

Exploring School Counselor Burnout and School Counselor Involvement of Parents and Administrators through an Adlerian Theoretical Framework

By: [Carrie A. Wachter](#), Elysia V. Clemens, Todd F. Lewis

Wachter, C. A., Clemens, E. V., & Lewis, T. F. (2008). Exploring school counselor involvement of student stakeholders and school counselor burnout through an Adlerian theoretical framework. *Journal of Individual Psychology*, 64(4), 432-449.

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This is a pre-copyedited version of an article accepted for publication in *Journal of Individual Psychology* following peer review. The definitive publisher-authenticated version is available through the University of Texas Press.

Abstract:

The purpose of this study was (a) to assess the relationship among Adlerian lifestyle themes and school counselors' choice to involve administrator or parent-guardian stakeholders when students present issues related to crisis or high-risk behaviors and (b) to assess the impact of lifestyle themes on school counselors' burnout. The Kern Lifestyle Scale, Stakeholder Survey, and Burnout Measure: Short Version were administered to a random sample of 800 school counselors from one Midwestern state; response rate was 31% (n = 249). A canonical correlation confirmed that there is not a relationship between lifestyle themes and stakeholder involvement. Multiple regression analyses indicated that 14.4% of the variance in school counselor burnout was explained by the lifestyle themes of self-esteem and perfectionism.

Keywords: Parent-teacher relationships | Adlerian psychology | Educational psychology | Risk-taking | Lifestyles | Students

Article:

School counselors are charged with contributing to the academic, career, and personal-social development of children and adolescents in the United States (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005a). Part of this responsibility involves working with students who are in crisis, involved with relational or physical aggression, or using substances (ASCA, 20p4a). Although some authors have proposed guidelines for school counselors to enhance their crisis and risk-taking behavior responsive services (e.g., Brock, Sandoval, & Lewis, 1996; Sandoval,

2002), minimal attention has been focused on the behavior and well-being of school counselors who implement these services. The constructs of interest in this study were (a) school counselors' propensity to involve administrators or parent-guardians in crisis situations and (b) school counselor burnout.

School Counselors' Involvement of Administrators or Parent-Guardians

A primary responsibility of school counselors is to intervene when students are in crisis (e.g., ASCA, 2000a; Ballard, 1995; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2001; Fitch, Newby, Ballester, & Marshall, 2001) and when students are at risk because of substance use or aggressive behaviors (ASCA, 2004a). For example, ASCA has articulated position statements about school counselors' roles in the development of bullying, harassment and violence prevention programs (ASCA, 2005b), prevention of and intervention in cases of child abuse or neglect (ASCA, 2003), conflict resolution to reduce violence (ASCA, 2000b), and identifying and providing services to students at risk for suicide (ASCA, 1999). Both practicing school counselors and future school administrators also have rated crisis as a primary role and duty of school counselors (Ballard, 1995; Fitch et al., 2001). In fact, future school administrators rated direct crisis intervention response as the most important duty of school counselors (Fitch et al.). School counselors, therefore, have central roles both in the development of crisis intervention strategies and in the implementation of crisis plans after crises occur (ASCA, 2000a; Gallagher & Coy, 1998; Petersen & Straub, 1992).

To address the changing roles of professional school counselors, the American School Counselor Association (2005a) has published a National Model to guide school counseling practices. In the National Model, school counselors are charged with taking on leadership roles in facilitating “effective working relationships” (ASCA, p. 25) among stakeholders (e.g., parent-guardians, administrators) through collaboration and teaming. The decision making process in involving stakeholders when providing services to students in crisis or engaging in high risk behavior, however, can be complex. Because most students being served by school counselors are younger than 18, school counselors have an ethical responsibility to respect the rights of parents and guardians (ASCA, 2004b). In addition, school counselors may be asked to provide information to school administrators that would pertain to school policies (e.g., bullying behavior, use of drugs or alcohol on campus) or that might otherwise affect the safety, security, and academic climate of the school. The ASCA (2005a) National Model emphasizes collaboration and teaming with stakeholders, and ethical guidelines (ASCA, 2004b) address general circumstances that might merit school counselors' involvement of familial and administrative stakeholders, but when do school counselors choose to involve these stakeholders?

Student crisis situations can take a number of forms, including suicidality, violence, self-injurious behavior, child abuse and neglect, bullying, severe mental health issues, issues of grief and loss, and environmental crises (Collins & Collins, 2005; Wachter, 2006). Because of the acute nature of crises (Caplan, 1964) and the potentially harmful—and even lethal—

consequences of some crises, school counselors must weigh multiple factors in making decisions as to whether or not one should involve familial or administrative stakeholders involved in a student crisis. Ethical codes (e.g., ASCA, 2004b) and decision-making models (e.g., Kitchener, 1984) may be ambiguous, leaving the school counselor to distinguish when to break confidentiality to protect student safety or to protect the safety of the school environment and mission. For example, does “harm to self” include a 13-year-old student who uses a pin to scratch the top of her arms, a 10-year-old who uses smokeless tobacco, or only those students at imminent risk of committing suicide?

School Counselor Burnout

In addition to handling crisis situations, school counselors are faced with varying tasks, expectations, and other Stressors in their jobs, and they may experience psychological stress leading to burnout (Kesler, 1990; Stephan, 2005). Burnout is described as having three primary components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1993; 2003). These components may interact in ways that rob a counselor of his or her ability to see each client as an individual with strengths and weaknesses (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Helping professionals who are overwhelmed by working with troubled individuals and who exceed their personal resources can become emotionally exhausted and may, in turn, disengage themselves from the individuals they serve by labeling, using depersonalizing language, and treating them as dehumanized objects (Maslach, 1982). Depersonalization of clients can be particularly stressful for mental health professionals, as they may feel guilty for failing to serve clients effectively, leading to a sense of reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1982). In addition, school counselors struggling with depersonalization may lose their ability to empathize (Emerson & Matikos, 1996; Skovholt, 2001), a core therapeutic condition (Rogers, 1980). Without the ability to empathize, school counselors may be unable to provide effective services and, in some cases, may engender an atmosphere of negativity and cynicism toward their clients (Maslach et al.).

Burnout has serious repercussions for counselors, students, and the school and community at large (Maslach, 1982). Intrapersonal consequences of burnout for the school counselor may include a myriad of negative physical, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms (Cherniss, 1980; Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980; Freudenberger, 1974; Maslach). Low job satisfaction, provision of services that are compromised, chronic absenteeism, refusal to perform certain job tasks, high rates of job turnover, and exodus from the profession are all subsequent effects of burnout in the helping fields (Edelwich & Brodsky; Maslach; Maslach et al., 2001). Burnout damages not only the individual professionals who are affected by it, but also their relationships with clients, the institutions where they are employed, and the profession they have chosen.

School counselors have been reported to be particularly at risk for burnout because of factors including high job stress, role ambiguity, role conflict, lack of supervision (Kesler, 1990); and some researchers have noted that helping professionals who work with clients in crisis are at

higher risk for burnout (e.g., Fong, 2005; Pines & Aronson, 1988; Schaufeli, Marek, & Maslach, 1993). Recently, Stephan (2005) found that 66% of middle school counselors in a statewide sample reported moderate to high levels of emotional exhaustion and n°/Q reported a moderate to high level of depersonalization. Wachter (2006) found that the majority of school counselors in a statewide sample exhibited warning signs of burnout, and 20% of respondents met criteria for burnout. A study by Crutchfield and Borders (1997) demonstrated a level of empathy in school counselors low enough to be labeled “subtractive” (p. 224). These studies suggest a population of school counselors in need of attention and support in order to protect them from burnout.

A gap in the research on school counselor's use of stakeholder involvement in crisis situations and psychological burnout is the lack of a theoretical underpinning to help explain these phenomena. Research grounded in theory can provide more explanatory power than a theoretical studies that have dominated research in the school counseling literature. A theoretical explanation also has the benefit of informing intervention and counseling practices for school counselors struggling to involve stakeholders when it is clearly warranted, or from problems related to burnout. Individual Psychology may be a particularly well-suited theoretical model for school counselors. Its personality theory, especially the concept of lifestyle themes, may be a useful framework to help understand what patterns of behavior lead to stakeholder involvement and burnout among school counselors.

Theoretical Framework

Individual Psychology is a comprehensive psychological theory that emphasizes the teleological nature of human behavior: Human behavior is largely purposive and directed by psychological goals (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). In addition, an individual's “movement” in life is often geared toward overcoming perceived inadequacies or weaknesses. This striving is toward a feeling of superiority as a way to conquer psychologically these perceived limitations (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Based on these ideas, Keene and Wheeler (1994) noted that Adlerian theory has been suggested as a model to understand not only personality but also maladjustment.

One of the central tenets of Adlerian personality theory is the concept of lifestyle, or how an individual perceives the environment, other people in the environment, as well as attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors of the self (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). Manaster and Corsini (1982) likened lifestyle to a blueprint for human living, describing it as a central part of who people are as human beings, their essence. It tells them what is right and wrong, how to fit in, what to do in certain situations, and what works and what does not (Manaster & Corsini). In general, socially useful lifestyles endorse caring and commitment to self, others, and society, whereas socially useless lifestyles focus energy away from the common good toward more self-centered; private interests and pursuits (Manaster & Corsini).

From an Adlerian perspective, individuals are both passive recipients of information from the environment and active creators of the meaning of that information (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). This “active creation” forms what is at the core of the lifestyle: the set of convictions one has about the outside world, others, and the self. These convictions can be thought of as a collection of strongly held beliefs which assist one in making decisions and handling stresses in the world (Mosak & Maniacci, 1999). Humans develop in early childhood a fictional image of what is needed to be safe, to be superior, and to belong; these images blend together to form the central goal of the lifestyle (Dinkmeyer & Sperry, 2000). Indeed, Adler believed that all individuals strive to belong (Mosak & Maniacci), and many of these strongly held convictions revolve around how best to fit in and rules about what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

Most Adlerians emphasize the ideographic nature of personality, that is, human beings manifest an infinite number of unique lifestyles (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). Adler believed in the primacy of this uniqueness; However, he acknowledged that lifestyles can revolve around common elements (Kern, Wheeler, & Curlette, 1997), often referred to as themes. Careful to suggest that themes should never be used to define the whole person, Adler believed that a general understanding of a person's core lifestyle convictions and movements could be an aid in interpreting the lifestyle as whole (Mosak, 1979). Mosak's description of 14 lifestyle types engendered renewed interest in the assessment and clinical utility of themes. A theme includes the dominant style the person displays to the outside world. For example, a “pleasing” theme indicates someone who primarily organizes his or her life around making others happy. A “controlling” theme indicates someone who gains satisfaction by being in charge of situations.

Individual Psychology provides a theoretical foundation for exploring how lifestyle themes might affect school counselors' service to students and school communities as well as a potential model for understanding susceptibility to burnout. Because of the central role that lifestyle exerts in people's lives, it may be that certain lifestyle themes propel one to seek the assistance of administrative personnel or parents in crisis situations more than others. It also may be the case that certain themes are not as conducive to handling stress, thus increasing the risk of experiencing burnout.

To date, we could find no studies that examined associations between stakeholder involvement or school counselor burnout and lifestyle. As such, the aims of this exploratory study were to examine, in a multivariate assessment, the relationships between stakeholder involvement and lifestyle themes and to explore the relationships between lifestyle themes and school counselor burnout. These aims were guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship among Adlerian lifestyle themes and school counselor involvement of familial and administrative stakeholders in student cases involving crisis or substance abuse situations?
2. To what extent do Adlerian lifestyle themes relate to school counselor burnout?

Our hypotheses were (a) that an identifiable pattern of lifestyle themes exists relating to stakeholder involvement, (b) that the control and perfectionism subscales are positively associated with greater levels of school counselor burnout, and (c) that there is a positive association among the discouragement subscales (i.e., self-esteem and expectations) and levels of school counselor burnout.

Methods

Participants and procedure. The population of interest for this study included practicing professional school counselors employed in schools serving students in kindergarten through 12th grade across a state located in the central United States. A target sample size of 160 professional school counselors was set based on a power analysis for the planned data analyses (Faul & Eridfelder, 1992). This sample size would allow adequate power (0.80) to identify a moderate effect size. Potential participants were identified through a public-access list of all school counselors employed in schools (both public and nonpublic). From this list of professional school counselors, 800 participants were randomly selected using a random number generator. These participants were mailed a packet including a cover letter describing the study and informed consent, an instrumentation packet, and a postage-paid return envelope. The final sample included 249 participants (exceeding our target size), for a response rate of 31.1 %

Instrumentation. The following instruments were used in this study: the Stakeholder Survey (Wächter, Clemens, & Lewis, 2007), the Kern Lifestyle Scale (KLS; Kern, 1996), the Burnout Measure: Short Version (BMS; Malach-Pines, 2005), and a demographic survey asking respondents for their age, sex, race/ethnicity, years of experience, grades served, and number of students served.

The Stakeholder Survey (Wächter et al., 2007) is a 54-item assessment developed by the authors for the purpose of this study. The Stakeholder Survey consists of two scales (an administrator scale and a parent-guardian scale) that assess the frequency that school counselors would anticipate involving the identified stakeholders (either the school administrator or student's parent-guardian) in a variety of crisis-related (e.g., pregnancy, suicidal ideation, sexual abuse) or substance use-related (e.g., drinking and driving, cocaine use away from school, alcohol use at school) situations. Survey construction followed the initial guidelines of Crocker and Algina (1986). Items on this instrument were drawn from a review of school counseling and crisis-related literature and consultation with experts in the fields of school counseling and crisis intervention. Participants responded to each item on a Likert-type scale anchored by 1 (*never*) and 5 (*always*). Higher scores reflect a greater willingness to involve stakeholders when confronting student crisis or substance use related situations.

Initially, the Stakeholder Survey consisted of 68 items, on two identical but separate 34-item scales. The number of items was decreased following initial psychometric reviews of the instrument. Specifically, item-to-scale correlation and results from a factor analysis were

considered. Because the Stakeholder Survey has not been used in previous research, we conducted a maximum likelihood factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation (not shown) for the administrator and parent-guardian scales.

For the administrator scale, results indicated that three factors appeared to be “real” (i.e., left of the scree) and met the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin criteria for retaining factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The three factors retained explained 67% of the variance in the data. The first factor “risk taking behaviors and violence away from school” consisted of 11 items (e.g., driving under the influence of alcohol or other controlled substances; narcotic use away from school; Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$). The second factor “risk taking behaviors at school” consisted of 4 items (e.g., alcohol use at school; drug distribution at school; Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$). The third factor “limits to confidentiality and physical bullying” consisted of 9 items (e.g., neglect; suicidal plan; Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$). Ten items were dropped from the administrator scale because of loadings below .3 on any of the factors or loadings above .4 on multiple factors. As a result, three variables (“risk taking behaviors and violence away from school,” “risk taking behaviors at school,” & “limits to confidentiality and physical bullying”) from the administrator portion of the Stakeholder Survey were entered into the data analyses. The final administrator portion of the Stakeholder Survey consisted of 24 items.

The parent-guardian scale yielded one factor solution through a maximum likelihood factor analysis. The factor “parental involvement in crisis and risk taking behaviors” consisted of 30 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$). Four items were dropped because of loadings of less than .30. As a result, “parental involvement in crisis and risk taking behavior” was entered in the data analyses as a single variable. The final parent scale consisted of 30 items.

The Kern Lifestyle Scale (Kern, 1996) is a 35-item self-report instrument that measures the presence of five lifestyle themes. Participants respond on a Likert-type scale anchored by 1 (*never applies to me*) and 5 (*perfectly applies to me*). Each of the five lifestyle themes is measured by seven items. The *Control* scale assesses a need to direct others, control personal emotional expression, and use logic to approach problem solving. An example of items from the Control scale is “likes to get the last word in conversations.” The *Perfectionist* scale assesses a need to work hard to organize life and to avoid mistakes. An example of an item from the Perfectionist scale is “really bothered when making a mistake.” The *Need to Please* scale measures a participant's need to avoid interpersonal problems and be liked by others. An example of an item from the Need to Please scale is “concerned with whether others approve of what I do.” The *Self-Esteem* scale assesses a participant's beliefs in his or her ability to handle life's problems and to encourage both others and self. High scores are associated with discouragement and low self-esteem. An example of an item from the Self-Esteem scale is “seldom satisfied with one's accomplishments.” The *Expectations* scale measures the level of belief that a participant has in setting goals and expectations of himself or herself and others. An example of an item from the Expectations scale is “holds people to their end of the bargain; and gets righteously indignant when they don't deliver.”

The Burnout Measure: Short Version (Malach-Pines, 2005) is a 10-item self-report instrument that was adapted from the Burnout Measure (Pines & Aronson, 1988) to meet research demands for a brief, user-friendly measure of burnout. Users of the BMS respond to prompts asking about the frequency of physical (e.g., weak/sickly), mental (e.g., disappointed with people), and emotional (e.g., hopeless) exhaustion on a Likert-type scale anchored by 1 *(never)* and 7 *(always)*. The BMS has been tested on several occupational samples, with good internal consistency (a range from .85 to .92; Malach-Pines).

Results

Participant demographics. Of the 249 participants who completed the questionnaire, 191 (77.5%) were female, 51 (20.5%) were male, and 5 (2%) declined to indicate sex. The majority (225, 90.4%) identified as Caucasian, 11 (4.4%) identified as Black, 5 (2.0%) identified as Asian, 5 (2.0%) identified as multiracial, 2 (0.8%) identified as Latino/a, and 1 (0.4%) identified as Pacific Islander. Participants ranged in age from 24 years to 67 years ($M = 45.15$ yrs, $SD = 11.10$) and reported between 1 and 41 years of counseling experience ($M = 11.10$ yrs, $SD = 8.40$). Participants reported being directly assigned to between 15 and 1250 students ($M = 420$ students, $SD = 155.07$). Of the participants, 109 (43.8%) reported working in high schools, 59 (23.7%) reported working in middle-junior high schools, 46 (18.5%) reported working in elementary schools, and 30 (12.0%) reported working in schools serving students across multiple levels. This sample appears to be demographically representative of the population of school counselors within the state that was surveyed.

Table 1. Best-Fitting Multiple Regression Analysis of Lifestyle Themes Predicting School Counselor Burnout

Variables in Model	β	t
Perfectionist	-.217	-3.12*
Self-esteem	.455	6.54

Note. $F(2,247) = 21.45$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .151$, $\Delta R^2 = .144$. * $p < .001$. $n = 249$.

Respondents to the survey indicated, on average, a population in danger of burnout ($M = 2.737$; $SD = .819$). Specifically, 53 respondents (19.2%) met criteria for burnout, including 7 (2.9%) who met criteria for a “very serious” level of burnout. An additional 99 participants (40.4%) met criteria for Being “in danger of” burnout (Malach-Pines, 2005, p. 88).

Canonical correlation analysis. A canonical correlation with the five Lifestyle subscales serving as the independent variables and the administrator subscales and parent subscale of the Stakeholder Survey serving as the dependent variables yielded nonsignificant results [Wilks's λ approximate $F(20, 286) = .88$, $p = .61$]. Thus, there were no significant relationships between the two sets of variables.

Multiple regression. Two multiple regression analyses were used to explore the relationships between lifestyle themes and school counselor burnout. In the first analysis, the full scale of the BMS inventory was regressed on the five lifestyle themes to determine which theme or themes emerged as the strongest predictors. In the second analysis, the total burnout score was regressed on the five lifestyle themes and sociodemographic variables of level of service, age, and years of experience. The purpose of the second analysis was to determine the predictability of lifestyle themes compared to sociodemographic variables on the dependent measure (burnout). In this analysis, level of service was defined as elementary, middle-junior high, and high school. In all regression analyses, all variables were entered into the model simultaneously (i.e., enter method) and adjustments were made to the model in an effort to create a balance between efficiency and explanatory effect.

The results of the first multiple regression analysis are displayed in Table 1. The best fitting model indicated that approximately 14.4% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .144$) in burnout scores was explained by the two lifestyle themes of Self-Esteem and Perfectionist. The lifestyle theme of Need to Please was dropped from the regression model because it was a nonsignificant predictor and its inclusion in the model decreased the adjusted R^2 value. After Need to Please was removed, the Control and Expectations themes were found to be nonsignificant in the presence of Perfectionist and Self-Esteem themes, and removal of these two predictors only resulted in a slight reduction in model fit (i.e., adjusted R^2 dropped .011 when the predictors were removed).

The results of the second multiple regression are displayed in Table 2. The sociodemographic predictors were all nonsignificant in the presence of the Perfectionist and Self-Esteem lifestyle themes, thus making no worthy contribution to the model.

Discussion

Results of this study show partial support for the research hypotheses. Although there was no identifiable pattern of lifestyle themes that related to stakeholder involvement, there was support for the association between lifestyle theme and burnout. Specifically, the Perfectionism subscale was negatively associated with greater levels of school counselor burnout, and the Self-Esteem subscale was positively associated with greater levels of school counselor burnout.

Stakeholder involvement. The nonsignificant relationship between Adlerian lifestyle themes and decisions to involve familial and administrative stakeholders when students are in crisis or engaging in risk-taking behaviors is an important finding. It indicates that, although there is ambiguity among ethical, legal, and school policy guidelines, Adlerian lifestyle themes may be unrelated to the decision to involve parents or principals. The five lifestyle themes that were considered in this study encompass a range of traits that are likely to guide counselor rationale (e.g., control related to maintaining tighter hold on student information, perfectionism related to clear “by the book” delineations). The nonsignificant findings in this study provide no evidence

that school counselors who responded to this survey are affected by these internal factors in decision making. Rather, they may rely on ethical codes, school policy, school precedent, consultation, or other external directives, although our data cannot confirm this speculation.

Burnout. The substantial amount of variance in burnout accounted for by Adlerian lifestyle themes (see Table 1) suggests that personal experiences of school counselors substantially affect how they emotionally respond to their professional role. Two out of five themes (i.e., self-esteem, perfectionist) made noteworthy contributions to the regression model, and accounted for 14.4% of the variance in burnout.

Self-esteem indicates a belief in being able to handle most of life's problems and the ability to encourage oneself as well as others (Kern & Cummins, 1996). Elevated scores on the Self-Esteem scale (which correspond to a lower level of self-esteem on the KLS) were significant predictors of burnout. Specifically, individuals who scored highly on the Self-Esteem scale tend to engage in self-deprecating behaviors and struggle to separate their personal issues from others (Kern & Cummins). Although school counselors for whom lower self-esteem is a predominant theme likely possess the skills to meet the academic, personal-social, and career needs of students, their self-esteem patterns may detract from applying their skills, resulting in greater risk for burnout.

The predictive power of the Perfectionist scale on burnout is a particularly interesting finding in light of recent research that connects role stress to burnout. Stephan (2005) found that a lack of clarity in the job description of a school counselor and conflicting messages about school counselors' role are significant predictors of burnout. Role conflict and role ambiguity can contribute to role stress (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005). Individuals who scored highly on the Perfectionist scale do not tolerate ambiguity well and prefer clear directions and expectations for their role within an organization (Kern & Cummins, 1996). Because clear delineation of school counselors' roles and responsibilities is not a hallmark of the profession, school counselors who manifest perfectionist tendencies may work particularly hard to ensure clarity of responsibilities. Specifically, school counselors who exhibit behaviors that help provide clarity may reduce conflicting messages from administrators, teachers, and counselor educators (i.e., role conflict) and help define roles that may have been unclear (i.e., role ambiguity). School counselors for whom perfectionist is a predominant lifestyle theme may, therefore, take actions that reduce their susceptibility to the negative consequences of role stress.

Implications for practice. The results have implications relevant for both supervision and counseling practice in the schools. The most substantial implication for practice is that school counselors are clearly in need of primary and secondary intervention in order to reduce burnout. Participants' self-reported BMS scores indicated, on average, a sample exhibiting the warning signs of burnout (with nearly 20% falling in the range of actual burnout), consistent with the findings of previous researchers (e.g., Kesler, 1990; Stephan, 2005; Wächter, 2006). From an Adlerian framework, burnout may lead to what Adler referred to as “feelings of inferiority,”

which can manifest as discouragement (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956). Ultimately, feeling discouraged comes down to the belief that one is not good enough or that one is unacceptable (Manaster & Corsini, 1982). This underscores the importance of learning more about how best to prevent or reduce burnout in this population. By increasing knowledge about and embracing self-reflection on their lifestyle themes, school counselors can adopt strategies tailored specifically to their personal strengths and limitations in order to buffer themselves from the personal and professional consequences of burnout.

The connection between the lifestyle themes and greater risk of burnout in the current study illuminates the need for increased awareness of how personality factors either enhance or compromise one's response to stress. Clinical supervision is one means of increasing school counselors' awareness of how their lifestyle affects their work within the school. Supervisors may choose to use an Adlerian framework in clinical supervision (see Bernard & Goodyear, 2004; Lemberger & Dollarhide, 2006; McCurdy, 2006) in order to help practicing school counselors explore ways in which their lifestyle may be both an asset and a liability to their work with students, their relationship with colleagues and parent-guardians, and their personal well-being. Clinical supervision would seem to be particularly beneficial because the focus is on the practicing counselor and her or his development as a person and a professional, rather than on a specific client. Dominant lifestyle themes in the school counselor's work can be drawn out and highlighted to raise awareness and encourage personal and professional reflection and growth.

The ASCA (2005a) model theme of *collaboration and teaming* may provide school counselors whose dominant lifestyle themes include self-esteem and perfectionist with guidance in not only meeting student needs efficiently but also reducing burnout. For school counselors who manifest a predominant self-esteem lifestyle, engaging in collaborative relationships might provide a means of more fully meeting student needs, while simultaneously decreasing the perception that the full weight of student mental health care resides with the school counselor. This may be even more important for school counselors who are responsible for a higher than recommended student caseload. The collaboration and teaming approach to student care may help school counselors with fewer perfectionist lifestyle tendencies to learn how to clarify ambiguous or conflicting roles. In addition, through collaborating with other professionals to develop treatment plans and consulting regarding the care of students, school counselors may feel more confident in the decisions made on behalf of the students who they serve and experience reduced fear of making the “wrong” decision. Working with other educational and student services personnel may help school counselors recognize areas in which they can be of particular service to students, while also connecting students to the support of other school personnel.

Implications for pedagogy. The results of the current study also have implications for those who train school counselors. The relatively high levels of burnout reported by the study sample are consistent with previous findings that school counselors are a population at risk (e.g., Stephan, 2005; Wachter, 2006). Therefore, raising awareness of areas for personal growth and practicing self-care techniques may help school counselors-in-training buffer themselves from the harmful

impact of burnout. Educators may consider introducing school counselors-in-training to the relationship between lifestyle themes and burnout, using Adlerian theory as an explanatory model. If school counselors are able to understand what they are bringing, in terms of lifestyle, to their work, they may be able to recognize how their personal needs influence their professional responsibilities. Specifically, this may be an opportunity for counselors-in-training to explore how their predominant and complementary lifestyle themes can serve as protective measures or risk factors related to burnout.

Incorporating the current findings as class assignments and personal growth activities may help school counselors-in-training learn to reduce some of the belief structures that predict burnout. For example, preventative measures for school counselors-in-training who manifest lower self-esteem might include integrating projects on collaboration with other educational or mental health professionals during a consultation or practicum course in order to illustrate how to partner and team with other professionals.

The supervisors of school counselors-in-training could also incorporate an emphasis on lifestyle awareness and the role it may play in practice. Discussing the interaction between lifestyle themes and professional activities with supervisees could be a worthwhile exploration. In addition, if a school counselor-in-training is particularly high on the Self-Esteem subscale or low on the Perfectionist subscale of the KLS, supervision might be an ideal place to provide additional activities, support, and space for processing in order to provide primary or secondary prevention against burnout.

Limitations. Although precautions were taken to minimize threats to internal and external validity, the findings must be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, data collection was dependant on the use of volunteer participants. Because the survey was anonymous in nature, there was no way to determine specific ways in which participants differed from nonparticipants. Second, the sampling frame was a list of school counselors drawn from a public access database held by a central U.S. state's Department of Education. This list is dependent on school counselors' updating their contact information; therefore, it is possible that there might have been some school counselors in the state who were not included or who might have been unreachable because of out-of-date contact information. Additionally, because of the inclusion of school counselors employed only in one state, the findings may not be generalizable beyond that individual state. Third, the reliance on participant self-report is susceptible to bias (Heppner, Kivlighan, & Wampold, 1999). For example, participants might under-estimate burnout symptomology or report their level of involvement with stakeholders based on what they thought they should be doing, rather than their actual practice. Fourth, the Stakeholder Survey was a researcher designed instrument in which the psychometric properties were established with one administration. Using this instrument in future research will help to evaluate the reliability and validity of this measure. Finally, the Kern Lifestyle Scale was developed for the purpose of interviews and the psychometric properties of this instrument for research are unknown. As such, the results of this study may be attributed to theory or to the instrument.

Despite these limitations, the results provide an initial look at the potential relationship between Adlerian lifestyle themes of school counselors, school counselor involvement of administrative and familial stakeholders, and school counselor burnout.

Directions for future research. The findings from this exploratory study offer future directions for research in terms of both design and focus area. Longitudinal design may be an appropriate means of determining how lifestyle affects burnout over time. Specifically, a longitudinal design paired with a modeling approach (e.g., structural equation modeling) may help researchers determine how protective factors (e.g., supervision, collaboration) moderate and risk factors (e.g., role stress) mediate the relationship between some lifestyle themes and burnout. Alternative methodological approaches might include case studies or other small *n* designs that allow for a more in-depth understanding of the impact of complementary themes on burnout.

Further research addressing other affective components that are important to school counselors' practice might include the interaction between lifestyle themes and school counselors' perception of relationship with stakeholders. The exploration of the relationship between lifestyle and burnout also could extend to other helping professionals and educators.

Conclusion

The findings from this exploratory study suggest that lifestyle may be a salient construct in exploring school counselors' affective experience. Awareness of how one's lifestyle patterns affect psychological reactions to stress is an important goal for both preventative and responsive efforts on behalf of school counselors. Integration of Adlerian lifestyle themes as a framework for school counselor training and professional development may be one way to protect these professionals and the students they serve from the effects of burnout.

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