

# Narcissism, Entitlement, and Questionable Research Practices in Counseling: A Pilot Study

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Although reports of research misconduct and questionable research practices (QRPs) have been prevalent in the literature, very little has been written about these issues in the field of counseling. The current pilot study addresses (a) the continuous drive for evidence-based practice in education and counseling and (b) the relationship between QRPs and individual characteristics. QRPs are reported for the sample, indicating that this does exist, at least minimally, within the field of counseling. The authors also explored the role of demographic and specific personality characteristics in explaining QRPs.

Although much has been written on the subject of research misconduct (e.g., Frankel, 1994; Institute of Medicine, 2002; Steneck, 2003; Weed, 1998), a paucity of literature exists within the field of counseling regarding the ethical practice of research. This is surprising given the emphasis in the counseling profession on conducting research to inform evidence-based practice. Research in the field of counseling is conducted by a variety of individuals within the field, including researchers, educators, students, and practitioners. Although counseling emphasizes research (e.g., McLeod, 2003; Sexton, Whiston, Bleuer, & Walz, 1997), there have been no empirical data to examine the prevalence, varieties, or correlates of either research misconduct or questionable research practices (QRPs) that exist in the field; nor has the counseling literature addressed the concept of research integrity, with the exception of the profession's ethical codes (see American Counseling Association [ACA], 2005; National Board for Certified Counselors, 2002) that speak to appropriate behaviors for researchers in counseling. The current pilot study was designed to begin exploring the prevalence of QRPs in the field of counseling, as well as to begin to examine certain personality and other demographic correlates of QRPs.

## Research Integrity in the Field of Counseling

In the field of counseling, there has been increased skepticism from the general public, government, and consumers about the provision of services, programs, and education for which no positive results or success have been demonstrated (Houser, 1998). Houser declared that "we [as a profession] can attempt to ignore the criticisms or we can attempt to address them in the practice of our profession" (p. 230). Because of the increased skepticism and the need to provide services that have proven to be effective and successful, there continues to be a drive in the field of counseling to provide evidence-based services. This drive leads counsel-

ing professionals to engage in research to provide data that either support or refute the value of their services. Despite the amount or type of research being conducted in counseling, Whiston (1996) noted that counselors are not trained to demonstrate accountability in the provision of their services. It is probably safe to assume that even less has been done to acknowledge or address research misconduct or QRPs in the counseling field. *QRPs* are defined as times when researchers engage in activities that depart "from accepted practices of the relevant research community" (Steneck, 2003, p. S241). Examples of these practices include sloppy or careless research, statistical errors, inappropriate allocation of authorship, and inaccurate references.

The few publications that have discussed research ethics within the field of counseling cover the topic minimally or have focused only on specific issues, such as informed consent (e.g., Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2003; Houser, 1998; Robinson & Gross, 1986), with a lack of attention regarding other ethical issues surrounding research such as data management, data collection and analysis, publication and authorship, and reporting results of research. Not only is there a lack of literature that focuses on research integrity in the counseling profession but there is also a scarcity of empirical research that examines research misconduct or QRPs in counseling. According to Steneck (2003), very little has been done to examine the prevalence of research misconduct within the social and behavioral sciences, in general. However, this does not mean that research misconduct, QRPs, and the lack of research integrity, do not exist. Overall, it has been found that QRPs are not uncommon. Results from the highly controversial Acadia survey suggested 44% of students and 50% of faculty reported having been exposed to at least one case of each of two types of misconduct (Shafir & Kennedy, 1998). Although overstated, these results do speak to a problem in the research community.

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Even though notorious cases of research misconduct have not been announced throughout the field of counseling education, it does not mean that the profession is exempt from QRPs or research misconduct. Steneck (2003) suggested that, on the whole, occurrences of QRPs (e.g., statistical errors, improper authorship, duplicate publications, and sloppy research) range from around 10% to 40%. He reported that every form of questionable research practice runs counter to well-established rules, which ultimately compromises research. Moreover, QRPs are undoubtedly more prevalent than outright research misconduct such as fabrication, falsification, and plagiarism, and consequently can actually be more damaging to the research community than the more serious and easily identifiable misconduct itself (Alberts & Shine, 1994). For example, once an article is published with inaccurate information or statistical errors, it is difficult to remove this publication from the research literature. Even if a retraction of the article is printed, other researchers continue to cite the inaccurate information in their own research and publications.

It is imperative that an examination is begun of the prevalence of QRPs and that knowledge surrounding research ethics and integrity is expanded to address the needs of the profession, especially if counselor educators and counselors are to continue using research findings to influence practice in educating students and counseling clients. Therefore, one of the purposes of the current study was to explore the occurrence of QRPs among professionals in the field of counseling.

## Possible Correlates of QRPs

There are numerous opinions in the literature that mental or emotional disorders underlie at least some instances of research misconduct and QRPs (e.g., Frankel, 1994; Weed, 1998). Implicit in such a conjecture is the question, What scientists in their right mind would purposely fudge data or plagiarize? Researchers have proposed a variety of individual and personal characteristics, including emotional disturbances (Broad & Wade, 1982); psychiatric illnesses (Royal College of Physicians, 1991); and ego, vanity, and narcissism (Mumford, Connelly, Helton, Strange, & Osburn, 2001). In an effort to identify individual characteristics related to unethical acts, Mumford and Helton (2002) conducted an extensive review of clinical, social-personality, management ethics, and criminological literature. Narcissism emerged as one of the seven characteristics related to socially destructive, unethical behavior. Relatedly, Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, and Elliot (2000) conducted several studies and reported that narcissists frequently engage in self-enhancing behavior. The authors confirmed earlier findings that associated self-enhancement with self-destructive behavior, such as competitiveness and hostility.

Thus, engaging in research misconduct would be deemed as one of the more extreme forms of attaining self-enhancement. Where a premium is placed on evidence of scholarly pro-

ductivity, narcissists may take ethical shortcuts in an effort to self-enhance or as a result of their sense of entitlement. Such behavior is ultimately self-destructive inasmuch as those found guilty of research misconduct often lose their jobs or otherwise damage their careers (Zuckerman, 1977). Using the threatened egotism hypothesis (Baumeister, Bushman, & Campbell, 2000; Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman, Bonacci, van Dijk, & Baumeister, 2003), one can posit that narcissists in academia may be more likely to engage in some of the more indirect forms of aggression as outlined by Salmivalli (2001). In scientific research, these might include the falsification of data or credentials, or plagiarism.

In response to the increasing interest in research misconduct and QRPs, universities and other research institutions receiving Federal research money have been forced to formally address what is now referred to as the “responsible conduct of research.” One problem with current efforts to educate researchers about the responsible conduct of research is that the pathways are not yet known through which researchers become irresponsible by engaging in misconduct. Do disordered individuals enter scientific careers and later decide to break science’s code of ethics, or do psychologically healthy individuals who are familiar with science’s norms engage in misconduct only after succumbing to structural, organizational, or situational pressures? Is it possible that there are multiple pathways to an instance of scientific misconduct? Davis (2003) proposed theorizing about research misconduct as a Venn diagram with each etiological factor as one of the overlapping rings. One such ring could easily be individual factors such as personality.

With the lack of knowledge or research being conducted that examines the correlates of individual factors and QRPs, the second purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship of two aspects of personality (i.e., narcissism and entitlement) and QRPs among professionals in the field of counseling.

## Narcissism: Its Normal and Pathological Forms

The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (4th ed.; *DSM-IV*; American Psychiatric Association, 1994) includes Narcissistic Personality Disorder in its list of Axis I disorders. According to the *DSM-IV*, a *personality disorder* “is an enduring pattern of inner experience and behavior that deviates markedly from the individual’s culture, is pervasive and inflexible, has an onset in adolescence or early childhood, is stable over time, and leads to distress or impairment” (p. 629).

*Narcissism* is characterized, among other attributes, by a sense of entitlement, feelings of grandiosity, a tendency to seek the attention of others, and interpersonal exploitativeness (Vaknin, 2003). As Rivas (2001) pointed out, these characteris-

tics can be seen in narcissists' tendency to exaggerate minor achievements and express entitlement to recognition without having earned it. In its more extreme, clinical form, Narcissistic Personality Disorder, narcissism is reflected in characteristics such as feelings of superiority and uniqueness, exaggeration of talents, boastful or pretentious behavior, grandiose fantasies, self-centered or self-referential behavior, need for attention and admiration, arrogant and haughty behavior, and high achievement (Ronningstam & Gunderson, 1990).

Because the narcissistic personality is characterized by a grandiose sense of self-importance and preoccupations with unlimited success, it would only be natural for such individuals to seek out self-enhancement opportunities. Wallace and Baumeister (2002) suggested that "a performance situation can be defined as having high self-enhancement opportunity to the extent that successful performance will be interpreted as an indication that the performer has impressively high levels of skills, talents or other desirable traits" (p. 820). In other words, *self-enhancement opportunity* can be defined as the degree to which a person can receive credit or attention by performing well.

According to Wallace and Baumeister (2002), there are three factors that determine whether a performance is self-enhancing for the performer: "the quality of the performance, audience characteristics, and the diagnosticity of the performance task" (p. 820). They suggested that the better the performance, the greater the opportunity for self-enhancement. Additionally, when the audience includes people whose opinions are valued by the performer, the opportunity for self-enhancement is increased more so than when the performance is witnessed by people the performer does not respect. Finally, Wallace and Baumeister mentioned that "for the performance to be self-enhancing it must be diagnostic of special achievement" (p. 820).

In academia, there are multiple opportunities for individuals to achieve self-enhancement by way of successful performance. These consist of those situations that bring recognition and prestige or other nonmaterial benefits, such as publications, presentations, and positions in national scholarly societies. These opportunities for self-enhancement are intuitively attractive to narcissistic individuals who, by definition, want to be noticed. These situations provide the individual with an opportunity, not available to everyone, to present a high-quality performance in front of peers.

For many academicians, research constitutes a large portion of the academic workload and is critical in order to flourish in one's profession and to gain promotion and tenure. Research can include publishing papers, getting grants, and conducting presentations at conferences, television shows, or radio stations. Research productivity, in large part, may determine tenure and promotion decisions. For that reason alone, research can be crucial to the livelihood of scholars and their careers. A decade ago, Alberts and Shine (1994) proposed that situational stress on research-

ers to conduct research, receive grant funding, and publish could promote undesirable behavior or dangerous shortcuts. When the pressure is on to "publish or perish," researchers might be more likely to engage in research misconduct or questionable research practices in order to gain promotion, tenure, or to simply keep their academic positions. In Woolf's (1981) interview, the researcher posited that medical researchers who have been found guilty of research misconduct tended to be in laboratories where the number of papers published exceeded the norm and, consequently, the researchers may have felt a higher level of pressure. The pressure to publish is one of the most often cited causes of research misconduct (Lynch, 1994; Smith, 1992). In a study on the incidence of fraud in medical research, Ranstam et al. (2000) found that the majority of respondents believed that their career and a desire for power were the main motives for misconduct.

Research (e.g., published articles, grants) not only provides an individual with an enhanced reputation and prestige but also fulfills the requirement identified by Merton (1973) to communicate research findings to the scientific world. Additionally, published journal articles can serve as symbolic products. Symbolic products are those that provide some sort of prestige, pride, or self-identity. As Khalil (2000) noted, "Although symbolic products are diverse, they are valuable because they enhance the sense of self-regard. However, in order for a product to become symbolic it must play an important role in the everyday livelihood of the individuals concerned" (p. 57). Khalil also suggested that others must also perceive the product (e.g., publications) to be difficult to acquire or achieve. Because narcissistic individuals, by definition, desire opportunities for self-enhancement, it can be hypothesized that a special relationship exists between the pursuit of symbolic products and narcissism. According to Chop and Silva (1991),

being successful becomes an inherent part of [narcissists'] value system. When the inability to attain a desired level of achievement threatens the scientist's success, he or she may commit an act of fraud to obtain a desired end. The desired end may be promotion and tenure; inclusion in an elite organization; or recipient of a prestigious honor, award, or research grant. Therefore, offenders of fraud are often caught up in the search for power, fame, and self-aggrandizement. (p. 167)

When an organizational or institutional structure facilitates self-enhancing behavior and opportunities, as the field of academic science has, narcissists, who engage in self-enhancing behavior, will no doubt be drawn to such opportunities. Because of their inflated sense of self, preoccupations with unlimited success, and sense of entitlement, narcissists in an academic setting may be more likely to cut ethical corners when conducting research in order to fully benefit

from the opportunities of attention and prestige conferred on those who publish often and acquire research grants.

## Research Questions and Hypotheses

The goals of the present pilot study were to explore (a) the prevalence of QRPs in the field of counseling; (b) the extent to which scores on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) would be correlated with scores on a measure of QRPs; (c) the extent to which scores on a new measure of psychological entitlement (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004) would be correlated with scores on a measure of QRPs; and (d) the relationship between sociodemographic variables and scores on the NPI.

Specifically, we hypothesized that (a) there would be a prevalence of QRPs in the counseling profession similar to that suggested by Steneck (10%–40%; 2003); (b) the more narcissistic individuals are, the more likely they are to be willing to engage in QRPs; and finally (c) the greater the sense of entitlement individuals evidence, the more likely they are to be willing to engage in QRPs.

## Method

### Instruments

To assess the relationship between narcissism and the tendency to compromise research integrity, we used a data collection instrument consisting of four sections.

*QRPs.* The first section consisted of eight vignettes, each of which described a research activity, with six of the eight vignettes posing QRPs. Two of the eight vignettes did not pose any type of ethically questionable behavior or situation in research and, thus, were considered dummy vignettes. These dummy vignettes were designed by the researchers for this project to prevent the participant from assuming that engaging in the behaviors listed in the vignettes would be considered QRPs.

Thus, six of the eight vignettes were used to measure QRPs. To guard against response bias, as discussed by Converse and Presser (1986), two of the six vignettes were reverse-coded. One unique aspect of all eight of the vignettes was that they were grounded in specific provisions of the *ACA Code of Ethics* (ACA, 2005) on conducting research. The six vignettes assessing QRPs inquired about whether the participant would be likely to engage in behaviors such as lack of recognition of others on publications, inappropriate authorship, reporting inaccurate significant results, purposefully not reporting confounding variables in results, unethically reviewing a manuscript for publication, and inappropriate deception in the informed consent presented to participants. Participants responded to these vignettes using a 7-point Likert-type scale of *extremely unlikely* (1) to *extremely likely* (7) to engage in the specified behavior. Respondents were given the instructions to “circle the num-

ber that most closely represents your position regarding the situation in question.” Research has shown mixed results on the validity of self-reported, socially disapproved behavior (e.g., see Del Boca & Noll, 2000; Golub, Johnson, Taylor, & Liberty; 2002, Koslowsky & Dishon-Berkovits, 2001). Thus, participants were asked what they were likely to do, rather than what they had actually done in the past.

*Narcissistic personality.* The second section of the survey instrument consisted of Raskin and Hall’s (1979) NPI. The NPI is a 40-item measure that has been used extensively for more than 20 years in psychological research. Respondents choose 1 statement from the 40 pairs that best describes them. The main scale of the NPI, Narcissism, can also be broken down into seven subscales. These subscales are Authority, Self-Sufficiency, Superiority, Exhibitionism, Exploitativeness, Vanity, and Entitlement. Stucke and Sporer (2002) reported an alpha of .93 in their use of the 40-item version. Score reliability for the NPI for the current study was  $\alpha = .81$ .

*Psychological entitlement.* The third section of the instrument is the Psychological Entitlement Inventory (PEI) developed by Campbell et al. (2004). The PEI is designed to assess the extent to which an individual feels entitled to special treatment. It comprises nine items, all answered using a 7-point Likert-type scale from *strong disagreement* (1) to *strong agreement* (7). Campbell et al. (2004) found that the PEI had moderately high score reliability ( $\alpha = .87$ ), and item–total correlations of all 9 individual items ranged between  $r = .51$  and  $r = .69$ . The alpha coefficient for the PEI in the current study was moderately high ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

*Demographics and professional items.* The fourth and final section of the instrument comprised sociodemographic items as well as questions designed to assess participants’ recent and long-term involvement in research.

### Sample

The sample consisted of 1,000 randomly selected members of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), a constituent organization and a member association of ACA. The reason that members of ACES were selected for the current sample was the likelihood that counselor educators would be members of this organization. Counselor educators would be individuals in the field of counseling who would be more likely than would other professionals to engage in research. It was also understood that other professionals in counseling are members of the ACES division (i.e., graduate students, clinicians, and supervisors).

Each of the participants was sent an e-mail informing them of the project and giving them a URL address that they could use to voluntarily participate in the Web-based survey. Two follow-up e-mails were also sent to each participant: The first follow-up e-mail was sent 1 week after the original one, and the second follow-up e-mail was sent 3 weeks after the original e-mail was sent. After e-mails had been sent out, it was found that 20% of the e-mail addresses provided were



invalid or undeliverable. Thus, the final sample that received the e-mail about the survey consisted of 794 randomly selected ACES members.

A total of 187 ACES members responded to the survey (23.6%). Given that we did not have access to demographic data on nonrespondents, we were not able to compare them with individuals who responded. However, the current sample was compared with the population (i.e., ACES membership) on gender, race, and professional role. Results of a  $z$  test revealed no significant differences in the proportions of these groups.

The majority of respondents in the current sample were women ( $n = 124$ , 66%). Respondents included 83% Caucasian, 4% African American, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 2% Hispanic, 1% Native American, and 5% other. Ninety-one percent of the respondents reported that they were born in the United States. The majority of individuals reported that the highest degree they held was a doctoral degree ( $n = 107$ , 57%), with 41% having received their master's degree and 1.7% reporting having a bachelor's degree. Respondents were asked what their "primary role" was in counseling. Almost half of the participants reported that their primary role in counseling was as an assistant, associate, or full professor (45%), 32% reported that they were currently a master's ( $n = 3$ ) or doctoral counseling student ( $n = 56$ ); 12% reported that their main role was that of practicing clinician, 3% reported being a clinical supervisor, 1% reported being currently retired, and 7% reported "other" as their current role. For the remainder of the analyses, participants identified as master's students ( $n = 3$ ), retired ( $n = 3$ ), supervisors ( $n = 6$ ), and "other" ( $n = 13$ ) were removed because of their low numbers or the inability to decipher a participant's role in the field of counseling. The final sample consisted of 167 participants.

## Results

One goal of this research project was to determine if QRPs existed within the field of counseling. As can be seen in Table 1, 2% to 24% of the current sample of counseling professionals self-reported that they were likely to engage (Items 5 through 7 on the Likert scale) in behaviors that exemplify QRPs. For example, 14.8% reported that they would be *somewhat likely to extremely likely* to submit a manuscript for publication as sole author even though another colleague had analyzed the data and had written a considerable portion of the manuscript. Twenty percent of the sample reported that they would put a colleague's name on a presentation even though the individual had not participated or contributed to the project. Approximately 25% reported that they would engage in deception of participants, and 8% self-reported that they would inaccurately report significant results.

In examining the frequencies of counselor educators, doctoral students, and practitioners, it can be seen that the prevalence of the type of QRPs likely to be engaged in differed according to the professional role. For example,

28.5% of doctoral students reported they would be *somewhat likely to extremely likely* to include a colleague's name on a presentation or publication without that colleague contributing to the project, whereas 16.8% of counselor educators and only 9% of practitioners reported they would be likely to engage in this behavior. With regard to reporting variables that might have confounded or had an impact on research results, 5.4% of doctoral students reported that they would not report confounding variables, whereas none of the counselor educators and the practitioners reported that they would not disclose variables that may have interfered with the findings.

In order to begin examining the reasons for the possible differences in prevalence of the likelihood of engaging in QRPs among the three roles (educator, doctoral student, practitioner), it was deemed important to examine the amount of research individuals in each role engaged in (see Table 2). Analysis of variance with a post hoc Scheffé test was used to examine the amount of research engaged in by the various professional roles in the current sample, with a univariate general linear model conducted to examine the partial eta squared ( $\eta^2$ ). Regarding effect size,  $\eta^2$ , 17% to 24% of the differences in research activities were explained by the professional role. It was not surprising to find that counselor educators engaged in statistically significantly more research, as measured by publications and presentations, than doctoral students and practitioners ( $F = 16.83$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .176$ ;  $F = 19.07$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .194$ ;  $F = 25.41$ ,  $p < .0001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .245$ , respectively). However, it needs to be noted that these statistically significant differences may have been due to difference in sample sizes. It is interesting that there was not a statistically significant difference in the number of publications and presentations of practitioners and doctoral students; thus, practitioners were kept in the analysis to examine the correlations of personality and demographic factors and QRPs.

Another main goal in the current study was to examine the relationship between QRPs and personality characteristics (i.e., narcissism and entitlement). Correlations and multiple regressions were used. Counselor educators, doctoral students, and practitioners were examined separately.

Bivariate correlations were used to examine the relationships that existed between each of the variables in the entire sample. The first goal was to examine the relationship between the NPI and QRPs. Contrary to expectations, narcissism was not statistically significantly related to the likelihood that an individual would engage in QRPs for practitioners and doctoral students ( $r = .21$ ,  $p > .05$ ;  $r = -.32$ ,  $p > .05$ , respectively); however, narcissism was found to be positively and statistically significantly related to QRPs for counselor educators ( $r = .21$ ,  $p < .05$ ). When examining narcissism in relation to other variables, it was not found to be statistically significantly related to basic demographic characteristics (e.g., sex, race, age), with the exception of a statistically significant negative relationship with biological sex for practitioners ( $r = -.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ),

**TABLE 1**  
**Reported Likelihood of Questionable Research Practices in the Field of Counseling**

Variable	Doctoral Students		Counselor Educators		Practitioners		Entire Sample	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Publication: Lack of recognition of others								
1 <i>Extremely unlikely</i>	14	25	20	24	10	45	44	27
2	18	32	26	31	8	37	52	59
3	8	14	14	17	1	4.5	23	14
4	7	12	10	12	2	9	19	12
5	5	9	11	13	0	0	16	10
6	2	4	0	0	0	0	2	1
7 <i>Extremely likely</i>	2	4	3	4	1	4.5	6	4
Publication: Inappropriate contributions								
1 <i>Extremely unlikely</i>	17	30	30	36	10	45	57	35
2	7	12	28	33	4	18	39	24
3	9	16	8	9	2	9	19	12
4	7	12	4	5	4	18	15	9
5	5	9	5	6	0	0	10	6
6	7	12	5	6	0	0	12	7
7 <i>Extremely likely</i>	4	7	4	5	2	9	10	6
Reporting results: Inaccurate significance								
1 <i>Extremely unlikely</i>	35	62	51	61	14	64	100	62
2	12	21	11	13	6	27	29	18
3	5	9	4	5	0	0	9	6
4	1	2	8	9	2	9	11	7
5	3	5	3	4	0	0	6	4
6	0	0	4	5	0	0	4	2
7 <i>Extremely likely</i>	0	0	3	4	0	0	3	2
Reporting results: Do not inform about confounding variables								
1 <i>Extremely unlikely</i>	34	61	68	81	18	82	120	74
2	13	23	13	16	2	9	28	17
3	3	5	2	2	1	4.5	6	4
4	3	5	1	1	1	4.5	5	3
5	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0.6
6	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0.6
7 <i>Extremely likely</i>	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0.6
Professional review: Biased								
1 <i>Extremely unlikely</i>	42	75	69	82	22	100	133	82
2	11	20	9	11	0	0	20	12
3	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	1
4	1	2	1	1	0	0	2	1
5	1	2	0	0	0	0	1	0.6
6	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	1
7 <i>Extremely likely</i>	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	1
Informed consent: Deception								
1 <i>Extremely unlikely</i>	15	27	21	25	11	50	47	29
2	16	29	11	13	4	18	31	19
3	5	9	15	18	0	0	20	12
4	7	12	12	14	5	23	24	15
5	5	9	12	14	1	4.5	18	11
6	7	12	10	12	1	4.5	18	11
7 <i>Extremely likely</i>	1	2	3	4	0	0	4	2

suggesting that female practitioners self-reported higher levels of narcissistic behavior. Professional characteristics (e.g., publications, presentations, and years in the profession) were not found to relate statistically significantly to narcissism for any of the three professional roles. However, narcissism was found to be positively and statistically significantly related to scores on the Entitlement

scale (Campbell et al., 2004) for counselor educators ( $r = .30, p < .01$ ), doctoral students ( $r = .32, p < .05$ ), and practitioners ( $r = .57, p < .01$ ). This makes sense because the definition of narcissism includes a sense of entitlement.

Along with examining narcissism, another goal in the pilot study was to determine the extent to which scores on

**TABLE 2**  
Means and Standard Deviations of Professional Characteristics and Research

Variable	Doctoral Students ( <i>n</i> = 56)		Counselor Educators ( <i>n</i> = 84)		Practitioners ( <i>n</i> = 22)		<i>F</i>	Partial $\eta^2$
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Number of journal articles published in refereed journals	0.55 <sup>a</sup>	0.95	8.27 <sup>b</sup>	11.62	0.64 <sup>a</sup>	0.95	16.83*	.176
Number of presentations	6.68 <sup>a</sup>	7.28	34.43 <sup>b</sup>	38.33	7.95 <sup>a</sup>	8.98	19.07*	.194
Number of years in the profession	5.52 <sup>a</sup>	4.96	15.09 <sup>b</sup>	9.38	10.18 <sup>a</sup>	6.77	25.41*	.245

Note. Different superscript letters signify groups that were significantly different in post hoc Scheffé analysis.  
\**p* < .0001.

a new measure of entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004) would correlate with scores on QRPs. We hypothesized that the more an individual expressed feelings of entitlement, the more likely she or he would be to compromise research integrity. The results of the bivariate correlations only partially supported our hypothesis. The only group that was found to have a statistically significant, positive relationship between a sense of entitlement and QRPs was doctoral students ( $r = .40, p < .01$ ), suggesting that doctoral students who engage in unethical behavior in research may tend to feel that they deserve more or have more rights than other individuals. Although the relationship between entitlement and QRPs was positive for counselor educators and practitioners, it was not statistically significant.

The only other variable that was found to be statistically significantly related to entitlement was the number of articles published in refereed journals for doctoral students ( $r = -.27, p < .05$ ), suggesting that the more articles a student published, the less entitled she or he felt.

Hierarchical regressions were used to examine the amount of variance accounted for by personality (i.e., entitlement

and narcissism). The first step of the hierarchical regression was demographic and professional variables, the second step was narcissism, and entitlement was entered as the third step. Counselor educators ( $n = 83$ ) and doctoral students ( $n = 56$ ) were examined separately in hierarchical regression analyses (see Table 3); practitioners were not examined because of small sample size ( $n = 22$ ).

When examining the relationship of various predictor variables to QRPs for doctoral students, using hierarchical regression, the only statistically significant relationship found was that of entitlement ( $\beta = .22, p < .01$ ), which was found to be positively related to QRPs, suggesting that students who reported greater feelings of entitlement also reported that they would likely engage in QRPs. Narcissism, as measured by the NPI, was not found to have a statistically significant relationship to QRPs for students ( $\beta = -.18, p > .05$ ). The number of presentations made, articles published, years in the profession, highest degree attained, or other demographic variables were not found to be statistically significantly related to QRPs for doctoral students. This may have been because the majority of graduate students tended to be just starting out in the field, as

**TABLE 3**  
Hierarchical Regression Analyses Examining Research Misconduct

Variable	Doctoral Students ( <i>n</i> = 56)					Counselor Educators ( <i>n</i> = 84)				
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$\Delta R^2$	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	$\Delta R^2$
Step 1 Constant	9.48	3.35			.154	3.30	5.23			.096
Sex (reference female)	1.17	1.34	0.11	0.87		1.96	1.05	0.21	1.87	
Race (reference Caucasian)	0.40	1.60	0.04	0.25		-0.69	1.36	-0.06	-0.50	
Age	-0.05	0.07	-0.11	-0.74		0.04	0.07	0.09	0.60	
Degree (reference bachelor's/master's)	-2.34	4.04	-0.07	-0.57		5.51	4.51	0.13	1.22	
Number of years in the profession	0.17	0.12	0.21	1.40		-0.04	0.08	-0.08	-0.48	
Number of articles published	-0.28	0.62	-0.06	-0.45		-0.05	0.06	-0.15	-0.97	
Number of presentations	0.11	0.08	0.20	1.37		-0.01	0.01	-0.13	-0.87	
Step 2 Narcissistic personality	-0.18	0.13	-0.21	-1.39	.000	0.17	0.09	0.22	1.80	.054
Step 3 Entitlement scale	0.22	0.07	0.50	3.19*	.153	0.05	0.06	0.12	0.94	.010
Total $F^2$	.308					.160				
Adjusted $F^2$	.172					.055				

\**p* < .01.

evidenced by the mean of 5.52 years in the field of counseling (see Table 2). The model for students accounted for 30% of the variance in the sample, and 17% of the variance in the population ( $R^2 = .308$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = .172$ ), with entitlement accounting for 15.4% of the total variance in Step 3.

A hierarchical regression was also used to examine the relationship between QRPs and narcissism for counselor educators (i.e., assistant, associate, and full professors; see Table 3). None of the predictor variables were found to be statistically significantly related to QRPs for counselor educators, including narcissism ( $\beta = .22, p = .07$ ) and entitlement ( $\beta = .12, p > .05$ ). Although narcissism was not found to have a statistically significant relationship to QRPs for counselor educators, it was found to be positively related and was the variable that came closest to achieving significance. Narcissism also accounted for 5% of the total variance of QRPs in the current model ( $R^2 = .054$ ), with the overall regression model accounting for only 16% of the variance in the sample and less than 10% of the variance in the population ( $R^2 = .160$ ; adjusted  $R^2 = .055$ ).

## Discussion

We found that between 2% and 24% of professionals in the field of counseling self-reported the likelihood that they would engage in QRPs. These percentages are similar to the prevalence that Steneck (2003) reported for the social and behavioral sciences. Although larger, public cases of research misconduct have not appeared throughout the profession, QRPs do exist among counseling researchers. Although the results from this pilot study cannot be generalized across the field, it has revealed that, at a minimum, QRPs do occur in the field of counseling, even if only for the 167 participants in the current study.

This prevalence is being explored only now, after decades of counseling research has already occurred and as future researchers continue to be trained. This raises the possibility that as the amount of research increases, the detection of QRPs may also increase, especially if the counseling profession does not address these issues through education, literature, and research. It also raises the possibility that the propensity to engage in QRPs may be higher than what was found in this study. More research, however, is needed to examine the overall propensity and prevalence rates in the profession.

It is interesting that differences existed in the likelihood of QRPs among counselor educators, doctoral students, and practitioners. Practitioners in the current sample were found to have the lowest propensity rates for QRPs: 0% to 9% versus 0% to 30% and 3.5% to 28.5% for counselor educators and doctoral students, respectively. Initially, we thought that the low propensity rates among practitioners were related to less involvement in research; however, the results revealed that practitioners engaged in levels of research activity similar to that of doctoral students (see Table 2), yet doctoral students

were up to 3 times more likely than practitioners to self-report the likelihood of engaging in QRPs. It is unclear if this is due to ethical values, education, or the nature of the environment (university vs. agency/school) in which students and practitioners study and work. Further research should examine education and training, along with organizational factors related to QRPs.

It was also interesting to see that the likelihood of QRPs among doctoral students and counselor educators depended upon the type of research activity, such that doctoral students were more likely to include others on a presentation who were not involved in the project and were more likely not to report confounding variables in a results section than counselor educators were; however, counselor educators were more likely than doctoral students were to leave a noteworthy contributor off of a manuscript or to present inaccurate significant results. This may be linked to the amount of research and the stage of the profession students and educators are in; however, years in the profession were not found to be related to QRPs in this study. Thus, future research needs to examine the relationship between other potentially influential characteristics, such as stress level, and QRPs.

Another goal of the current project was to examine the relation between narcissistic personality and feelings of entitlement and QRPs. Although this study did not reveal that having a narcissistic personality was directly related to QRPs for all professional roles in this sample, it did reveal that, in bivariate correlations, narcissism was positively and significantly statistically related to QRPs for counselor educators; however, the correlation was not strong ( $r = .21$ ), and the relationship was not statistically significant when examined through regression analyses while controlling for other demographic variables. This finding suggests that future research should examine narcissism closely, with a larger sample, in order to gain a clearer understanding of the role that narcissism might play in QRPs.

It was also found that a sense of entitlement was directly related to QRPs for doctoral students, although not for counselor educators or practitioners. Campbell suggested that individuals who scored high on the Entitlement scale tended to “lack high-energy levels of narcissists, as well as the ambition and drive” (W. K. Campbell, personal communication, March 2003). It was interesting that doctoral students with a greater sense of entitlement were more likely to report that they compromised research integrity and that students who reported more entitlement were also less likely to have published articles in peer refereed journals. Thus, it may be that students who have engaged in less research, or published less, either are not familiar with responsible conduct of research, indicating that there is a need for them to be trained and educated, or they may feel more pressure to engage in research, ultimately leading them to cut corners. This relationship between entitlement and QRPs needs to be examined further with other populations of researchers.



There were a few limitations to the current study that deserve to be noted. One of these difficulties was the 20.5% of individuals who could not be reached via the e-mail address given in the ACES membership database. A technological limitation was the inability of some of the participants to submit or open the survey on the Web, which might have been due to incompatibilities between browser and software. A third limitation was that the individuals responding to the survey were from the field of counseling; thus, it is possible that responses on the NPI may have been inaccurate because of the specialized knowledge these counseling professionals have in the area of diagnosing and treating personality disorders. This knowledge may have influenced the results of the pilot study. Future research should be conducted with the NPI in different fields of study where the professionals are not as savvy or knowledgeable about personality. Another limitation is that although the target sample was randomly selected, participants who responded were volunteers. Therefore, participants who voluntarily respond might be less narcissistic than individuals who choose not to or may differ on other important variables in the study. We were unable to determine whether statistically significant differences existed between those who did or did not respond on any of the measures. Finally, although we asked participants to respond to what they were likely to do in terms of QRPs, instead of what they had done, in an attempt to increase the validity of self-reporting of socially disapproved behaviors, participants still may not have accurately or truthfully responded.

Another possible explanation for why narcissism and QRPs were not statistically significantly related for the entire sample was offered by Campbell (W. K. Campbell, personal communication, March 2003), who suggested that narcissists ordinarily would want to demonstrate their superiority by their academic achievement. Thus, it could be that the mere presence of narcissism does not lead the individual to breach responsible conduct of research or engage in unethical behavior. The negative qualities that have come to be associated with narcissists may relate more narrowly to specific aspects such as an exaggerated sense of entitlement or exploitativeness rather than to narcissism as a unified construct.

Of the several narcissistic personality attributes, it appears that the sense of entitlement as assessed by the Campbell et al. (2004) measure is the best predictor of the tendency to compromise research ethics, at least for doctoral students. This suggests that those who feel that life owes them certain considerations are more likely than others to cut ethical corners.

## Conclusions and Implications for Future Research

The main implications of this study are that (a) QRPs exist within the field of counseling, even if only in the current

sample and (b) it is possible that only certain exaggerated aspects of narcissism become maladaptive. Other aspects of narcissism such as grandiosity or the need for admiration may affront others but may not necessarily lead to unethical behavior in research. There are a number of future studies implicit in the foregoing discussion. For example, researchers could compare a sample of counseling researchers who have been found guilty of engaging in research misconduct with a group that had neither been accused nor found guilty of such conduct. The research hypothesis would state that individuals who had been found guilty of research misconduct would score statistically and/or practically significantly higher on entitlement than the comparison group. The challenge, of course, would be securing the interviewees' cooperation, not to mention related issues such as Institutional Review Board approval. This approach would be far more difficult, if not impossible. Still, the assertions made above should be put to empirical test.

Overall, this study was one of the first studies in the field of counseling to begin to examine the prevalence and tendency of and the characteristics related to QRPs. Future studies should also obtain a large representative sample of individuals within the field of counseling who are currently engaging in research to conduct the study and determine the prevalence of various forms of questionable research behavior. Finally, future studies should assess other aspects of personality to determine characteristics related to research misconduct, as well as characteristics outside of the individual and present in academia (e.g., tenure requirements, departmental requirements, various stressors, and collaborations among colleagues).

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