

Identifying Dynamics of Counseling Leadership: A Content Analysis Study

By: W. Bradley McKibben, Lindsey K. Umstead, [L. DiAnne Borders](#)

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Abstract:

The authors synthesized counseling leadership literature to identify themes of counseling leadership. Using an inductive approach to content analysis, the authors analyzed 11 empirical articles, 9 conceptual articles, and 13 leadership profiles. Results yielded 24 emergent leadership themes that were sorted into 3 groups. Findings pave the way for more comprehensive research on counseling leadership and allow for increased intentionality in teaching, training, and practicing counseling leadership.

Keywords: counseling leadership | content analysis | leadership

Article:

Leadership is essential for continued success of the counseling profession (Chang, Barrio Minton, Dixon, Myers, & Sweeney, 2012; Paradise, Ceballos, & Hall, 2010). Counselors have been called to lead in areas of advocacy and social justice (Paradise et al., 2010), school counseling (Dollarhide, 2003; R. E. Lewis & Borunda, 2006), professional identity and professional advocacy (Myers, Sweeney, & White, 2002), and the counseling relationship (Jacob, McMaster, Nestel, Metzger, & Olesky, 2013), among others. Accordingly, authors have increasingly highlighted the importance of training counselors as leaders (e.g., Chang et al., 2012; Paradise et al., 2010; Wahesh & Myers, 2014). Professional organizations such as the American Counseling Association (ACA), Chi Sigma Iota (CSI), the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) offer formal leadership training experiences via workshops and fellow programs. The 2016 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; 2015) Standards delineate leadership-specific learning outcomes for graduates of accredited doctoral programs (e.g., leadership theories and development), as well as leadership-related learning outcomes (e.g., advocacy) for graduates of accredited master's programs. Yet questions still

needing answers are (a) What exactly is counseling leadership? and (b) How do we know that we are training leaders optimally?

Sweeney (2012) defined *leadership* as actions taken by counselors that contribute to their capacity to serve others in a competent, ethical, and just manner. Yarborough (2011), however, contended that more than a definition is needed to teach and train leadership; one first must identify the necessary ingredients of effective leadership. To date, counseling leadership primarily has been informed by theories (e.g., transformational theory; Jacob et al., 2013) and philosophies (e.g., servant leadership; CSI Academy of Leaders, 1999; Greenleaf, 1977) external to counseling. Although these theories and philosophies are helpful (T. F. Lewis, 2012), theorists have proposed that leadership dynamics present differently based on contextual influences (Eberly, Johnson, Hernandez, & Avolio, 2013; Emery, Calvard, & Pierce, 2013). Thus, external leadership theories, models, and philosophies may not accurately or completely describe how counseling leadership occurs because professional counseling is a distinct discipline from those in which most leadership theories were developed (e.g., business, military). Currently, there is no comprehensive description of leadership that accounts for the professional context of counseling (e.g., volunteer-based; developmental, relational training; professional and client advocacy).

To address contextual limitations of leadership theories, Eberly et al. (2013) proposed that common factors of the theories be used to understand leadership dynamics within a given context. In other words, leadership is viewed optimally as a process involving multiple people (e.g., leaders, followers/dyads, groups) interacting directly and indirectly in various ways (e.g., behaviors, cognitions, affect). McKibben (2016) noted that Eberly et al.'s (2013) process orientation of leadership aligns with professional counselors' attunement to content and process in the counseling relationship. Thus, researchers need to identify the content and processes of counseling leadership before they can be taught and studied as part of a complex social system in which a leader operates. Initial descriptions of counseling leadership include advocacy and social justice (Smith & Roysircar, 2010), mentorship (Black & Magnuson, 2005; Gibson, Dollarhide, & McCallum, 2010; Luke & Goodrich, 2010; Portman & Garrett, 2005), modeling (Luke & Goodrich, 2010), passion (Black & Magnuson, 2005; Magnuson, Wilcoxon, & Norem, 2003), professional identity (Gibson et al., 2010; Luke & Goodrich, 2010; Magnuson et al., 2003), service (CSI Academy of Leaders, 1999), and vision (West, Bubenzer, Osborn, Paez, & Desmond, 2006). Lacking, however, is a synthesis of leadership dynamics that can be infused into a contextually sensitive leadership model specific to the counseling profession, thus optimizing the intentionality and accuracy of counseling leadership training and research.

Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to identify themes in the counseling leadership literature that compose counseling leadership content and processes. We sought to answer Yarborough's (2011) call to identify the ingredients of leadership in counseling by identifying common factors across the counseling leadership literature. This study was guided by two research questions: (a) What leadership dynamics are specified in the counseling leadership literature? and (b) What are the common themes across leadership dynamics?

Method

We used content analysis to identify themes in the dynamics of counseling leadership. Content analysis allows researchers to make valid and reliable inferences from text and to examine existent and emergent categories (Krippendorff, 2013). We used an inductive coding approach to allow themes to emerge without the constraints of an a priori theory (Krippendorff, 2013). The first two authors served as coders; the third served as auditor. We were affiliated with the same university in the southeastern United States as a doctoral student (first author), master's student (second author), and faculty member (third author).

Data Utilized

We followed four guidelines for content analysis from Krippendorff (2013). *Unitizing* refers to determining what will be analyzed. Our units were full-length articles published in counseling journals that specifically addressed counseling leadership. *Sampling* refers to determining a sampling method of the units. We sought to locate all available units by conducting searches in ACA division, CSI, and NBCC journals, as well as the PsycINFO database, using the keyword *counseling leadership*. The search yielded 11 empirical articles, nine conceptual articles, and 13 leadership profiles. One article in a noncounseling journal that specifically addressed school counseling leadership was also included. *Recording* refers to how data are recorded so that they are transferable among coders. In this study, the data were written text (i.e., Results sections of empirical articles and the entirety of conceptual articles and leadership profiles).

The empirical articles were published between 1974 and 2013; all but two were published between 2003 and 2013. Research methodologies were six qualitative, three quantitative, one Q-methodology, and one mixed methods. There were a total of 703 participants (115 men [16.4%], 424 women [60.3%], and 164 participants [23.3%] whose sex was not reported) across the empirical studies. Although several studies included culturally diverse samples, more than half of the participants ($n = 373$, 53.1%) were White, 89 (12.7%) were African American, four (0.6%) were Latina/o, three (0.4%) were Asian American, two (0.3%) were biracial, and 12 (1.7%) indicated their race/ethnicity as other; four studies ($n = 220$, 31.3%) did not include or had incomplete race/ethnicity information. (Percentages do not total 100 because of rounding.) Researchers in four studies reported age ranges (25 to 80 years); in one, they reported a mean age of 49.5 years.

Conceptual articles were published between 1982 and 2014; all but one were published between 2003 and 2014. In six, authors transposed external leadership theories, models, or practices onto counseling leadership, two detailed multicultural leadership (e.g., Black men, women, American Indians), and one advocated for increased counselor leadership training. Leadership profiles, published between 1998 and 2014 in the *Journal of Counseling & Development*, described contributions of high-profile leaders in the counseling profession. Eighteen men (60.0%) and 12 women (40.0%) were profiled; some profiles discussed more than one leader. Of the leaders profiled, 10 (33.3%) were White, two (6.7%) were African American, one (3.3%) was Asian American, and 17 (56.7%) did not indicate the leader's race/ethnicity. Most had served in positional leadership (e.g., counseling organization president) and as counselor educators.

Data Analysis

Reducing refers to the process of inferring and representing categories from the data. A leadership dynamic was allowed to emerge from the data if it could be identified clearly as a leadership behavior, cognition, affect, trait, or value (see Eberly et al., 2013). In addition, to more accurately describe counseling leadership as a social dynamic, we allowed leadership dynamics that described counseling leaders, followers/dyads, groups, and contexts to emerge. Using an inductive approach, the coders randomly selected two articles as a pretest and coded them together to enhance consistency. Next, they analyzed the remaining articles independently, coming together after every third article to reach consensus. Using ReCal (Freelon, 2013), we calculated overall interrater reliability at .79 (.86 for empirical articles, .71 for leadership profiles, and .83 for conceptual articles). The auditor reviewed coded data for each group of articles (empirical articles, leadership profiles, and conceptual articles, respectively) and provided feedback.

Using the auditor's feedback, the coders grouped the emergent data into 24 themes and then reduced the themes into categories based on commonalities among the themes (Research Question 2). Given the limited leadership experience of the coders at the time of this study, we sought to optimize the credibility of the conclusions through feedback from counseling leaders. Although participant checks, validation, and coanalysis (Morrow, 2005) were not possible in this study given that the sources were text based, it was possible to triangulate information from another source (i.e., leaders). Thus, we asked seven counseling leaders, selected based on their range of leadership experience as counselor educators and service at the local, state, regional, and national levels (1 to 20+ years), to synthesize the 24 emergent themes into categories. On the basis of their feedback, themes were grouped into three categories.

Results

On the basis of a systematic coding procedure, we identified 24 themes that described leadership dynamics in the counseling profession (Research Question 1), which were then grouped by commonalities into three broad categories (Research Question 2). The leadership values and qualities category described the construct of leadership dynamics rather than leader qualities or skills. The second category, personal and interpersonal qualities, detailed intrinsic abilities that a leader brings to leadership endeavors. In contrast, the final category, interpersonal skills, referred to concrete skills that leaders apply in interactions with others.

Leadership Values and Qualities

Themes in this category reflected qualities that define what counseling leadership looks like (e.g., mentorship) and how counselors understand leadership to occur. This category is distinct from the other categories in that the focus is on leadership as a construct rather than a leader as an individual. We provide examples of how leaders operationalize each theme, but these themes were sorted into this category based on how they describe counseling leadership.

Professional identity. Professional identity was defined as holding values consistent with the counseling profession; being dedicated to promoting human worth, dignity, and potential;

believing in holism and development; having a strong interest in a unified profession and a strong professional identity; having prevention and systems orientations; being professionally involved in counseling organizations (e.g., Black male leaders emphasized involvement in the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development); and providing a research database for what counselors do (e.g., Gibson et al., 2010). Counseling leaders placed client welfare as a primary goal through the delivery of optimal counseling services. They firmly believed in core guiding principles of the profession and actively promoted a unique counselor identity through professional activity. An important notion was the belief that a professional counselor identity was stronger than counseling affiliations (e.g., counselor first, school counselor second).

Advocacy. Advocacy contained two subthemes: professional advocacy (i.e., promotion of and advocacy for the profession) and social justice (i.e., advocacy for clients and communities). Professional advocacy was characterized by contacting, discussing, or debating issues confronting the profession with colleagues; making contributions to professional practice and policy; engaging in political advocacy for the profession; and advocating on the behalf of counseling programs (e.g., school counseling programs). For example, Cooper and Dean (1998) highlighted that Theodore Miller advocated for student affairs in counseling by often discussing its importance with others. Similarly, counselor educators focused on the quality of counselor education programs, whereas journal editors shaped and refined research articles, thus ensuring interest in and scientific accuracy for readers and bridging research to practice.

Social justice was characterized by advocating for social issues, attending to cultural worldviews, taking on a diversity/multicultural orientation, maintaining a concern for cultural competence, promoting social justice, and recognizing oppression. Counseling leaders held a community orientation, recognized the importance of inclusion and having people from diverse backgrounds in leadership positions, and focused research on women and minority groups. They infused cultural aspects into their work, adopted cross-cultural perspectives in professional organizations, established organizations and programs dedicated to multiculturalism and social justice, addressed the needs of women in counseling, identified and took action to change systemic conditions, and spread out leadership to promote equality.

Vision. Vision emerged as a group process in which the leader is a facilitator of vision rather than a sole creator. This theme reflected the time-limited design of most counseling leadership positions (e.g., West et al., 2006). In the beginning of a leadership term, counseling leaders had a preliminary vision for an organization; articulated and communicated that vision to a group; inspired a shared vision among the group members; and carried out a vision congruent with the values, philosophies, and commonalities of self and the group (West et al., 2006). In the middle of a term, they continued to communicate and build an ongoing vision. At the end, they communicated the vision to incoming leaders and stakeholders to ensure continuity of the vision.

Modeling. Counseling leaders modeled active involvement in the profession (e.g., organizational service), wellness, genuineness, humility, and personal accountability. Leaders accomplished this by setting an example of what is expected and by being transparent. For example, Black and Magnuson (2005) found that, among female leaders, “it was as if the leaders were transparent in many of their dealings with others, thus providing an excellent role model for genuineness,

humility, and personal accountability” (p. 340). Students often saw counselor educators or experienced mentors as model leaders (Gibson et al., 2010; Luke & Goodrich, 2010), a notion echoed by Magnuson et al. (2003): “We might assume that each class a counselor educator teaches, each supervision session a supervisor conducts, or each encounter between an experienced and novice counseling practitioner becomes an opportunity to model attributes that contribute to leadership” (p. 50).

Mentorship. Counseling leaders built relationships with mentees, empowered mentees to find a voice, challenged mentees, emphasized the learning aspect of a mentoring relationship, developed strong leaders, and encouraged mentees to find allies and support and adopt roles such as being a change agent. For example, Borders and Cashwell (2014) noted that Nicholas Vacc “had an uncanny knack for seeing the ‘growing edge’ for students personally and gently inviting them in this direction” (p. 351). Counseling leaders exhibited an intense desire to encourage, educate, and empower mentees in support of their personal and professional growth. Among counselor educators, student mentorship was described as a first priority, especially in the context of teaching. Formal programs were also noted as potentially valuable sources of mentorship (e.g., Luke & Goodrich, 2010; Maples & Maples, 1999; Portman & Garrett, 2005).

Service. Counseling leaders actively served the profession via local, national, and international involvement; viewed service as an opportunity to give back; prioritized service despite time constraints; and thought globally and acted locally. Leaders continued in service efforts despite potential difficulties. For example, pretenure counselor educators reported that service (e.g., organizational service) was viewed positively by others but was not as important to the tenure or promotion process as research and teaching activities; these leaders continued to engage in service despite timing and financial challenges (Gibson et al., 2010).

Deal with difficulty and setbacks. This theme dealt specifically with difficulties and setbacks experienced during leadership efforts, particularly early in one's career. For example, counseling leaders encountered financial constraints and systemic hindrances (particularly for school counselors; e.g., not allowed to self-define role). In counselor education, some leaders faced adversity from other faculty, particularly related to race/ethnicity, sex, and religion. Counseling leaders were aware of the systems stacked against them (e.g., racism), as well as gaps in their experience of self, role, responsibility, personal expectation, credibility, professional relationships, and preparation for leadership. In other words, counseling leaders experienced disequilibrium in the many aspects involved in leadership and their understanding of it. In addition, leaders experienced anxiety, frustration, and pressure to perform, although some used internal anxiety as a catalyst for self-reflection and growth. Some leaders endured difficult early experiences (e.g., Nassar-McMillan, 2001), such as a struggle to advocate while also being accepted by the dominant culture, but resiliency was also common in these experiences.

Leadership-specific cognitive complexity. Leadership-specific cognitive complexity referred to the process of identifying and integrating information related to a leadership endeavor. Leaders demonstrated intelligence, prolific conceptual skills, an ability to see the big picture, and an ability to analyze relevant information while remaining flexible in decision making. For example, West et al. (2006) found that leaders considered commonalities among followers,

understood organizational resources, and maintained awareness of external pressures faced by an organization. Similarly, Dollarhide (2003) described essential qualities for school counseling leadership:

If school counselors are to be leaders of school counseling programs and transformation efforts, understanding the contexts in which leadership occurs (Bolman & Deal, 1997), the activities involved in each context, and the skills required for those activities can be a way of conceptualizing and applying effective leadership of school counseling programs. (p. 304)

Finally, Smith and Roysircar (2010) noted that African American leaders were aware of diversity, racism and discrimination, culture, minority status, and self as a diverse individual; this awareness prompted leaders to act flexibly in navigating personal and dominant cultures. In summary, counseling leadership involved attending to multiple pieces of information and making decisions based on one's understanding of how all the information fit together.

High standards for self and others. This theme involved a leader holding and communicating high standards for self and others (e.g., strong drive and work ethic). A counseling leader was described as an individual who had high, progressive ideals; was willing to expand leadership skills and continue learning; and attended to details. In addition, leaders established professional credibility combined with trust by working hard, stepping out of their comfort zone, and taking pride in accomplishments.

Passion. Passion was described as a positive affect for, or energy toward, the profession, productivity, teaching and writing, service, leadership, and the professionalization of counseling. Counseling leaders demonstrated commitment, intensity, purpose, and motivation. For example, Black and Magnuson (2005) highlighted passion as a personal attribute among accomplished female leaders, who were described as energetic, persistent, committed, invested, and prolific.

Sense of humor. This theme emerged consistently in the literature as a value or trait in counseling leadership. Optimally, humor was used appropriately or intentionally. For example, Sam Gladding noted in a leadership profile that he preferred to use humor in a counseling relationship at critical points when working to define a problem with a client (e.g., Haight & Shaughnessy, 2006). Gladding noted, "I will sometimes use an exaggeration in counseling to help a family realize what they are doing. . . . What I am trying to get to when I use an exaggeration is a different perspective" (p. 118).

Creativity/innovation. Leaders approached situations in inventive ways. Counseling leaders brought a fresh approach to leadership, engaged in pivotal efforts to transform the leadership process, and approached problems with creative solutions to achieve great outcomes. For example, a practitioner may use creative strategies to stimulate awareness and change (e.g., therapeutic reframe, metaphors, a focus on the here and now). A counselor educator might use symbols or metaphors to capture and hold students' attention. Counseling leaders also held innovative ideas on gender issues, career development, international counseling, and organizational leadership.

Wellness. Wellness contained four emergent subthemes: work–life balance, social support, spirituality, and self-care. Work–life balance included notions that balance, wellness, and family are important. Counseling leaders strived for balance but sometimes struggled to integrate lifestyle and leadership. Social support came from colleagues, friends, church, and family. Important people in leaders' personal and professional lives anchored, supported, challenged, and surrounded them (Meany-Walen, Carnes-Holt, Barrio Minton, Purswell, & Pronchenko-Jain, 2013). Social support was particularly important for African American leaders. For example, Don C. Locke noted,

I remember when I was in college, there were a couple of women who would bake a cake for me every time I went home. . . . This was their way of saying to me that we support you, we believe in you, and this is what we can do to support you. (Vereen, 2010, pp. 377–378)

Spirituality was an important value for many counseling leaders. Mary Thomas Burke shared, “Well, I see spirituality as the essence of my being . . . manifested by the essence of another person's being and by helping make that person whole” (Nassar-McMillan, 2001, p. 499). Self-care included notions that one must be whole, integrated, and genuine. Leaders emphasized self-care and advocated for holistic life planning and wellness.

Personal and Interpersonal Qualities

Themes in this category described abilities that a leader brings to leadership. In contrast to the leadership values and qualities category, this category described qualities of an individual leader. In contrast to the interpersonal skills category, these qualities were sorted according to dispositional qualities that reflect one's personhood rather than concrete skills.

Intrinsic motivation. This theme emerged only in empirical articles and leadership profiles. Leaders derived personal fulfillment from leadership opportunities and found enjoyment in leadership itself. They received joy and intrinsic rewards from serving the community, watching others grow, and seeing or being a part of change. Such motivation was self-reinforcing and described as a felt sense. For example, Black and Magnuson (2005) noted that the female leaders they interviewed “passionately described a deep sense of intrinsic motivation, investment, persistence, and commitment” (p. 340).

Authenticity. Authors used the term *authenticity* as a trait-based quality within the leader. Accordingly, Goldman and Kernis's (2002) definition of dispositional authenticity—the unhindered operation of one's true or core self in daily activities—was used to organize codes in this theme. The authentic process has four components: awareness, unbiased processing, behavior, and relational orientation (Goldman & Kernis, 2002). Awareness consisted of self-awareness and insight, particularly when operating from a relational self. Unbiased processing involved engaging in and applying reflective thinking and striking a balance between individual responsibility for change and external validation. Authentic behavior included preferring nonhierarchical communication, acting congruently, offering leadership contributions that reflected one's intrinsic personhood, staying true to oneself, maintaining a sense of character, and living what one believed. Relational orientation consisted of being transparent and genuine/authentic in dealing with others, and reinforcing others' self-concepts.

Humility. Leaders demonstrated humility in their perspective of and actions toward leadership efforts. Counseling leaders attributed successes to serendipity or luck, recognized themselves as only a small part of the world, did not consider themselves a pioneer, believed that they were being led by others, considered themselves confident but not arrogant, listened to the wisdom of teachers, and respected others. In addition, leaders avoided boasting achievements, seldom sought the spotlight, worked hard behind the scenes, and strived to be a good follower.

Intentionality. Counseling leaders thought and acted strategically. Leaders stayed cool under pressure, acted thoughtfully and decisively, revised timelines to achieve goals, seized opportunities, engaged in strategic planning, and remained persistent in pursuing change. They intentionality made meaningful and relevant interventions, dealt with administrative situations, and built consensus among followers. For example, West et al. (2006) noted that leaders intentionally built consensus around a vision “when what is common among members is emphasized” (p. 9).

Dependability. Counseling leaders valued completing tasks, holding positions, interacting with students, and producing scholarly works; being informed and trustworthy; and being committed to a professional philosophy. Followers, in turn, perceived the leader as trustworthy and dependable. In essence, counseling leaders delivered and followed through on promises and commitments to others and the tasks at hand.

Leadership development catalysts. Contextual forces clearly affected counseling leadership development. Five subthemes, grouped by timing, reflected past contextual influences that fostered the emergence of counseling leadership: historical influences, early/family influences, early education, college, and early work experience. Historical influences emerged only in conceptual articles and were characterized by contextual events not directly related to the leader. For example, sociohistorical influences (e.g., the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., Jim Crow laws, *Brown v. Board of Education* [1954]) influenced interest in multicultural counseling, particularly among African American men (e.g., Smith & Roysircar, 2010). Also, school counseling leadership was influenced by politics and changes in school counselors' roles, including “changing social forces and perceived student educational need” (R. E. Lewis & Borunda, 2006, p. 406).

Early/family influences included parents, birth order, and family. In leadership profiles, many counseling leaders identified their mother as a person who fostered the values of working with people, helping others, and reaching out. Other influences included growing up in poverty or in a working-class family, living in diverse communities, experiencing racism and oppression directly, and being active in church. These influences fostered the values of quality education, high expectations, the importance of community, critical thinking, mentorship, a sense of one's roots, humility, and the desire to effect change.

Early education included various school influences, such as being a class leader, being involved in 4-H, receiving a specific type of education (e.g., Mary Thomas Burke noted her Irish education influenced how she viewed leadership; Nassar-McMillan, 2001), and having influential friends and teachers in high school. College included activities such as being involved

in the civil rights movement, working as a resident adviser, volunteering, attending professional conferences, receiving encouragement from faculty and supervisors, and being involved in college leadership experiences. Broader contextual influences included popular role models (e.g., Martin Luther King Jr., Ghandi) and good college training.

Early work experience also influenced leadership development. Some counseling leaders noted defining moments that influenced a service spirit. For example, some African American male counseling leaders' early experience as teachers fueled a passion for counselor education (Smith & Roysircar, 2010). In addition, early experiences in professional organizations through volunteering, conferences, and election to leadership influenced later leadership development.

Openness. Counseling leaders were open to feedback from others, were perceived by others as approachable, and were willing to mentor others (this was noted as especially important to female leaders; Portman & Garrett, 2005). They gathered diverse perspectives and expectations from others, took time to hear and recognize concerns, created an open forum for others to voice thoughts and opinions, listened to diverse voices, remained available to others, and kept a positive attitude with others. In turn, followers viewed the leader as approachable, supportive, open to new ideas, and less authoritarian and more autocratic.

Principles. Principled leadership referred to thinking and acting ethically and being perceived by followers as a just person. Counseling leaders had a sense of meaning and caring for others, a sense of duty, and a sense of professional responsibility. Consequently, followers perceived the leader as just, altruistic, and honest.

Interpersonal Skills

Themes in this category described concrete skills that leaders use in their efforts with others. These themes reflect concrete skills that leaders develop and use to accomplish goals.

Interpersonal influence. A pervasive tone throughout this theme was that counseling leaders exercised power with others rather than over others. Black and Magnuson (2005) noted, "All of the leaders [in their study] emphasized an important distinction between influence and power. Their influence was exercised *with* people and situations rather than having power *over* people in order to command another person or a situation" (p. 340). Five subthemes described counseling leaders' interpersonal influence: empowerment, positive reinforcement, collaboration, consensus building, and relationship building.

Empowerment referred to leaders working to actualize talent in followers. For example, Black and Magnuson (2005) and Portman and Garrett (2005) noted that leaders particularly empower those from nondominant groups; this was especially important for female leaders. Counseling leaders assisted followers in fulfilling their professional role, recognized talent in others, encouraged others to use their strengths to address weaknesses, inspired individuals to action of their own accord, and prompted change by increasing confidence.

Positive reinforcement referred to reinforcing others' desired behaviors. Counseling leaders encouraged and motivated individuals by ascribing meaning to their work. They also promoted team spirit by celebrating accomplishments and giving words of encouragement. Collaboration

was characterized by a shared group effort. The leader facilitated this group effort and became less involved as the group became more autonomous. Counseling leaders developed cooperative relationships with others, maintained relationships over time, focused on collaborative relationships, worked alongside others to accomplish goals, and networked. In turn, followers perceived the leader as collaborative and respectful.

Consensus building referred to the process of bringing people together. Counseling leaders engaged in ongoing consensus building by bringing stakeholders together prior to moving plans forward, uniting followers based on commonalities, acting as a cohesive force, and gathering all points of view in decision making. Relationship building referred to attending to relational variables in leadership efforts. Counseling leaders emphasized personal relationships, built and maintained lasting relationships, brought out the best in others, listened to others and communicated caring, reached multiple audiences, conveyed mutual respect and trust, and built relationships based on trust. Reciprocally, followers perceived the leader as generous and caring.

Assertiveness. This theme was characterized by acting in a self-assured manner. Leaders were willing and able to challenge one another, present advantages to taking risks, sell ideas, say no, address conflict openly yet respectfully, challenge the process in leadership, set boundaries and expectations, and delegate. For example, Jane Myers noted, “I have learned that I do not need to offend others in order to make my points known” (Nichols & Carney, 2013, p. 246).

Role competence. Role competence referred to a host of behavioral and cognitive skills that distinguished the leader as capable. Counseling leaders demonstrated skills in counseling, consulting, teaching, advocacy, and research. They possessed skills in verbal communication, problem solving, goal and task attainment, professionalism, and charisma. In turn, followers perceived the leader as performing capably. More broadly, consumers and stakeholders perceived counseling leaders to be skilled at listening, responsive, and helpful.

Administrative skills emerged in such detail that it was specified as a subtheme of role competence. Administrative skills consisted of meeting individually with followers, not providing professional followers with personal counseling, holding followers accountable for performance standards, providing professional assistance and resources, encouraging professional development, promoting events, developing and executing programs, and managing conflict. Within this set of behaviors, program development and execution were noted frequently, particularly in the conceptual articles. For example, Dollarhide (2003) noted, “As leaders of school counseling programs, school counselors have a role in addressing the problems of today's schools” (p. 304). Leaders were described as having awareness of an administrative role, needing a public relations mind-set, and being organized.

Discussion

In this study, we sought to highlight how counseling leadership works as a social dynamic by identifying the content and processes involved. A content analysis of existing counseling leadership literature yielded a comprehensive description of counseling leadership dynamics, described in terms of leadership values and qualities, personal and interpersonal qualities of the leader, and interpersonal skills of the leader. How leadership occurs was further described by 24

themes of behaviors, thoughts, emotions, values, traits, and contexts; some themes are found in other leadership theories, and some are unique to counseling.

Some emergent themes were similar to those of leadership theories from other disciplines, thus indicating common factors across leadership theories, as proposed by Eberly et al. (2013). For example, modeling, subthemes of interpersonal influence (e.g., empowerment, positive reinforcement), creativity/innovation, and mentorship closely align with elements of transformational theory popular in the business literature. Transformational theory consists of four components: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Antonakis, 2012; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Idealized influence (i.e., serving as a positive role model for others) aligns with modeling, which, specific to counseling, may include modeling how to get involved in the profession and how to be well and balanced. Empowerment and positive reinforcement are similar to inspirational motivation (i.e., motivating others by fostering meaning and challenge in work) and to the transactional component (i.e., rewards/punishment) in transformational theory. In both cases, the leader is focused on motivating others via tangible (e.g., rewards) and intangible (e.g., meaning) means. In counseling, this can describe a practitioner using leadership skills to motivate a client toward change (Jacob et al., 2013). Intellectual stimulation (i.e., exploring and reframing problems and work in innovative ways) aligns with creativity/innovation. Individualized consideration (i.e., attending to each person's needs via mentorship) aligns with the mentorship theme. Transformational leadership has been researched extensively and linked to multiple outcomes (e.g., follower commitment, performance outcomes, employee satisfaction; for a full review, see Bass & Riggio, 2006). Thus, counseling leaders who effectively engage in modeling, interpersonal influence, creativity/innovation, and mentorship may achieve similar outcomes.

Similarly, the service theme aligns with servant leadership philosophy, which posits that leaders take on positions out of a desire to give back to others (Greenleaf, 1977). This theme also reflects CSI's perspective of leadership (e.g., CSI Academy of Leaders, 1999), which highlights service as an important value and frame of reference. Service describes how counselors view leadership but not how counselors lead; thus, service may serve as a guiding value for leaders.

The authenticity theme aligns with the philosophy of authentic leadership (e.g., Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011), which refers to the extent to which one is aware of and accepting of who one truly is and can act accordingly with others (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Thus, authenticity may be a common factor in leadership that counselors apply. This is not surprising given that authentic processes are grounded in notions of Rogerian congruence and Gestalt present experiencing (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). Authentic leadership has been linked to multiple outcomes, including group identification and cohesion (López, Alonso, Morales, & León, 2015), positive areas of work life (Laschinger, Borgogni, Consiglio, & Read, 2015), and team performance and reflexivity (Lyubovnikova, Legood, Turner, & Mamakouka, 2015). Authentic leadership in counseling may foster similar results.

Other themes appeared unique to the professional context of counseling. The emergence of wellness as a function of counseling leadership aligns with counselors' identity, describes sources of wellness for leaders, and underscores the importance of a wellness perspective in counseling

leadership. Two other unique counseling leadership themes, professional identity and professional advocacy, may have emerged because of the history of the profession and current attempts by counseling leaders to unify and promote professional counseling. For example, the American Mental Health Counselors Association (AMHCA), ACES, and NBCC recently collectively endorsed a licensure plan that cites CACREP-accredited counselor education training and national certified counselor certification as a pathway to licensure portability and parity (AMHCA, 2015; NBCC, 2015). In addition, the ACA Governing Council recently endorsed a single path to licensure and a unifying professional identity for licensed counselors, which included endorsement of counselor education programs accredited by CACREP and the Council on Rehabilitation Education (ACA, 2015). These actions by organizational leaders underscore the trend toward a common core identity as a professional counselor and highlight professional advocacy behaviors to advance the field. As counselors assert a unified identity and work toward parity with other helping professionals, these leadership themes will likely remain prominent.

Leadership-specific cognitive complexity was a unique theme that emerged in counseling leadership. Whereas many leadership theories focus on how leadership behaviors influence outcomes, counselors appear to also focus on how leaders think and how thinking informs action. This theme is similar to the construct of counselor cognitive complexity, which refers to a counselor's ability to identify, differentiate, and integrate multifaceted information about a client (Welfare & Borders, 2010). Higher counselor cognitive complexity has been linked to using more multifaceted thought processes about clients (Welfare & Borders, 2010). Similarly, counseling leaders who recognize and connect the many moving parts of their role and the people around them; the actions, values, thoughts, and emotions that drive and affect their leadership approach; the influences of historical and current contexts; and the intersectionality of the human condition can be viewed as cognitively complex and may be better set to lead effectively.

Limitations

Articles analyzed in this study focused almost exclusively on the leader; followers, dyads, and groups were not discussed in great detail, even though they are important elements of leadership (McKibben, 2016; Eberly et al., 2013; Emery et al., 2013). Second, cultural diversity was not well represented, particularly in the leadership profiles, which also tended to highlight counselor educators and positional leaders; counseling practitioners were underrepresented. The 33 articles represent a small percentage of articles published in ACA journals each year. We chose journal articles because they are peer reviewed; however, it is possible that we omitted some important leadership dynamics described in book chapters or missed articles. In addition, the empirical studies necessarily had their own limitations, and the leadership profiles and conceptual articles were primarily opinion based and observational. We sought to minimize the latter limitation by coding the empirical articles first, thus providing guidance for the remainder of the coding process; notably, no new themes emerged. Furthermore, the themes seem supported by their similarities with both general leadership theories and prominent counseling-specific values. Nevertheless, other researchers might identify different themes. Finally, given the descriptive

nature of the study, our results cannot explain causality of how leadership dynamics emerge, sustain, and lead to outcomes, which are important avenues for future research.

Implications for Counseling Leadership Research and Practice

Counseling leadership appears to be a relatively recent area of interest given that most of the literature was published in or after 2003, but results of this study provide a foundation for future research. Additional research is needed to highlight how other people (e.g., followers, groups) and contexts contribute to counseling leadership processes and enhance the understanding of leadership as a social dynamic, as well as the content and processes that occur among people (McKibben, 2016). Research is also needed among culturally diverse groups of counselors, particularly given that some of the emergent themes were strongly associated with culturally diverse leaders (e.g., mentorship, advocacy). The results could also be used to develop a measure of counseling leadership to investigate what themes apply in various counseling contexts (e.g., Which themes do practitioners use compared with administrators?), how skills are developed and applied, and how themes are linked to outcomes. Finally, leadership profiles that focus on exemplary practitioners may highlight leadership skills and contexts among this population.

Practically speaking, leadership occurred in a variety of contexts, such as counselor education (e.g., Black & Magnuson, 2005; Gibson et al., 2010), schools (e.g., Dollarhide, 2003; Dollarhide, Gibson, & Saginak, 2008; R. E. Lewis & Borunda, 2006), private practices and agencies (Magnuson et al., 2003), and professional counseling organizations (Meany-Walen et al, 2013; West et al., 2006). Across these contexts, counselors demonstrated an array of leadership skills from which counselors can draw to enhance their leadership and practice across settings. Jacob et al. (2013) contended that leadership skills from transformational theory are analogous to core counseling skills (e.g., motivating followers by attending to their needs is similar to building a therapeutic alliance in counseling). Similarly, McKibben (2016) asserted that counselors can understand leadership interactions in the way that counselors understand the content of a client's narrative and the processes that are occurring within the counseling relationship. That is, counselors can integrate leadership skills by recognizing who or what is involved in a leadership endeavor (content) and how people are relating to one another and why (process).

This study provides counselors with a comprehensive skills set that they can integrate to enhance practice. For example, leaders must think complexly by recognizing the needs of individuals, groups, and organizations involved in a leadership endeavor. They must then act flexibly in a way that will facilitate a desired outcome. Similarly, counselors must attend closely to their clients, think critically and objectively about client information, conceptualize clients' presenting concerns, and intervene (and prevent, if possible) in ways that move clients toward their goals. Counselors can also draw on the interpersonal skills detailed in this study to guide how they lead. The counselor who shares power with (rather than over) the client, assists in defining and redefining presenting concerns, and helps the client set goals and work toward wellness can be viewed as a leader; in this vein, learning, practicing, and honing the leadership dynamics identified in this study may contribute to counselor skill development. Similarly, mentorship was described as an important, close relationship, typically between a student and a counselor educator. For example, the school counselor working closely with a first-generation student to

enhance her college-going beliefs can draw on the leadership qualities of mentoring to prioritize the relationship with the student, challenge her to find her voice, and assist her in finding allies (e.g., a first-generation college student). Additional work is needed to explore the intersectionality of leadership and counseling skills.

Notably, leaders from marginalized groups, such as African Americans, Asian Americans, American Indians, and women, were aware of cultural influences and discrimination against them, which fed into their approach to leadership (Black & Maguson, 2005; Portman & Garrett, 2005; Smith & Roysircar, 2010; Vereen, 2010). Awareness of one's own culture, as well as a client's culture, reflects ethical best practice (ACA, 2014) in addition to leadership acumen. Thus, the culturally competent practitioner may also be leading ethically.

Finally, organizations such as ACA and its divisions can intentionally train counselors, students, educators, and administrators how to lead by using the themes in ways that serve the profession and their respective organizations, as well as examine leadership contexts to determine which themes are relevant (and how) to organizational success. Counseling organizations can lead by enhancing counselors' professional identity around a core, unified identity, and by teaching counselors how to advocate for the profession and for clients. In doing so, organizations model leadership for counselors.

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