

Chi Sigma Iota *Excellence in Counseling Research Grant* Application

Contact Information:

Name(s) of Research Investigator(s) (please list all investigators, if more than one):
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Title/Position of Primary/Principal Investigator (PI)
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Date of Application Submission: June 1, 2009

CSI Home Chapter of PI: Omega Delta Chapter

For Active CSI Student Member Applicants:

Counseling degree program currently enrolled in:

Master Specialist Doctorate

Program specialty:

School Community Mental Health
 Rehabilitation College Career
 Gerontological Student Development
 Marriage & Family Other (please specify): Counselor Education and Supervision

Anticipated Graduation date: May/2010 (month/year)

Please describe PI's research preparation and experience in no more than 50 words. If PI is a student, please also describe the mentor's training in no more than 50 words.

This research is being conducted as a doctoral dissertation and is being chaired by chapter faculty advisor Dr. Danica Hays. Dr. Hays has an extensive research background in qualitative and quantitative methodologies and has been involved with Amanda Healey in various projects since she began her doctoral studies in 2007.

Female Perspectives of Professional Identity and Success in the Counseling Field

Abstract

The purpose of this study will be to investigate the contextual and definitional qualities of professional identity as well as the perception of success as defined by female counseling professionals. This study will be conducted using a sequential mixed methods approach for inventory development and analysis of gender related to professional identity and success values.

Description of Research

This study is being conducted in order to explore female professional counselor's perspectives concerning the constructs of professional identity and success in the counseling field. The purpose of this study will be to investigate the contextual and definitional qualities of professional identity as well as perceptions of success defined by female counseling professionals. In addition, this study is being conducted in order to determine if current views of success in the counseling field are in line with the counseling philosophy and the perspective of professionals currently serving in our communities and as counselor educators. The purpose of this study is in agreement with the Chi Sigma Iota advocacy research priority in that the focus is on assessing graduates and counselor educators with regard to their professional identity development and the congruence of that identity with their personal values. By completing this research, it is the hope of the investigator that this information will contribute significantly towards the future development of the profession. This will be done by focusing on the mission of counseling as it has been outlined conceptually in the past, evaluating its current value within the field, and promoting a clear way forward in developing pride and an inner sense of connection between professionals and their work in counseling and counselor education.

This study will consist of a sequential exploratory mixed methods design (Creswell, 2009). This first part of the investigation will begin with qualitative interviewing of participants in order to help determine how female counselors perceive professional identity and define success within the field. Qualitative data may yield information about components of professional identity congruent with as well as outside of the current paradigm. A qualitative inquiry is necessary in order to determine what professional identity means to those professionals who have reached a certain level of experience within the field of counseling. By determining the definition of professional identity as it relates to counselor's individual experiences from different perspectives in the field, a more contextual view of the concept can be developed for consideration and assessment. This form of inquiry will address the perceptions of women in the counseling field towards the construct of professional identity and their individual definitions of success as a counselor or a counselor educator. In deriving this meaning, it is hoped that an awareness of the contributions of counselors serving in different capacities can be valued and the current view of success through professional engagement can be expanded.

The qualitative portion of this investigation will take place from a constructivist grounded theoretical approach (Charmaz & Smith, 2003) using a Feminist framework, with a focus on participant voices and eventual adoption of participant perspectives as valuable and important within the counseling profession. Participants will consist of female professionals who are in the dissertation process, who are tenure-track faculty, and those who have been licensed within the past two years. Participants will be recruited for the interviews and focus groups through CACREP doctoral and master's program liaisons, as well as e-mails to those practitioners who are listed as accepting insurance in the state of Virginia and through NBCC listings. A two-part interview will be conducted as well as three focus groups.

The validation process for the qualitative portion of this study will evolve through dialogue with participants and will therefore remain within the context of that time. Two types of qualitative validation will take place as defined by Angen (2000); those types being ethical and substantive validation. Ethical validation is defined as the questioning of the underlying moral assumptions of the research, its “political and ethical implications” as well as the “equitable treatment of diverse voices (Angen, 2000).” Through this dialogue, new questions and possibilities concerning professional identity and what it means to be successful in the field of counseling may arise. Interpretations of the research will be filtered through the understanding of the new information in relation to the researcher. This is what is referred to as substantive validation and takes place through a process of researcher reflection, understanding derived from previous research, and the creation of a chain of interpretation for review of others in order to establish the trustworthiness of the meanings and conclusions reached (Angen, 2000).

Strategies by which both forms of validation will be reached will include systematic triangulation of sources, theory and methods, peer review and auditing, negative case analysis, clarification of researcher bias, member checking, and external audits (Creswell, 2007). Reliability, or dependability, of information gathered will be established through detailed notes, participant profiles and recordings, detailed transcription of interviews and focus groups, and inter-coder agreement.

After completion of the interviews and focus groups, an inventory will be created to reflect the values of the women who participated. Following validation procedures, this inventory will be given in conjunction with the inventory developed by Puglia (2008) and will be distributed through the online survey distribution service, Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). Participants will be recruited through e-mails and letters to

CACREP liaisons in order to reach tenure track faculty and doctoral students who are in the dissertation process. The NBCC practitioner list will also be used to help reach newly licensed professionals. New professional counselors will also be reached through lists that are made available through state licensure boards and insurance provider lists from selected states.

The design for the quantitative portion of this study will be non-experimental with the goal of comparing the current PEIS measure (B. Puglia, Remley, T.P., Hays, D.G, & Healey, A., In Review) for concept of professional identity with the new measure developed through this investigation. The current professional identity inventory includes sub-scales related to the counseling philosophy, beliefs about the profession (Gray, 2000), and engagement scale in counseling. This measure will then be compared with a new measure that will be developed as result of qualitative analysis. The new inventory will attempt to assess participant conceptualization of success as well as potential additional components of professional identity. This new measure will also include concepts related to professional success.

Relevance

It is the hope of this study that the definition of the constructs related to professional identity and engagement can be evaluated to be more inclusive of the views of counselors. This would then allow training programs to tailor their approach to meet the perspectives of those they serve and thus help to shape the future of the counseling profession in a way that values the perspectives revealed by this work. By reviewing professional identity and success within the context of the counseling field from the voices of female professionals, a basic description of counseling beliefs, philosophy, and significance can be formed. From this generalized narrative, conceptual ordering and theorizing can take place.

Timeline

The qualitative portion of this study will begin in February of 2009 following the exempt approval of the college committee. Qualitative interviews and focus groups have been completed and the inventory resulting from those interviews is currently in development. The quantitative study of professional identity will begin in September and conclude in October 2009. It is hoped that an article intended for publication will be released for review in the spring of 2010. If this project is funded by Chi Sigma Iota, the principal investigator would be available to present the findings in a poster session format.

Research Expenses

The expenses for this research project will be incurred through the need for transcription of interviews and focus groups as well as the use of Survey Monkey for dissemination of the inventories related to the quantitative portion of the study. A total of 38 interviews and focus groups have been conducted. A typical transcript will cost approximately \$60. Fifteen transcripts remain, which will require \$900 to complete. Survey Monkey requires \$25 per month and will be maintained for two months in order to ensure enough inventories are completed. This study will require a total of \$950 to complete, and therefore, any monetary contribution from this grant would go towards these costs. No other funding for this project has been obtained. A grant is being submitted in conjunction with this request to the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. Any money obtained from that grant will go towards expenses related to the completed transcriptions and participant compensation for travel.

Ethical Guidelines

This dissertation project was approved as an exempt study on February 23rd, 2009 by the Darden College of Education research college committee chaired by Dr. Edwin Gomez.

Faculty Endorsement

I, Dr. Danica Hays, fully endorse the dissertation research being conducted by Amanda C. Healey. I currently serve as her dissertation chair and serve as the Omega Delta chapter faculty advisor. You can contact me at dhays@odu.edu or by calling (757) 683-6692.

References

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