AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Judith D. Richards for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling presented on

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Title: Historical and Current Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations

Abstract approved:

Cass Dykeman

Doctoral training programs in counselor education require a dissertation, a capstone

project in the academic training and development of graduate students seeking a PhD or

an EdD. The dissertation is expected to contribute new knowledge to the profession

through the researcher reporting the results of research. The counselor education

literature has an absence of analysis or examination of dissertations produced in the field.

Content and design analysis studies conducted in allied fields documented multiple

benefits to such research. These benefits to doctoral research included: (1) identifying

research gaps, (2) showcasing the mentoring process within the profession, (3)

illuminating the characteristics of, and trends in, research (4) guiding revisions in

research training, (5) guiding revisions in research techniques, and (6) aligning research

practices to needs of the profession. The first study in this thesis used content analysis

and analyzed the content, research methods, and research designs of dissertations produced in Oregon State University's Counseling Academic Unit over a 65-year period (1949–2014). Inferential statistics determined if there were any decadal differences in content, research methodology, or design. No decadal differences were discovered. Having a historical perspective assists current researchers in knowing their history, which can inform both present and future research efforts. The second study used content analysis and analyzed a cross section of counselor education dissertations produced in a random selection of Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs institutions located in Carnegie-designated research universities in the year 2013 by examining the dissertations' content, research methods, and designs. Inferential statistics determined if selection of a research method differs based on type of degree. Results indicate no relationship between type of degree and selected research method. A total 88.7% of the dissertations employed an observational design. Benefits, trends and implications are summarized, described, and discussed so that counselor educator professionals and their students will have a baseline from which they can reflect on, plan, and carry out research to best meet gaps in scholarship literature.

Historical and Current Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations

by

Judith D. Richards

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APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing Counseling

Dean of the College of Education

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Judith D. Richards, Author

CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS

Cass Dykeman assisted with methodology and research design in addition to refining the

naarative of this document. Sara Bender assisted with the coding of dissertation. Timothy

Bergquist provided assistance with the interpretation of the data.

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Chapter 1: General Introduction

From as early as 1909, with the publication of Frank Parson's book *Choosing a Vocation*, a case has been presented for providing assistance to individuals through the services of trained counselors. American society has evolved and become an increasingly complex and multicultural place in which to grow and develop (Castells, 2010). A plethora of unique challenges to health and well-being have emerged as a by-product of current events, societal and cultural expectations, and federal and state legislation (Hinshaw & Cicchetti, 2000). Individuals of all ages and stages, families, political and economic systems, and society at large come face-to-face with struggles on a daily basis (Castells, 2010). The demand for assisting individuals and families in negotiating personal and systemic challenges has greatly increased the need for counselors (Barker & Chang, 2013). This need has resulted in an increasing demand on counselor education training programs to graduate competent and capable service providers (Hoge, 2002). The purpose of this study is to provide the first analysis and examination of both historical and current trends in content, research methodology, and design of published counselor education dissertations.

Historical Perspective

An extensive review of the literature revealed that there is a shortage of information related to the analysis or examination of counselor education dissertations. In the absence of literature to examine on this topic in the counselor education field, allied fields were reviewed. To illustrate what has been produced in allied fields, the literature in rehabilitation counseling and social work was explored.

The first annual dissertation review was produced in the field of rehabilitation counseling in 1979 (Lofaro, 1981). Since that initial review, doctoral dissertation research has been published in rehabilitation counseling on a regular basis (Leahy et al., 1988, 1989, 1990, 1992; Lofaro, 1981a, 1981b, 1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1984). According to researchers, the benefits of these reviews are numerous and include assisting researchers in reviews of the literature, keeping practitioners aware of programmatic and evaluative research (Lofaro, 1981), representing the mentoring process within the profession, and becoming a significant knowledge base for the field (Lofaro, 1983).

A second allied field, social work, has published studies using a number of differing methods to analyze and examine dissertations for a variety of purposes. A study published in 2010 reported a "content analysis of doctoral dissertations published in the year 2006 was performed to determine what percentage of the dissertations focused on intervention" (Horton & Hawkins, 2010, 380). The results of another study, published in 2012 by Maynard, Vaughn, and Sarteschi, "provide interesting and important insights into the characteristics and trends of doctoral education and research and have significant implications for doctoral training and social work research" (p. 2).

These two examples from allied fields set forth benefits and knowledge gained through the process of examining doctoral dissertations in those respective fields. With the counselor education dissertation field still unexamined, these studies illustrate potential benefits that may emerge for the field of counselor education and provide impetus for the current study.

The American Counseling Association (ACA) publishes numerous journals, each representing a different division of the ACA. Synthesizing the results of content analyses of 11 studies (Byrd, Crockett, & Erford, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c; Charkow & Juhnke, 2001; Crockett, Byrd, Erford, & Hays, 2010; Erford, Crockett, Giguere, & Darrow, 2011; Erford, Erford, & Broglie, 2012; Erford, Erford, Hoffman, & Erford, 2013; Erford, Miller, Duncan, & Erford, 2010; Erford et al., 2011; Juhnke, Charkow Bordeau, & Evanoff, 2005) produced the following trends and patterns: (a) the emergence of an international voice; (b) a significant shift during the past 25 years to a female-dominated field; (c) the overwhelming majority of published articles written by academicians and the paucity of those written by practitioners; (d) the rise in the amount of qualitative research; (e) the dearth of intervention-based research methodologies and designs; and (f) the sparsity of intervention articles published compared to the number of nonintervention articles. The trends and patterns that emerged through content analyses of dissertations in allied fields provide further support of the potential benefits in applying content analyses to dissertations in the counselor education field.

Chapter 2 is a stand-alone article titled "Historical Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations." The purpose of this study was to provide the first detailed analysis of content, research methods, and design trends over time in counselor education dissertations. Excavating archival dissertations may lead to a discovery similar to what emerged in a content analysis of the *Journal of Counseling and Development* (*JCD*). The *JCD* content analysis revealed that through the years, researchers have been able to chronicle "a living history of the issues confronting the profession" (Weinrach, 1987,

395). As this relates to the content analysis of counselor education dissertations, one prime example has been the authors' exploration of the work conducted by doctoral students at Oregon State University (OSU). OSU has one of the oldest counselor education programs in the country: the Counseling Academic Unit. The program has prioritized transparency and created an online database of dissertations that allows researchers easy access to full-text dissertations produced in the Counseling Academic Unit since the fist dissertation in 1947.

Six research questions guided this study:

1. What are the frequencies of content categories for counselor education dissertations?

2. What are the frequencies of research method categories for counselor education dissertations?

3. When the method choice was quantitative, what are the frequencies of design categories for counselor education dissertations?

4. Do decadal differences exist in the dissertation content-focus choices made by counselor education students?

5. Do decadal differences exist in the dissertation research choices made by counselor education students?

6. When the method choice was quantitative, do decadal differences exist in the dissertation design choices made by counselor education students?

To answer these questions, an index of 203 doctoral dissertations completed within OSU's Counseling Academic Unit and accepted by the OSU Graduate School was utilized in this archival study. Dissertations were analyzed through the lens of decades beginning with 1947 up to 2014. Content, research methodology, and design were coded. If the research method of choice was quantitative, the research design was coded. The target journal for the publication of this manuscript is *Counselor Education and Supervision*.

Chapter 3 is a stand-alone article titled "Current Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations." The purpose of this article is to offer information designed to address the gap that currently exists in the field, which may have limited the scope and sequence of researchers' ability to focus on issues, research methodologies, and designs that are either being underrepresented or missing entirely from the literature. This may have affected the quality of knowledge in the field. In addition, providing such research may assist future doctoral candidates in their efforts to prevent or minimize unnecessary and unintended duplication of work.

Five research questions guided this study:

1. What are the frequencies of content categories for counselor education dissertations?

2. What are the frequencies of research method categories for counselor education dissertations?

3. When the method choice was quantitative, what are the frequencies of design categories for counselor education dissertations?

4. Does selection of a research method (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) differ based on type of degree (i.e., PhD, EdD)?

5. For those students who complete a quantitative dissertation, does selection of an experimental versus observational research approach differ based on type of degree (i.e., PhD, EdD)?

To answer these questions, 160 counselor education dissertations produced in the year 2013, taken from a random sample of top-tier Carnegie-designated and Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)-accredited universities, were coded for content, research method, and, if the method was quantitative, research design. The target journal for publication of this manuscript is also *Counselor Education and Supervision*.

Together, chapters 2 and 3 provide an opportunity to examine trends in counselor education dissertations, from both historical and current perspectives.

Examining counselor education dissertations provides a threefold perspective. Appropriating a historical approach reveals where the field of counseling has been. Capturing a look at the current trends reveals where the discipline of counseling is at the moment. Synthesizing historical and current trends and patterns creates opportunities to evaluate and forecast needs and develop plans for the future of the counseling profession.

Glossary of Specialized Terms

The following terms are used in this dissertation.

ACES: An acronym for Association of Counselor Education and Supervision. The primary purpose of the association, in accordance with the purpose of the

ACA, is to advance counselor education and supervision to improve the

provision of counseling services in all settings (Association of Counselor

Education and Supervision [ACES], n.d.).

CACREP: An acronym for Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related

Educational Programs. CACREP accredits master's and doctoral degree

programs in counseling and its specialties that are offered by colleges and

universities in the United States and throughout the world. CACREP is the

gold standard accrediting body in the field of counselor training (Council

for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs

[CACREP], n.d.).

Carnegie-designated top-tier research university: The Carnegie Foundation for

the Advancement of Teaching is responsible for the Carnegie

Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, which uses three

designations to describe research universities: very high research activity,

high research activity, and doctoral/research universities.

Coding: The process by which text is designated into certain categories related to

the use of content analysis as a research method (Instructional Assessment

Resources, 2011).

Content analysis: A research technique for making replicable and valid inferences

from texts (or other meaningful matter) about the contexts of their use

(Krippendorff, 2013).

Counselor education: An academic discipline that has its roots in education, clinical supervision, counseling, human development, vocational guidance, psychology, and other human services occupations. The primary focus of counselor education is training and preparing professional counselors; this includes recruiting and training the next generation of academic professionals who will teach the curriculum of counseling theory and practice.

Doctoral dissertation: The final capstone project required for a doctoral degree. The expectation is that the dissertator will contribute new knowledge to the field. In the social sciences and natural sciences, there is an expectation that empirical research will be conducted.

Evidence-based practice: Evidence-based practices are interventions for which there is scientific evidence consistently showing that they improve client outcomes (Drake et al., 2001).

Manuscript document format: Also known as contemporary style or article style. It is one of two formats for the dissertation. It is a single thesis document made up of several scholarly manuscripts or journal articles addressing a common theme (Oregon State University [OSU], 2014).

Mixed methods research design: A procedure for collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" both quantitative and qualitative research and methods in a single study to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2012).

Qualitative research method: A way of conducting, and conceiving of, research. In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument or the tool for designing, collecting, and analyzing research. Qualitative research, in contrast to quantitative research, generally does not translate aspects of the world into numbers to be analyzed mathematically. Instead, it analyzes the world through the lenses the researcher brings to bear on the data (Foundations of Qualitative Research in Education, 2008).

Quantitative research method: The systematic, scientific investigation of data and their relationships. This category includes experimental, interrupted time series, quasi-experimental, and single-subject design, where the researcher manipulates an intervention. It also includes descriptive, correlational, meta-analysis, measurement study, and program evaluation, where the researcher manipulates no variables.

Rehabilitation counseling: Focused on helping people who have disabilities achieve their personal, career, and independent living goals through a counseling process.

Traditional style format: Also known as standard document format. Refers to one thesis document that addresses a single theme (OSU, 2014).

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the topic being researched, including an overview of the literature and the purpose of the inquiry. These were followed by a brief synopsis and overview of each of the two manuscripts servings as chapters 2 and 3,

delineating their purposes, research questions, and methodologies, as well as the journal

targeted for publication. Chapter 1 concluded with a statement linking the two

manuscripts and a glossary of specialized terminology. From these discussions the reader

has obtained the background information and context required to foster the knowledge

necessary to understand chapters 2 and 3. Chapter 4 provides a discussion of the results

and limitations, applications, and recommended action steps emerging from the research.

Chapter 2: Historical Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations

Historical Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations

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Abstract

The study analyzed the content, research methods, and research designs of dissertations produced in Oregon State University's Counseling Academic Unit from 1949 to 2014. Having a historical perspective can assist current researchers with both their present and the future work. No decadal differences were discovered in the three aforementioned areas.

Keywords: Dissertation, History of Counselor Education

Historical Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations

The doctoral process culminates in a capstone project displaying academic scholarship. This capstone project traditionally has been a written research document called a *dissertation.* The goal of such a document is to extend the knowledge base of a field. In the social sciences, little research has examined how the nature of this capstone project has changed over time.

Oregon State University (OSU) is home to one of the longest standing programs in counselor education, producing more than 200 doctoral dissertations since the program granted its first doctoral degree in 1947 (Dykeman, 2013, 2014). To date, there has been no inquiry or exploration into utilizing dissertations as data to examine content, research methodologies, and research design. One approach toward systematically examining this body of literature is to conduct a content analysis. Content analysis is a formal analytic technique that uses archival investigations. Archival studies enable the researcher to gather data longitudinally, being on the alert for patterns, themes, trends, and relationships that may emerge as data are reviewed in hindsight.

The purpose of this paper is to make the first detailed study of content and research methods and design trends over time in counselor education dissertations. A search of the literature helped to build a foundation for this study. A search of various databases, including Academic Search Premier, Educator's Reference Complete, Educational Resources Information Center, (ERIC), and Psych Articles, using the search terms "dissertations," "counselor education," and "content analysis," did not generate any articles. The lack of such research leaves a gap in the field that limits researchers' ability

to focus on issues advancing the quality of the field (Ronau et al., 2014). In addition, promoting such research assists in preventing or minimizing unnecessary and unintended duplication of work by future doctoral candidates (Erlen, 2002; Ronau et al., 2014). Both of these motivations provide impetus for the current study.

In the absence of subject-specific literature to review, we examined the literature of allied fields, such as the broad field of counseling and rehabilitation counseling. We also present and discuss the development of the guidelines and accreditation standards as they relate to doctoral graduate research. Our review begins by offering a summary and synthesis from this review of the literature as it applies to our examination. The examination comprises three aspects: (a) Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) Doctoral Standards for Counselor Education and Supervision regarding research, (b) content analyses employed in the broader field of counseling through examining articles in the *Journal of Counseling and Development* (*JCD*), and (c) content analyses of doctoral dissertations in the field of rehabilitation counseling, a field allied with counselor education.

Professional guidelines and accreditation standards have shaped doctoral preparation in counselor education (Adkison-Bradley, 2013). The Association for Counselor Educators and Supervisors (ACES; 1978) promulgated the Guidelines for Doctoral Preparation in Counselor Education (hereinafter referred to as the Guidelines) in 1977. Specifically, the Guidelines noted that "through both didactic work and supervised experiences, graduates should possess strong competencies in the core areas of preparation: counseling, consulting, and research" (p. 163). Also, the Guidelines put

forward the idea that "all doctoral students should acquire competencies in statistics, research design, and other research methodology. Faculty should be involved in research that can be observed by students, and when appropriate, students should be active participants." Additionally, "students should have opportunities to collaborate with faculty in the development of scholarly reports and papers" (p. 164). Finally, the Guidelines propose the idea that "the institution should provide adequate support for a sound program of research in the various aspects of counseling, guidance and student services" (p. 165). Developing expertise in research methodology has been an expectation of counselor education and supervision programs dating from the first statement of doctoral guidelines (ACES, 1978).

The 1977 ACES guidelines became the standards published by CACREP. CACREP accredited its first doctoral program in 1980. Since adopting the initial standards, CACREP has revised its standards four times: in 1988, 1994, 2001, and most recently 2009. Only changes that apply to the areas of research in doctoral programs are noted here. Changes made to the 1994 standards require preparation in "design and implementation of quantitative and qualitative research" and that "students participate in a doctoral seminar in counseling research" (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 1994, p. 63). Placing limitations on faculty involvement in dissertation committees was the only change affecting CACREP doctoral standards for research in the 2001 standards revision (CACREP, 2001).

As the counseling profession developed, the standards changed to reflect this development. In the most recent revision of the standards, "the emphasis is now placed

on preparing students to disseminate innovative counselor education research in scholarly

venues (e.g., refereed journals, conferences) and to assume leadership roles within the

counseling profession" (Adkison-Bradley, 2013, p. 47). Developing scholarship and

research expertise continues to be an ongoing expectation of the CACREP standards for

doctoral education. Current CACREP doctoral standards relevant to production of a

dissertation include IC.1, IC.2, IC.3, IIB.1, IIB.2, IIB.4, IIC.5, IVE.1, IVE.2, IVE.3,

IVF.1, IVF.2, and IVF.3.

A review of the literature related to content analysis of the *JCD* can provide a

perspective from the broader field of counseling. The *JCD* is published by the American

Counseling Association and can be considered the flagship journal for the counseling

profession (Blancher, Buboltz, & Soper, 2010). Beginning with an initial study by Barry

and Wolf (1958), formal analyses have been performed for five decades. These analyses

have provided a method for identifying and examining patterns, trends, and changes in

the *JCD* over time (Blancher et al., 2010; Brown, 1969; Cesari & Pelsma, 1986; Pelsma

& Cesari, 1989; Stone & Shertzer, 1964; Williams & Buboltz, 1999). Taking note of

these issues is important. One of the major vehicles for serving and promoting the field of

counseling is the dissemination of knowledge and ideas in professional publications.

The articles published in a professional journal such as the *JCD* are an indicator

of the topics of interest, research foci, and thinking of scholars in the field. Goodyear

(1984) noted that articles in the *JCD* "have attempted to 'mirror' changes in the

counseling profession" (p. 3). Second, Weinrach (1987) noted that "the Journal is a living

history of the issues confronting the profession" (p. 395). Using content analysis creates

the opportunity for a developmental perspective to emerge. In an early review of the

JCD, Brown (1969) encouraged individuals in scholarly fields to look at where they have

been, where they are, and where they are going. A clear statement of purpose in each of

the three most recent analyses form the hypothesis that "editors can and do make a

difference in terms of emphasis and direction" (Williams & Buboltz, 1999, p. 349; see

also Blancher et al., 2010; Pelsma & Cesari, 1989). The authors of these studies divided

the years of the *JCD*'s publication into "editorship periods" as blocks of time for

analysis. Some of these editorship periods were as short as 2 or 3 years. These periods

give authors an opportunity to answer the question, "To what extent have the editors

influenced the nature of these changes?" (Pelsma & Cesari, 1989, p. 275). Last, each

article reports findings were found to be reflective of the field's zeitgeist yet included

some statement noting the extremely diverse nature of the field of counseling and the

responsibility the *JCD* has to reflect the needs of its readership (Williams & Buboltz,

1999, p. 349; see also Blancher et al., 2010; Pelsma & Cesari, 1989).

The field of rehabilitation counseling, a field related to counselor education, can

provide additional evidence on the effective use of content analyses in generating helpful

information, emerging patterns, and trends. The *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*

(*RCB*) published a series of articles categorizing doctoral dissertations for the purpose of

identifying research trends, enhancing the accessibility of research, and proposing areas

for future research (Beck & Janikowski, 1996; Beck, Janikowski, & Stebnicki, 1994;

Leahy, Habeck, & Fabiano, 1988, 1989; Leahy, Habeck, & Van Tol, 1992; Leahy, Van

Tol, & Habeck, 1990; Lofaro, 1979, 1981a, 1981b, 1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1984; Tansey,

Phillips, & Zanskas, 2012; Tansey, Zanskas, & Phillips, 2011; Zanskas et al., 2014).

According to Beck and Janikowski (1996), these articles have been offered (a) as a

service to rehabilitation researchers, (b) as documentation of the evolution of the

profession of rehabilitation, and (c) for the benefit of practitioners and consumers to gain

access to and use new knowledge in the field.

The article titled "1979 Annual Dissertation Review: An Annotated

Bibliography" (Lofaro, 1981) appeared in the *RCB* in the 1981 volume and was followed

by a series of chronological reviews stretching to the present. In 1983, a special issue was

published chronicling Lofaro's work with a review of dissertations from 1954 to 1978

(Lofaro, 1983b). Lofaro suggested that this period provided "the opportunity for a

retrospective, historical assessment of rehabilitation counseling's development of

professional identity, knowledge-base, and expertise through one component of its

research efforts" (p. 253). Through the years, the content analysis process has varied with

the researcher. Historically, studies provided an annotated bibliography summarizing the

content, reference citations, observations, and research trends. Later studies included the

type of methodology the dissertator used, the type of research data, the type of statistical

analyses, and the research design the dissertator chose to answer his or her research

questions (Tansey et al., 2012). The most recently published analysis also analyzed

institutional productivity and employment trends of doctoral graduates (Zanskas et al.,

2014).

To close the gap in historical research on counselor education dissertations, the

authors employ six research questions: (a) What are the frequencies of content categories

for counselor education dissertations? (b) What are the frequencies of research method categories for counselor education dissertations? (c) When the method choice was quantitative, what are the frequencies of design categories for counselor education dissertations? (d) Do decadal differences exist in the dissertation content-focus choices made by counselor education students? (e) Do decadal differences exist in the dissertation research choices made by counselor education students? and (f) When the method choice was quantitative, do decadal differences exist in the dissertation design choices made by counselor education students?

Method

Research Design

In this study, the authors analyzed the content, research method, and design of the 203 dissertations produced in OSU's Counseling Academic Unit over a 65-year period (1949–2014). Krippendorff (2013) defined *content analysis* as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use" (p. 24). Content analysis produces descriptive data which takes the influence of the researcher out of the interpretation due to the nonreactive, systemic process of the research technique (Hays & Singh, 2012; Neuman, 2003).

To address the first three research questions, frequency counts were computed for the categories of the following: (a) content, (b) research method, and (c) quantitative design. For Research Questions 4–6, the dissertations from the 65-year period studied were divided into seven decadal epochs. Only one dissertation was produced in the decade 1940–1950; therefore the authors made the decision to include it within the

decade 1950–1960. Then category frequency by decade was examined for the following:

(d) content, (e) research method, and (f) quantitative design. These decadal examinations

were done using the Kruskal–Wallis test.

The authors conducted an a priori power analysis using G*Power 3.1 (Faul,

Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). Because a simple method to determine power for the

Kruskal–Wallis does not yet exist, a power analysis for a one-way analysis of variance

(ANOVA) served as a proxy. Using a one-way AVOVA as a proxy is not problematic,

because the Kruskal–Wallis is known to possess more power than the one-way ANOVA

(Van Hecke, 2012). The effect size was drawn from a mean of effect sizes reported for

attitudinal studies (Lipsey & Wilson, 1993). The authors employed the following input

parameters: (a) two-tailed, (b) $d = 0.30$, (c) power $(1 - \beta$ err probability) $= 0.8$, (d)

number of groups $= 7$, and (e) $\alpha = .05$. The G*Power 3.1 output included a sample size of

161 and an actual power of 0.81.

Dissertations

For this archival study, the authors used indexes of doctoral dissertations

completed within OSU's Counseling Academic Unit and accepted by the Graduate

School of OSU (Dykeman, 2013, 2014). These indexes are accessible through OSU's

online Scholar Archive Index. One index included dissertations from 1947–2013, and a

second index contained doctoral dissertations for 2013–2014. We analyzed a total of 203

dissertations in this study.

Measures

Content coding. The content coding sheet the authors employed in this study was adapted from the classification of categories Walter Buboltz and his team originally developed for their content analyses of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* and the *JCD* (Blancher et al., 2010; Buboltz, Deemer, & Hoffmann, 2010; Buboltz, Miller, & Williams, 1999; Williams & Buboltz, 1999). All studies reportedly employing the Buboltz classification schema obtained high intercoder reliability (e.g., Blancher et al., 2010). The authors drew additional categories from research on education dissertations (Nelson & Coorough, 1994; Walker & Haley-Mize, 2012). Finally, to fully reflect the CACREP standards, new content categories were added. This revised and augmented coding sheet is available from the second author.

Quantitative design coding. The authors drew the quantitative coding sheet from one developed by Maynard, Vaughn, and Sarteschi (2012). The only changes made to this coding sheet were to (a) Americanize the spelling and (b) limit the "Systematic Review or Meta-analysis" section to "Meta-analysis." Maynard et al. reported obtaining high intercoder reliability using their design-coding schema.

Research method coding. The authors drew the quantitative coding sheet from Maynard et al.'s (2012) study of social work dissertations, with no changes. Maynard et al. reported obtaining high intercoder reliability using their method-coding schema.

Procedures

Content, research method, and quantitative design coding were accomplished using dissertation abstracts. Previous research has shown a near-perfect agreement

between content analysis of dissertation abstracts and analysis of the total studies (Cleary, 1992; McCurdy & Cleary, 1984). If content, method, or design was not clear in the abstract, the text of the dissertation was consulted. For the method coding, intercoder reliability was calculated using Krippendorff's alpha via the ReCal software (Freelon, 2013; Krippendorff, 2004). Intercoder reliability was determined by the coders rating a random draw of 60 from the data set (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2004). This pilot intercoder reliability study produced a Krippendorff's alpha of .94.

This intercoder reliability exceeds the preset minimum of .90. Thus, no further pilot reliability studies were conducted. Given the number of categories for the content and design coding, both coders independently rated all dissertations. Any discrepancies were discussed, and the consensus rating after discussion was used.

Data Analysis

For the first three research questions, we calculated the following descriptive statistics: (a) count of each content-focus choice, (b) count of each design choice, (c) count of each research method choice, (d) ranking of content-focus choice by frequency, (e) ranking of design choice by frequency, and (f) ranking of research method choice by frequency. For the fourth, fifth, and sixth research questions, a Kruskal–Wallis test was employed. For each research question, the decade (i.e., 1947–1959, 1960–1969, 1970–1979, 1980–1989, 1990–1999, 2000–2009, and 2010–2014) by category rank order was compared. All calculations were made using Microsoft Excel.

Results

In terms of Research Questions 1–3, the frequency counts can be found in Tables 2.1–2.3, respectively. In terms of content (Research Question 4), no decadal differences were found (Kruskal–Wallis test: $n = 203$, $H = 5.195$, $p > .05$). In reference to method (Research Question 5), no decadal differences were discovered (Kruskal–Wallis test: $n = 203$, $H = 8.59$, $p > .05$). In relation to quantitative design (Research Question 6), no decadal differences were uncovered (Kruskal–Wallis test: $n = 144$, $H = 2.671$, $p > .05$).

Discussion

This study asked the following six research questions: (a) What are the frequencies of content categories for counselor education dissertations? (b) What are the frequencies of research method categories for counselor education dissertations? (c) When the method choice was quantitative, what are the frequencies of design categories for counselor education dissertations? (d) Do decadal differences exist in the dissertation content-focus choices made by counselor education students? (e) Do decadal differences exist in the dissertation research choices made by counselor education students? and (f) When the method choice was quantitative, do decadal differences exist in the dissertation design choices made by counselor education students?

The first three research questions are a report of descriptive data. The top content category is school counseling, with multiculturalism/diversity/multicultural counseling and counselor education tied for second and third position. The dominance of school counseling as a content area for a clear majority of dissertations reflects the setting of the counselor education program; it resides in the College of Education at OSU. In addition,

in the past 15 years, with the development of national standards and frameworks by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), a unifying voice of advocacy for the profession of K–12 school counselors has emerged. A number of students entering doctoral studies have background and training as professional school counselors. Regarding the next two content areas, it seems reasonable and expected that counselor education would appear in the top three content categories. Doctoral students being trained to instruct and educate future counselors had this topic as one of the top priority areas of focus for their research. The publication of Sue et al.'s model of multicultural competencies in 1982 led to the incorporation of that model into most graduate counselor training. It is a CACREP expectation that counselors graduate with a competency and commitment to offer services that respect and honor the diversity and multicultural composition of our present society. That the multicultural content area emerged in the top three rankings is a testament to the value placed on this competency by doctoral student researchers. As it pertains to Research Question 2, quantitative research methodology dominated the choice of doctoral students' research methodology options. Seventy-one percent of students chose a quantitative design. Historically, this has been the only method of research in the scientific literature. With the 1994 revisions to the CACREP standards requiring that students be trained in both quantitative and qualitative methodology, it is noteworthy to observe that 15% of students utilized mixed methodology and 12% utilized qualitative methodology. In response to Research Question 3, when the research methodology chosen was quantitative, observational studies outweighed experimental studies about three to one. When experimental research

design category choices are added together (i.e., randomized experiment, quasi-experimental, and single-subject design), they account for only approximately 26% of doctoral students' research design choices. The remaining approximately 74% of research design categories are observational. In terms of content (Research Question 4), method (Research Question 5), and quantitative design choices (Research Question 6), no decadal differences emerged. From the results of this data analysis, one might conclude that counselor education doctoral students, through the decades, are more similar than different. They appear to be equally similar in terms of the variety of topic, research methodology, and design choices they make.

Limitations

There are some limitations inherent in the use of content analysis as a research tool. Krippendorff (2004) has written extensively regarding the need for testing the reliability of content analysis data, and the researchers have followed his recommendations. However, despite reliability being assessed in this study, coding was accomplished by humans. Disagreements arose and needed to be resolved. It was a common occurrence during the coding process that dissertations could fit into several different content categories. Because of the multiplicity of content categories (there were 21) and the need to make a decision that led to placing each dissertation into only one category, the factors surrounding these human judgments contribute to limitations.

The same issue occurred when making decisions about research design categories. Sometimes the description of the use of the statistical analysis took the researchers in one direction and the writing in the abstract led in another direction. Because this study used

archival data (dissertations written as early as 1947), the writing about design appeared to be less uniform.

Implications for Researchers

When OSU doctoral student researchers chose to utilize a quantitative research method, 74% of the design methods chosen were observational. This percentage is somewhat lower than researchers found in a recent study looking at a sample of current counselor education dissertations. That study examined a cross section of counselor education dissertations produced in a random selection of CACREP institutions located in Carnegie-designated research universities for the year 2013 (Richards, Dykeman, & Bender, 2014). From that study it was established that 83.7% of doctoral student researchers utilized an observational design in the year 2013. Since there were no decadal differences that emerged from the data analysis as it related to the choice of research design in this historical study, it would appear that this pattern of choosing observational design over experimental design is not a new phenomenon. Given the limited number of doctoral students who have been mentored through the process of experimental research design, it follows that those students, once they become employed as counselor educator professionals, will most likely lack the confidence and competence to mentor doctoral graduate advisees in the use of experimental design research. If this deficit is not addressed, this historical pattern most likely will continue.

OSU's Counseling Academic Unit has generated an online electronic database, accessible to anyone through the OSU library homepage. Here every counselor education dissertation back to the first one successfully defended in 1947 up to the present can be

accessed in full text. Such a resource has been invaluable and has greatly contributed to the ability of the researchers to conduct this current study. OSU provides an example of transparency that openly models inclusiveness, facilitates the dissemination of new knowledge, and invites research efforts. In the next revision of CACREP standards, consideration should be given to the potential benefits of requiring CACREP-accredited programs to publish all doctoral dissertations in as transparent a manner, as OSU has done.

There has been no previous analysis or examination of counselor education dissertations prior to this study. The researchers' goal was to analyze and examine archival data in one of the oldest counselor education programs in the country for the purpose of uncovering trends and patterns, thereby opening the opportunity for other researchers to build on this initial contribution of new knowledge to the field.

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Table 2.1

Frequency Rank by Content Category

Rank	Content category	*n*
1	School counseling	44
2	Multiculturalism/diversity/multicultural counseling	28
3	Counselor education (preservice and/or in-service)	28
4	College counseling/student affairs	19
5	Human development	10
6	Group counseling	9
7	Counselor supervision	9
8	Community/clinical mental health counseling	7
9	Other	7
10	Research on development and evaluation of tests and measures	6
11	Rehabilitation counseling	6
12	Addiction counseling	6
13	Marriage/couple/family counseling	5
14	Individual counseling	4
15	Career counseling and research on vocational behavior	4
16	Mental illness	4
17	Gerontological counseling	3
18	Crisis/grief/loss counseling	2
19	Generic professional, ethical, and/or legal issues	1

Table 2.2

Frequency Rank by Research Methodology

Rank	Methodology	*n*
1	Quantitative	144
2	Mixed methods	32
3	Qualitative	25

Table 2.3

Frequency Rank by Quantitative Research Design

Rank	Research design	*n*
1	Correlational–cross-sectional	65
2	Descriptive or case study	25
3	Randomized experiment	17
4	Quasi-experimental	17
5	Measurement study	6
6	Correlational–longitudinal	5
7	Single-subject design	4
8	Program evaluation/outcome study	4
9	Meta-analysis	1

Chapter 3: Current Content and Methodology Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations

Current Content and Methodology Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations

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Abstract

This study analyzed a cross section of counselor education dissertations produced in a random selection of CACREP institutions located in Carnegie-designated research universities in the year 2013. Dissertations were examined as to content, research methods, and designs. A total 88.7% of the dissertations employed an observational design.

Keywords: Dissertation, CACREP, research methods

Current Content and Methodology Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations

Doctoral preparation in accredited counselor education programs includes developing expertise in four major areas: clinical practice, instruction, supervision, and scholarship (CACREP, 2009). Dating from the first statement of doctoral guidelines in 1977 (ACES, 1978; West, 1995), it is an expectation of counselor education doctoral programs that students will develop expertise in research methodology. As the climax of the doctoral education process, doctoral dissertations reflect both the research interests and sophistication of prospective graduates (Zanskas, Phillips, Tansey, & Smith, 2014). As in other fields of doctoral-level education and training, reviews of dissertations in terms of quantity, quality, content analysis, and research methodology are absent from the counselor education literature (Erlen, 2002; Morris, 2013).

There are currently 57 counselor education programs located in the United States that are Carnegie-designated research universities with accreditation from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). To date, there has been no inquiry or exploration into utilizing dissertations produced, as data, to analyze and examine current content and research methodologies in an effort to reflect trends in the field of counselor education. The lack of such research leaves a gap in the field that limits the ability of researchers to focus on issues advancing the quality of the field (Ronau et al., 2014). Promoting such research assists in preventing or minimizing unnecessary and unintended duplication of work by future doctoral candidates (Erlen, 2002; Ronau et al., 2014). These reasons provide impetus for the current study. One approach to systematically examining this body of literature is to conduct a cross-

sectional, observational study of counselor education dissertations. In an observational study, the frequency of an outcome is measured, providing a baseline of prevalence measures (Jepsen, Johnsen, Gillman, & Sørensen, 2004). Content analysis procedures can then be utilized to identify content and methodology trends. This is the approach of this study.

In counselor education, there are no direct studies concerning the prevalence rates of (a) content areas, (b) methodology, and (c) quantitative design choices. However, information on these areas exists in the rehabilitation counseling and social work journals. This information from allied fields of research will be reviewed first, and then the research questions for this study will be detailed.

Rehabilitation counseling began as a "specialized subspecialty" (Lofaro, 1983, p. 249) of the broader counseling profession. The earliest dissertation review in rehabilitation counseling was conducted using dissertations published in 1979. The goal was to assist researchers in reviews of the literature as well as to keep practitioners aware of current programmatic and evaluative research. Dissertations were listed under one of the following headings: "Education," including general, guidance and counseling, psychology, personality and mental hygiene, special, and tests and measurement, or "Psychology," including general, clinical, or social. With the use of additional inclusion criteria, a bibliography of 44 dissertations was produced. For each dissertation, citation information and a condensed abstract reflecting the purpose of the study, a description of the methodology, and the results were included (Lofaro, 1983). Lofaro created a second annual review using similar inclusion criteria for dissertations produced in 1980. He

included observations on topical trends as well as institutional productivity trends. In

1983, Lofaro published the third annual review of dissertations that had been produced in

1981. He already had in press a review of doctoral dissertations for the period from 1954

to 1978, for what he stated was "representative of the first quarter century of the

profession's (rehabilitation counseling) existence" (Lofaro, 1983, p. 222). This

comprehensive examination of doctoral dissertations in this retrospective manner

provided the opportunity to analyze research efforts in topical areas through a

commentary review that highlighted major findings and made recommendations for

future directions of doctoral research (Lofaro, 1983). Continuing this tradition, an article

written in 1988 presented a review of doctoral research in rehabilitation for 1982 and

1983. The article was intended as part of a continuing series providing ongoing

documentation and analysis of doctoral dissertation research (Leahy, Habeck, & Fabiano,

1988). For the next 5 years, doctoral dissertation research in rehabilitation was reviewed

and topical indexes provided (Beck & Janikowski, 1996; Beck, Janikowski, & Stebnicki,

1994; Leahy & Habeck, 1992; Leahy, Habeck, & Fabiano, 1989; Leahy, Van Tol, &

Habeck, 1990). All the studies over this 11-year period reported content areas. In a study

that reviewed dissertations from 1982 to 1983, there were 6 major content areas and 26

subcategories (Leahy et al., 1988). The next review added two new content areas for

family studies and social and cultural aspects of disability, bringing the content categories

to a total of 8 with 31 subcategories (Leahy et al., 1989). With the following year's

review came the addition of another two content categories of technology studies and

miscellaneous investigations, bringing the number of content categories to 10 major areas

with 26 subcategories (Leahy & Van Tol, 1990). Content categories remained consistent until the review for 1990–1991 was published. With the addition of two subcategories, substance abuse and brain injury, the number of subcategories was increased to 28 (Beck et al., 1994). The final review, produced by Beck and Janikowski in 1996, used the 10 major content categories but reduced the number of subcategories to 27. Tables showing rank ordering of content categories offered comparisons with previous years and discussions of emerging trends. This tradition of comprehensive summaries of doctoral-level rehabilitation research ended here. In 2012, the review process was resurrected. Covering the years 2005–2007, content categorization mirrored that of previous reviews, with the addition of assessment for methodology, type of data, type of analysis, and research design. The content review of dissertations resulted in the identification of 10 categories and 24 subcategories. Comparisons were provided between the content analysis in this review and reviews conducted on dissertations for 1986–1987, 1988–1989, 1990–1991, and 1992–1993. These comparisons provided observations of patterns and themes and ensuing discussion of emerging trends (Tansey, Zanskas, & Phillips, 2012). Two more reviews, one for 2008–2010 and another covering 2011, were published using the same methodology and gathering the same information on the type of research data, statistical analyses, and research design, as was done in the 2005–2007 review (Tansey, Phillips, & Zanskas, 2011; Zanskas et al., 2014). The content review of dissertations for 2008–2010 resulted in the identification of 9 categories and 28 subcategories (Tansey, Phillips et al., 2012). The content review of dissertations for 2011

resulted in the identification of eight categories. Because the project's focus was only 1 year, the inclusion of subcategories was deemed unnecessary (Zanskas et al., 2014).

In the scholarly literature in the field of social work, a recent article addressed the empirical status of social work dissertation research. Unlike the work historically produced in an effort to examine doctoral dissertations in the field of rehabilitation counseling, there has been a paucity of effort in social work. A study from the field of public administration (Adams & White, 1994) was one of four articles cited. Adams and White found that the proportion of dissertations utilizing a survey research methodology was highest in social work among the six disciplines they studied. Experimental designs were employed in 8% of the social work dissertations, ranking social work fourth compared to other disciplines. In the assessment of quality of dissertations, social work ranked last (Adams & White, 1994). A study examining the qualitative research process employed in a sample of 57 social work dissertations between 1986 and 1993 found that doctoral candidates justified their use of qualitative methods because it provided a method to better understand the lived experiences of the participants and to fill a gap in the current state of knowledge about the studied phenomenon (Brun, 1997). Most recently, Horton and Hawkins (2010) examined 252 dissertation abstracts and found only 13.49% were focused on intervention. Their conclusions led them to argue that the lack of focus on intervention outcome research by social work doctoral candidates indicates a need to examine social work education and the research system to affect the production of intervention research and bridge the research–practice schism that has been noted in the literature for the past 40 years (Horton & Hawkins, 2010).

The purpose of the most recently published article was to assess the social work profession's capacity to build and advance knowledge through an examination of the characteristics and trends of social work doctoral dissertation research. Data related to study design; methods, data sources, practice domains, participants, topics, and international focus were extracted and analyzed. Summarizing some of the salient findings reported, observational research designs far outweighed the 7% employing an experimental design, and quantitative analysis was utilized more than twice as frequently as qualitative methods. To the authors' knowledge, this is the most comprehensive study of social work dissertation research ever conducted. They believe their findings provide interesting and important insights into the trends and characteristics of social work research and doctoral education (Maynard, Vaughn, & Sarteschi, 2012).

To address the complete lack of research on counselor education dissertations, five research questions were employed:

1. What are the frequencies of content categories for counselor education dissertations?

2. What are the frequencies of research method categories for counselor education dissertations?

3. When the method choice was quantitative, what are the frequencies of design categories for counselor education dissertations?

4. Does selection of a research method (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) differ based on type of degree (i.e., PhD, EdD)?

5. Among PhD candidates, does the category of quantitative research design (experimental vs. observational) differ from chance?

Method

Research Design

This study employed a cross-sectional, observational design (Jepsen et al., 2004) of counselor education dissertations completed in nationally accredited programs (those meeting CACREP accreditation standards) located at Carnegie-designated research universities during a 1-year period (2013). Content analysis procedures were used to identify content and methodology trends. If the method was quantitative, then the dissertation was coded for research design. Content analysis relies on archival materials—in this study, dissertations—and codes them as data. This approach depends on a careful assessment of the relevant variables that are implicitly embedded within the material and a systematic method of recording the constituent information to apply formal methodologies. Insights stem from attention to systematic variations, patterns, or configurations within formally measured data fields (Baum, 2001). To address the first question, dissertations were classified into content focus areas. To address the second question, the dissertations were categorized into research method categories (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods). To address the third question, if the research method choice was quantitative, it was further delineated into 1 of 12 design subset categories. For the fourth question, research method (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) was compared by type of degree (PhD vs. EdD). In terms of the fifth question, the occurrence

of category of quantitative research design (experimental vs. observational) was

compared with chance.

An *a priori* power analysis were conducted using G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder,

Buchner, & Lang, 2009). For the fourth research question, the results form a 2×2

crosstab of frequency counts. As such, the power analysis was also for a χ^2 square test.

The G*Power test family and statistical test were (a) χ^2 tests and (b) goodness-of-fit tests:

contingency tables. The effect size was drawn from a mean of effects sizes reported for

attitudinal studies reported in Lipsey and Wilson (1993). The following input parameters

were employed: (a) one-tailed, (b) $w = 0.47$, (c) power $(1 - \beta$ err probability$) = .8$, (d)

degrees of freedom $= 1$, and (e) $\alpha = .05$. The G*Power 3.1 output included a sample size

of 36 and an actual power of .81. The original analysis plan for Research Question 5 was

a 2×2 χ^2. However, the count in one of the four cells was less than 5. Therefore, a

binomial test was completed on just the PhD dissertations. A post hoc power analyses

was conducted using G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). The

parameters for this analysis were (a) exact-proportion: difference from constant (binomial

test, one sample case), (b) post hoc: compute achieved power, (c) tail(s) $= 2$, (d) $g = .86$,

(e) $\alpha = .05$, and (f) total sample size $= 77$. The G*Power 3.1 output reported an actual

power of 1.00.

Dissertations

The data for this study consisted of counselor education dissertations completed

in nationally accredited programs (CACREP) located at Carnegie-designated research

universities for the year 2013, which was the most recent full calendar year for which

data were available. The researcher utilized the CACREP directory of accredited

programs then cross-referenced this list with a list of Carnegie-designated research

universities. The cross-referencing process produced a list of 57 institutions. The 39

institutions needed for the required power were randomly selected from the population

of CACREP accredited Carnegie research universities ($n = 57$). This random selection

without replacement was conducted using the Stat Trek's random number generator (Stat

Trek, 2014). The researcher utilized a variety of avenues to access these dissertations,

including making contact with the academic department in which the counselor education

program resides. Identified program leads were contacted by both telephone and e-mail

and asked to provide a list of students and the titles of dissertations produced in their

program in 2013. There are a few CACREP doctoral counselor education programs that

publish lists of their program dissertations, however, most do not. Some university

libraries have university repositories for dissertations produced at their schools, and when

these could be identified, the researcher utilized these. Many dissertations are a matter of

public record at http://www.proquest.com/products-services/pqdt.html. The results of

these methods will be addressed further in the limitations section. A total of 160

dissertations were analyzed for this study.

Measures

       Content coding. The content coding sheet employed in this study was an

adaptation of the classification of categories developed originally by Walter Buboltz and

his team's content analysis of the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* and *Journal of*

Counseling and Development (Blancher, Buboltz, & Soper, 2010; Buboltz, Deemer, &

Hoffmann, 2010; Buboltz, Miller, & Williams, 1999; Williams & Buboltz, 1999). All studies employing the Buboltz classification schema reported were able to obtain high intercoder reliability (e.g., Blancher et al., 2010). Additional categories were drawn from research on education dissertations (Nelson & Coorough, 1994; Walker & Haley-Mize, 2012). Finally, to fully reflect the CACREP standards, new content categories were added. This revised and augmented coding sheet is available from the second author.

Research method coding. The research method coding sheet was drawn from Maynard, Vaughn, and Sarteschi's (2012) study of social work dissertations**.** No changes were made to this coding sheet. Maynard et al. reported obtaining high intercoder reliability using their method-coding schema.

Quantitative design coding. The quantitative coding sheet was drawn from Maynard et al. (2012). The only changes made to this coding sheet were (a) Americanization of the spelling and (b) limiting the "Systematic Review or Meta-Analysis" section to "Meta-Analysis." Maynard et al. reported obtaining high intercoder reliability using their design-coding schema.

Overall design choice coding. For the purpose of analyzing Research Question 5, the research design variable was recoded into a new and separate variable titled overall design choice. The coding options for this new variable were the overall design choice categories presented by Maynard et al. (2012). Specifically, codes 1 through 5 were recoded in the new variable as 1 with the category titled "Experimental." Codes 6–12 were recoded in the new variable as 2 with the category titled "Observational."

Procedures

Content, research method, and quantitative design coding were accomplished using dissertation abstracts. Previous research has shown a near-perfect agreement between content analysis of dissertation abstracts and analysis of the total studies (Cleary, 1992; McCurdy & Cleary, 1984). If content, method, or design was not clear in the abstract, the text of the dissertation was consulted. For the method coding, intercoder reliability was calculated using Krippendorff's alpha via the ReCal software (Freelon, 2013; Krippendorff, 2004).

This intercoder reliability was established in a different study the coders completed using the same coding scheme (Richards, Dykeman, & Bender, 2014). The intercoder reliability established in that study was a Krippendorff's alpha of .94. This intercoder reliability was beyond the preset minimum of .90. Given the multiplicity of categories for the design and content coding areas, the coders separately rated all dissertations. All differences were reviewed and complete concurrence on each rating was achieved.

Data Analysis

For first three research questions, the frequency count for each category was reported. For the fourth research question, a 2×2 χ^2 test of independence was used. The rows for the crosstab were the overall design categories (i.e., experimental or observational) and the columns were the degree type (i.e., PhD or EdD). The original analysis plan for research question number five was a 2×2 χ^2. However, the count in one of the four cells was less than 5. Therefore, a binomial test was completed on just the

PhD dissertations. A post hoc power analysis was conducted using G*Power 3.1 (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). The parameters for this analysis were (a) exact-proportion: difference from constant (binomial test, one sample case), (b) post hoc: compute achieved power, (c) tail(s) = 2, (d) g = .86, (e) α = .05, and (f) total sample size = 77. The G*Power 3.1 output reported an actual power of 1.00.

Results

In terms of Research Question 1, the top three ranking content areas were counselor education, school counseling, and multiculturalism/diversity/multicultural counseling. For the top ranking data of the content categories, the reader is referred to Table 3.1. In terms of Research Question 2, the results showed that more than twice as many dissertations utilized quantitative research methodology compared to the use of qualitative methodology. The use of mixed methods comprised fewer than 11% of the total. The reader is referred to Table 3.2 for the full descriptive results. In terms of Research Question 3, out of the 92 dissertations that chose to utilize quantitative methodology, 68, almost 74%, chose a correlational–cross-sectional research design. For the full results of the research design category ranking, the reader is referred to Table 3.3.

In terms of Research Question 4, the results of the 2×2 χ^2 test of independence were not significant. There is no relationship between the type of degree and selection of a research method (p = .1512, χ^2 test statistic = 2.0603). In terms of Research Question 5, the result of the two-sided binomial test was significant (n = 86, P1/P2 = 9/77, p = .00, B = 8.341).

Discussion

This study asked the following five research questions. First, what are the frequencies of content categories for counselor education dissertations? Second, what are the frequencies of research method categories for counselor education dissertations? Third, when the method choice was quantitative, what are the frequencies of design categories for counselor education dissertations? Fourth, does selection of a research method (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, or mixed) differ based on type of degree (i.e., PhD, EdD)? And fifth, among PhD candidates, does the category of quantitative research design (experimental vs. observational) differ from chance?

The first three research questions are a report of descriptive data. With regard to the first question, it seems reasonable and expected that counselor education as a topic would produce the most dissertations. Doctoral students being trained to instruct and educate future counselors had this topic as the top priority of focus for their research. School counseling emerged as the next rank-ordered content area. With the development of the ASCA framework, national standards, and the focus on advocacy for the provision of counselors providing a defined role within the K–12 school system, this seems predictable and appropriate. The publication of Sue et al.'s model of multicultural competencies in 1982 led to the incorporation of that model into most graduate counselor training. It is a CACREP expectation that counselors graduate with a competency and commitment to offer services that respect and honor the diversity and multicultural composition of our present society. That the multicultural content area emerged in the top three rankings is a testament to the value placed on this competency by doctoral student

researchers. As it pertains to Research Question 2, quantitative research methodology dominates the choice of doctoral students' research methodology options. Historically, this has been the only method of research in the scientific literature. With the CACREP standards requiring students to be trained in both quantitative and qualitative methodology, this dominance may subside. Even more dominance appeared in students' choice of research design when their method choice was quantitative. In response to Research Question 3, 87.3% of doctoral students utilized observational not experimental design. Evidence-based practice has become a focus in the counseling field, yet the body of research literature being produced is observational, not experimental.

Pertaining to Research Question 4, the results of this study confirm that students in pursuit of a PhD are just as likely to choose similar research methodology as those students pursuing an EdD. In the field of education, some academicians hold the view that there is a difference in the research methodology chosen by those who pursue a PhD and those who pursue an EdD. From the results of this study, no evidence in support of this view was found.

The results from data analysis on Research Question 5 indicate that method two, observational design, dominates across both EdD and PhD dissertations. Of the 92 dissertations that were coded, 77 of them (83.7%) utilized an observational design. No causal claims can be made from these studies; only correlations can be inferred.

Limitations

A major limitation was the lack of transparency in the process of trying to identify counselor education dissertations. In an attempt to identify authors' names, titles of their

dissertations, abstracts, and full-text online dissertations, the researcher encountered multiple roadblocks. Of the 39 universities contacted, there were only a handful of responses to telephone and e-mail requests. Despite student names and titles of dissertations being public information, some responses identified concerns that the information being requested was protected by FERPA guidelines. On one end of the continuum, OSU created a database with online, full-text access to every counselor education dissertation ever published in the department. At the other end of the continuum, a prominent southern research university was willing to provide a list of titles of counselor education dissertations but stated their parent corporation prohibited them from releasing any student names. Attempts by the researcher to match titles with authors' names were fruitless. None of their dissertations are published in any dissertation databases. Their research librarian stated there was no way to access this university's dissertations. None of these dissertations were able to be included in the data set.

Of the remaining 160 dissertations identified as falling within the parameters of the sample, 17 were not able to be included in the data analysis. Despite multiple attempts to gain access to these dissertations through contact with counselor education departments, reference librarians at the respective universities, and the utilization of several online dissertation databases, they remained inaccessible. Even though some of them were available in electronic format, it was discovered that access was "restricted" to current students and staff at the university. Some were restricted due to the author's choice. An author may request a restriction if his or her intention was to publish the

findings as a book or manuscript. Other dissertations were only available in print form and not electronically. To access these, one would need to a make an on-site visit to the university library. Others were inaccessible with no reason discovered as to why.

More limitations emerged during the search process. In searching through the online dissertation database "Dissertations and Theses," it is possible to narrow the search to a specific department within a specific university. When that technique was used, often the title of the dissertation appeared to be related to counselor education, but when the name of the dissertator was later cross-checked using a Google search, the student's PhD or EdD was not in counselor education after all but rather in an allied field such as counseling psychology, human development, or educational administration. There was no streamlined way to retrieve these dissertations.

All of the programs in this study were CACREP-accredited programs. We do not know what may be occurring in non-CACREP-accredited programs.

Implications for Researchers

With 83.7% of the quantitative methods chosen being observational by design, no causal claims can be made from these studies, only correlations can be inferred. This does not bode well for the clinical counseling field, where the use of evidence-based practice is expected and, in many settings, required. Given so few doctoral students have been mentored through the process of experimental research design, it follows that those students will most likely lack confidence and competence to mentor doctoral graduate advisees in the use of experimental design research once they become employed as counselor educator professionals. When practitioners look to the research literature for

current intervention studies, they will find very few being produced in the field of counselor education dissertations.

The results of this study showed no difference between research methodologies chosen by students within the counselor education field pursuing a PhD and those students pursuing an EdD. These results can contribute to the ongoing dialogue addressing current reform efforts in schools of education to eliminate the EdD and only offer the PhD, to unify the two degrees, or to design programs to differentiate differences that may be important to acknowledge between the two degrees (Walker, 2011).

If counselor educators are to take full advantage of the research produced in our profession, the issue of transparency in the publication and utilization of our doctoral dissertations needs to be addressed. Rather than keeping doctoral research hidden on shelves, buried in file cabinets, or forgotten on a hard drive or on a cloud, making it available and accessible in an electronic format to as many practitioners, researchers, and academicians as possible is a wise investment of time and energy. In the next revision of CACREP standards, consideration should be given to the potential benefits of requiring CACREP-accredited programs to publish all doctoral dissertations in an electronic format accessible online to everyone.

This study is the first content analysis of doctoral dissertations in the counselor education field. Trends in content, research methodology, and research design have been identified. In discussing limitations and implications for the counseling profession, it is hoped that doctoral dissertation research will be a regular and ongoing research topic.

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Table 3.1

Frequency Rank by Content Category

Rank	Content	*n*
1	Counselor education (preservice and/or in-service)	33
2	School counseling	23
3	Multiculturalism/diversity/multicultural counseling	22
4	Generic professional, ethical, and/or legal issues	11
5	Research on development and evaluation of tests and measures	9
6	Marriage/couple/family counseling	7
7	Addiction counseling	7
8	College counseling/student affairs	5
9	Individual counseling	4
10	Crisis/grief/loss counseling	4

Table 3.2

Frequency Rank by Research Methodology

Rank	Methodology	*n*
1	Quantitative	92
2	Qualitative	41
3	Mixed methods	10

Table 3.3

Frequency Rank by Research Design

Rank	Research design	n
1	Correlational–cross-sectional	68
2	Measurement study	7
3	Quasi-experimental	6
4	Randomized experiment	4
5	Program evaluation/outcome study	3
6	Descriptive or case study	2
7	Correlational–longitudinal	1
8	Other	1
9	Regression discontinuity or interrupted time series	0
10	Single subject design	0

Chapter 4: General Conclusion

In order to inform future research efforts in the Counselor Education field, it is necessary to look at patterns and trends of historical research efforts as well as current research efforts. The two manuscripts in this dissertation are thematically linked in their purpose to generate the first examination and analyses of doctoral dissertations in the field of Counselor Education.

To understand historical trends in counselor education dissertations, the first manuscript analyzed the content, research method and research design choices of dissertations produced in Oregon State University's Counseling Academic Unit (CAU) over a 65-year period (1949–2014). The research was aimed at generating descriptive data regarding both frequency counts and ranking of content areas, research methodology and research design. In addition, the research aimed to uncover the presence of any decadal differences in the choices made by counselor education doctoral students in reference to (1) content, (2) research methods and (3) quantitative research design.

To understand current trends, the content, research method, and quantitative research design choices from a random selection of CACREP institutions located in Carnegie-designated research universities were assessed. The research was aimed at generating descriptive data regarding both frequency counts and ranking of content areas, research methodology and research design. In addition, inferential statistics were used to examine possible differences between choices of methodology by the type of degree earned (i.e., PhD or EdD).

Moving through the process of accessing dissertations for the historical trends manuscript was seamless. OSU's CAU has generated an online electronic database, accessible to anyone through the OSU library homepage. Here, every counselor education dissertation back to the first one successfully defended in 1947 can be accessed full text online. Such a resource was invaluable and contributed to the ability of the researchers to conduct this current study. OSU provides an example of transparency that openly models inclusiveness, facilitates the dissemination of new knowledge, and invites research efforts.

In attempting a similar process to access dissertations for the year 2013, major roadblocks and multiple bottlenecks were encountered. A major limitation that emerged was the lack of transparency in the process of trying to identify: (1) dissertations with a counselor education major, (2) authorship, (3) titles, (4) access to abstracts, and (5) access to full text online.

Several important implications for the profession of Counselor Education emerged from this research study. One of the areas relates to an ongoing conversation regarding the PhD and the EdD. The results of this study showed no difference between research methodologies chosen by students within the Counselor Education field pursuing a PhD and those students pursuing an EdD. These results can contribute to the ongoing dialogue addressing current reform efforts in colleges of Education. Options under consideration are to eliminate the EdD and only offer the PhD, to make advances to unify the two degrees, or to design programs to differentiate differences that may be important to acknowledge between the two degrees (Walker, 2011).

Another area for dialogue is related to the dominance of the choice of quantitative research methodology coupled with correlational cross sectional design choices. In the manuscript analyzing current trends, when the design choice was quantitative, 83.7 percent of counselor education doctoral students chose to utilize an observational design. No causal claims can be made from these studies. Similar findings were reported in the manuscript analyzing historical trends. When the research methodology chosen was quantitative, observational studies outweighed experimental studies about three to one. When experimental research design category choices were added together, (i.e., randomized experiment, quasi-experimental, and single subject design) they accounted for only approximately 26 percent of doctoral students' research design choices. The remaining approximately 74 percent of research design categories chosen were observational. This circumstance does not bode well for the clinical counseling field where the use of evidence based practice is called for, expected, and in many settings, required. Given so few doctoral students have been mentored through the process of experimental research design, it follows that those students will most likely lack confidence and competence to mentor doctoral graduate advisees in the use of experimental design research once they become employed as counselor educator professionals. If this deficit is not addressed, the extant historical pattern most likely will continue. When practitioners look to the research literature for current intervention studies, they will find very few being produced as part of dissertation research in Counselor Education .

With the awareness of content areas, research methods and designs that are underutilized in the research literature, counselor educators and the students they advise can pursue pairing content areas that are less well researched with methods and design choices that are more robust but less employed. The goal of this pairing would be to increase the production of causal experimental designs to assist practitioners in the field to be well equipped with cutting edge interventions that are shown by research to be efficacious.

If counselor educators are to take full advantage of the research produced in our profession, the issue of transparency in the publication and utilization of our doctoral dissertations needs to be addressed. At present, much of dissertation research in Counselor Education remains hidden. In the next revision of CACREP standards, consideration should be given to the potential benefits of requiring CACREP accredited programs to both index and publish full-text online all doctoral dissertations. As such, future research efforts can be designed so that counselor educator professionals and their students will have a baseline upon which they can reflect, plan, and carry out research to meet gaps in scholarship literature.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Dissertation Content and Methods Coding Sheets

1. Student (Last, First): _____

2. School: _____

3. Year: _____

4. Degree:

1 = PhD
2 = EdD
3 = Not Specified
4 = Other (specify) (#5 on coding sheet)

6. Style of Dissertation

1 = Traditional 5 Chapter
2 = Manuscript Style

n.b.:   If a dissertation is manuscript, use the following coding algorithm for research design:
a. 1 quantitative and 1 qualitative manuscript = Mixed Methods.
b. 2 quantitative = flip a coin (heads for first manuscript) and code based on the article that won the coin flip.
c. 2 qualitative = Qualitative.

7. Content:

#	Content category
1	**Multiculturalism/Diversity/Multicultural Counseling:** These dissertations were coded as such when the primary purpose of studies was to investigate issues stated as particularly relevant to ethnic minority, disadvantaged, gay, lesbian, physically challenged, or disabled individuals or persons living with HIV/AIDS. These dissertations were included in an effort to capture research with an orientation toward multiculturalism/diversity. Many of these dissertations could be coded into other content categories; however, by doing so, the multicultural/diversity dimension would have been lost. This category is believed to provide an operationalization of the degree to which the value of multiculturalism/diversity has been internalized by counseling. *This category trumps all others.*
2	**Research on Development and Evaluation of Tests and Measures:** These dissertations reported on the development and assessment of psychological instruments. For example, if a study reported on the development or validation process of an instrument, it would be coded into this category. Examples of the types of dissertations coded into this category are those reporting on objective and subjective personality tests, intelligence tests, aptitude and achievement tests, interest inventories, values measures, and counseling instruments. *This category trumps all others except the multicultural category.*
3	**Individual Counseling:** Outcome and process research specific to counseling individuals. This category is selected when the particularities of application in a specific setting (e.g., school) are not the primary focus.

4	**Group Counseling:** Outcome and process research specific to counseling in a group format. This category is selected when the particularities of application in a specific setting are not the primary focus.
5	**Crisis/Grief/Loss Counseling: This category includes suicidality and threat assessment.** This category is selected when the particularities of application in a specific setting are not the primary focus.
6	**Rehabilitation Counseling:** Outcome and process research specific to this subspecialty; organization and management of the subspecialty (including certification); practice patterns of counselors in this subspecialty; history of the subspecialty.
7	**School Counseling:** Outcome and process research specific to this subspecialty; organization and management of the subspecialty (including certification); practice patterns of counselors in this subspecialty; history of the subspecialty.
8	**Marriage/Couple/Family Counseling:** Outcome and process research specific to this subspecialty; organization and management of the subspecialty (including certification); practice patterns of counselors in this subspecialty; history of the subspecialty.
9	**Gerontological Counseling:** Outcome and process research specific to this subspecialty; organization and management of the subspecialty (including certification); practice patterns of counselors in this subspecialty; history of the subspecialty.
10	**Career Counseling and Research on Vocational Behavior:** Outcome and process research specific to this subspecialty; organization and management of the subspecialty (including certification); practice patterns of counselors in this subspecialty; history of the subspecialty. Also, research concerning the career development of individuals and groups in various settings. However, vocational instrument development and validation dissertations were coded into the development and evaluation of tests and measures category.
11	**College Counseling/Student Affairs:** Outcome and process research specific to this subspecialty; organization and management of the subspecialty (including certification); practice patterns of counselors in this subspecialty; history of the subspecialty.
12	**Community/Clinical Mental Health Counseling:** Outcome and process research specific to this subspecialty; organization and management of the subspecialty (including certification); practice patterns of counselors in this subspecialty; history of the subspecialty.
13	**Addiction Counseling:** Outcome and process research specific to this subspecialty; organization and management of the subspecialty (including certification); practice patterns of counselors in this subspecialty; history of the subspecialty.
14	**Counselor Supervision:** Outcome and process research specific to counselor supervision (group, individual, triadic).
15	**Generic Ethical and/or Legal Issues:** This category is selected when the ethical and/or legal issue addressed crosses subspecialties.
16	**Counselor Education (Preservice and/or In-service):** Outcome and process research specific to training counselors; organization and management of Counselor Education; practice patterns of Counselor Educators, history of Counselor Education; program accreditation.
17	**Research on attitudes and beliefs about counselors, counseling services, and mental health services:** This category contains dissertations dealing with perceptions of service providers by the external public.
18	**Mental Illness:** This category deals with one or more of the following in reference to mental illness: diagnosis, nomenclature, course of the disease, and stigma.
19	**Human Development:** This category deals with normative developmental and/or personological issues (including attachment). It is noteworthy that dissertations on personality instrument development were placed into the research on development and evaluation of tests and measures category.

20	**Research Methods and Statistics:** Dissertations were coded as such if they emphasized relatively novel applications of research methodologies or statistical procedures to counseling. For example, an article detailing how discriminant analysis may be used in treatment outcome evaluation research would be coded into this category.
21	**Other (specify) (#8 on coding sheet)**

8. Other:

Main Source: Buboltz, W. C., Miller, M., & Williams, D. J. (1999). Content analysis of research in the Journal of Counseling Psychology (1973–1998). *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 46*(4), 496–503. doi:10.1037//0022-0167.46.4.496

9. Research Method:

Code	Design
1	*Quantitative*: studies that utilized statistical, mathematical or computational techniques
2	*Qualitative*: analysis of unstructured data, often in the form of words, pictures and objects
3	*Mixed methods*: studies employing quantitative and qualitative techniques
4	*Unable to determine*

Source: Maynard, B. R., Vaughn, M. G., & Sarteschi, C. M. (2012). The empirical status of social work dissertation research: Characteristics, trends and implications for the field. *British Journal of Social Work, 44,* 267–289. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcs123

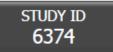*If #9 was coded as "1," then complete #10:*
10. Quantitative Study Design:

Code	Design
	Experimental: the researcher assessed the effects of one or more researcher-manipulated interventions or treatments
1	*Randomized experiment*
2	*Regression discontinuity or interrupted time series*
3	*Quasi-experiment—other*
4	*Single subject design*
5	*Likely an experimental study, but unable to determine specific type*
	Observational: the researcher manipulated no variables
6	*Descriptive or case study*: no relationship between variables was measured, may have included outcome measures along with numerical data in the form of descriptive statistics, but no inferential statistical tests or probability-based estimations
7	*Correlational–cross-sectional*: quantitative analyses were analyzed to observe relationships among variables at one point in time
8	*Correlational –longitudinal*: quantitative analyses were analyzed to observe relationships among variables at two or more points in time
9	*Meta-analysis*: synthesize results of relevant research using systematic procedures and methods
10	*Measurement study*: validation, factor analysis, etc., of a measure
11	*Program evaluation/outcome study*: an intervention, or different conditions, is examined and an outcome variable is measured, but the researcher did not assign the intervention or manipulate the independent variable
12	*Other*: observational studies that did not fit in any of the above categories or unable to determine specific type

Source: Maynard, B. R., Vaughn, M. G., & Sarteschi, C. M. (2012). The empirical status of social work dissertation research: Characteristics, trends and implications for the field. *British Journal of Social Work, 44,* 267–289. doi:10.1093/bjsw/bcs123

Appendix B: Research Determination

OSU Oregon State
UNIVERSITY
Institutional Review Board
Office of Research Integrity | Oregon State University
B308 Kerr Administration Building, Corvallis, OR 97331-2140
Telephone (541) 737-8008
irb@oregonstate.edu | http://oregonstate.edu/irb/

STUDY ID
6374

Notification Type	**RESEARCH DETERMINATION**		
	IRB REVIEW NOT REQUIRED		
Date of Notification	07/07/2014		
Study Title	Content and Methodology Trends in Counselor Education Dissertations		
Person Submitting Form	Judy Richards		
Principal Investigator	Cass Dykeman		
Study Team Members	N/A		
Funding Source	None	Proposal #	N/A
PI on Grant or Contract	N/A		

The above referenced proposal was reviewed by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office. The IRB has determined that your project, as submitted, DOES NOT meet the definition of research involving human subjects under the regulations set forth by the Department of Health and Human Services 45CFR46.102.

IRB review and approval of this study is not required.

Please proceed with the project as it was described.

Please note that amendments to this project may impact this determination.