

## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### Background and Theoretical Framework

*"The basic function of consciousness is awareness, and the function of awareness is the regulation of behavior" (Branden, 1971).*

We cannot hope to understand experience without also considering its connection with other cognitive processes and abilities as well as the emotional and affective concomitants in the situations in which experience was gained (Fiedler, 1994). Part of the problem is that:

academic intelligence offers virtually no preparation for the turmoil -- or opportunity -- life's vicissitudes bring. Yet even though a high IQ is no guarantee of prosperity, prestige, or happiness in life, our schools and our culture fixate on academic abilities, ignoring *emotional* intelligence (for the purposes of this study, personal-emotional characteristics), a set of traits -- some might call it character -- that also matters immensely for our personal destiny. (Fiedler, 1994, p. 36)

One of psychology's open secrets is the relative inability of grades, IQ, or SAT scores, despite their popular mystique, to predict unerringly who will succeed in life. There are widespread exceptions to the rule that IQ predicts success --many (or more) exceptions than cases that fit the rule. At best, IQ contributes about 20 percent to the factors that determine life success, which leaves 80 percent to other forces. (Goleman, 1995, p.34)

Of most interest to this researcher, was this set of 'other characteristics' (i.e., '80 percent of other forces'), referred to here as personal-emotional characteristics of effective counselors. Examples of these 'other forces' include being able to motivate oneself and persist in the face of frustrations; to control impulse and delay gratification; to regulate one's moods and keep distress

from swamping the ability to think; to empathize and to hope. According to Goleman (1995) "people with well-developed emotional skills are more likely to be content and effective in their lives, mastering the habits of mind that foster their own productivity;" (p. 36).

With this in mind, the current study was conducted to examine the relationship between research on effective counselor characteristics (ECC) and actual admission requirements of master's level CACREP counseling programs. Literature on effective counselor characteristics and other topics were reviewed and current admission practices and requirements of the 129 master's level CACREP counseling programs across the country, as identified by information from the CACREP (1999) Directory of Accredited Programs, were assessed.

For the purposes of this study, a 'standard set of admission requirements' are requirements that include and are balanced between cognitive-behavioral characteristics and personal-emotional characteristics of effective counselors. In this study, cognitive-behavioral characteristics were defined as logical, informational and verbal, accumulated facts (Confer, 1987) and consist of cognitive intelligence such as knowledgeable about people, places, things, and skills, theories and techniques and cognitively driven behavior. On the other hand, personal-emotional characteristics were defined as what Goleman (1995) described as emotional intelligence (EQ) - knowing without necessarily knowing in words (Confer, 1987). Some of these characteristics include knowing and managing your feelings well, motivating yourself with spirit and persistence, and exhibiting empathy and compassion. Finally, throughout this study all references to counseling programs imply Master's Counseling Programs accredited by The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and to prospective students imply master's-level counseling students.

## Characteristics of Effective Counselors & Therapies

“The counseling profession has historically searched for characteristics, traits, behaviors, and other variables that contribute to successful helping relationships” (Schmidt, 1994, p. 3). The assumption is that if counselor educators are aware of student's personal-emotional characteristics they can better prepare them to be effective counselors. The most recent trend in assessment of counselor performance has been to broaden the perspective on what it means to be an effective counselor, that is, to acknowledge that there is more to being a good counselor than just counseling skill (Bell, 1990). For example, counselors inevitably bring their personal feelings and issues into the therapeutic relationship so that past experiences, values, and beliefs influence their interactions with clients (Sumerel & Borders, 1996).

Purkey and Schmit (1987) believe that to be an effective counselor the individual must be keenly aware of his/her own development, frailties, competencies, and limitations. “Learning to be a counselor is both an emotional and an intellectual experience and of the two, the emotional part is the most crucial” (Altucher, 1967, p. 268-269). Likewise, Janson (1998), in expressing his feelings about becoming a counselor, recognized that knowing himself, having confidence, and focusing on the relationship between himself as a counselor and each client, were the most critical elements of being an effective counselor.

Aspects of a counselor that affect the counseling relationship are the counselor's role, theoretical orientation, work context, AND *personal experience* (Holiman & Lauver, 1987). The most pervasive filter through which counselors operate is composed of the individual counselor's own background and cultural heritage (Holiman and Lauver, 1987). Many researchers have concluded that effective counseling is based more on the personality characteristics of the counselor than on specific techniques used, therefore, effective screening of prospective

counseling students needs to be based on personality characteristics in order to predict clinical success (Frame & Stevens-Smith, 1995). Personal-emotional characteristics and life experiences of the individual counselor are crucial to how a counselor will perform and respond with clients. Hence, individuals who are emotionally healthy and aware of their humanness can improve and enhance their functioning as counselors. Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987) indicated supervisee (students learning to be counselors) characteristics such as personal maturity and cognitive complexity might affect how rapidly supervisees develop. Furthermore, success as a counselor may depend less on analytical aptitude and much more on creative and practical abilities (personal-emotional characteristics), as well as the ability to adjust to and cope with (i.e., characteristics of Emotional IQ) life's stressors (Leverett-Main, 2004). However, few studies have actually examined the impact of these personal-emotional characteristics on supervisee development.

Many (e.g., Bergin & Lambert, 1978; Bergin & Suinn, 1975; Beutler, 1979; Goldstein & Stein, 1976; Kellner, 1975; Lambert & Bergin, 1973; Meltzoff & Kornreich, 1970; Rachman & Wilson, 1980) previous reviews have analyzed studies comparing a wide range of psychotherapies with most, but not all, reaching the same conclusion (Bergin & Garfield, 1994): There are no differences between therapies (Luborsky, Singer, and Luborsky, 1975). Meta-analytic methods have now been extensively applied to large groups of comparative studies and these reviews generally offer similar conclusions (i.e., little or no difference between therapies) (Bergin & Garfield, 1994). Smith et al (1990) and Sloane, Staples, Cristol, Yorkston, and Whipple (1975) also concluded from their studies that the differences between therapies were minimal to none.

This general finding of no differences in counseling outcomes has a number of alternative explanations. One alternative, first hypothesized by Rosenzweig (1936), was that different therapies embody *common factors* that are curative although not emphasized by the theory of change central to a particular school (Bergin & Garfield, 1994). Thus, it appears that factors common across treatments are accounting for a substantial amount of improvement found in counseling clients. These so-called common factors may even account for most of the gains that result from counseling interventions. Client-Centered therapy describes these common therapeutic factors as "necessary and sufficient conditions" for client personality change; accurate empathy, positive regard, nonpossessive warmth, and congruence or genuineness (Bergin & Garfield, 1994). These factors are also some of the personal-emotional characteristics of effective counselors. Almost all schools of counseling accept the notion that counselor variables are important for significant progress in psychotherapy and in fact, fundamental in the formation of a working alliance (Lambert, 1983).

Miller, Taylor & West (1980) in their study found a strong relationship between counselor empathy and client outcome. These results strongly advocate the importance of counselor communicative skills even with behavioral interventions. Lafferty, Beutler, and Crago (1991) found that the less effective therapists were shown to have lower levels of empathic understanding. Empathy is an important component of counselor training and counselors' empathic ability is closely correlated with their therapeutic effectiveness (Maciak, 2002). Patients frequently attribute their success in treatment to the counselor's personal qualities. In Lazarus' (1971) uncontrolled follow-up study of 112 patients, patients believed that the personal qualities (personal-emotional characteristics) of the therapist were more important than specific technical factors, about which there was little agreement.

In addition to common factors such as empathy, positive regard, nonpossessive warmth, congruence, and genuineness, three counselor qualities were identified as discriminating more helpful from less helpful counselors: 1) the counselor's adjustment, skill, and interest in helping clients (Luborsky, McLellan, Woody, O'Brien, & Auerbach, 1985); 2) the purity of the treatment each offered; and 3) the quality of the counselor-client relationship (Bergin & Garfield, 1994). Careful studies like Ricks' (1974) give strong support to traditional clinical beliefs regarding the effects of therapist personality and countertransference phenomena on outcomes (Bergin & Garfield, 1994). Interpersonal, social and affective factors (personal-emotional characteristics) common across therapies, continue to be major stimulators of client improvement. "Enduring subjective therapist traits include personality and coping patterns, emotional well-being, values, attitudes, and beliefs, and cultural attitudes" (Beutler, Crago, & Arizmendi, 1986 cited in Bergin & Garfield, 1994, p. 235). Further personal-emotional indicators of effective counselors are open-mindedness (Harvey & Weary, 1985; Pope, 1996), flexibility, locus of perceived control (Deysach, Rooss, & Hiers, 1977; Pope, 1996), and emotional well-being (i.e., positive self-concept) (Lambert & Bergin, 1983; Wiggins & Giles, 1984; Beutler et al, 1986; Bergin & Garfield, 1994; Pope, 1996).

Much of the research states that personal-emotional characteristics of counselors are "crucial," "most important over all," and so on, yet few have attempted to study, develop or foster these elements. Counselor educators implicitly agree that their programs and supervisors need to do more than follow an educational (i.e., cognitive) model. Unfortunately, the literature has revealed limited efforts to advocate for a model of counselor development and supervision that emphasizes the human element (i.e., personal-emotional qualities) in admissions or the counseling processes and relationships. Most CACREP programs have not attempted to utilize a

standard set of admission requirements that are balanced between evaluating cognitive-behavioral characteristics and personal-emotional characteristics. Usually the emphasis is on the cognitive-behavioral. Likewise, there is no evidence related to existing characteristics of CACREP admission requirements that demonstrate the examination or consideration of personal-emotional characteristics. Part of the problem is the difficulty of measuring such abstract concepts as life experiences and personal-emotional qualities. Many authors (e.g., Bergin, 1980; Beutler, Clarkin, Crago, & Bergan, 1991; Bergin & Garfield, 1994; Khan & Cross, 1983; Seymour, 1982) have pointed out that in practice, one's effectiveness as a counselor and a person and one's personal-emotional characteristics become so intertwined that it is virtually impossible to differentiate among them. As Sternberg (1988 in Dickinson, on-line) stated, "If we want to measure intelligence, we can and should measure it broadly rather than in the narrow ways that have failed to give a true picture of human capacities." "There are hundreds and hundreds of ways to succeed, and many, many different abilities that will help you get there" (Howard Gardner, Nov. 3, 1986 in an interview with Daniel Goleman).

Having knowledge of effective counselor characteristics per the literature, this researcher then examined graduate admissions and the current admissions requirements of CACREP-accredited counseling programs.

### Admission Requirements

After examining the 129 CACREP counseling programs and reviewing the literature on non-CACREP programs, there appears to be little difference in admissions' requirements and procedures between programs endorsed by The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and non-CACREP-accredited programs. Admissions to counseling master's programs, whether CACREP-accredited or not, typically require

prospective students to submit their grade point average (GPA), their college transcripts, a basic application which asks for demographic information, their Graduate Record Examination (GRE) or Miller Analogy Test (MAT) scores, and in some cases 2-3 letters of recommendation, preferably from previous professors. Of course, there are some CACREP programs that ask for more requirements, but the majority do not. This researcher categorized these admission requirements and labeled them Cognitive-Behavioral Admission Requirements (see Table 1, p.75). As can be seen in Table 2 (p. 76), Personal-Emotional (Admission Requirements) characteristics are, at best, minimally assessed during admission reviews of prospective counseling students.

The focus of cognitive-behavioral characteristics in admission requirements seems to stem from Counselor Educators primarily focusing on intelligence and cognitive abilities with evidence to suggest this focus has been effective, although not in determining personal-emotional characteristics (Borck & Fawcett, 1982; Leverett-Main, 2004). Emphasis has been placed on possessing content knowledge and knowing theories, with some attention to application of these theories and knowledge, but little attention to the personal-emotional characteristics of students learning to be counselors. Many programs, whether credentialed or not, subscribe to the eight core CACREP foundation areas consisting of 1) Human Growth & Development, 2) Social and Cultural Foundations, 3) Helping Relationships, 4) Group Work, 5) Career and Lifestyle Development, 6) Appraisal, 7) Research and Program Evaluation, 8) Professional Orientation including counseling skills and areas of specialization. These core areas are the easiest to assess and measure yet only minimally address the counselor as a whole person (i.e., their personal-emotional characteristics). Most counselor educators believe the personal development of prospective counselors is very important and admit wanting to focus on this area



(Carney, Cobia, & Shannon, 1998). Despite this belief, they have made little progress, citing personal and psychological wellness or the student's appropriateness for the profession as the areas of a student's development most difficult to evaluate (Carney et al, 1998). Evaluations of performance have been defined as assessments that "require students to actively accomplish complex and significant tasks, while bringing to bear prior knowledge, recent learning, and relevant skills to solve realistic or authentic problems" (Herman et al., 1992, in Hanna & Smith, 1998, p.270) - all of which is focused on one's cognitive-behavioral abilities.

With this possible deficit in mind, this researcher sought to develop a framework for a standard set of admission requirements (balanced between cognitive-behavioral and personal-emotional characteristics).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problems for this study were threefold. The first two related to identified effective counselor characteristics and current admission requirements of master's-level CACREP-accredited counseling programs. Both Counselor Educators and their program's admission requirements have traditionally focused on assessing cognitive-behavioral characteristics, often ignoring the personal-emotional characteristics (PEC) in admission requirements of prospective students that contribute to being an effective counselor. The third aspect was that there are no standard admission requirements for assessing prospective counseling students that focus on personal-emotional characteristics. The three specific problems investigated in this study included:

- 1) Counselor educators are not sure and cannot agree on what the characteristics of effective counselors are or should be.

- 2) Personal-emotional characteristics (PEC) of effective counselors are usually either not included or are included minimally in admission requirements of master's counseling programs.
- 3) There is no framework for a standard set of admission requirements for assessing prospective master's-level counseling students.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study consisted of three main components:

1. To identify effective counselor characteristics (ECC);
2. To describe existing admission requirements of CACREP counseling programs.
3. To develop a framework for a standard set of admission requirements for assessing prospective counseling students.

### **Research Questions**

Three specific research questions were addressed in order to achieve the purpose of this study.

1. What does the research indicate are the characteristics of effective counselors?
2. What are current admission requirements of CACREP-accredited counseling master's programs in the United States?
3. A) To what extent do admission requirements and procedures of CACREP counseling programs reflect and assess characteristics of effective counselors? What's missing?  
B) What would a framework for a standard set of admission requirements consist of if they were balanced between cognitive-behavioral characteristics (CBC) and personal-emotional characteristics (PEC) of effective counselors?

Information collected was used to develop a framework for a standard set of admission requirements to assess prospective students for CACREP counseling programs. To answer the research questions, operational steps of this study are summarized below:

1. Research Question 1: Conducted a literature review of effective counselor characteristics (ECC).
2. Research Question 2: A) Analyzed admission requirements of the 129 master's-level CACREP counseling programs;  
B) Reviewed literature on graduate admission requirements;  
C) Examined CACREP guidelines.
3. Research Question 3: A) Compared findings from the literature review (Research Question 1) with data collected and analyzed from existing CACREP programs (Research Question 2);  
B) Conducted follow-up telephone interviews (FTI) with the program chair, CACREP liaison, or program's admission coordinator from a sample of 20 CACREP programs.
  1. Ten interviews with Academically Focused Admission Requirements (AFAR) programs.
  2. Ten interviews with Personally Focused Admission Requirements (PFAR) programs.(Follow-up interviews were important for answering research question 3).  
C) Assessed gaps (i.e., missing personal-emotional effective counselor characteristics) between literature-identified characteristics of effective counselors and current admission requirements (what prospective students are typically assessed

for) of CACREP programs by synthesizing information collected throughout this study.

D) Developed a framework for a standard set of admission requirements to more thoroughly assess prospective students for admission to CACREP counseling programs.

### **Assumptions**

Research on balancing admission requirements, by including personal-emotional effective counselor characteristics (ECC), to assess prospective counseling students for admission to master's counseling programs relied on six assumptions:

1. There are specific characteristics of effective counselors;
2. Many personal-emotional characteristics are difficult to teach in Counselor Education Programs in part because of the time limitations.
3. Current admission practices of master's-level CACREP counseling programs do not adequately assess effective counselor characteristics (ECC) of prospective students, specifically personal-emotional characteristics (PEC).
4. There is no framework for a standard set of admission requirements for assessing effective counselor characteristics (ECC), specifically personal-emotional characteristics, of prospective counseling students.
5. Counselor education, like other professional fields of study, requires qualities of mind and personality that are not universally possessed.
6. One of the most crucial responsibilities of counselor educators is the adequate selection of qualified candidates for professional study, and eventually for practice

that will serve societal goals, protect present and future clients from impaired professionals, and will preserve the profession itself.

### **Delimitations**

This researcher chose to impose several factors in which to delimit and establish boundaries for this study. These included the following:

1. This researcher chose to examine and interview only master's-level CACREP counseling programs. Doctoral and non-CACREP-accredited master's programs were eliminated.
2. CACREP-accredited programs at private universities were eliminated in an effort to standardize the programs studied. Only CACREP programs at public universities were utilized.
3. Representatives interviewed in the sample included program chairs, CACREP liaisons, the program's admission coordinator, or a faculty member with a leadership position.
4. Ten of the twenty sampled included only academically focused admission requirements (AFAR) (i.e., graduate application and/or program application, GPA, GRE/MAT, transcripts and may or may not include recommendation letters) as determined by this researcher.
5. Ten of the twenty programs sampled included personally focused admission requirements (PFAR) (i.e., an individual/group interview and two or more of the following: portfolio, autobiographical/personal statement, psychological assessment, counseling work experience, prerequisite(s), and/or miscellaneous requirements not otherwise specified) as determined by this researcher, in addition to AFARs.

## **Limitations**

As a result of the delimitations of this study, there are specific limitations that must be taken into account, especially in terms of their ability to impact generalizability of the results.

These include:

1. Because only master's-level CACREP counseling programs at public universities were included, one must be careful in generalizing these results to programs at private universities, doctoral programs and those that are non-CACREP-accredited.
2. Responses to interview question 16 asking, 'at the time of admissions, do you believe most counseling programs adequately screen and assess the characteristics deemed necessary to be an effective counselor, particularly the personal characteristics?' were program representatives' opinions based on their experiences of what they thought were reasons why some programs inadequately screened and assessed prospective counseling students.
3. Due to the lack of research in this area, most literature cited in this study was more than five years old with some much older.

## **Definitions**

Operational definitions relevant to this study include:

Academically Focussed Admission Requirements (AFAR) - Requirements consisting of graduate and/or program admission application, undergraduate/graduate GPA, GRE/MAT scores, transcripts, and may or may not include letters of recommendation.

CACREP Counseling Programs - Counseling programs that are endorsed by The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. Programs follow the eight core foundation areas: Human Growth & Development, Social & Cultural Foundations, Helping

Relationships, Group Work, Career & Lifestyle Development, Appraisal, Research & Program Evaluation, and Professional Orientation, and include counseling skills and areas of specialization. CACREP counseling programs educate and train individuals for careers in school counseling, mental health counseling, community counseling, college counseling and the like.

Cognitive-Behavioral Characteristics - Left hemisphere brain functions - logical, informational and verbal, accumulated facts (Confer, 1987). Consist of cognitive intelligence - knowledgeable about people, places, things, and skills, theories and techniques and cognitively driven behavior. These characteristics include being *intellectually* insightful, self-aware, open-minded, independent, self-managing, self-motivating, understanding, persistent, determined, and assertive; logical; higher abstract processing abilities; prior work/volunteer and life experiences; and an intellectual internal locus of control.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) - An independent council created by ACA and its divisions to implement standards of preparation for the counseling profession's graduate-level degree programs including those that educate counselors who do counseling (CACREP Accreditation Standards and Procedures Manual, 2001).

Counseling – A process by which the counselor brings about positive therapeutic change by establishing mutual goals and objectives with the client; a change agent.

Effective Counselor – (Describes 2 dimensions: cognitive-behavioral characteristics and personal-emotional characteristics). As defined by ACA (1998):

Effectively practices professional counseling by establishing rapport and a professional relationship, modeling assertiveness, goal setting, boundary setting, self-disclosure, trust, honesty, and open and clear communication in order to effect/elicit change in the client.

Provides coaching and guidance, confronts, persuades, and suggests, as well as supports client through entire counseling process while continually monitoring and developing self and maintaining a healthy and balanced life style and relationships. (on-line)

Successful counselors select their helping behaviors and choose specific strategies with a clear purpose and direction - referred to as a counselor's level and degree of intentionality (Schmidt, 1994) which enables them to establish rapport, gain trust, and effect change in others (i.e., clients). Effective counselors also tend to exhibit positive perceptions of self and others, are personally motivated and fully functioning, accurately assess the world around them, and are capable of using this assessment to facilitate beneficial helping relationships (Schmidt, 1984).

Impairment/Limitation - An inability or unwillingness "... to control personal stress, psychological dysfunction, and/or excessive emotional reactions that interfere with professional functioning" (Lamb et al., 1987, p. 598).

Personal-Emotional Characteristics - Right hemisphere brain functions. Knowing without necessarily knowing in words (Confer, 1987). Much like what Goleman (1995) described as emotional intelligence (EQ) - some of what is listed here. These characteristics include knowing your feelings (self-aware) and using them to make good decisions (independent); managing your feelings well; motivating yourself with spirit and persistence (determined); maintaining hope in the face of frustration (hopeful and positive); exhibiting empathy and compassion (empathetic); interacting smoothly and managing your relationships effectively (effective and healthy inter- and intra-personal competence). Skills found in the context of emotional intelligence, what I am calling personal-emotional characteristics, help individuals manage both the self and others in the following areas: 1) impulse control, 2) self-esteem, 3) self-motivation, 4) mood management, and 5) people skills.



Personally Focused Admission Requirements (PFAR) - Academically focused admission requirements plus an individual/group interview and two or more of the following: portfolio, autobiographical/personal statement, psychological assessment, counseling work experience, prerequisite course(s), and/or miscellaneous requirements not otherwise specified. These admission requirements focus more on the personal-emotional characteristics of the prospective student.

Prospective Students - Students who are applying to CACREP-accredited master's-level counseling programs, but who have not enrolled in their first graduate-level counseling course.

Standard Admission Requirements - A set of admission requirements of prospective students with a balanced assessment of cognitive-behavioral and personal-emotional characteristics.

### **Need for the Study**

Mistakes in admissions are costly to the prospective student, the program, the university and the profession. Making more precise admission decisions (the first step to entering the profession) about who to admit to counseling programs can help avoid or reduce legal problems, reduce the amount of time faculty spend discussing and counseling out problem students (i.e., formal and informal meetings and discussions based on CACREP standards describing the process of retaining or eliminating impaired students from a program), safeguard and uphold the integrity of the counseling profession, and can help individuals make better career choices.

To date there is no framework for a standard set of admission requirements for assessing prospective students for master's-level counselor education programs endorsed by The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), despite the fact that the counseling profession has historically searched for better methods for identifying prospective students. An examination of the literature and the current admission requirements of

counseling programs indicated that the characteristics of what makes effective counselors are not characteristics traditionally required or assessed in prospective counseling students by counselor educators. A review of the literature indicated that there was also no comprehensive review of admission procedures and requirements of CACREP programs. In addition, attempts at developing admission guidelines to include personal-emotional characteristics of effective counselors in admission requirements have been relatively non-existent.

Ideally, trainees displaying emotional and mental problems serious enough to impair their effectiveness as counselors would be identified before acceptance into counseling programs. Admissions standards for graduate programs in counseling vary, typically including basic graduate applications, undergraduate grade point averages (GPA), GRE/MAT scores, transcripts, and sometimes 2-3 letters of recommendation, with the most common determinants being GRE/MAT test scores (76.9%) and minimum undergraduate GPA (76.9%) (Stickle & Schnacke, 1984). These factors may be helpful in eliminating students with academic problems, but they are not directly related to the personal limitations of applicants. The literature shows that counseling students' success in graduate school cannot be consistently predicted on the basis of GRE scores (Leverett-Main, 2004). When you look at the scores on standardized tests, you know what they mean. If the student gets a good score on a section, you know he or she can do that subject (Levy, 2003). What you don't know is how much of the score is attributable to innate ability, how much to education and how much is because he or she studied hard and didn't fall asleep in class (Levy, 2003). Standardized test scores also don't tell you whether the test taker is a good or bad person, or is imaginative, or has a nice sense of humor. "They don't tell you a lot of extraneous things like whether the student is good-looking or plain, speaks with an accent, has a father who is an alumnus, is of this or that religion, or comes from what sort of family" (Levy,

2003, p. 3). Only 57% of the master's-level counseling programs address the issue of identifying personal limitations in applicants by requiring a personal interview (Bradey & Post, 1991), and only 7% ask for a taped demonstration of human interaction skills (Stickle & Schnacke, 1984). Admission requirements are limited because they do not include personal-emotional characteristics of prospective students such as the ability to make good decisions, manage their feelings, motivate themselves, maintain hope, exhibit empathy and compassion, interact with others and manage relationships. "Success in a counselor education program may depend on criteria, such as ability to cope with and adjust to the multiple demands of academic preparation and clinical training requirements, that are not measured by the GRE" (Leverett-Main, 2004, p. 209). Counseling programs to date have not found a successful means of identifying students with serious personal limitations before they are accepted into graduate study and they need a reliable methodology that can be used to effectively screen applicants for admission.

Because critical personal-emotional characteristics (PEC) of prospective counselors are not usually assessed during admissions, current CACREP admission requirements seem to suggest that prospective students could learn to be effective counselors even though they entered the counseling program with underdeveloped PEC and/or little life experience.

Without admission requirements that include assessing personal-emotional characteristics or at least are balanced between cognitive-behavioral characteristics and personal-emotional characteristics, counselor educators may admit students to their counseling programs that do not possess the needed abilities and characteristics to learn how and/or be an effective counselor, hence are impaired. These abilities and qualities often cannot be developed within the brief time limit programs have to educate students. Students may have emotional problems that need resolving prior to admission, and will most likely struggle through counseling programs, passing

minimally if at all. For these reasons and more, master's-level CACREP counseling programs could benefit from using admission requirements, balanced between cognitive-behavioral and personal-emotional characteristics, in their assessment of prospective students. Balanced admission requirements would help identify those who are most likely to develop into effective counselors. To balance current admission requirements, programs must broaden the parameters of what is needed to become an effective counselor by including personal-emotional characteristics of effective counselors in addition to the cognitive-behavioral characteristics.

The literature and the public ask counselor educators and supervisors to do more to protect present and future clients from impaired professionals (Lamb et al., 1987). Society expects the counseling profession to monitor and regulate the professional behavior of its members. Doing a more thorough job of screening before students enter the profession greatly lessens the likelihood of clients being harmed by impaired counselors. When assistance is provided to counseling students with personal limitations or when those who are seriously impaired are dismissed from counseling programs, clients are protected.

The personal-emotional admissions characteristics identified in this study directly address the reluctance counselor educators and supervisors have had in the identification and evaluation of impaired counseling students (generally related to personal-emotional characteristics) and provides them with a tool for responding to their professional responsibilities. Olkin and Gaughen (1991) warn mental health professionals:

This area requires some constructive and structured attention; we cannot leave identification of problems in intrapersonal functioning to ex post facto definitions... we are too reactive in our approach to dealing with problem students and we must take more proactive steps. (p. 287)

One proactive stance by the profession to defend its integrity and to protect society from potentially harmful counselors is the development of a framework for a standard set of admission requirements for screening prospective students that include not only cognitive-behavioral characteristics, but personal-emotional characteristics. If those educating future counselors are aware of prospective students' personal-emotional characteristics as well as cognitive-behavioral characteristics, they can better select and hence, prepare them to be effective counselors. Stadler, Willing, Eberhage and Ward (1988) warn:

Impaired mental health care professionals do present a threat to the maintenance of professional standards and quality care. This threat may not be as great, however, as the reluctance of professionals to take responsibility for the maintenance of professional standards (p. 259). They must understand that there is an interrelationship between educational purpose, professional integrity, and student selection.

The expectation of this study is to develop a framework for a balanced set of standard admission requirements that will lead counselor educators to improve how they assess prospective students for acceptance into their master's counseling programs. This could also lead to changes in the curriculum of the program, such as having a more interpersonal and self-awareness focus and developing one's personal-emotional abilities. For instance, prospective counselors may be required to participate in counseling for a semester or two as part of their program, or be required to acquire additional relevant work experience and/or be a minimum age before being accepted into a Master's counseling program.

### **Organization of the Study**

The remainder of this dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter Two contains a review of literature related to characteristics of effective counselors, college admissions, novice vs.

expert characteristics, and supervisee and graduate student development and characteristics.

Chapter Three details the research design, research sample and participants, and a description of the Follow-up Interview Protocol used in data collection and analysis for this study. Chapter Four presents results of this study. Chapter Five reviews and discusses results, presents conclusions and gives recommendations.