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# Comparison of the level of career development between beginning, practicum, and graduating counselor education students

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COMPARISON OF THE LEVEL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN  
BEGINNING, PRACTICUM, AND GRADUATING COUNSELOR EDUCATION  
STUDENTS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Jennifer L. Barch

August 2011

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Jennifer L. Barch

2011

**DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF EDUCATION**  
**Department of Counseling, Psychology and Special Education**

*Dissertation*

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

**Executive Counselor Education and Supervision Program**

*Presented by:*

Jennifer L. Barch, M.A.

**June 16, 2011**

COMPARISON OF THE LEVEL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN  
BEGINNING, PRACTICUM, AND GRADUATING  
COUNSELOR EDUCATION STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

# COMPARISON OF THE LEVEL OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT BETWEEN BEGINNING, PRACTICUM, AND GRADUATING COUNSELOR EDUCATION STUDENTS

By

Jennifer L. Barch

August 2011

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Joseph Maola

This study examines the difference in the level of career development among beginning counselor education students, practicum students, and graduating counselor education students. Career development was measured using the *Career Development Inventory*, which is available only online via the Vocopher website. Career development is a process that takes place over an individual's lifespan and each career decision makes an impact on future decisions, as well as the roles an individual will play. As an individual progress though the career stages, he or she makes career decisions and must master the tasks of each stage in order to successfully transition into the next stage. Career maturity, a concept used to define an individual's readiness for making sound career decisions, is used to gauge whether an individual has adequate information and the

appropriate attitude to make decisions that allow progression into other stages of career development, and ultimately find career success. Research suggests that students who are in the exploratory stage of career development tend to have higher career development scores than those who newly enter the establishment stage of career development (McCaffrey, Miller & Winston, 1984). The career development of counselor education students appears to proceed upon a somewhat predictable path. This study revealed that when students begin a counselor education program, he or she may be in the exploratory phase of career development and at some point, just prior to or during the practicum experience, students appear to transition into the establishment phase of career development. Evidence for this career stage transition is found in the lower means scores of the beginning counselor education students as compared to the mean scores from the practicum and graduating students. Implications from the results of this study and suggestions for further research are presented.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

Becoming a professional counselor is contingent on the successful completion of a graduate program in counselor education. Graduates from the counselor education programs are expected to have developed certain attitudes and skills that would indicate the ability to perform the duties required of a professional counselor by the time that he or she graduates. It would seem reasonable to assume that those applying for graduate education in a counselor education program would already have knowledge, skills, or personal characteristics that influenced the decision to pursue a career in counseling. The responsibility for determining who enters counselor education programs usually falls on faculty members who seek applicants that appear to have the qualifications to become a counselor. Simply stated, the gate-keeping responsibilities for the future of the counseling profession ultimately lies on the decision making process of those faculty members and their ability to select qualified individuals from the pool of candidates (Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002). Between entrance into the program and the time that students are in their final internship experiences, the students should have an increased level of vocational development, career maturity, and readiness to cope with the duties required of a new professional counselor. This change in vocational development would indicate that students have successfully moved from the exploration to the establishment stage of career development (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984).

Selecting candidates for graduate studies in counseling requires a screening process. In due course, the decision made by the faculty members during the screening process would determine which candidates appear to have the preferred qualities and

criteria that may indicate that a person could become a qualified professional counselor. Those applicants who are deemed qualified would then be granted entrance into the counseling program. Just as an employer screens candidates for aptitude, the screening process for admissions into a graduate program is one of the first steps in determining potential career fit between applicants and the field of counseling (Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002). The personality of individuals desiring to become a professional counselor should encompass characteristics that are necessary to be a competent, ethical, and successful counselor (Eaves, Erford, & Fallon, 2010).

Those faculty members selecting candidates for the counseling program may be guided by a professional set of standards predetermined by the university employing them, by credentialing entities, or by the individual counselor education programs. Applicants for graduate programs, potentially, may be selected based on academic and non-academic criteria (Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010).

Screening appears to serve a dual purpose. Screening is a means of limiting the number individuals admitted into the counselor education program due to the number of spaces allotted for new students, and it plays a role in determining that the most qualified applicants are selected. Screening for admission into a counselor education graduate program may include formal and informal assessment tools. Students wishing to enter into a counselor graduate program should have an undergraduate degree and may need a minimum undergraduate quality point average (QPA), depending on policies at the university they wish to attend. Applicants may need to furnish letters of reference, confirmation of being a person in good standing through letters of recommendation, and proof of clean criminal record (Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010; Nagpal & Ritchie,

2002). Other formalized screening tools can include completion of a standardized test, such as the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) and attainment of a minimum score for consideration of admission (Sternberg & Williams, 1997). These formalized screening tools can eliminate applicants who do not meet the minimum criteria for admission into the counseling graduate program; thus, the next step would be to screen the remainder of the applicants based on non-academic indicators of competency, such as emotional security, sincerity, and empathy (Duba, Paez & S Kindsvatter, 2010).

Non-academic screening methods may include individual or group interviews in which the applicants should be able to demonstrate an expected set of social and interpersonal skills. Strong indicators of a successful professional counselor are having personal characteristics such as empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruency. Therefore, applicants who demonstrate these pro-social skills are most likely to be appropriate fits for a counseling graduate program (Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010). Emotional fitness and other basic interpersonal skills, such as eye contact and good listening skills, may be qualities that are desired for admission into the counseling program. This interview process can further eliminate candidates that meet the minimum standards but do not possess the personal skills to be successful in a graduate counseling program (Dawes, 1971; Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010).

Assuming that education is an investment in one's future, individuals choosing to attend a counseling graduate program expect a rate of return greater than his or her investment. This return of investment can be found by obtaining a job in the desired career field resulting in a sense of satisfaction with the work and an adequate salary for the job (Dawes, 1971). Going to graduate school is a considerable endeavor, which

involves a great deal of time, energy, and monetary investment (Brown, 2004; Teichler, 2007). Choosing what to study and actually attending classes can be a daunting task. An individual's decisions regarding a graduate program may be based on experience, intuition, and judgment, but the individual also may use subjective decision-making based on what feels good at the time (Bhushan & Rai, 2004). An individual pursues careers based on interests and preferences (Armstrong & Rounds, 2008); a person's desire to enter a counselor education graduate program may stem from several sources that may include increased social status, necessity to gain work for financial reasons, desire for self-fulfillment, or some combination of these factors (Carlson, Portman, & Bartlett, 2006).

Many reasons influence individuals to seek advanced degrees. An individual may consider the advanced degree as a means to set him or herself apart from his or her family and community of origin. The advanced degree may be looked as some indication of prestige or a means to be distinguished from the general populace. Self-fulfillment and the yearning to find direction in one's life may also lead an individual to seek an advanced degree, motivation to become more self-fulfilled may be an internal desire or personal goal for an individual, despite all external influences. An individual may have career goals in mind or the strong desire to learn and expand critical thinking that results in the pursuit of an advanced degree (Counsel of Graduate Schools, n.d; Taubman & Wales, 1974).

Some individuals may enter a graduate program out of necessity, such as the loss of a previous job or pressures from family members or other sources, such as an employer. The desire to increase one's income is yet another motivator to pursue an

advanced degree. Job loss and technological advancements may cause an individual to look for a means to change careers or gain more knowledge and skills in order to remain in his or her current career field. In addition, one member of a family pursuing an advanced degree may stimulate the desire of another relative to return to school for career or personal reasons (Taubman & Wales, 1974). Miller-Brown (2002) reported that divorce is cited, among adult students, as the number one reason for returning to school; furthermore, changes in the workplace, especially the increased use of technology, necessitate further education.

Regardless of the motivation to seek the advanced degree, the selection of the field of study is important because graduate studies will prepare an individual for successful attainment of specific career or personal goals. Super (1980) theorized that individuals play an active role in constructing meaning in his or her career, as opposed to trying to fit into an existing career role. Therefore, making decisions that move an individual toward the implementation of activities that meet vocational goals, such as attending graduate school, is an extension of that individual's self-concept (Swanson & Fouad, 2010). The 2009 CACREP standard, section I.K.3 recommends that in order to be granted admission to a counseling program, an applicant's career goals should be relevant in the field of counseling, in other words, the individual's career goal must correlate with what the counseling program can offer. Individuals typically choose a graduate program in a field that he or she is somewhat familiar with, either through personal or career contacts. Individuals may choose to enter a counseling graduate program based on some exposure to the field, a personal relationship or connection to an

individual already practicing in that field, or encouragement from an undergraduate professor or advisor (Huss, Randall, Patry, Davis, & Hansen, 2002).

The field of counseling, as we know it today, has its roots in career guidance. While the historical purpose of counseling was to help facilitate wise choices and to help clients make wise decisions, a more modern function of counseling involves assisting clients to make wise decisions as well as empowering the client to develop goals that are realistic for his or her circumstances and available natural supports. This process may involve the facilitation of growth as well as prevention, remediation, rehabilitation, and enhancement techniques (Eaves, Erford, & Fallon, 2010). Counseling students who develop a more complex cognitive process are better equipped to understand and synthesize multiple perspectives and should have highly developed positive counseling characteristics. Such students will have the ability to assist the client with decision making and growth due to his or her use of empathy and case conceptualization skills (Choate & Granello, 2006), which can lead a client to have improved decision making skills (Erford, 2010). An important question to ask as students progress through a counseling graduate program is this: as the students are learning to help others make better decisions and facilitate development, are the trainees developing the critical vocational skills and attitudes to make better decisions themselves, enabling them to cope with the work duties and environment of a professional counselor?

Students may enter a counseling graduate program with conflicting career goals that may stem from a lack of knowledge about their intended profession, throughout graduate school, the student may seek assistance to clarify these goals. The degree of commitment to graduate studies has an impact on that student's satisfaction with

postgraduate education (McCaffrey, Miller & Winston, 1984). Students who are informed about future counseling work settings will become productive counselors, thus experiencing satisfaction in their professional roles. These counseling students can gain a great sense of satisfaction by using their talents in the most productive way to help the client (Garner, Valle, & Hinkle, 2010).

Students enter a counselor education program and are taught how to help others make better decisions and facilitate development. Career development can be measured as students learn new skills and gain different attitudes, thus allowing us to determine the level of readiness on the part of the student to be in the role of counselor. As future professional counselors, students who manage transference issues effectively can promote positive counseling outcomes for the client (Sussman, 2007).

An individual possessing the knowledge and skills to make sound career decisions demonstrates that he or she can cope with age appropriate career development tasks in the affective and cognitive domains; the term career maturity is used to describe this career developmental state (Levinson, Ohler, Caswell & Kiewra, 1998). Career maturity can be defined generally as the extent to which an individual has mastered career tasks important to one's development level (Swanson & Fouad, 2010). As a student progresses through the graduate program and builds more complex career decision-making skills he or she develops an increased level of awareness and understanding of the program content and is able to demonstrate readiness to perform the tasks necessary to successfully complete the final semester of internship in the counseling program (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Counselor education students can be described as completing the exploratory stage of career development. Students are ready to enter

the next stage, the establishment stage, once they have demonstrated successful negotiation of counselor related tasks (Super, 1980; Anderson & Vandehey, 2006).

#### Statement of the Problem

The focus of the current study is to determine whether there is a significant difference in career development levels among counselor education students at the beginning phase of the training program, those in the practicum phase, and those graduating. We can expect differences in career development levels among beginning, practicum, and graduating students because as the student progresses through the counseling program, he or she develops a more complex understanding of the responsibilities of a professional counselor and should be able to apply those skills in a work environment.

Career development, according to Super (Erford, 2010) is the process of implementing one's self concept in career decision making; how one views oneself is reflected in his or her career choices. Career maturity describes an individual's ability to make self-aware, appropriate career choices, and the extent to which that person is developmentally ready will be indicated by his or her ability to cope with career development tasks (Levinson, Ohler, Caswell & Kiewra, 1998). Counselor education students who have coped with the developmental tasks and expectations through the process of career development can reasonably expect success and satisfaction in his or her career as a professional counselor.

#### Research Question

The research question is as follows: is there a significant difference in the level of career development among counselor education students in the first two semesters of a

counselor education program, those in practicum, and those who are in his or her internship experience? Career development will be measured using the Career Development Inventory (Vocopher, 2004; Glavin, n.d.). Students for this study will be counselor education students in a CACREP approved graduate program in the state of Pennsylvania.

### Significance/Rationale

Professionals, instructors, and students can benefit from the following study. The developmental approach to appraising career development is most useful for the creation of screening and selection criteria, along with curriculum interventions that focus on the assessment of specific skills that one must master as a necessary part of his or her vocation maturation process (Osipow, 1990). Studies have suggested that formalized aptitude measurements can predict academic success (Wilkerson, 2006; Sternberg & Williams, 1997; Dawes, 1971). However, the informal and non-academic means of selection lack that same predictive value (Wilkerson, 2006; Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002).

Counselor education programs focus on the development of skills and attitudes indicative of competent, professional counselors which necessitates the ability to measure quantitatively the development of those individuals graduating from counselor training programs. The counselor education programs' faculty, through didactic and experiential means such as practicums and internships, promote career maturity and vocational mastery, which are the main components of career development (Erford, 2010).

Counselors who work with counselor education students can benefit from this study because they can assist graduating students who experience difficulties related to the transition from school to work. Graduating students may have a limited view of the

counseling field and clientele because their view of clients may be limited to only that of the clients they worked with during practicum and internship experiences.

Career development, incremental by nature, has decision points at which one encounters observable change (Osipow, 1990); as a student progresses through the stages in the counselor education program, one can assume that the trainee is gaining awareness of self-skills and how his or her behaviors have an impact on others (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). If these changes can be measured, then we can predict that the trainee most likely will experience career continuity, thus he or she would have developed the necessary skills and attitudes to be a competent, professional counselor.

#### Hypotheses

1. There is no significant difference in the level of career development attitudes among beginning level counselor education students, practicum level, and graduating counselor education students.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of career development knowledge among beginning level counselor education students, practicum level, and graduating counselor education students.
3. There is no significant difference in the level of career orientation among beginning level counselor education students, practicum level, and graduating counselor education students.
4. There is no significant difference in the level of knowledge of preferred occupations among beginning level counselor education students, practicum level, and graduating counselor education students.

## Definitions

Beginning student – a graduate level student beginning his or her first or second semester in a training program in counselor education.

Career adaptability – a psychological construct that describes an individual’s “readiness and resources for coping with current and anticipated tasks of vocational development” (Betz, 2008, p. 366). This concept was proposed to more accurately reflect career maturity in the adult developmental process in the context of the life-span, life-space approach to comprehending and intervening in careers with adaptability as the core concept; adaptability serves to close the gap between career and personal development especially in the realms of career planning, exploring, and decision making (Savickas, 1997).

Career development attitudes (CDA) – As defined on the Career Development Inventory, the sum of the career planning (CP) and career exploration (CE) scores, items intended to assess “involvement in occupational choice, orientation to choice, independence, preference for decision bases, and conception of the choice process” (Super & Hall, 1978; p. 339). Attitudes encompass beliefs, feelings, values, and a disposition to act in certain ways in relation to career development.

Career development knowledge (CDK) – As defined on the Career Development Inventory, the sum of decision making (DM) and world of work (WW); refers to what level an individual is knowledgeable about potential vocational /career decisions and the amount of knowledge an individual possesses in regard to the potential tasks of a chosen profession.

Career exploration (CE) - As defined on the Career Development Inventory, how well an individual has used quality resources in career planning activities.

Career mastery – overall career adjustment, or maturity, in the establishment state of career development (Walsh & Betz, 2008); as measured on the Career Mastery Inventory, the progress an individual is making on mastering developmental tasks in the exploration stage of career adaptability.

Career maturity - scores on the three scales on the CDI form I; readiness to make career decisions required by age and social system; a concept used to describe an individual's ability to make self-aware, appropriate career choices and the extent to which that person is developmentally ready to make intelligent, realistic career choices and cope with career development tasks (Swanson & Fouad, 2010).

Career orientation – A pattern of job and vocational preferences that remains fairly stable over a person's work life (Glavin & Rehfuß, 2005).

Career orientation total (COT) - As defined on the Career Development Inventory, the composite measure that combines the four subscales CP, CE, DM, and WW.

Career Planning (CP) – As defined on the Career Development Inventory, a score that represents an individual's degree of involvement in thinking about his or her future and how well various occupations fit that individual (Glavin & Rehfuß, 2005).

Decision Making (DM) - As defined on the Career Development Inventory, an individual's ability systematically apply principles of rational decision making to the educational and vocational choices that he or she will face in the future and to the types

of career decisions he or she is now making (Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005; Gati, Osipow, Krausz, & Saka, 2000).

Graduating student – a graduate level counselor education student who is in the process of completing his or her supervised internship in a counselor education program, has completed and passed his or her comprehensive exam process, and will graduate within six to 12 weeks from the date of completing the CDI.

Knowledge of Preferred Occupational Group (PO) - As defined on the Career Development Inventory, the extent to which an individual understands the types of duties, abilities, interests, values, and other characteristics involved in the pursuit of an occupation in one's preferred group.

Practicum student – a graduate level counselor education student beginning a supervised field placement experience, practicing counseling with clients in a school, agency, or community setting.

World of Work (WW) - As defined on the Career Development Inventory, the knowledge that one has about a particular occupation, including the vocational and task expectations of that occupation.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Career Development Theory

Career - defined as a sequential, cumulative experience of occupations and tasks such as education and training endured by an individual over the course of a life time - can be viewed from a developmental perspective due to the proposition that vocational decisions are a result of a process over time and not a one-time action (Super, 1980; Betz, 2008). Career theories help to explain vocational behaviors, such as career choice and career development (Swanson & Fouad, 2010). Developmental approaches to career development widened the scope of traditional career theories by viewing career development as an ongoing process across an individual's lifespan and theorizing that career decisions should be made only after an individual reaches career maturity (Zunker, 2008; Super 1980). The ultimate goal of career development is to allow the emergence of a career identity that is composed of an individual's motivations, interests, competencies, and acceptable career roles (Meijer, 1998).

According to Super's career development theory, vocational development is a culmination and implementation of career choices that are representative of one's self-concept; career choice is a process and not a one-time occurrence (Gysbers, Heppner & Johnson, 2009; Anderson & Vandehey, 2006). Inherently, individuals have the characteristics for a variety of occupational choices, and a broad range of occupations fit the needs and abilities of many individuals. Thus, vocational preferences, competencies, and work situations change with time and experience (Anderson & Vandehey, 2006).

Successful mastery of vocational tasks that are characteristic of an individual's developmental stage allows an individual to prepare for vocational tasks in the next developmental stages (Anderson & Vandehy, 2006). Consequently, career maturity is a psycho-social construct that is defined as the readiness of an individual to master developmental tasks and effectively cope with situations, vocational and psychological, within of each stage of development (Swanson & Fouad, 2010; Anderson & Vandehy, 2006). An individual who is career mature has the ability to cope, on a cognitive and affective level, with developmental career tasks as expected for that individual's chronological age group (Anderson & Vandehy, 2006).

An individual constructs and negotiates his or her career development by mastering predictable tasks and coping with transitions throughout the life course; the blending of one's personality into work life and work-choices results in one's career identity, or career self-concept. Occupational choice implements self-concept, and self-concept plays a significant role in career choices. Therefore, this reciprocal relationship greatly influences career development (Savickas, 1997). The implementation of occupational self-concepts is an essential aspect of career development. The process of exerting one's self-concept in career development includes a combination of choices, inherited aptitudes, personality, physical attributes, successful role completion, and other interactions and influences from other people and social environment (Anderson & Vandehy, 2006).

Donald Super postulated that career development occurs in stages over an individual's life span (Zunker, 2008), and an individual holds multiple roles that interact and vary in importance over that individual's life time (Zunker, 2008; Swanson & Fouad,

2010). In each stage and role, decision points and transitions exist; mastery of skills in each stage is necessary for an individual to make career decisions relevant to that individual's current role and stage (Osipow, 1999). Super created his developmental career theory using a combination of phenomenological psychology contexts, personality theories, developmental theories, and sociological theories, and then wrote 14 propositions that present a comprehensive theory to career development (Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2009).

The core elements of Super's theories are developmental life stages and tasks, or roles, over a life span (Zunker, 2008). Super's *Life space – Life span* model of career development meshes the concepts of roles an individual plays throughout a lifetime and the life stages through which an individual develops. Super concludes that career development is an ongoing process that gradually unfolds over a lifetime (Swanson & Fouad, 2010; Zunker, 2008). Life-span refers to the developmental stages that one progresses through in a lifetime; each life stage has tasks that one masters as he or she develops. Super categorized specific life periods, beginning with adolescence and ending in late adulthood, and defined five life stages (Zunker, 2008). Life-space refers to the variety of roles that an individual plays as he or she matures; the roles can begin early in life and continue through the end of life (Super, 1980).

Individuals occupy various roles throughout a lifetime and may act out several roles in a number of different settings with some roles overlapping in variety of settings (Super, 1980; Savickas, 1997; Zunker 2008). The term *role* refers to the expectations and the performance of the individual in relation to others. An individual fulfills the requirements of a specific role and shapes the composition of the role according to that

individual's personality and characteristics (Super, 1980). Zunker (2008) wrote that, according to Super's theory, individuals are involved in six life roles which may overlap at times; therefore, successes or failures in one role may affect other roles at different times in life, and the importance of the roles may vary. The life roles are child, student, homemaker, worker, citizen, and leisurite (Zunker, 2008). Career choice occurs within the context of other life roles, such as gender roles, and environmental factors can affect career choices (Hackett & Lonborg, 1993). Each life role over an individual's lifespan, to a certain extent, is influenced by the interaction between life roles (White, 1995).

Super's life periods identify chronological ages of an individual's developmental process. The periods are as follows: adolescence, ages 14-25; early adulthood, ages 25 to 45; middle adulthood, ages 45 to 65; and late adulthood, ages 65 and above (Zunker, 2008). The career life-stages identified by Super are the growth stage, the exploratory stage, the establishment phase, the maintenance stage, and the disengagement stage (Zunker, 2008; Anderson & Vandehey, 2006). The life stages, or *maxicycles*, are not defined by chronological age, but rather are defined by distinct, recurring characteristics that describe the general tasks of an individual in a stage of career development. An individual can be of any chronological age, from adolescence to adulthood, and in any stage of career development, depending on career choices and life circumstances (Zunker, 2008; Anderson & Vandehey, 2006; Swanson & Fouad, 2010; Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnson, 2009).

An individual will progress through the maxicycles in a somewhat linear fashion; however, the age and manner in which one progresses is unique to that individual. The transition between each of the stages is called a *minicycle*; when an individual recycles

through previous stages, the term minicycle is used to describe the transition (Swanson & Fouad, 2010; Zunker, 2008). Individuals typically will complete one stage prior to progression into the next stage, but one might repeat any given stage depending on his or her career choices and behaviors (Swanson & Fouad, 2010; Super, 1980). Individuals may experience a minicycle for reasons such as career growth, loss of vocation or destabilization of work, or other human resource issues (Anderson & Vandehey, 2006).

The growth stage of career development typically occurs in childhood and early adolescence; however, one may re-enter the growth stage due to career changes (Zunker, 2008; Anderson & Vandehey, 2006). This is the stage in which work role images are formed (Anderson & Vandehey, 2006). Characteristics of the growth stage include the development of interests, the recognition of self-concept limitations, and changes in job priorities (Zunker, 2008).

An individual transitions into the exploration stage of career development when he or she begins the process of investigating and questioning potential career possibilities, in addition to seeking additional vocational knowledge (Super, 1980). In the exploration stage, an individual may make tentative career choices, become aware of a progressive increase in career knowledge, encounter career indecisiveness and drifting, or begin a new occupation (Super, 1980; Anderson & Vandehey, 2006; Betz, 2008; and Zunker, 2008). The exploration stage is usually marked with a variety of transitions and decision points; individuals may engage in job assessment tasks, such as learning about required skills, career alternatives, and the training necessary to gain employment in a specific vocation (McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984; Super & Hall, 1978; Super, 1980).

Exploration is a time of curiosity and ambiguity, which is why an individual may experience conflicts, confusion, and an inability to crystallize a career path (Super & Hall, 1978; Super, 1980). When an individual makes a career choice and takes action, with the proper amount of exploration, he or she may experience a sense of hesitation and failure when entering a vocation (Supper & Hall, 1978; Raskin, 1998). Career exploration can occur across the lifespan and can help an individual cope with changing work environments. Exploration requires an assessment of career information based on an individual's emotional and cognitive knowledge about oneself and one's career environment (Zikic, & Hall, 2009).

One can successfully transition into the next stage of development after he or she has adequately explored vocational information, experiences minimal vocational conflicts, and is able to make a vocational choice (Anderson & Vandehy, 2006; McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984; Super 1980). Once that individual begins to place values on his or her decisions, develop goals, and set a plan of decision with some level of commitment to take action, that individual has moved into the establishment stage of career development (Super, 1980).

During the establishment stage of career development a person will enter into a chosen occupation. Through trial and error that individual will begin to stabilize and adapt to the vocation that fits his or her abilities and personality (Zunker, 2008; Anderson & Vandehy, 2006). An adult will develop new skills and make more definite career decisions while adapting to the new career roles in the establishment stage (Anderson & Vandehy, 2006; Super 1980). An individual may continue to explore career information once he or she has transitioned into the establishment stage; such continued exploration is

necessary for successful negotiation of the career developmental process (Betz, 2008; Super, 1980; Zunker, 2008). Mastery of skills is essential to the successful movement of an individual through the establishment stage. Previous performances in occupational roles are an indicator of future performances, and the ability to adapt to new work roles leads to career satisfaction and success (Crites, 1976; Hackett & Lonborg, 1993; Betz, 2008).

Career adaptability is a psychological construct used to describe the readiness of an individual to cope with vocational tasks and development (Betz, 2008). The process of adapting to a new career occurs in the establishment phase of career development and is characterized by increased occupational stability, increased understanding of the consequences of career decisions, increased frequency in achieving career goals, and increased proficiency in one's chosen career (McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984; Hackett & Lonborg, 1993; Betz, 2008). The recycling process through the developmental stages - typically through exploration, establishment, and maintenance stages - can be an indication of unstable vocational experience or ill-preparedness to move into the next stage of development (Anderson & Vandehey, 2006; Zunker, 2008; Raskin, 1998). Career adaptability and the ability to adjust to career changes can increase the possibilities of career successes as one cycles, and recycles, through the career development process (Zunker, 2008, Betz, 2008; Crites, 1976).

Once an individual verifies his or her occupational choice, seeks a secure job position, and is able to be competitive in the work environment, he or she is considered to be in the maintenance stage of career development (Anderson & Vandehey, 2006; Zunker, 2008). The maintenance stage is characterized by continued adaptation to one's

work environment, the continuation of the development of advanced skills, and the ability to effectively manage career tasks (Zunker, 2008; Anderson & Vandehy, 2006; Betz, 2008). At the point in career development, typically prior to retirement, when one begins to have diminished interests in the work role one may be transitioning into the disengagement stage of career development (Anderson & Vandehy, 2006). This final stage in career development can also occur as a result of job loss or unsatisfactory work performance, or follow multiple career changes (Anderson & Vandehy, 2006; Zunker, 2008; Betz 2008).

### Career Maturity

A general description of career maturity is an individual's readiness to make informed, age appropriate career decisions coupled with the ability to manage career developmental tasks (Patton, Creed, & Spooner-Lane, 2005). Career choice readiness "means that an individual has sufficiently developed the career development attitudes, coping behaviors, and cognitions needed to crystallize a stable vocational identity and specify a realistic occupational choice" (Toman & Savickas, 1997, p. 275.). The concept of career maturity across the life-span is function-centered and not age-centered; the same career developmental tasks can take place in various chronological age stages, but the tasks will appear different depending on age and career stage (Raskin, 1998).

The construct of career maturity evolved out of the concept of vocational maturity, which defines a linear pattern beginning in early adolescence and continuing through early adulthood. Along a linear trajectory, an individual masters a career task, moves to the next step, and so on, until that individual makes a career decision. The original concept of vocational maturity did not necessarily incorporate the impact on

career development resulting from personality and a variety of environmental factors (Crites, 1976; Osipow, 1990; Savickas, 1997; Vondracek & Reitzle, 1998). The progress of mastering the development tasks as one moves through the development stages describes vocational maturity; mastery of tasks through the life-stages shapes an individual's career self-concept as he or she develops (Osipow, 1990). Career mastery drives the integration of personal development and growth and career development and growth (Gaines, 2009).

Career maturity involves psychological and social factors that influence the readiness of an individual to make career decisions and to progress along the continuum of career development stages (Anderson & Vandehey, 2006; Zunker, 2008). Factors identified as part of the career maturity construct are exploration, information, decision making, reality orientation, and planfulness; planfulness includes autonomy, self-esteem, and reliance of time perspective (Anderson & Vandehey, 2006; Gysbers, Heppner, & Johnston, 2009). Planfulness is a critical variable in the concept of career maturity and is a prime component in career choice readiness (Savickas, 1997). The process of development requires that a person implements his or her self-concepts into occupational choices and behaviors. This can be achieved once an individual has the awareness of personal characteristics and the readiness to adapt to realistic career expectations and life-career roles (Anderson & Vandehey, 2006).

Career maturity is determined by the attitudes and competencies of an individual throughout the career development process. Career attitudes are the beliefs, feelings, values, and dispositions of a person to act in certain ways. Career competencies are the cognitive dimensions related to career information and rational decision making,

knowledge specific to preferred occupations, and knowledge regarding the decision making process (Savickas, 1997). Realistic career decisions, consistency of choice over time relating to a preferred occupational field, and vocational success and satisfaction are apposite results of career maturity (Hackett & Lonborg, 1993).

“Individuals who possess a readiness for career choice, as evident in their career development attitudes and competence for making occupational choices, are better able to cope with the developmental tasks of crystallization and specification [of occupational choices]” (Toman & Savickas, 1997, p. 276.). Readiness is crucial to making suitable educational and vocational choices, and with an increased career choice readiness, an individual is sufficiently mature to follow through with tentative career choices (Savickas, Briddick, & Watkins, 2002; Toman & Savickas, 1997).

There are several instruments designed to measure career maturity, such as the Career Development Inventory, the Adult Career Concerns Inventory, the Assessment of Career Decision Making, the Career Beliefs Inventory, Career Decision Scale, Career Maturity Inventory, and the Career Decision Scale. Each instrument measures a specific aspect of career maturity, except for the Career Maturity Inventory which measures the general career maturity of the test taker. The Career Development Inventory measures each aspect of career maturity, in addition to measuring the knowledge of a specific profession. The Career Development Inventory can be used to provide “... diagnostic information regarding attitudinal and cognitive strengths and deficiencies and can provide assistance in determining necessary interventions” (Levinson, Ohler, Caswell, & Kiewra, p. 478).

## Career Decision-Making

Career decision-making is an active process that involves exploring career options, making choices, and evaluating experiences (Priest, 2008). Career decision making models hypothesize that individuals may use a rational process that involves examining the options, weighing the consequences, and making a decision based on which option yields the most benefit. Other models propose a nonlinear process that involves rearranging information into a course of action (Murtagh, Lopes, & Lyons, 2011). Career decision making models suggest that emotions and cognitions are inseparable from the decision making process and can be a source of information for the decision maker (Meyer-Griffith, Reardon, & Hartley, 2009; Murtagh, Lopes, & Lyons, 2011).

Two critical components involved in career decision making are the actual decision making skills and the attitudes of an individual toward the decision making process; these components are also career maturity indicators (Patton & Creed, 2001). Realistic career choices demonstrate a balance between abilities, interests, and the requirements of a chosen occupation (Lonborg & Hackett, 2006). Career indecision could be the result of insufficient career information, a lack of alternative options, the inability of the individual to link occupations and personal preferences, or uncertainty about how the individual's personal characteristics match potential occupational alternatives (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996).

Individuals make meaningful career decisions and find personal satisfaction once they have gathered adequate information about the self and environment and have assessed that information on the emotional and cognitive levels (Zikic & Hall, 2009).

The most successful career decision making conditions include an awareness that a decision needs to be made coupled with a readiness to decide. An individual's level of readiness is based on sufficient career information and an adequate knowledge of self, including personal goals (Gati, Osipow, Krausz, & Saka, 2000). Individuals make competent career decisions based on mature attitudes that encompass adequate self and vocational knowledge, identification of career goals, future career plans, and problems solving skills (Betz & Luzzo, 1996).

Individuals encounter decision points, which occur before and during the time an individual is making a career decision; these points are critical because each decision is closely tied to other roles in an individual's life and therefore can affect seemingly unrelated roles (Super, 1980). Maximizing the positive outcomes of career choices involves actively exploring how the decision might affect other life roles; satisfying career choices are linked to an individual's values, both personal and career-oriented, as well as self-efficacy (Lomborg & Hackett, 2006). Self-efficacy refers to an individual's ability to perform a task or behavior, and career decision-making self-efficacy refers to the ability to make effective career decisions (Betz & Luzzo, 1996).

Since the average worker may change careers more than once over the course of a lifetime, and since most workers associate their self-worth with career situations, career satisfaction has an impact on individuals' self-concepts (Priest, 2008) and on their ability to make career decisions (Osipow, 1999). Career transitions sometimes lead to career indecision. However, this period of change can be considered a step toward reaching a career decision (Osipow, 1999).

## Decision to Enter the Profession of Counseling

According to the Council of Graduate Schools (n.d.), individuals who obtain a Master's degree increase the likelihood of gaining better employment, obtaining a higher income level, having professional advancement opportunities, and tending to play key citizenship roles that contribute the public good. Between 2006 and 2016, the number of occupations that will require a Master's degree is expected to increase by nearly 20% (Council of Graduate Schools, n.d.).

Many factors contribute to an individual's readiness to apply for graduate school, including undergraduate grades, GRE scores, personal characteristics, and experiences at his or her undergraduate institution (Huss, Randall, Patry, Davis, & Hansen, 2002). Brown (2004) sites individual characteristics such as age, gender, race and ethnicity, level of self-efficacy, and interpersonal interactions as factors may influence an individual's post-undergraduate choices, such as attending graduate school. Other experiences that influenced post-undergraduate decisions were undergraduate coursework, internship experiences, and the opportunity to engage in a variety of activities in which an individual was encouraged to develop new interests and to engage in self-exploration (Brown, 2004).

## Screening and Readiness of Counselor Education Students

The Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (2009), or CACREP, provides a set of standards of practice for counselor education programs with the purpose of ensuring that students who graduate acquire the knowledge and master the skills necessary to develop a professional counselor identity and competent skills. Because the counselor education faculty has the responsibility to serve

as the profession's gatekeepers, and are responsible for the students who are accepted into the program, the faculty must properly screen the applicants for readiness for graduate level counselor training (Vacha-Haase, Davenport, & Kerewsky, 2004; Wilkerson, 2006; Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002; Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010).

Throughout the counselor education trainee program, the counselor education faculty monitors and evaluates students regarding his or her academic and interpersonal abilities. Therefore, when screening applicants for admission to the program, the faculty members can use interviews as a screening tool to choose the most appropriate candidates (Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002). The use of an interview process is reinforced by the 2009 CACREP standards that recommend admission decisions be based on both non-academic criteria, such as the ability to form effective and culturally relative relationships, and academic criteria based on the candidates aptitude for graduate level study (CACREP, 2009; Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010).

Individuals tend to choose careers in which they are able to perform the duties that are most compatible with their personal characteristics (Armstrong & Rounds, 2008). There are certain personality characteristics that are usually good predictors of effective counselors. Therefore, when counselor education faculty interview potential trainees for the entry into the counselor education program, identification of those personal characteristics and interpersonal skills is crucial (Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010; Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002). Some non-academic qualities that indicate positive counselor characteristics and competence include the ability to be empathetic, have unconditional positive regard for the client, apply theory to practice, and display interpersonal competence, personal maturity, flexibility and emotional stability while valuing others'

opinions and culture (Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002; Erford, 2010; Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010; Wilkerson, 2006). The previous list is not all-inclusive, however, the faculty making the decisions to admit individuals into a counseling program subjectively evaluate the applicants' interpersonal behaviors as they answer questions (Nagpal & Ritchie, 2002).

Several sources and career development theories postulate that an individual's thoughts and feelings are inseparable from career choices, thus emotions and cognitions both affect and are effected by career choices (Meyer-Griffith, Reardon, & Hartley, 2009; Armstrong & Rounds, 2008; Lent, 2008). In addition, there is evidence of a social and cultural basis for career development and decision making; development in area of an individual's domain will lead to development in other areas (Betz, 2008). When an individual is able to make a career choice that provides a match between the individual's sense of self and knowledge of the work environment, then that choice is said to be congruent, thus leading to the best outcomes for career development (Betz, 2008).

#### Development of Counselor Education Students

“Graduate students seek an advanced degree to obtain the specialized training needed for a previously made career choice” (McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984, p. 128). Graduate studies prepare students to apply the learned knowledge and skills to practice in order to gain values and attitudes for success in the world of work (Teichler, 2007). Individuals entering a counselor education program may be seeking assistance in clarifying and confirming career goals and decisions (McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984). As the student progresses through the counselor training program, he or she would need to develop cognitive and attitudinal complexities necessary for a

comprehensive understanding about the “nature of knowledge as it applies to counseling” (Choate & Granello, 2006, p. 46).

Students in a counselor training program would be expected to progress along a somewhat predictable developmental course throughout the counselor education program. According to Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003), counselors proceed through predictable phases throughout their life-long career development processes; beginning counselor education students fit the profile of the first phase: the *Lay Helper Phase*. The lay helper phase is considered a pre-training phase in which the individual is in a role in which he or she is helping friends, family members, or others to resolve a problem; this role feels natural or authentic to the lay helper. Comfort in this role may be one variable that may inspire an individual to study to become a professional counselor (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Students tend to become more aware of the theoretical and professionally based methods and techniques as they progress through the early portion of the counselor education program. When the student gains more knowledge, his or her behaviors may become more rigid, less natural, and he or she may tend to be more externally focused (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). As the student gains more confidence with his or her skills, there tends to be a shift back to an internal focus on the part of the student: “...this movement is propelled by the disillusionment with training after being confronted with the hardships and challenges of practice. Disillusionment may induce exploration into assets and strengths but also weaknesses and liabilities” (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003, p. 29).

The second phase, called the *beginning student phase* occurs once the individual enters the counselor education program and has experienced the completion of some coursework. This phase of development is characterized by dependency and vulnerability on the part of the student, due to feeling overwhelmed and challenged by new information. A student may question his or her ability to complete the tasks necessary to be a professional counselor; students may actively explore the environments and tasks in which a professional counselor may practice. With encouragement and support, the students can progress into the next phase of development as they master counseling tasks and gain a greater understanding of the requirements of the occupation (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

As students begin to understand and gain some mastery of the complexities of counseling skills and attitudes, they progress into the *advanced student phase* and prepare to graduate. Students may feel less threatened and anxious as they begin to establish basic skills and abilities. Students may continue to experience tension and self-criticism as he or she develops new skills and is not able to perform at an advanced level; typically students will experience these emotions during the practicum and internship level. Critical moments in the development of the counselor education student are when that student is faced with difficulties and challenges. These moments can be an indicator of how that individual may handle difficulties and challenges by a client once he or she enters into practice (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

#### Summary

The crux of career development theory constructs include "... vocational developmental tasks, vocational maturity, self-concept, and self-esteem. Vocational

maturity, coupled with self-concept implementation, predicts ease of career choice and satisfaction with and stability of choice” (Osipow, 1990, p. 126). Career maturity, originally called vocational maturity, is a construct that describes an individual’s readiness to make age-appropriate, career-related choices, have the ability to develop a plan of action, and understand the expected role of an individual in his or her preferred career (Vondracek & Reitzle, 1998; Patton & Creed, 2001). Career maturity explains an individual’s career behaviors related to developmental tasks and can be used to indicate that an individual has developed from engaging in simple reasoning patterns to having the ability for more complex career decision reasoning and attitudes (Patton & Creed, 2001; McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984).

Within each stage there are developmental tasks that, once mastered, prepare the individual for the next task; each vocational decision is built upon previous decisions and actions, and earlier vocational performances influence later occupational roles. The type and amount of one’s education depends upon the desired occupation and chosen career field (Super, 1980).

Personality characteristics of the counselor influence the counseling process, and counselor competency is based on the ability of the counselor trainee to develop his or her non-academic qualities and recognize the consequences of these qualities in the counseling relationship (Erford, 2010; Duba, Paez, & Kindsvatter, 2010). Students progress through stages of development and encounter crossroads where he or she must make critical career decisions; these decisions have an impact on success in personal and professional realms (Gladding, 2004).

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

This study investigated the career developmental differences among master's degree counseling students at three different stages throughout a CACREP approved counselor education program. The data collected was on the subject of the assessment of career development levels among (a) students in the beginning courses of the counselor education program, (b) students participating in the practicum field experience of their training, and (c) students graduating from the counselor education program. The assessment instrument used to collect the data is the Career Development Inventory College Form (CDI-CU), parts I and II.

#### Research Question

The research question for this study concerns counselor trainees and their levels of career development over the course of a counselor education training program. Will there be a significant difference in the career development level of counselor trainees at the beginning of training, practicum students, and students at the end of training?

#### Research Design

The research design is a comparison of three non-equivalent, static groups; static groups are those that exist because a condition or intervention has already occurred (Houser, 2009). For this study, three groups were assessed using the CDI-CU as an individual, computerized assessment instrument: group 1 – beginning counselor students; group 2 – practicum counseling students; and group 3 – graduating counselor students. These groups were intact prior to the beginning of this study; therefore the groups cannot be randomly assigned. Thus, the external variables and conditions, such as experience

outside of the counselor education program, cannot be controlled. Another short-coming of this study design is that, since the study will assess static groups, the groups will not be matched on demographic or other variables (Houser, 2009).

### The Instrument

The instrument that was used in this study, the Career Development Inventory College Form (CDI-CU), measured the counselor education students' career development levels. The Career Development Inventory (CDI) was originally developed as a means to empirically measure the constructs that comprise the concept of career maturity (Anderson & Vandehey, 2006). Donald Super, Albert Thompson, Richard Lindeman, Jean Pierre Jordaan, and Roger Myers collaboratively developed the first version of the instrument in 1979, called CDI Form S, for use with high school students. In 1981, a second form, CDI-CU, was developed for use with adults in the college setting (Glavin & Reh fuss, 2005; Savickas & Hartung, 1996). The CDI, both form S and form CU, measures vocational development and readiness of an individual to cope with the tasks of a chosen profession; the CDI is not career specific, but rather focuses on the career development knowledge and attitude levels of the individuals completing the inventory (Vocopher, 2004; Savickas, 1984; Super and Hall, 1978).

The CDI measures how well an individual makes wise choices in the process of building his or her career and contains both knowledge and attitude scales. It also measures coping behaviors that relate to developmental tasks leading to the crystallization of specific career choices (Vocopher, 2004; Hackett & Lonborg, 1993; Savickas & Hartung, 1996). The CDI-CU evaluates the development of adults who are in the exploration stage of career development, between the exploration and establishment

stages, and those who have entered the establishment stage of career development. The subscales of the CDI-CU assess the amount to which an individual has planned, explored, and decided on a career, as well as the level of understanding of future job related expectations. Thus, this instrument is able to capture development levels of individuals who are said to be in the exploration and establishment stages of career development (NCDA, 2010; Walsh & Betz, 2001).

Since career maturity is an essential component in an individual's career decision making process, and since the CDI contains scales that measure attitudes and knowledge that are essential elements in career maturity and career mastery, this instrument is a reliable source for comparing career development levels. Suggestions for use of the CDI include career counseling and planning as well as research and determining difficulties for an individual concerning career planning and interventions (Levinson et al., 1998).

The 120-item CDI-CU is composed of two parts. Part one focuses on career orientation while part two focuses on knowledge of preferred occupation. Part I includes the following subscales: Career Planning (CP), Career Exploration (CE), Decision Making (DM), and World of Work (WW); Part II measures Knowledge of Preferred Occupational Group (PO) (Savickas & Hartung, 1996; Walsh & Betz, 2001). The CDI-CU is an internet-based, computerized instrument that is available only on the Vocopher website (Vocopher, 2004). The instrument is computer-scored, and results are available immediately after an individual completes the instrument,. The results are reported in standard scores that have a mean of 100 and standard deviation of 20; percentile scores are also provided (Walsh & Betz, 2001; Vocopher, 2004). Part II of the CDI is suitable for college-age and older individuals only, whereas Part I may be appropriate for high

school-aged students, in addition to other adults (Levinson, et al. 1998). There is no cost for the instrument when accessed through the Vocopher website.

An individual will receive eight scaled scores, one score from each of the five subscales and three scores based on a combination of subscale scores; the three combinations of scores are: (1) career development attitudes (CDA), which is a combination of CP and CE scores; (2) career development knowledge (CDK), which is the combination of the DM and WW scales; and (3) career orientation total (COT), which is a composite score that combines the CP, CE, DM, and WW (Walsh & Betz, 2001; Levinson, et al. 1998).

The subscales on Part I measure the components of the construct of career maturity. Subscale one - Career Planning, or CP - assess the degree to which an individual has engaged in career planning, such as tasks that specifically orientate an individual to a career. This section of the CDI is made up of 20 items used to indicate the degree to which he or she has engaged in the process of learning and planning for his or her career. A low score indicates that one may not yet be serious and systematic about approaching the career choices. A high score indicates appropriate awareness of, concern about, and involvement in preparing to make educational and occupational choices, as well as career plans (Vocopher, 2004; Walsh & Betz, 2001).

The second subscale, Career Exploration (CE), is comprised of 20 items and measures the quality of the tasks the individual engaged in order to learn about a particular career, such as talking with professionals or reading literature regarding a particular career. An individual indicates whether or not he or she would go to the specific resources - such as friends, books, professionals, or other sources - for

information or help in making plans for work or further education, one then rates how useful these resources are for career planning. A low score may indicate that one may not have begun to use quality informational resources in exploring career opportunities, whereas a high score may indicate that one has learned effective strategies for seeking information and gathering relevant data about occupational opportunities (Vocopher, Walsh & Betz, 2001; Savickas & Hartung, 1996).

The third subscale, Decision Making (DM), measures one's ability to apply knowledge and skills to gain a theoretical understanding of what may be involved in a particular career and make decisions accordingly (Walsh & Betz, 2001). Decision making involves using information on educational and vocational options related to career opportunities, as well as the skills to apply principles systematically when making choices related to current and future vocational situations. The DM section contains 20 items that challenge the individual to apply knowledge and insight in order to make the most appropriate decision related to a vocational situation presented in a brief vignette (Vocopher, 2004; Walsh & Betz, 2001). Low scores suggest that an individual could benefit from learning effective ways to problem solve and make informed decisions. High scores on the DM section may indicate that an individual developed critical decision making skills to make effective career decisions. A high score may also indicate that an individual can make decisions that will match interests and abilities to the requirements of a preferred vocation (Glavin & Rehfluss, 2005).

The fourth subscale is the World of Work (WW), which assesses one's knowledge regarding the duties and expectations related to the actual job that an individual may desire (Savickas & Hartung, 1996; Walsh & Betz, 2001). Low scores

may indicate that an individual needs more information about occupational fields and career development tasks before making important career decisions and occupational choices. An individual may benefit from learning more about his or her initial preferences, how to secure jobs in the preferred area, and how those working in the preferred occupation adjust to the demands of the job. High scores could indicate that an individual has sufficiently engaged in information seeking to learn about educational and occupational opportunities and alternatives (Vocopher, 2004; Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005).

The career development attitudes score is produced by combining the CE and CP subscales. Career development attitudes relate to an individual's general viewpoint related to choices, preferences, and decision making within the process of career planning and exploration. Glavin and Rehfuss (2005) note that career planning and career exploration attitudes are the most important because these activities help an individual develop a greater awareness of duties and expectations of possible vocational interests. Lower CDA scores may indicate that an individual should increase his or her awareness regarding career preferences and actively seek to understand his or her leading career interests (Savickas & Hartung, 1996).

The career development knowledge score is produced through the combination of the DM and the WW subscales. These two subscales relate to career competencies and the individual's ability to apply attitudes and knowledge to career decisions. Low scores on these subscales may indicate that an individual should spend more time in exploring the realities of the preferred vocation - such as job duties, requirements, rewards and benefits of the job - as well as improving his or her decision making skills (Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005; Savickas & Hartung, 1996).

The career orientation total score is produced by combining the CP, CE, DM, and WW subscales. When all four subscales are combined, a more reliable measure of attitudes and knowledge is produced. The COT indicates the level of readiness for making career choices (Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005). When the score is high in CP, CE, DM, and WW subscales, an individual is most likely to have the attitudes and knowledge to make competent career decisions that are based on a thorough process of inquiry and examination of career-related factors (Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005; Savickas & Hartung, 1996).

Part II of the CDI-CU contains the fifth and final subscale, Knowledge of Preferred Occupational Group (PO). The PO subscale attempts to measure the extent to which an individual understands the "... types of duties, abilities, interests, values, and other characteristics involved in the pursuit of an occupation in one's preferred group" (Levinson, et al., p 289). On the PO subscale, an individual first chooses a preferred occupational group and then answers 40 multiple choice questions related to that specific vocational group. The more knowledge and understanding that an individual has for a particular vocational choice, the more career-mature that individual is in his or her career development (Walsh & Betz, 2001). Low PO scores indicate that the individual would need to explore more specific information related to a preferred occupation while higher scores indicate that the individual is ready to make clear and definite choices about a career field (Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005; Savickas & Hartung, 1996).

The internal consistency reliability data for each individual scale, based on Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , ranges from 0.61 to 0.91; the reliability for the CDA and the CDK scales ranges from 0.75 to 0.90; and the reliability for the COT is higher than 0.85 (Walsh &

Betz, 2001, Levinson, et al. 1998; Savickas & Hartung 1996). Test-retest reliability ranges from 0.36 to 0.90 for each of the subscales and combination scales (Levinson, et al. 1998). According to Savickas and Hartung (1996), the CDI was tested for concurrent validity in multiple studies as relevant to external variables, such as demographics, career development indicators, and educational achievement. The scores on the CDI were found to correlate significantly with scores on other career development instruments; one study compared the CDI scores from the Career Education Questionnaire and found the coefficients ranged from .55 to .65 (Savickas & Hartung, 1996).

One study examined gender differences and found that overall, women have higher mean CDI scores than men. However, this study also revealed that women tended to have higher career maturity in the cognitive domain with no significant differences in the career attitude domain when compared to men (Walsh & Betz, 2001; Savickas & Hartung, 1996). A different study examined cultural and gender differences. Overall, females scored higher on the CDK scales, but there were no statistically significant differences between Asian, black, and white test takers (Savickas & Hartung, 1996).

#### Research Population

The research population that participated in this study consisted of volunteer students enrolled at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Duquesne University is a CACREP accredited university. Students were invited to participate in the study by the researcher, with permission from the instructor, at the beginning of class or during group supervision time. Students were informed, verbally as well as in a written letter, that their participation in the study would be strictly voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at anytime. Students were given the opportunity to meet with

the researcher, either in person or by telephone, to discuss any questions pertaining to the study. The small samples size could be related to the inconvenience of using an instrument that is available exclusively on-line.

The version of the CDI-CU used for this study is on the Vocopher website. Students were informed that if they would participate in the study, they would need to have access to a computer, an internet connection, and a printer. Students were given a hard copy of complete, step-by-step instructions detailing how to access and register with the Vocopher website and how to access the instrument, as well as which pages would need to be printed and returned to the researcher. Students were asked to complete parts I and II of the CDI-CU, save the results and print a hard copy of the results to be returned to the researcher in an addressed, stamped envelope. Students were asked to use a separate envelope to return the test results and the consent to participate, in the case that a student chose to participate at a later date than when invited by the researcher.

#### Process for Data Collection

Vocopher requires that all users must register in order to gain access to the instruments on its website. Students received an access code from the researcher and were instructed to register using their statuses in the counselor education program - such as beginning student, practicum student, or graduating student - as opposed to using his or her name or other identifying information. Voluntary participants were instructed to complete the computerized version of the inventory as found on the Vocopher website and print out the results from part I and part II. The researcher provided a complete set of instructions about accessing the Vocopher website and how to begin the CDI. Students were required to register with Vocopher using a pass code specific to this researcher;

thus, only the researcher and the student would have access to the test results. Once the students registered with Vocopher, they could access the CDI; and for the purposes of this research study, students were directed to enter their status in the program as opposed to entering his or her name or other identifying information. Upon the completion of the instruments, students were asked to print out their results and place them in a sealed envelope when returning them to the researcher. No personal identifying information about the student should have appeared on any part of the results of the CDI; any such information was shredded and not used in this study.

### Analysis

Students were asked to print a hard copy of his or her results for Part I and Part II of the CDI and then return those scores to the researcher. The results pages that were returned contained raw scores and percentage scores for each of the subscales on Part I and Part II. Only the raw scores, calculated by Vocopher, were used in this study; SPSS was used to analyze the data. The three student groups were labeled in SPSS as follows: 1 = beginning students; 2 = practicum students; and 3 = graduating students. The raw scores for CDA, CDK, COT, and PO were entered for each student participant and were analyzed using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if there is a significant difference among the three groups. A post hoc analysis was run on all four of the test sections, using a Bonferroni Correction for the multiple comparisons, to determine differences among the student groups in each subscale area. The SPSS output included a dataset of descriptive statistics and the ANOVA results for each of the four subscales, CDA, CDK, COT, and PO.

## Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the level of career development by counselor trainees changes over the course of a counselor education training program. The methods used addressed the following research question: *will there be a significant difference in the career developmental level of counselor trainees at the beginning of training, during practicum, and at the end of training?* The Career Development Inventory, available exclusively online, was used to measure the differences in four subscales of career development; these subscales are variables used as indicators of an individual's career maturity. The subscales identified in this study were career development attitudes, career development knowledge, career orientation total, and knowledge of preferred occupation. Counselor education students from Duquesne University were invited to participate in the study and were asked to print a hard copy of their results and return it to the researcher by postage paid mail. Each student was grouped into one of three categories based on his or her status in the program; the three static groups were labeled as beginning student, practicum student, and graduating student. An analysis of variance was used to determine if a significant difference on each of the subscales existed among the three student groups.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

This section will present a highlight of the results of the study. There were four hypotheses for this study: (1) there is no significant difference in the level of career development attitudes among beginning level, practicum-level, and graduating counselor education students; (2) there is no significant difference in the level of career development knowledge among beginning, practicum-level, and graduating counselor education students; (3) there is no significant difference in the level of career orientation among beginning, practicum-level, and graduating counselor education students; and (4) there is no significant difference in the level of knowledge of preferred occupations among beginning, practicum-level, and graduating counselor education students. A separate analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for each hypothesis across the three different statuses of students; the different statuses of the students are beginning student, practicum student, and graduating student. The total N of all of the student groups was 31; 13 beginning students, 12 practicum students, and six graduating students. Because the CDI-CU is available exclusively online, the small sample size may be the result of participants finding the instrument inconvenient to access or too time consuming to register on the website.

Career development attitudes are the beliefs, feelings, values, and disposition to act in certain ways in relationship to career choices and career development. The first hypothesis - there is no significant difference in the level of career development attitudes (CDA) among beginning, practicum-level, and graduating counseling education students - was verified by this study. The ANOVA produced an F ratio of 1.147, which is not

significant at the .05 alpha level; the reported significance level was .332 (see Table 1). The mean CDA score for beginning students was 114.77 with a standard deviation of 12.538. The mean CDA score for practicum students was 126.50, with a standard deviation of 13.325. The mean CDA score for graduating students was 117.50, with a standard deviation of 37.793.

**Table 1**

**ANOVA**

CDA

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	899.386	2	449.693	1.147	.332
Within Groups	10980.808	28	392.172		
Total	11880.194	30			

Career development knowledge refers to the level of knowledge an individual possesses related to a chosen or potential vocation and the tasks involved in that particular vocation. The second hypothesis - there is no significant difference in the level of career development knowledge (CDK) among beginning, practicum-level, and graduating counselor education students - was rejected. The mean score for beginning students was 105.85, with a standard deviation of 7.978. The mean score for practicum students was 110.25, with a standard deviation of 10.964. The mean score for graduating students was 73.00, with a standard deviation of 15.336. The ANOVA yielded an F ratio of 25.901, which was significant at the .05 alpha level; the significance level was .000 (see Table 2).

**Table 2****ANOVA**

CDK

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6034.896	2	3017.448	25.901	.000
Within Groups	3261.942	28	116.498		
Total	9296.839	30			

The post hoc analysis generated a comparison between the three student status groups and reported that there is a significant difference at the .05 alpha level in CDK between the beginning students and the graduating students. The T ratio was 32.846 with a significance level of .000. This result indicates that the mean score in CDK for beginning students was higher than that of the graduating students. There was also a significant difference between the practicum students and the graduating students' scores in CDK at the .05 alpha level; the significance level was .000. This result indicates that the mean score in CDK for practicum students was higher than that of graduating students. There was no significant difference between the beginning students and the practicum students at the .05 alpha level.

The career orientation total is a composite measure that reveals a pattern of vocational behaviors over the course of an individual's work life. The third hypothesis in this study - there is no significant difference in the level of the career orientation total (COT) among beginning, practicum-level, and graduating counselor education students - was rejected. The mean score for beginning students was 114.38, with a standard

deviation of 9.287. The mean score from the practicum students was 126.00, with a standard deviation of 8.954. The mean score for graduating students was 93.00 and the standard deviation was 15.336. The ANOVA yielded an F ratio of 19.729, which was significant at the .05 alpha level; the significance level was .000 (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

**ANOVA**

COT

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	4358.859	2	2179.429	19.729	.000
Within Groups	3093.077	28	110.467		
Total	7451.935	30			

The post hoc analysis generated a comparison among the three student status groups and reported that there is a significant difference at the .05 alpha level in COT among all three groups of students. There was a significant difference between the beginning students and the practicum students, the T ratio was 11.616 with a significance level of .030. This result indicates that the practicum students scored significantly higher in COT than the beginning students. There was a significant difference between the beginning students and the graduating students; the T ratio was 21.385 with a significance level of .001, thus indicating that the graduating students scored significantly higher on the COT than the beginning students. There was a significant difference between the practicum students and graduating students on the COT; the T ratio was

33.000 and the significance level was .000, indicating that the graduating students scored significantly higher on COT scores than the practicum students.

The knowledge of the preferred occupation refers to the level of knowledge and the extent to which an individual uses that knowledge to understand the characteristics of his or her preferred occupation. The fourth hypothesis in this study - there is no significant difference in the level of the knowledge of preferred occupations (PO) among beginning, practicum- level, and graduating counselor education students - was rejected. The mean score for beginning students was 106.23, with a standard deviation of 30.037. The mean score for practicum students was 105.50, with a standard deviation of 9.587. The mean score for graduating students was 67.50, with a standard deviation of 53.129. The ANOVA yielded an F ratio of 3.847, which was significant at the .05 alpha level; the significance level was .033 (see Table 4).

**Table 4** **ANOVA**

PO

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7130.870	2	3565.435	3.847	.033
Within Groups	25950.808	28	926.815		
Total	33081.677	30			

The post hoc analysis generated a comparison among the three student status groups and reported that there is a significant difference at the .05 alpha level in PO between beginning students and graduating students. The T ratio was 38.731 with a significance level of .047. This result indicates that the mean score in PO for beginning

students was higher than that of the graduating students. There was no significant difference in the scores between beginning students and practicum students in the area of PO; there was no significant difference between practicum and graduating students.

### Summary

This study proposed four hypotheses related to career development; of the four hypotheses, only one was accepted. The accepted hypothesis stated that there is no significant difference in the level of career development attitudes among beginning, practicum-level, and graduating counselor education students. Three hypotheses were rejected because a statistically significant difference was found among the scores between the three test groups: beginning students, practicum students, and graduating students in a counselor education graduate program.

According to the statistical analysis, a significant difference was found between the test scores in the area of career development knowledge between beginning and graduating students and between graduating and practicum students. There was no significant difference between the beginning and practicum student scores in the area of career development knowledge. A significant difference was found among the scores of all three groups of students on the career orientation total scales, and the hypothesis was therefore rejected. Finally, a significant difference was found between the scores of beginning and graduating students on the preferred occupations scales. There was not a significant difference between the graduating and practicum student scores or between the beginning and practicum student scores in the area of preferred occupations.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### Introduction

Analysis of the data comparing the career development levels of beginning, practicum-level, and graduating counselor education students revealed differences in the areas of career development knowledge, career orientation, and knowledge of preferred occupation; however, no difference related to career development attitudes was found among the groups. Several variables could influence the results derived from this study. A detailed description of the conclusions drawn from this study, along with possible reasons for the results and recommendations for future study, will be offered in this chapter.

#### Discussion

Research related to the career development of counselor education students is limited. In one study, McCaffrey, Miller, and Winston (1984) used the CDI Part I as a means to assess the career maturity of undergraduate and graduate students. The CDI Part I encompasses the career development attitudes and career development knowledge scales; the subscales are career planning, career exploration, decision making, and world of work. The results of the McCaffrey, Miller, and Winston (1984) study revealed that freshmen had a significantly lower mean score than the seniors and graduate students, and there was no significant difference between the mean scores of seniors and the graduate students. Therefore, the researchers concluded that students groups in the exploration stage of career development have higher mean scores than those students who are in the establishment stage of career development.

The conclusion drawn from the McCaffrey, Miller, and Winston (1984) study postulates that graduate students experience the same career maturity issues as freshmen and that graduate school may serve as a way to "... explore career options rather than furthering a commitment to a particular field" (p. 128). Graduate students' "... relatively low career maturity in the exploration stage ... suggest that their explorations might emphasize thorough self-examination of individual skills, career values, and fundamental decision making process" and can benefit from career counseling activities that focus on "... vocational self-concept, including aspects as values, needs, skills, and interests related to future work roles and life-style considerations" (McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984; p. 128-129).

This current study's results suggest - if likened to the McCaffrey, Miller, and Winston (1984) study - that the beginning students could be categorized as being in the exploration stage of career development and that the students then transition into the establishment stage of career development as they complete their practicum and internship experiences. That there is no significant difference among the three student groups on the CDA scale supports the verity that each student group had similarly explored resources, gathered information regarding professional counseling, and sufficiently planned to be able to narrow career choices to that of counseling, all in a similar manner. These career development attitudes are consistent with an individual who is in the exploration stage of career development (Super, 1980).

It is on the CDK and COT scales that it becomes more evident that the practicum students and the graduating students are in the process of moving, or have already moved, into the establishment stage of career development. The career decision making process

requires that one be able to effectively use problem solving skills and apply past experiences to current decision making situations in real-life work scenarios; the ability to apply these decisions to the world of work are consistent with what occurs in the establishment stage of career development (Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005; Super, 1980).

Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) examined the progressive development of counselors starting at the point when an individual decides to enter a graduate program through the senior professional level. The results of the Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) reveal that personal and professional life domains influence the professional development of the counselor, a theme that parallels those in career development theories. Prior to beginning a counselor education program, helping others and giving advice may seem comfortable and natural; thus, when that individual enters that counselor education program, he or she may feel excited. However, once the demands of the program become challenging and overwhelming, the individual may feel less prepared for the demands of the profession. After the individual begins the counselor education program, he or she moves into an unknown role as a professional helper, often feeling threatened, anxious, and overwhelmed due to inexperience. Upon graduating from the program, the individual may encounter hardships related to feeling unprepared to work autonomously, especially when he or she encounters client populations different from those he or she worked with in the practicum and internship experiences (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Ronnestad & Skovholt (2003) use the label “lay helper” (p. 10) to describe an individual’s development as a counselor prior to entry into the counselor education program. This lay helper phase has characteristics similar to those in the exploratory stage of career development, such as narrowing tentative career choices, clarifying

somewhat vague ideas about the specific duties of the occupation, and acting out vocational roles in an effort to facilitate decision making. However, has not necessarily taken steps to make career changes (Ronnestad & Skovholt; Super & Hall, 1978; Anderson & Vandehey, 2006; McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984). The lay helper phase and beginning students group, who in this study are in the exploratory stage of career development, appear to have equivalent levels of career maturity and career development based on the characteristics describe previously in this section.

The next successive phase described in the Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) study, labeled as the “beginning student phase” (p. 11), is the time that the student begins to question his or her abilities and personal characteristic necessary for the work as a professional counselor. In the “beginning student phase,” as described by Ronnestad & Skovholt (2003), students are in the process of mastering the complex concepts, theories, and skills required of a counseling professional, and as the students’ progress through the counselor education program, his or her career development proceeds forward, toward the “advanced student phase” (Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003). In this period of career growth, students begin to establish a more formalized set of skills and begin to engage in career tasks that will allow that student to achieve vocational goals; however, they may not have fully completed the tasks necessary for full crystallization and stabilization, of career objectives (McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Zunker, 2008).

The beginning student phase, described by Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003) would include the beginning and practicum counselor education students as described in this current study. The practicum level may be the point in the career development of

professional counselor trainees in which the crystallization of career decisions begins. Thus, a drop in the level of career maturity, as well as scores on the CDI, could be expected as the students move into the establishment stage of career development. Individuals may use graduate school as an opportunity to crystallize his or her career decisions, since the crystallization process of career development occurs in the establishment stage of career development (McCaffrey, Miller, & Winston, 1984; Ronnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Super & Hall, 1978).

The student groups in this current study, beginning students and practicum students, possess qualities of the exploratory stage in career development; the practicum and graduating students possess qualities of the exploratory and establishment stages in career development. Thus, we see a drop in the career maturity indicators in the mean CDI scores. The practicum students and the graduating students are further along in the process of trying to master the tasks that lead to establishing a career choice and would fit in the “advanced student phase” category as identified by Ronnestad and Skovholt (2003). The results from the COT scale comparisons in this current study show a significant difference among all three students groups. This difference appears to be indicative of the movement by the student groups, especially the practicum and graduating students, from the exploratory to the establishment stage of career development. Evidence of such a movement was reported by McCaffrey, Miller, and Winston (1984), when the results of a comparison among the career maturity levels of college freshmen, college upper classmen, and graduate students revealed that the significant differences among the groups “...can be explained by the difference between the exploration stage, which deals with the process of choosing a career, and the

establishment stage, which emphasizes the process of ‘finding a niche’ and making success of one’s chosen career. As might be expected, all student group means were significantly higher on the exploration stage than on the establishment stage” (pp 129-130).

### Conclusions

Career development data was obtained from a total of 31 counselor education students through the use of the *Career Development Inventory* (CDI), available only on-line on the Vocopher website. The CDI is intended to measure an individual’s readiness to make vocational choices by measuring career maturity variables on each of the subsets (Anderson & Vandehey, 2006; Glavin & Reh fuss, 2005). Career maturity, in conjunction with stage theory, is the foundational construct for the *Life space – Life span* career development theory, upon which the CDI was constructed (Swanson & Fouad, 2010, Zunker, 2008; Savickas & Hartung 1996; Super, 1980).

Hypothesis one was accepted because there was no significant difference found in the career development attitudes (CDA) mean scores among beginning, practicum-level, and graduating counselor education students. Hypothesis two was rejected because there was a significant difference found in career development knowledge (CDK) between the mean scores of beginning students and graduating students, as well as between practicum-level and graduating students; no significant difference in the mean scores was found between beginning students and practicum-level students. Hypothesis three was rejected because a significant difference in the mean scores on the career orientation total (COT) scale was found among beginning, practicum-level, and graduating counselor education students. The fourth hypothesis was rejected because there was a significant

difference found between the mean scores of beginning and graduating counselor education students on the knowledge of preferred occupation (PO) section; there was no significant difference between the mean scores of practicum-level or graduating students and between beginning and practicum-level students on the PO subscale.

The results indicate that there was no significant difference in mean scores among the three student groups on the CDA scales. Career development attitudes refer to the disposition of a person regarding the amount of thinking, planning, and effort employed while exploring and planning for occupational and educational choices (Glavin & Reh fuss, 2005). The CDA scale is comprised of two subscales, career planning (CP) and career exploration (CE). Higher scores in the area of CP indicate that an individual has actively engaged in career planning behaviors that lead to an increased awareness of necessary decisions related to occupational choices; a higher score shows that an individual has enough career readiness to narrow career choices. A higher score in the CE subscale indicates that one has explored adequately enough to make career choices. Lower scores on these two subscales, CP and CE, indicate that an individual could benefit from further planning and exploration in an effort to narrow career choices and understand the process of pursuing a preferred occupation (Glavin & Reh fuss, 2005).

The results indicated that beginning counselor education students had a higher mean score than the graduating students and that the practicum-level students had a higher mean score than the graduating students on the CDK subscales; there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the beginning and practicum-level students. Career development knowledge is the level of knowledge that one has related to a chosen vocation. The CDK scale is composed of the decision making (DM) and

world of work (WW) subscales. High DM scores indicate a strong readiness for making vocational decisions and that one can make choices that best match his or her abilities and interests. Higher scores on the WW subscale indicate that an individual has a full range of information related to a preferred vocation and may be ready to make distinctive occupational choices. Lower scores on these two subscales may indicate that one lacks problem solving skills and pragmatic decision making skills related to career development. One may lack basic information about how a person would obtain a job in a particular field, how to adjust to that occupation, and the day to day duties required of that job (Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005).

The results indicate that there was a significant difference among the scores for all three groups of students on the career orientation total (COT) scale. The COT score is a composite score, composed of the CDA and the CDK subscales, and is used to gain a greater reliability measure of career attitudes and knowledge, thus indicating the overall readiness of the individual to make appropriate career and educational choices (Savickas & Hartung, 1996; Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005). Higher scores on the COT score indicate that an individual displays readiness to match choices to interests and has the attitudes and competencies to follow through with career choices. Higher COT scores could indicate that an individual is career-mature enough to make career decision and act on those decisions that best correspond to his or her interests and abilities (Savickas & Hartung, 1996).

The results indicate that the beginning counselor students had a higher mean score than the graduating students on the knowledge of preferred occupation scale (PO); there was no significant difference indicated between beginning students and practicum-level

students, as well as no significant difference between practicum-level students and graduating students. The PO scores reflect knowledge about specific occupations (Savickas & Hartung, 1996). The PO scale measures "... the amount of in-depth knowledge one has with respect to their primary field of interest ... When administered to the appropriate population, low scores on the PO indicate one may need to gather more detailed information regarding their occupation of choice ..." (Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005, p. 15-16). Lower scores indicate that one would need more in-depth investigation of the requirements and expectations of a specific occupation (Savickas & Hartung, 1996). High scores indicate that an individual has gathered detailed information about his or her preferred occupation and is ready to make clear, specific career and occupational choices (Glavin & Rehfuss, 2005).

From the results of this study and the conclusions drawn from the McCaffrey, Miler, and Winston (1984) study, we can assume that beginning counselor education students are in the exploratory stage of career development and eventually move into the establishment stage of career development as they progress through the counselor training program and prepare to graduate. There does not appear to be an obvious point in the counselor education program where this movement takes place; we can only assume that at some time in the practicum or internship experience students will move into the establishment phase of career development. The career needs of individuals between the exploratory and establishment phase of career development typically involved being able to access career and work-role information and understanding how to use that information to make decisions specific to that persons' abilities and interests. Counselors, counselor educators, and career counseling professionals can use this

knowledge to assist counselor education students by promoting further investigation of the day-to-day experiences of professionals who are already working in the field.

Career counseling professionals may be able to assist counselor education students by providing opportunities to complete interest inventories and other explorative means that lead to a realistic view of the duties that counseling professionals engage in on a daily basis. Career professionals from a university's career center could be in a partnership role with the counselor education faculty to provide a variety of career supports to the students. The close association between the career center professionals and counselor education faculty could be incorporated into the counselor education curriculum early in the program to assist students with finalizing their exploration processes. Once the student begins to establish career choices, the career professionals and counselor education faculty could continue the partnership and find the most appropriate practicum and internship settings, as well as community partners, which will most greatly benefit to the student's mastery of skills.

Another way to use the results of this study is to incorporate some measure of career maturity, career development, or career readiness into the initial screening process of applicants to the counselor education program. Applicants lacking the basic understanding of the counseling profession as beginning students may continue to have insufficient knowledge or abilities to perform the duties expected in the practicum and internship experiences. Gauging the level of career maturity as accurately as possible could assist with ensuring that program applicants have adequately explored their career interests and have a basic understanding of what might be expected of a professional

counselor, thus increasing the success of the students in mastering skills that allow them to become competent, practicing professionals.

#### Recommendations for future research

Studies on the construct of career maturity have consistently reported that women tended to have higher levels of career maturity than men (Welsh & Betz, 2001; Savickas & Hartung, 1996; Luzzo, 1995; Hackett & Lonborg, 1997; and Patton & Creed, 2001). This current study did not include a comparison of the career development levels between women and men, which may influence the results on the subscales that measure career maturity constructs. The CDI subscales of career planning, career exploration, decision making, and world of work contain measures to gather empirical data related to career maturity. One way to obtain the significance level of gender is to include it as a variable in each of the three student status groups. A two-way ANOVA would be appropriate to find the significance level of the added variable.

There are very few studies that incorporate the age of individuals across the developmental stages. Career maturity levels, and consequently career development levels, can be influenced by an individual's life experience and stage of career development; thus, it would be prudent to incorporate chronological age as a variable in determining the differences among the student groups. This current study could be repeated and would include the age of the student as a variable to be compared within each student group and between the student groups. The chronological age of a student would be important to determine if within the beginning student group, for example, there is a significant difference between older and younger students on career

development scales, although the students would all be considered in the exploration stage of career development.

### Summary

Career development theory postulates that an individual develops through stages and at each stage gains an awareness of his or herself, becomes aware of environmental opportunities, and makes career choices based on interests and abilities (Super & Hall, 1978; Betz, 2008; Crites, 1976; Osipow, 1990). Stage theory of career development hypothesizes that individuals progress through somewhat predictable stages. The theory also describes typical cognitive and behavioral indicators related to chronological age and phase of development (Savickas, 1997; Osipow, 1990; Betz, 2008; Super, 1980; Crites, 1976; Super & Hall, 1978; Vondracek & Reitzle, 1998).

When one masters a task in an age and phase category, it can be hypothesized that the individual has a high level of mastery related to expectations of that stage. When he or she then moves into the next stage, it can be hypothesized that the individual has a lower level of mastery related to the expectations of that new stage. This process can be repeated several times over the lifetime as the individual proceeds through the stages and gains mastery of the tasks in each stage. It can also be assumed that, at times, individuals may revert to attitudes and behaviors of previous stages when poor choices are made or choices are forced prior to the individual having the readiness to make a decision.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that there is movement from the exploration stage of career development to the establishment stage of career development by the counselor education students as they progress from beginning students into the practicum experience and eventually prepare to graduate. Another

conclusion established by this study is that the counselor education students appear to drop in the level of career maturity, as reflected in the differences in the CDI mean scores, because of the movement from the exploration stage to the establishment stage in their career development processes. This drop in career development scores may be an indication that the student is at the beginning of the next stage of development and would need to master the tasks necessary to increase career maturity as he or she is training to become a professional counselor. If counselor educators can expect this drop in career development as the students progress through the counselor education program, curriculum or other supports can be developed and added to the graduate programs to aid this transition. Opportunities for observation of, and interaction with, master counselors in practice could assist students with the transition into establishing oneself as a professional counselor.

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