Title of Study

Differences and Similarities Between Community Counseling and Christian Counseling

1. Identify the sources of the potential subjects, derived materials or data. Describe the characteristics of the subject population, such as their anticipated number, age, sex, ethnic background, and state of health. Identify the criteria for inclusion or exclusion. Explain the rationale for the use of special classes of subjects, such as fetuses, pregnant women, children, institutionalized mentally disabled, prisoners, or others, especially those whose ability to give voluntary informed consent may be in question.

Criteria for participation include adults, over the age of 18, and a practicing Christian Counselor/Educator or Community Counselor/Educator. Potential participants for this study will be identified through the American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) for Christian counselors and the American Counseling Association and Counsel for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) for Community Counselors. This study is utilizing a Delphi methods. As a result, only a small number of participants are needed. However, given that ‘rounds’ are used, attrition may occur. Therefore we will need to recruit at least 30 participants for each counseling orientation.

1. Describe the procedures for recruitment of subjects and the consent procedures to be followed. Include the circumstances under which consent will be solicited and obtained, who will seek it, the nature of information to be provided to prospective subjects, and the methods of documenting consent. (Include applicable consent form(s) for review.) If written consent is not to be obtained, this should be clearly stated and justified.

Upon securing a list of organization members, both primary researchers will send recruitment letters that secure involvement. This will also include both the consent form and initial research questions. All responses, and subsequent ‘rounds’ will be conducted online. Written consent will not be obtained as a result.

1. Describe the project’s methodology in detail. If applicable, detail the data collection procedures, the testing instruments, the intervention(s), etc. If using a survey, questionnaire, or interview, please provide a copy of the items or questions.

Because this study is directed toward gathering professionals’ opinions about the fields of counseling and Christian counseling, qualitative methods seemed appropriate for attaining this type of information. A Delphi method will be used via internet to gather information. Historically, the Delphi was used to survey a panel of experts, through repeated rounds, to achieve consensus among those experts. This method has often been used to discover alternatives, explore underlying assumptions, seek out information, educate groups, and correlate judgments on a topic. The advantage of using a Delphi approach is that participants are provided surveys to answer, and participants do not need to meet face-to-face to reach consensus. Achieving agreement through this method dispels the effects of group dynamics on the decision making process, and also facilitates a speedier outcome (Page-McCuistion, 1997). An e-mail questionnaire is also thought to be least obtrusive, costly, and time-consuming. E-mail also provides a simple avenue for correspondence between the researchers and participants when necessary. Ideally no less than 30 members will participate in each identified group for optimal robustness. However, the Delphi method in theory can be applied to any number of individuals and achieve reliable results. As this study is a preliminary investigation, a small number of participants will still be deemed by the researchers as acceptable for determining a meaningful outcome.

Participants will be e-mailed an initial survey that included a description of the project and a consent form. Participants will be asked initially to answer six questions. Questions used in a Delphi study are intended to be open-ended in order for participants to freely generate responses (Page-McCuiston, 1997). The questions for this study are included on the consent form document attached to this application. All participants will be given 2 weeks to respond and asked to limit their responses to 500 words or less. This limit is intended to allow participants to keep their answers as concise as possible, as well as keep the responses from becoming too cumbersome.

1. Describe any potential risks — physical, psychological, social, legal or other — and state their likelihood and seriousness. Describe alternative methods, if any, that were considered and why they will not be used.

There is little foreseeable risk for this study. It is unlikely, however some may become uncomfortable when asked to describe their professional orientation.

1. Describe the procedures for protecting against or minimizing any potential risks and include an assessment of the likely effectiveness of those procedures. Include a discussion of confidentiality safeguards, where relevant, and arrangements for providing mental health or medical treatment, if needed.

Participants are informed that they may remove themselves from the study at any time. Further, the identity of the subject will always be held in strict confidence, and no identifying information will be published in the final manuscript.  All electronic communications will be stored on a secure server in a secure location until the conclusion of the study; approximately 1 year. At which time the information will be deleted.

1. Describe and assess the potential benefits to be gained by the subjects, as well as the benefits that may accrue to society in general as a result of the proposed study.

Sometimes volunteers in a research study may experience benefits from participation. Participants may gain insight and knowledge about their own professional identity/orientation. Also, participants will be helping to provide clarity about the orientation of Christian Counseling and Community Counseling. This will help provide better services to clients seeking services from these orientations.

1. Clearly describe any compensation to be offered/provided to the participants. If extra credit is provided as an incentive, include the percentage of extra credit in relation to the total points offered in the class. Also, if extra credit is provided, describe alternatives to participation in your research for earning extra credit.

No compensation will be offered.

1. Discuss the risks in relation to the anticipated benefits to the subjects and society.

Given the minimal risk of this study, the knowledge gained will help a great deal to better distinguish these 2 orientations and ultimately be able to provide more effective services to clients.

1. Identify the specific sites/agencies to be used as well as approval status. Include copies of approval letters from agencies to be used (note: these are required for final approval). If they are not available at the time of IRB review, approval of the proposal will be contingent upon their receipt.

Sites and agencies will not be used for this study. E-mail lists of participants will be generated through professional organizations and contacted directly.

1. If you are a student, indicate the relationship of the proposal to your program of work and identify your supervising/sponsor faculty member.

N/A

1. In the case of student projects, pilot studies, theses, or dissertations, evidence of approval of Supervising Professor or Faculty Sponsor should be included. Thesis and dissertation proposals must be approved by the student’s committee before proceeding to the IRB for review.

N/A

1. If the proposed study has been approved by another IRB, attach a copy of the letter verifying approval/disapproval and any related correspondence. If the proposed study has not been reviewed/approved by another IRB, please state this explicitly.

N/A

1. Identify all individuals who will have access, during or after completion, to the results of this study, whether they be published or unpublished.

Anthony Pearson – Co-investigator

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Professional Counseling Program

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John Beckenbach – Principle Investigator

Assistant Professor

Texas State University

Shawn Patrick – Co-investigator

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Karen Beloney – Research Assistant

**In addition to this synopsis, you are required to submit all relevant documentation for review. This may include, but is not necessarily limited to: 1) recruiting documents (e.g., flyers, letter, e-mails, brochures, etc.), 2) a consent form, 3) an assent form, 4) letters of approval from relevant organization(s), 5) surveys/instruments/questionnaires, esp. those created by the researcher, 6) a list of questions that the researcher may ask (e.g., focus groups questions, questions for qualitative studies, etc.), and 7) all documents in translated versions.**