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Exploring the evolving professional identity of novice school counselors

Olamojiba Omolara Bamgbose

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ABSTRACT

EXPLORING THE EVOLVING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF NOVICE SCHOOL COUNSELORS

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Northern Illinois University, 2017
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The study employed a grounded theory approach to explore the evolving professional identity of novice school counselors. Participants, who are currently employed as school counselors at the elementary, middle, or high school level with 1- 4 years' experience, were career changers from other helping professions and graduates from an intensive school counselors' certificate program (SCCP). The findings, have provided a proposed theoretical framework of career transition and professional identity development for school counselors, which is comprised of major themes and categories from the study. The theoretical model consists of two major sections, a transitional piece in the dimensions of career change for school counselors, and the professional identity piece in the personal definitions of school counseling, and the supports and challenges to professional identity. Dimensions of career change contains components that are instrumental to the transition process and foundational to school counselors developing professional identity. Attraction to school counseling, one of the main components, emphasizes the reason participants' chose professional school counseling as a transitional career and provides a base from which all other elements within the unit develop. Participants' personal definition of professional identity reveals a new meaning-making of school counselor professional identity as roles performed, intentional student relationships and engagement, and wealth of knowledge linked to experience and maturation in the profession.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
DEKALB, ILLINOIS

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EXPLORING THE EVOLVING PROFESSIONAL
IDENTITY OF NOVICE SCHOOL
COUNSELORS

BY

OLAMOJIBA OMOLARA BAMGBOSE
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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING, ADULT AND
HIGHER EDUCATION

Doctoral Director:
Teresa A. Fisher

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Reflecting back over the last five years, which I would describe as a journey and a half, I can say with certainty that I would not be here today without the support of family, friends, and my esteemed professors. I have to start by acknowledging Fola and Bolaji who gave me the confidence to take this journey, because they had gone before, and knew I could achieve the same. Thank you for giving me the guidance I needed to apply to the program and the courage to persist when other pressures threatened to overwhelm. Thank you, daddy, mummy, Jide, MoraQ, Ope, Victor, Wunmi, and Stanley, words cannot express the gratitude I feel for your support and encouragement. Thank you to my nieces and nephews, time spent with you lifted my spirits, made me laugh, and provided those much needed opportunities for self-care.

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was actually achievable. Overall, I want to thank all of you for being with me in the beginning and seeing me through to completion of my program.

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my parents, Mr. F. Akintelure and Mrs. M. Akintelure (JP),
rest in peace mummy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over several decades, the counseling profession as a whole and the specialist areas within it have struggled to establish a solid and strong professional identity. The importance of a defined professional counseling identity, which individual practitioners can articulate, should not be underestimated. Woo (2013) identified that “Professional identity refers to a core set of beliefs, values, and assumptions about the distinctive characteristics of an individual’s chosen profession that distinguishes it from other professions” (p. 1). He identified that “a strong professional identity ethically supports the counselor-client relationship as it minimizes the potential for role confusion, [and] enhances the counselors’ ability to serve their clients ethically and competently within specified boundaries” (p. 16). Myers, Sweeney, and White (2002) identified that a strong professional identity supports advocacy for clients, the profession, and increases inter-professional collaboration and credibility (Myers et al., 2002). The battle to establish a strong solid professional identity is even more significant for the school counseling field, because it is a specialist area with practitioners who hold unique tasks, roles, and responsibilities as mental health specialists and educators. This diversity in task orientation has resulted in role ambiguity, conflicting demands from stakeholders, and issues of credibility for the professional identity of the school counseling field and practitioners (Gibson, Dooley, Kelchner, Moss, & Vacchio, 2012; Webber & Mascari, 2006). However, the current struggle faced by the profession is not novel; in fact, it is better understood in context of historical data

and the changing events that have influenced and shaped the profession over the decades since its inception. In the next section, I explore these historical events in more details, and in the remainder of the chapter I consider the significance of the study, provide a statement of purpose and brief overview of my personal interest.

Historical Context of the Problem

Professional school counseling in the United States developed in response to concerns regarding the quality and efficacy of existing educational processes related to vocational guidance and educational reform (Herr, 2003). Although there were many contributors to the development of professional school counseling; Frank Parsons (1906-1908) is the person most credited with the foundation of school counseling through his work in vocational guidance. Parsons developed the Vocational Bureau of Boston and vocational counseling principles and methods; his efforts resulted in the development of the vocational guidance movement (Jones, 1994), which is the foundation of professional school counseling.

Although Parsons was significant in shaping the profession there were other events leading to the evolution of professional school counseling specifically and the counseling field in general. In 1913, alliances between education, social work, and psychometrics resulted in the formation of the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA). The NVGA merged with other organizations to form the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA), which is now the American Counseling Association (ACA) (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). NVGA's

evolution was significant to the development and recognition of professional school counseling; it influenced the way school counselors worked and continue to work around “assessment (testing) and academic and vocational planning (scheduling)” (Lambie & Williamson, 2004, p. 125). In the 1920s, John Dewey highlighted the significance of schools in supporting children’s cognitive, personal, social, and moral development. Dewey’s work resulted in guidance strategies becoming an essential part of school guidance curriculum. In the 1930s, Williamson built on Parsons work to establish the first guidance and counseling theory also known as trait and factor theory (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The theory, which required competencies of analysis, synthesis, diagnosis, prognosis, counseling, and follow-up (Baker & Gerler, 2004) provided a framework within which school counselors could structure and practice their work with students.

In the 1940s, Carl Rogers’ contributed to the field through his work on psychological humanism; following his contribution, the term *counseling* replaced *guidance* in the literature (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). In 1952, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) was created. ASCA supported the foundation of the *School Counselor* journal in 1953. Furthermore, ASCA, in collaboration with the Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) worked on the development and training of the profession (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Professional organizations such as ASCA and ACES advocated for stability of the school counseling profession and strengthened school counselor identity by providing a structure for the preparation of school counselors-in-training; ASCA also advocated for the

development and identity of the profession using the journal as a medium (Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

In 1958, the introduction of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) resulted in an increase in high school counselors tasked with testing students and identifying those most capable of entering the sciences at the higher education level (Herr & Erford, 2007). In 1964, the act was amended to secure guidance and counseling services for all students thus increasing the number of professional school counselors at the elementary and technical school level (Herr & Erford, 2007). Other legislation influencing the development of school counseling and the professional school counselor role included the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) and subsequent amendments of 1969 and 1970, the Vocational Education Act 1968, the 1995 Elementary School Counseling Demonstration Act, and the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) 2001/2002 (Herr & Erford, 2007). These pieces of legislation resulted in an increase in school counselors across all educational levels K-12. Initially, school counselor intervention focused on career and vocational guidance; however, the focus of school counseling soon shifted to include work with students on academic achievement.

In the 1970s through to the 1990s, the concept of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs began to emerge in response to renewed interests in areas of vocational guidance and career development, developmental guidance and counseling, concerns about utility of existing approaches to guidance and counseling in schools, and issues of accountability and evaluation (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). The ASCA (2003) national model, revised in 2005, 2008, and 2012 was one such comprehensive school counseling program. The model

provided direction on the school counselor role and national standards pertaining to students' academic, career, and personal/social development, both of which define the expected responsibilities and competencies of school counselors (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012). These historical events and legislative changes, coupled with shifting societal needs, and the reported experiences of service users have been significant to the development of the field of professional school counseling regarding roles and responsibilities, professionalization, and ultimately professional identity.

Initially, teachers occupied the role of school counselor with the task of offering vocational counseling in combination with normal teaching responsibilities. The introduction of full time school counselors resulted in a change of guidance and counseling services to include orientation, assessment, information, counseling, placement, and follow-up (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). In the 1950s-1960s, school counselors focused on closing children's achievement gaps especially those from non-dominant cultures (Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010). The 1960s to the 1980s followed a model of developmental guidance with the focus on increasing students' achievement, provision of equitable services, and preventative and proactive school counseling to all students. Finally, the 1990s to current day, school counselors have been encouraged to perform in leadership roles by providing comprehensive services to all students using data driven evidence and results (Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010).

Significance of the Study

As highlighted above, the school counseling profession has experienced numerous changes in roles and responsibilities linked in part to changing events, societal needs, and legislative requirements. In the midst of these changing roles and responsibilities, practitioners have experienced difficulty defining and describing the profession and solidifying a professional identity. The introduction of comprehensive school counseling programs such as the ASCA National model (2003) and policies such as the ASCA role statement and national standards have provided a framework to define, describe, and solidify the school counselor professional roles and responsibilities and inadvertently school counselor professional identities (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Gibson, Dooley, Kelchner, Moss, & Vacchio, 2012; Milsom & Akos, 2007). In addition, state and national certification and licensure also provides a base for promoting competency through common skills and knowledge (Milsom & Akos, 2007). However, these organizations and systems only provide forums for defining the profession and the professional identities of school counselors at a structural systemic level. At an individual level, school counselors have to experience a personal process in the development of their professional identities (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012) and demonstrate competence articulating this identity as they interact with other professionals and stakeholders.

A search and review of the literature using various databases identified that studies researching the professional identity of counselors are sparse and restricted in focus. Furthermore, I found few studies that addressed the professional identity of school counselors.

Reiner, Dobmeier, and Hernández (2013) researched the viewpoints of 378 counselor educators on the significance of professional counselor identity to professional advancement and recognition. Mellin, Hunt, and Nichols (2011) conducted a study exploring the perceptions of 238 practicing counselors about counseling as distinct from other helping professions such as social work and psychology. Moss, Gibson, and Dollarhide (2014) explored the professional identity development of 26 practicing counselors divided into six focus groups, at significant career points. Healey and Hays (2012) considered the extent to which gender identity predicted the professional identity development of 489 counseling practitioners, educators, and trainees. Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992) conducted a 5-year longitudinal qualitative study looking at the professional development of 100 participant counselors, consisting of masters-level counseling students, doctoral students, and practicing practitioners with post-doctoral experience of 5 years, 15 years, or 25 years. Few studies have explored the professional counselor identity of school counselors. Brott and Myers (1999) investigated the professional identity development and self-conceptualization of school counseling roles for 10 professional school counselors through their process of resolving conflict decisions. Harris (2009) investigated the professional identity of six professional school counselors based in secondary and primary schools in the United Kingdom.

An additional rationale of the current study was to examine and identify the process by which novice professional school counselors, with no more than 1- 4 years' experience in the field, develop professional identity. Research on school counselor professional identity is rare, and yet there are a number of challenges to developing a professional identity for novice and perhaps seasoned practitioners in the field. First, the changing roles and responsibilities

characterizing the profession for several decades have created ambiguity in job description leading to questions about the school counselor roles and priorities (DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, 2013; Gibson, Dooley, Kelchner, Moss, & Vacchio, 2012). Second, the continuous changes in school counselor roles and responsibilities has resulted in external forces such as national policies or legislation and other stakeholders defining the school counselor tasks despite their lack of understanding about school counseling training or knowledge of the profession (Coy, Cole, Huey, & Sears, 1991; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Shimoni & Greenberger, 2015). Third, novice school counselors who understand their roles and professional identity in context of the ASCA national model (2003, 2005, & 2012), might find a disconnect or have difficulty adhering to the model following entry to a field that is incongruent to the model directives and subject to regular changes based on educational reforms or changing professional responsibilities (Gibson et al., 2012).

Mascari and Webber (2013) defined professional identity as “a complex set of behaviors that involves being more than just a member of a professional association . . . a unique belief system that separates one profession from another and is intertwined with ethical practice” (Mascari & Webber, 2013, p.16). In this context, professional identity encompasses the attitudes, beliefs, values, and ethics, practitioners bring to their practice within a particular profession. However, the current study addressed how professional identity presents in school counselors practice and profession. It examined how novice school counselors are developing their school counselor identity, how they are experiencing the process, and the unique challenges they face.

A critical component of the study is that all of the participants have achieved qualifications in counseling or other helping professions, before making the decision to obtain state and university requirements for a professional educator license with school counseling endorsements. This transition from other helping professions to school counseling adds another dimension to the existing research and scholarly literature, because it explains the process for individuals not initially trained in school counseling, also described as career changers. Furthermore, findings from the study could provide information on how we as counselor educators currently assist with the professional identity development process of novice school counselors. The study will contribute to curriculum development and future practice in optimizing the school counselor identity of new entrants to school counseling training programs at the masters' or post masters level. Finally, findings can support advocacy for the profession as we gain clarity on the processes involved in school counselor professional identity development.

Statement of Purpose

The main purpose of this study was to explain and understand the process by which the professional identity of novice school counselors evolves. The participants, who had trained in other helping professions, are novice school counselors who graduated from a school counselors certificate program (SCCP) an intensive school licensure training program at a Midwestern University. The second purpose was to explain school counselors meaning making of their evolving professional identity. The third purpose was to understand school counselor

perspectives on the significance of professional identity in the field. Finally, the study explored career transition dimensions and factors that differentiate school counseling from other helping professions including those aspects of previous helping professions, which are retained in participants new evolving professional school counselor identity.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study and informed the questions for the semi-structured interview schedule (see appendix B):

1. What are novice school counselors' perceptions of their developing professional counseling identity?
2. What are novice school counselors' perceptions of the various components (e.g., supervision, ethical, teaching/education, professional membership, and clinical practice) that contributed to or are contributing to their evolving professional counseling identity? What components were instrumental in supporting the transition from one professional identity to their current evolving school counselor professional identity?
3. What factors created challenges for the evolving professional school counselor identity of novice school counselors? What factors created challenges in the transition from one professional identity to their current evolving school counselor professional identity?

4. What factors enhanced the evolving professional school counselor identity of novice school counselors? What factors enhanced the transition from one professional identity to their current evolving school counselor professional identity?

The central focus and question of this study was to examine and explain the process by which the professional identity of novice school counselors evolves. Data was collected, from participants who graduated from the School Counselor Institute, using semi-structured audio recorded interviews lasting 60-90 minutes. In addition, the study used artifacts such as course syllabi and website information from the school counselor institute to support understanding of course curriculum and instruction.

Personal Interest

My interest in this study stems from my own experience as a professional who transitioned through three different careers. I began my career as a school social worker working with children 5- 16 years of age in elementary and secondary schools. I transitioned from school social work to children and families social work in child protection agencies, so I could focus on working with children aged 0-18, who were in need, at risk of abuse, or who had suffered significant harm. I left agency social work to return to the field of school counseling, and subsequently counselor education, because I wanted to contribute in a more meaningful way to the education of the next generation of counselors. Transitioning from education social work to agency social work was relatively seamless. The professions were complementary in areas of

knowledge, qualities, values, and skills. I had an established professional identity as an experienced practitioner and leader with supervisory responsibilities; and I was able to adapt to any changes in professional roles whilst taking responsibility for gaps in my learning. At the time, I had no context for defining my professional identity development. However, using Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) phase model, I assess that at the time of transition I was in the experienced professional phase, and by the end of my career as a social worker, I had potential to define myself within the senior professional phase, because of my position as mentor and role model for new entrants to the field.

The transition from social work to school counseling and counselor education has been a different journey and one of self-discovery. Entering the field with a professional identity steeped in social work required a shift in thought process and practice sometimes clear but often ambiguous as I tried to navigate the similarities and differences between the roles and responsibilities of the two professions. On the one hand, the legislation, laws, and ethics informing my practice have changed. I am now a mandated reporter, not the professional receiving the report. Most of the theories informing practice are similar but the application of theory to practice differs. On the other hand, my clinical case conceptualization skills and my experience and practice as an advocate for clients are assets relevant to the profession and still essential to my current professional identity. Probably the greatest challenge has been managing that interplay of conceptual learning, experiential learning, and external evaluation (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003). In the process, I have had to reorient my thinking and accept those moments of vulnerability, uncertainty, and the proverbial trusting of the process, as part of my

development and growth, aspects that might have been foreign to me in my previous profession because they were not in the forefront of my thinking. My experience reveals my bias. I believed that participants in this study, who transitioned from other helping careers into school counseling, would have experiences both similar and different to mine. As a consequence of this bias, I have taken precautions to ensure that the study reflects the lived experiences of participants and that their voices are heard at every step of the process through techniques such as member checking.

Tentative Definitions of Terms

Professional Identity Development

The study is focused on the evolving professional identity development of novice school counselors. Professional Identity development is defined as “a process of continual interplay between structural and attitudinal changes that result in a self-conceptualization as a type of professional” (Brott & Myers, 1999, p. 339).

School Counselors Certificate Program

School counselors’ certificate program (SCCP) is a fast-track intensive school licensure training program that offers professionals with a masters’ degree in clinical counseling or other helping related fields’ the opportunity to complete partial requirements towards the professional educator license with an endorsement in school counseling.

Novice School counselors

Novice school counselors are students who completed a school counseling endorsement through an intensive program at the School Counselor Institute and have worked in the field for a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 4 years.

Conclusion

“Professional identity refers to a core set of beliefs, values, and assumptions about the distinctive characteristics of an individual’s chosen profession that distinguishes it from other professions” (Woo, 2013, p. 1). As a profession, the counseling field in general and the specialist area of school counseling have experienced challenges establishing a solid professional identity. The difficulties experienced by school counseling in particular should be understood in context of historical events that have shaped the profession. Historical events that started with Frank Parsons through the development of the vocational bureau and vocational counseling principles and methods in 1906-1908; and continued through the contribution of the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA), which highlighted school counselor roles around assessment and academic vocational planning. Furthermore, the works of John Dewey in the 1920s, which resulted in guidance strategies becoming an essential part of the school curriculum and the works of Williamson in the 1930s, which led to the trait and factor theory and provided a framework through which school counselors practiced. In the 1940s, Carl Rogers’ work on humanism

resulted in the term counseling replacing the word guidance in the literature, and influenced the way school counselors practiced.

The historical events also included the contributions of professional organizations, legislative pieces, and developmental programs. For instance, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) formed in 1952, which raised the profile of school counseling through foundation of the School Counselor Journal in 1953 and supported the training and development of school counselors. The 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA) that supported an increase of professionally trained high school counselors who were tasked with testing and identifying students with capability for the sciences. Finally, the introduction of comprehensive guidance and counseling movements, in the 1970s through to the 1990s, which developed in response to concerns about the utility of existing approaches to guidance and counseling; and resulted in the ASCA model (2003), which clarified expectations of the school counselor roles and responsibilities.

Overall, the professional identity of school counselors has changed and shifted with the advent of each historical event, legislative change, and societal requirements. The profession started with teachers in the role of school counselor, focused on providing vocational counseling. Subsequently, formally trained school counselors took on the role and expanded the responsibilities to include tasks around orientation, assessment, information, counseling placement, and follow-up. The school counseling role has since stretched to include closing students' achievement gaps, provision of equitable services, and preventative proactive school counseling, with school counselors being encouraged to assume leadership roles.

Research on the professional identity of school counselors is sparse and limited in focus; hence the importance of the current study, which explored how the professional identity of novice professional school counselors evolves or develops. Furthermore, the participants' unique demographics as career changers from other helping professions added another dimension to the study because it provided information on how professional identity changes following career transitions. Overall, the study explored school counselors' professional identity development in context of their perceptions, contributing components, enhancing factors, and challenges.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mascari and Webber (2013) identified “professional identity [as] a complex set of behaviors that involves being more than just a member of a professional association. Identity is a unique belief system that separates one profession from another and is intertwined with ethical practice” (p. 16). Skovholt (2010) identified that identity describes an “internal subjective feeling and reality . . . a kind of internal clarity about oneself . . . a coming-into-focus process about the self as a therapist or counselor” (p. 67). A solid school counselor professional identity supports advocacy for clients, the profession, and increases inter-professional collaboration and credibility (Alves & Gazzola, 2011), minimizes ethical violations (Mascari & Webber, 2006), and reduces the potential for role ambiguity or role conflict.

The literature review intends to focus on the professional identity development of school counselors under four main sections. First, a historical overview of the school counseling profession will be provided. The overview will consider the various movements that have been instrumental to the development of the school counseling profession and influential in the identification of the roles and responsibilities integral to school counseling practice and school counselor identity. Second, the review will explore the professional identity of school counselors specifically and counselors generally, under sub headings of components, challenges, and significance and support. Third, the literature review will explore professional identity models that provide theoretical frameworks for conceptualizing professional identity development in

school counselors and counselors, before considering research finding on professional identity development generally. Finally, the review will consider frameworks for conceptualizing career changers.

Historical Overview of the School Counseling Profession

This section of the literature review explores those historical factors that have influenced the professional identity development of school counselors over the decades and through several movements. The movements and approximate time lines are identified loosely using the works of Wingfield, Reese, and West-Olatunji (2010), and they cover the vocational guidance movement, mental health movement, and transformation of school counseling through the developmental guidance movement and comprehensive school counseling programs. These historical pieces acknowledge that pioneers to the field, legislative and federal policies, and societal changes have influenced the professional identity development of the profession and inadvertently individuals in the field.

Vocational Guidance Movement/Era (1900s- 1940s)

The school counseling profession locates its origins in vocational guidance and Frank Parsons (1854-1908) as the father or pioneer. The movement occurred during a period of technological advancement in communication and transportation, rapid immigration leading to cheap labor, economic depression and job displacement as the country transitioned from an agricultural to industrial economy (Watts, 1994; Spokane & Glickman, 1994; Zytowski 2001).

Against this political, economic, and social milieu, Parsons began the vocational guidance movement (1906-1908). The movement included development of the Vocational Bureau in 1908 (Gummere, 1988; Watts, 1994) and stipulation of principles or methods relevant to vocational counseling (Jones, 1994; Spokane & Glickman, 1994) both of which still influence professional school counselor practice in career counseling today.

Parsons principles and methods in vocational guidance advocated and encouraged choosing a vocation instead of a job. He proposed that career choice should occur through a process of self-analysis, exploration, and self-knowledge and understanding in areas of aptitudes, interests, ambitions, resources, and limitations. Furthermore, career choice should involve career exploration and professional advice to support quality decision-making (Jones 1994; Spokane & Glickman, 1994; Zytowski and Swanson, 1994). In addition, Parsons principles highlighted the importance of understanding different job requirements, having knowledge of what constitutes success, and increasing understanding of the potential effect maladaptive behaviors have on career functioning (Jones 1994).

Parsons principles and methods still influence school counselors practice today and indirectly the perception others have of school counselors' professional identities. School counselors employ self-assessment techniques and career guidance instruments or assessments for purposes of self-examination (Jones 1994; Zytowski & Swanson, 1994). They use occupational databases to gain and support students understanding of job conditions and requirements as standard career counseling competences (Jones, 1994). In certain instances, school counselors give advice and provide information on essential aspects of career counseling

practice (Jones, 1994). Finally, school counselors' exploration and understanding of maladaptive functioning has expanded from career counseling into general counseling with some practitioners exploring dysfunctional cognitions and behaviors as part of their normal theoretical process (Jones, 1994).

Parsons established the vocational bureau, the second part of his vocational guidance movement, to support young people (specifically men) in choosing, preparing, and finding occupations suited to their natural abilities and interests. The bureau also aimed to support people across all ages, especially those displaced due to the agricultural-industrial transition, in their search for resources and opportunities that provided financial security (Aubrey, 1991; Jones 1994; Spokane & Glickman, 1994; Zytowski, 2001). Under umbrella of the bureau, Parsons contributed to the development of a training program for male vocational counselors on behalf of Boston YMCA (Zytowski, 2001). In 1909, the bureau trained Boston teachers from elementary and vocational schools in vocational counseling. The training was offered in response to requests from Boston School Superintendents to develop a program focused on helping young people make life long career choices (Zytowski, 2001). Similar to Parsons, and integral to the professional identity of school counselors, was the work of Eli Weaver. In 1905, Weaver who was the chairperson of the Students' Aid Committee of the High School Teachers Association of New York, engaged the support of volunteer teachers to assist young people in their career development and entrance to the world of work (Glossoff, 2009).

Parsons and Weaver's historic engagement of teachers in career and vocational counseling might have contributed to the decision to employ teachers with no formal training in

the role of vocational counselors during the early days of the 1920s vocational guidance movement (Gysbers, 2001). Teachers fulfilled the vocational counselor role in addition to their normal teaching tasks. They had very little structure, which had implications for their ability to perform duties relevant to the post and their responsibilities were subject to the interest or importance placed on the role by principals and administrators (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001), a fact that is still reminiscent of the way school counselors practice today (Shimoni & Greenberger, 2015). By the 1930s, a new organizational structure for guidance and counseling called pupil personnel work was introduced. The structure provided a solution to the lack of organization previously identified, and included professionals from attendance officers, school nurses, physicians, and vocational counselors, with guidance and counseling being one of the available school services (Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

In addition to Parsons, there were several other contributors to the role development and identity of professional school counselors. In 1907, Jesse B. Davis began integrating guidance into school curriculum using English Language essays and assignments (Aubrey, 1991; Baker & Gerler, 2004; Glossoff, 2009). In the 1920s, John Dewey introduced the cognitive developmental movement. His work emphasized the significance of schools in promoting students' development cognitively, personally, socially, and morally, and resulted in guidance strategies becoming an essential part of the curriculum supporting student development (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Dewey's work on student development has become pertinent to the role of professional school counselors in current day practice. Dewey and Davis' work integrating guidance strategies into

the curriculum became significant components of the developmental guidance and comprehensive school counseling programs.

In the 1930s, E.G. Williamson built on Parsons work to establish the first guidance and counseling theory, commonly referred to as *trait and factor theory* (Aubrey 1991; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The theory provided professional school counselors with a framework to support students' needs using a directive administrative approach or counselor-centered approach to counseling (Lambie & Williamson, 2004) and it became the core component of the school counselor role. In 1917, Alfred Binet and T. Simon's work using psychometric intelligence scales to measure mental ability, promoted the use of psychometrics as a tool for assessing recruitment eligibility in World War I (WWI) by the US military (Feingold, 1991; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). School counselors also contributed to this process through their assessment of soldiers' potential professional competence in WWI and WWII (Wingfield, Reese, West-Olatunji, 2010). Furthermore, the psychometric movement influenced the decision of vocational guidance workers' to use testing as a way to determine peoples' interests, strengths, and limitations (Baker & Gerler, 2004).

From the 1920s to the 1930s, interested parties expressed concern about the ability of vocational counselors to perform the responsibilities of the post due to other duties, which included teaching (Gysbers, 2001). The concerns received support from a number of legislative acts for example the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act and the 1936 George-Dean Act, which provided federal grants towards a nationwide vocational education program, and the 1946 George-Barden Act that supported funding for the training of vocational guidance counselors (Glosoff, 2009).

All of these legislative pieces led to an increase in formally trained professional school counselors. Also of significance during this period was the 1913 formation of the National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA), consisting of professionals from education, psychology, community service, business and government. NVGA contributed to the development and recognition of professional school counseling by informing much of current counseling practice around assessment or testing, and academic and vocational planning or scheduling (Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

Between the 1920s to the 1940s five professions were instrumental in shaping the roles and responsibilities of professional school counselors. Student personnel administrators served in administrative roles, such as directors of guidance services, thus taking on leadership roles now typically reserved for school counselors. Psychologists supported school counselors understanding and use of instruments for measuring human behavior, thereby contributing to vocational guidance and school counselor credibility through testing. Other professionals from mental health and psychiatry also contributed to school counselors' preparation and perspective on the mental health needs of children, contributing to their role as mental health specialists. The personnel work industry increased the need for vocational career counseling in schools and therefore the number of school counselors. School social workers confined the work of school counselors to schools as they had sole responsibility for providing home-school community liaison (Herr, 2003). In light of the various roles and responsibilities held by these professionals, the professional identity of school counselors was established as vocational and career guidance counselors who utilized testing in their work with students and worked solely in schools.

However, by the 1940s the role of school counselors expanded to incorporate mental health counseling.

Mental Health Counseling Movement (1940-1960s)

The 1900s-1940s followed a vocational guidance model with the school counselor role focused on matching and supporting students' career needs. However, the 1940s -1960s, ushered in the mental health movement, with school counselors changing perspective to provide remedial individualized services based on students' personal/social problems and on closing achievement gaps of children from non-dominant cultures (Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010). The new perspective was linked in part to Carl Rogers' psychological humanism movement. Rogers encouraged counselors to focus on students' mental health needs (Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010). He emphasized the need for empathy in the counselor-client relationship and the importance of facilitating environments conducive to clients' self-actualization and capacity for problem solving (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Rogers' work marked a departure from Williamson's trait and factor theory, which had received criticism because it placed minimal interest on students' input and it failed to consider their concerns in context (Aubrey 1991; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The humanism movement significantly influenced the school counseling profession and its professional identity, because it changed the way vocational counselors viewed their students; they were no longer problems to be solved, but people first with concerns that might have implications in multiple aspects of their lives (Feingold, 1991).

Carl Rogers' work influenced the school counseling profession significantly. In view of his work, the word counseling replaced guidance in the literature (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Furthermore, the mental health movement had implications for the role professional school counselors played in the organizational structure of guidance and counseling school programs. As mentioned above, by the 1960s pupil personnel work, which had become the dominant structure for organizing guidance and counseling in schools, changed to pupil personnel services, and included professionals from guidance, health, psychological services, school social work, and attendance. The new model influenced by the humanism movement, complemented the clinical model of guidance. In this model counseling services had a prominent role in guidance programs, supported consultation with parents and teachers, and performed additional functions such as appraisal, placement, and evaluation (Gysbers, 2001).

During this era, the professional school counseling field received significant support from government policies, legislation, and professional organizations. Probably the most influential of the legislative acts was the 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA). The act originated in response to concerns by the American government that in 1957 Soviet Union launched *Sputnik*, the first human-made object, to orbit the earth, ahead of the United States of America (USA) (Herr, 2003). The government implemented NDEA to identify, guide, and support students who showed high capacity for the sciences and math and secondary school counselors were responsible for implementing the government agenda. The act resulted in increased funding to provide school counseling services that supported gifted high school students towards college readiness (Aubrey 1991; Glosoff, 2009; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Furthermore, the act

supported an increase of full-time trained school counselors, under the continued organization system of pupil personnel services, with school counseling described as a service focusing on six main areas “orientation, assessment, information, counseling, placement, and follow-up” (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001, p. 248).

In 1964, NDEA was amended to incorporate the requirements of the 1962 Wrenn report titled *The Counselor in a Changing World* and the recommendations from the civil rights movement. The amended act included gifted children at the elementary school level as part of the search process and provided funds to support elementary school counseling (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The NDEA and subsequent acts led to an increase in school counselors at the elementary and secondary school level. The acts expanded school counselor roles and responsibilities from focusing solely on identification and encouragement of gifted students to include addressing the career and social needs of students identified as disadvantaged or with special needs. For instance, the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act expanded the role of and increased the number of elementary school counseling programs and services (Glosoff, 2009; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The amendments to the Vocational Education Act 1968 provided funds to support career guidance programs for children identified as disadvantaged or disabled, and the Education Act for all Handicapped Children 1975 expanded the counselors’ role to provide relevant services to children with special needs and their parents (Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

In addition to legislation, a number of professional organizations were instrumental to the continual development and stability of the professional school counseling field and professional

identity. In 1952 the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) was formed. In 1953, ASCA joined the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA) with a number of other professional organizations including the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), The National Association for Guidance Supervisors and Counselor Trainers (NAGSCT), and the Student Personnel Association for Teacher Education (SPATE) (Baker & Gerler, 2004; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). From its inception, ASCA was instrumental in strengthening school counselor identity. ASCA developed *The School Counselor journal* in 1953, which raised the professional profile of school counselors. ASCA provided professionals with professional development strategies, research resources, and advocated for the overall professional school counselor identity. In 1990, ASCA advocated for a change in the professional name from *guidance* to *counseling*, thus emphasizing the clinical aspects of the school counselor role; following which some school counseling professionals identified with the title professional school counselor (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Finally, ASCA worked in collaboration with the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), to support the development and training of school counselors (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). This collaboration started the process of standardizing training for school counselor professionals and further provided a foundation for solidifying the professional identity of school counselors.

Transformation of School Counseling

Periodic initiatives connected to educational reform, changing national policies around civil rights and defense, including the need to support students' access and adaptation to a changing workforce and economy, have repeatedly affected the school counseling profession (Herr, 2001). Similarly, school counseling programs have experienced changes based on the social, political, economic, and psychological issues experienced by families, children, adolescents, and the wider community (Green & Keys, 2001; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Twentieth century transformation in school counseling, with its concepts of developmental guidance and comprehensive school counseling programs, has arisen in response to the necessity of preparing all students from diverse populations and cultural identities to become citizens and workers ready to participate in a global society and economy (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). The concepts of developmental guidance and comprehensive school counseling programs will be discussed in the next section.

Developmental Guidance Movement (1960s-1980s)

The 1960s-1980s followed a developmental guidance model with school counselors initially assuming supportive remedial roles in pupil personnel services before changing emphasis to provide proactive and preventative school counseling focused on equitable services and increasing student achievement (Gysbers, 2001; Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010). According to Baker and Gerler (2004) developmental guidance as a concept refers to “proactive

prevention programming . . . with several common features, it is structured, planned in advance, presented in group format, and led by individuals working from a predetermined plan” (Baker & Gerler, 2004, p. 92). The concept of developmental guidance and counseling might have started with Robert Mathewson (1949, 1962) who advocated that development should be the guiding principle in the organization and implementation of school guidance programs (Aubrey, 1991). However, the concept began to emerge and take roots in the 1970s following, renewed interest in vocational-career guidance and career development, the school movement reform, requests for increased accountability on the efficacy of school guidance services, and the use of empirical evidence-based data to support the necessity of guidance and counseling services. Furthermore, there was acknowledgement that individual counseling was insufficient to meet diverse students’ needs; therefore, developmental learning experiences should inform counseling practice (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Herr, 2001). Finally, the movement emphasized group work due to concerns at school counselors’ ability to reach large numbers of students.

The movement received support from legislation through the 1975 Education for all Handicapped Children Act, which extended the role and responsibilities of school counselors to include designing, implementing, and evaluating individual education plans relevant to students’ special needs (Glossoff, 2009). The 2001 No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act made schools and school counselors responsible and accountable for student learning and academic success. First, the act attached education federal funding to students’ performance on academic tests. Second, the act stipulated consequences for those schools that failed to meet statewide proficiency goals (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006; Wingfield et al., 2010). Overall, the developmental guidance

movement with its philosophy of accountability and evidence-based practice had significant implications for schools and school counseling professional identity. The movement required that practitioners deliver evidence-based school counseling services focused on decreasing achievement gaps; sometimes to the exclusion and detriment of providing services around emotional, personal, and social needs (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006; Wingfield et al., 2010).

Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (1980s-Current Day)

Developmental guidance programs or models provided the foundation for and have since transformed into modern day comprehensive school counseling programs (Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010). Comprehensive guidance and counseling programs encompass three elements, content, organizational framework, and resources (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). Content details how school counseling programs conceptualize student needs in three developmental domains of academic/educational, career, and personal/social (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Lapan, 2001). Organizational framework is divided into structural components and program components. Structural components comprised definitions, rationale, and assumptions informing school counseling programs. Program components focused on service delivery using guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, systems support, and program time (Gysbers et al.). Finally, resources incorporated those human, financial, and political resources that support the continual effective implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001).

Overall, Comprehensive school counseling programs are designed to be holistic, systemic, balanced, proactive, infused into the school curriculum, and reflective (Dollarhide et al., 2012).

The programmatic model changed the way professional school counseling was practiced, it provided a basis for restructuring guidance and counseling services from one person with the title of school counselor to a comprehensive developmental program (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001) requiring the active involvement of all stakeholders to support students' success. In addition, the concept proposed a results-based framework from which to construct counselor roles, functions, and duties in context of critical outcomes students should achieve following access to counseling services (Lapan, 2001). As a result, the concept emphasized the role of school counselors as practitioners with accountability for student success through the use of data driven evidence based practice.

Various legislation, policies, and initiatives have reinforced the introduction of comprehensive guidance programs; the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act 1984, which supported the term guidance and the development of programs geared towards students' career development and vocational educational and employment needs (Herr, 2001). The National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC 1988) provided competencies and behavioral indicators in areas reflecting the basic skills and attitudes students require to cope with transitions, career development, and educational growth; the aim being to support planned sequential guidance programs (Herr, 2001). The NOICC competencies also formed the foundation of program goals for comprehensive guidance programs in areas of self-knowledge,

educational and occupational exploration, and career planning (Herr, 2001), which provided clarification on the roles, responsibilities, and professional identity of school counselors.

In addition to legislation probably the most influential contribution to the origins of comprehensive guidance programs came from the work of professional organizations such as ASCA. In the 1990s, the school reform agenda Goals 2000 and The Educate America Act 1994 resulted in a series of dialogues by policy makers' intent on improving public education. However, school counseling programs, which were considered integral to student success, were noticeably and mistakenly absent from the consultation process (Dahir, 2001; Green & Keys, 2001; House & Hayes, 2002). A number of organizations with interest in school counseling such as the College Board, the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (NACAC), and the Commission on Precollege Guidance and Counseling, advocated for reorganization in the delivery of school counseling programs to include services for all students' not just individuals, and comprehensive programs rather than loosely connected services (Dahir, 2001). Furthermore, leaders in the counseling profession requested a transformation of school counseling programs (Dahir, 2001). The advocacy and appeals from these organizations and leaders compelled ASCA to commit efforts and resources to promote the profession and development of school counseling programs as an integral aspect of the educational system (Dahir, 2001). These efforts resulted in publications on definitions of counseling roles, program philosophies, and professional goals. ASCA presented position papers that encouraged school counselors to become change agents and leaders in educational reform (Dahir, 2001).

Additionally, according to Dahir (2001) ASCA Governing Board embraced a revised definition of school counseling as follows:

Counseling is a process of helping people by assisting them in making decisions and changing behavior. School counselors work with all students, school staff, families, and members of the community as an integral part of the education program. School counseling programs promote school success through a focus on academic achievement, prevention and intervention activities, advocacy, and social-emotional and career development.
(p. 321)

In 1994, ASCA Governing Board committed to developing the national standards for school counseling programs (Dahir, 2001). In 1997, ASCA adopted standards, which emphasized the importance of school counseling programs supporting students' academic, career, and personal social development, and established standards and competencies students are expected to achieve following access to school counseling programs (Dahir, 2001; Herr, 2001; Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). In 2001 ASCA developed the National Model for school counseling (2003), which was reflective of a comprehensive school counseling program and covered components of foundation, delivery, management, and accountability (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). The model clarified the roles and expectations of the school counseling profession, and provided a basis for recognizing school counseling programs committed to comprehensive data-driven accountable school counseling programs (Wilkerson, Pérusse, Hughes, 2013). The introduction of the National Standards for Students (2004) and the revised ASCA National model (2005) transformed developmental guidance programs to comprehensive school counseling programs (Wingfield, Reese, West-Olatunji, 2010). This transformative model supported by ASCA National Model (2005) encouraged school counselors

to become leaders in students' academic, career, and personal social development through their role as advocates, agents of social change, consultants, and active collaborators (Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Wingfield, Reese, West-Olatunji, 2010).

The transformative change process also occurred in education programs specific to school counselor training and preparation. In the 1990s, the transforming school counseling initiative (TSCI) funded by DeWitt Wallace-Reader's digest highlighted the unique needs of school counselor competencies, which are required to support students' academic success (Paisley & Hayes 2003) and provided planning grants to support research, development, and implementation of new models for school counselors-in-training (Martin, 2002; Paisley & Hayes 2003; Perkins, Oescher, & Ballard, 2010). In 2001, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) approved new standards, similar to those developed by the TSCI, for the training of school counselors to reflect the unique practice requirements of working in school environments (Paisley & Hayes, 2003). The 2009 CACREP standards brought the transformative roles of school counselors to the forefront by highlighting the knowledge, skills, and practices needed by school counselors-in-training if they are to meet the academic, career, and personal/social development needs of K-12 students (Wilkerson & Eschbach, 2009). CACREP has become the primary accreditation body ensuring school counselor training programs conform to nationally approved professional standards (Baker & Gerler, 2004; Wilkerson & Eschbach, 2009; Wilkerson, Pérusse, & Hughes, 2013), in areas of foundation, counseling prevention and intervention, diversity and advocacy, assessment, research and evaluation, academic development, collaboration and consultation, and leadership

(CACREP, 2009). The implementation of CACREP standards by school counseling programs supports uniformity in training and has impacted the professional identity of school counselors.

Summary

Over the years, the professional identity of school counselors as defined through their roles and responsibilities has shifted to adapt to the changing requirements of government initiatives, legislative acts, and societal needs. In the 1920s, schools employed teachers with no formal training to the role of vocational counselors, with the expectation that they would offer vocational guidance in addition to their normal tasks (Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). In the period between the 1920s-1940s various acts and federally funded grants supported the increase of formally trained professional school counselors (Glossoff, 2009); and during this period, the role, of professional school counseling was shaped by five other professions; student personnel administration, psychologists, the personnel work industry, school social work, and mental health and psychiatry (Herr, 2003).

The 1940s-1960s ushered in the mental health counseling movement with school counselors changing perspective to focus on providing remedial individualized services tailored to student concerns and raising achievement gaps of children from non-dominant cultures (Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010). School counselors also operated under the reorganized structure of pupil personnel services and maintained prominent roles (Gysbers, 2001). The 1960s-1980s followed a developmental guidance model with school counselors being

required to provide proactive and preventative counseling focused on delivering equitable services geared at increasing students' achievement (Gysbers, 2001; Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010). The movement also required school counselors to provide evidence based school counseling services and demonstrate accountability. The developmental guidance movement laid the foundation for comprehensive school counseling programs.

The professional identity of school counselors shifted with the introduction of comprehensive school counseling programs like the ASCA (2012) national model. The roles and responsibilities of the transformed school counselor utilizing a comprehensive school counseling program is one of leadership and competence establishing school environments conducive to student learning and development in all three domains of academic, career, and personal/social development through student advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change (Lapan, 2001; Dollarhide & Saginik, 2012; Wingfield et al., 2010). Transformed school counselors are required to be investigative and reflective (Lapan, 2001) to develop, implement, and evaluate programs that are data driven and evidence based. The transformed school counselor is organized and able to design, develop, implement, and evaluate integrated coherent, developmental, and sequential K-12 programs (Lapan, 2001).

The School Counselor Professional Identity

This section reviews the literature on the professional identity of school counselors with focus on components of a professional identity, challenges to establishing a solid professional

identity, the significance of having a professional identity, and elements that support development of a professional identity. As part of the review, the professional identity of counselors in general will be considered, in acknowledgment that there are overlaps between school counselor professional identity and the professional identity of the counseling profession.

The School Counselor Professional Identity: Components

Professional identity development also described as professionalism exists in context of a profession. Baker and Gerler (2004) defined a profession as a “vocation requiring special knowledge or education in some department of learning or science [and] a professional [as] one belonging to a learned or skilled profession” (p. 3). Shimoni and Greenberger (2015) identified that “the establishment of a profession is based on the development of a clear, defined identity, role uniqueness, and recognition on the part of the professional community, stakeholders, and the public” (Shimoni & Greenberger, 2015, p.15). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) was and continues to be instrumental in developing and promoting the school counseling profession, and therefore the school counselor professional identity. ASCAs contributions include defining school counseling roles, school counseling programs, focal themes, philosophies, management systems, accountability structures, and professional goals, and revising the definition on what constitutes professional school counseling (Dahir, 2001; Moyer, 2011). CACREP has also contributed to the development of the school counseling profession by highlighting the knowledge, skills, and practices school counselors-in-training

need across a range of competency areas, such as prevention and intervention, diversity and advocacy, assessment, and research, in order to meet the diverse needs of K-12 children (CACREP, 2009; Wilkerson & Eschbach, 2009; Wilkerson, Pérusse, & Hughes, 2013).

The literature has defined and described professional identity in numerous ways but to varying degrees of similarities. Weinrach, Thomas, and Chan (2001) identified that professional identity consists of “the possession of a core set of values, beliefs, and assumptions about the unique characteristics of one's selected profession that differentiates it from other professions” (Weinrach, Thomas, & Chan, 2001, p.168). Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003) proposed that counselor professional identity is a product of “attitudes about responsibilities, ethical standards, professional membership, and learning styles linked to an advanced cognitive thought process” (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003, p. 25). Gibson, Dooley, Kelchner, Moss, and Vacchio (2012) identified that the process of establishing and developing a professional identity is developmental, evolving, and entails integration of professional training with personal attributes in a professional community. The process leads to reflection and self-identity integration, personal awareness and professional viability, cognitive processes, and professional membership (Luke & Goodrich, 2010; Rockinson-Szapkiw, Pritchard, McComb-Beverage, & Schellenberg, 2013; Spurgeon, 2012). Furthermore, as part of the process, individual practitioners acquire understanding and integration of their profession and self-concept; and demonstrate this understanding through engagement behaviors and articulation of counseling roles, philosophies (encompassing wellness, prevention, advocacy, understanding of developmental issues and empowerment), and professional approaches internal and external to the profession (Healey &

Hays, 2011; Healey & Hays, 2012). Finally, individual professional identity evolves through socialization in the work place, following observation of identified role models; and involves shared expertise, occupational roles, and expectations held by others, and accepted representations in society (Neary, 2014).

Some components of school counselor professional identity are easier to identify and review through the literature. For instance, ethical school counselors practice under the American Counseling Association (ACA) code of ethics (2014) and should practice within ACAs mission, philosophy, purposes, values, and requirements. In addition, school counselors are expected to meet competencies outlined in ASCA school counselor competencies, with focus on knowledge, abilities and skills, and attitudes that pertain to school counseling programs, and components of the ASCA developmental model in the domains of foundation, management, delivery, and accountability (ASCA National Model, 2012). Finally, the 2004 National Standards for students outlines the vision and mission of professional school counselors and outcomes students should meet in domains of academic, career, and personal/social development (ASCA National Standards for Students, 2004).

The unique characteristics of school counselors are also revealed through membership in professional organizations such as ACA and ASCA and through national and/or state certification/licensure. Certification is “the process by which an agency, government, or association officially grants recognition to an individual for having met certain professional qualifications that have been developed by the profession” (Milsom & Akos, 2007, p.346).

Currently, there are two forms of national certification/licensure available to school counselors, the National Certified Counselor (NCC) for all counselors offered through National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), and the voluntary National Certified School Counselor (NCSC) offered through the NBCC and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS). National licensure or certification provides standardized criteria of specific skills and knowledge and demonstrates competence to key stakeholders (Milsom & Akos, 2007), which supports counselor professional identity and equality, job opportunities, marketability, and could support state-to-state portability (King & Stretch, 2013). Despite the identified benefits, studies have highlighted the confusion that can result from having two distinct bodies (NBCC and NBPTS) with separate requirements, goals, and agendas responsible for school counselors' certification. The concern being that it could lead to differences in standardized qualifications and contribute to the already existing ambiguity in school counselor roles and responsibilities (Webber & Mascari, 2006). Second, certification through NBTS adds to the debate about the roles and identity of school counselors as professional counselors working in schools or educators with focus on counseling (Stroh, 2004). Both concerns have implications for the solidification and unification of the professional school counselor identity.

The roles, responsibilities, and specific activities counselors perform is one approach for defining counselor identity (Alves & Gazzola, 2011). The *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (2012) provides a framework for defining the roles, responsibilities, and practice of the school counseling profession. The model covers components of school counseling programs such as foundation, management, delivery, and accountability.

The model also encourages school counselors to perform in the role of leaders, advocates, collaborators, and change agents tasked with removing individual and systemic barriers that have the potential to impede student academic success (ASCA National Model, 2012; Borders, 2002; Cigrand, Havlik, Malott, & Jones, 2015; DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, 2013; Mason, Ockerman, & Chen-Hayes, 2013). Professional school counselors advocating in context of the ASCA model are encouraged to work with a multicultural and diverse population at an individual and systemic level for families, schools, classrooms, communities and neighborhoods (Borders, 2002). Furthermore, school counselors are encouraged to understand and meet the needs of a range of students such as English language learners, youth at risk of poverty and discrimination, students with special needs or those identified as gifted (Cigrand, Havlik, Malott, & Jones, 2015).

The above points to a school counselor professional identity that has potential to be distinct and established. Ethically, practitioners in the profession practice under the guidelines of ACA code of ethics. ASCA school counselor competencies and the ASCA national standards clearly delineate student outcomes and expectations following access to services from comprehensive school counseling programs. School counselors' unique characteristics are revealed through membership in ACA and ASCA and via national and/or state certification. Finally, ASCA provides a framework for defining school counselors' roles and responsibilities through the ASCA national model. In spite of the above, the school counseling professional identity is still beset by challenges, which has implications for solidifying the profession.

The School Counselor Professional Identity: Challenges

The challenge to establishing and defining a solid professional identity is not unique to school counseling, the counseling profession as a whole has struggled to identify and articulate a unified professional identity for several reasons. First, the profession has experienced difficulty identifying those elements that make it unique to other helping professions (Gale & Austin, 2003; Hanna & Bemak, 1997; King & Stretch, 2013). Second, due to the existence of multiple counseling specialties, which have created distinct professions and identities with different ethical guidelines, training requirements and credentials, and professional organizations under affiliation of ACA. All of these elements combined may have ultimately resulted in fragmentation of the profession (Alves & Gazzola, 2011; Gale & Austin, 2003; King & Stretch, 2013; McLaughlin & Boettcher, 2009; Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011).

The profession has made efforts to establish a unified professional identity by highlighting those nuanced components that distinguish counseling from other helping professions. For example, the profession has acknowledged counseling as practice-oriented versus research-based, with emphasis on counseling, human development, multiculturalism, holism prevention and wellness (Hanna & Bemak, 1997). In addition, CACREP strongly encouraged the development of a unified professional counseling identity through established standards, program core competencies, and common curricular experiences (CACREP, 2009; Spurgeon, 2012). In 2010, a common definition of counseling emerged as, a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental

health, wellness, education, and career goals (King & Stretch, 2013; Spurgeon, 2012). The definition aimed to unite the counseling profession and establish it as a profession distinguished from other helping professions. Additionally, the 20/20 vision made up of 29 professional counseling organization delegates including ACA, identified seven strategic areas or principles for unifying and strengthening the profession. Four of the seven areas focused on “Strengthening identity, presenting [the profession as] one profession, improving public perception/recognition and advocating for professional issues, and creating licensure portability” (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011, p. 369). Despite the potential benefits of a vision that unifies all specialist areas under one counseling umbrella, ASCA refused to endorse the 20/20 vision because they considered it premature to support the concept of a single counseling profession (Kaplan & Gladding, 2010). In effect, ASCA wanted to establish school counseling as a specialist profession with a distinct professional identity in a unique professional field.

ASCA's position notwithstanding, professional school counseling like the professional field has also experienced difficulty establishing a solid professional identity; mainly because school counselors still experience role ambiguity and difficulty defining themselves and the roles and responsibilities that make them unique to other professionals working in schools (Astramovich, Hoskins, Gutierrez, & Bartlett, 2013; Borders, 2002; Sears & Granello, 2002). The role ambiguity and difficulty experienced by professional school counselors is due in part to the fact, that over the decades the professional roles, responsibilities and expectations of school counselors has shifted to adapt to changing educational philosophies, federal legislations, and societal needs (Borders, 2002; DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, 2013; Perkins, Oescher, &

Ballard, 2010). Second, external forces and stakeholders such as principals and administrators have contributed to the ambiguity by defining school counselor roles and professional development, despite having conflicting agendas, a lack of school counseling training, lack of knowledge about the profession, and understanding on what constitutes school counselor roles (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Mason, Ockerman, & Chen-Hayes, 2013; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Shimoni & Greenberger, 2015; Webber & Mascari, 2006). Finally, the ongoing debate between professional leaders such as ASCA and ACA about school counselors as professional counselors working in schools or educators with school counseling qualifications has inadvertently contributed to the role ambiguity and ability of practitioners to solidify a clear professional identity. (Astramovich, Hoskins, Gutierrez, & Bartlett, 2013; Cinotti, 2014; Gibson, Dooley, Kelchner, Moss, & Vacchio, 2012; Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011; Perkins, Oescher, & Ballard, 2010).

The implications of role ambiguity are cyclical. Role ambiguity results in stress and conflict for counselors and program stakeholders and distorts the professional school counselor image (Moyer, 2011; Powers & Boes, 2013). As a result of role ambiguity, other stakeholders and school professionals such as teachers, principals, and administrators tend to conceptualize and misunderstand school counselor roles in context of ASCA endorsed and non-endorsed services (Power & Boes, 2013). Role ambiguity and role conflict, although not the focus of this review, are important predictors of job satisfaction (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011). In a study of 175 high school counselors, Cervoni et al. found that school counselors experienced pressure when tasked with managing and prioritizing multiple demands placed on them by other

stakeholders. Conversely, participants who spent time on ASCA related activities that aligned with school counselors' professional identity, specifically counseling, experienced job and work satisfaction and promotion (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011). Pyne (2011) identified similar findings in his study of 103 high school counselors. He concluded that school counselors who successfully implemented comprehensive school counseling programs most likely experienced higher job satisfaction than counterparts with no successful implementation. Especially when implementation accompanied administrative support, improved communication between faculty and staff members, had a clearly established philosophy, provided services to all students, and opportunities for program planning and evaluation (Pyne, 2011).

Introduction of the ASCA National Model (2012) was supposed to remove role ambiguity, by providing a basis to define and solidify the roles, responsibilities, and professional identity of school counselors' (Astramovich, Hoskins, Gutierrez, & Bartlett, 2013; DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, 2013). In fact, DeKruyf et al. suggested that the model supported a conjoint professional identity, which could negate the need for the debate surrounding professional school counselors as educators or mental health practitioners. However, Mascari and Webber (2006) expressed that the transformed school counselor role as proposed by the ASCA model, contributed to the role ambiguity of school counselors because it blurred the distinction between their roles and those of teachers and principals. Moreover, it had implications for the school counselor role as mental health providers (Webber & Mascari, 2006).

Differing views on the benefits of ASCA models notwithstanding, implementation of the model by schools and professional school counselors is inconsistent and dependent on multiple

factors for example the region, state, district, school culture and administrative agendas (Cinotti, 2014). Implementation of the model also depends on the confidence of individual practitioners to advocate for and implement the model with fidelity. A study by Burkard, Gillen, Martinez, and Skytte's (2012) consisting of 166 Wisconsin high school counselors from 116 schools, found that schools had implemented approximately 60% of the model in their schools. Counselors spent about 30% of that time on responsive services, while individual planning and guidance curriculum received inconsistent implementation to varying degrees of quality. Evaluation activities received the least implementation, and foundation and management components were underdeveloped. The authors also identified that a significant amount of time focused on non-school counseling related services for example testing and scheduling (Burkard, Gillen, Martinez, & Skytte, 2012).

The School Counselor Professional Identity: Significance and Support

A solid counselor identity supports advocacy for clients, the profession, and increases inter-professional collaboration and credibility (Alves & Gazzola, 2011; Myers, Sweeney, & White, 2002). An established professional identity minimizes the potential for ethical violations (Mascari & Webber, 2006), and supports development of the profession as a legitimate field with unique identities (Alves & Gazzola, 2011). One's professional identity enhances understanding of the counseling field and supports legislative interest for the profession and clients (Kaplan & Gladding, 2010). A recognized professional identity is integral to the growth of individual

counselors and solidarity of the whole profession, consequently, strength in the identity of individual practitioners lends strength to the professional identity of the field (Murdock, Stipanovic, & Lucas, 2013; Rockinson-Szapkiw, Pritchard, McComb-Beverage, & Schellenberg, 2013).

Alves and Gazzola (2011) stated that “Individual professional identity includes one’s personal work values, skills and knowledge, growth as a person, success and improvement at work, and imagination and innovation” (p. 190). Given the import of individual professional identity to the professional identity of the field, studies have highlighted the role individual school counselors should play in order to support development of the school counseling professional identity. For instance, Cigrand et al. (2015) proposed that individual school counselors must learn to advocate for the profession by utilizing data that justifies program planning and delivery of school counseling programs, and supports refusal to engage in non-ASCA related activities (Cigrand, Havlik, Malott, & Jones, 2015). Furthermore, they identified that school counselors should employ evidence-based practices and disseminate positive outcomes to stakeholders, administrators, parents, and peers at state and national conferences, and through publications (Cigrand, Havlik, Malott, & Jones, 2015). Individual school counselors should also learn to articulate their roles and responsibilities to administrators and other stakeholders and to highlight their expertise and competence in developing comprehensive counseling programs (Cinotti, 2014; Powers & Boes, 2013). Finally, Cigrand et al., highlighted that school counselors should promote the profession through professional affiliation and membership, connection with constituency groups, collaboration with education and

accreditation bodies, and use consistent language to describe the profession (Cigrand, Havlik, Malott, & Jones, 2015).

Educators can reinforce the identity development of individual school counselors through specialized training, advocacy, and support. As part of the specialized training, school-counselors-in-training need support to become leaders and advocates (Cinotti, 2014) and to embrace professional effectiveness and accountability as essential aspects of their professional identities (Brott, 2006). School counselors-in-training need support to develop cultural competence, knowledge, attitudes, and skills essential to working with diverse populations (Lewis & Hatch, 2008).

The literature has also highlighted the benefits of clinical supervision including peer supervision to support the development and continuous evolution of school counselors' professional identity development (Borders, 2002; Cinotti, 2014; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Clinical supervision reduces burnout, emotional exhaustion, and provides a protective factor to school counselors (Duncan, Brown-Rice, & Bardhoshi, 2014). Peer group clinical supervision has the potential to support positive counseling skills, increase confidence, job comfort and satisfaction, decrease burnout, and increase a sense of professionalism and professional validation (Agnew, Vaught, Getz, Fortune, & Getz, 2000). Overall, supervision provides support and mentorship, promotes growth and development, and supports and alleviates concerns associated with professional identity development and ineffective service delivery for both novice and seasoned professionals (Moyer, 2011).

Professional Identity Frameworks

The first half of this section contains a review of existing professional identity development models relevant to professional counseling in general and school counseling specifically. The models provide a skeletal framework within which to understand professional identity development. The models consist of Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) phase model of professional counselor development; Moss, Gibson, and Dollarhide (2014) theory of transformational tasks of counselors; and Brott and Myers (1999) theory for the blending of influences. In the second half of this section, the review will provide a summary of research findings on professional identity development.

Phase Model of Counselor Development

Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) phase model of professional development evolved from the results of a 5-year cross sectional and longitudinal qualitative study. The study investigated the development of 100 counselors/therapists at the masters' level, doctoral level, and practicing practitioners with post-doctoral experience of 5 years, 15 years, or 25 years. The authors gathered data using semi-structured interviews focused on eight areas of inquiry, "definition, central task, predominant affect, predominant sources of influences, role and working style, conceptual ideas, learning process, and measures of effectiveness and satisfaction" (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003, p. 8). From the results, the authors constructed an 8-stage model consisting of conventional helper, transition to professional training, imitation, conditional autonomy,

exploration, integration, individuation, and integrity (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The authors subsequently reformulated the 8-stage model into a 6-phase model comprised of the lay helper phase, the beginning student phase, the advanced student phase, the novice professional, the experienced professional phase, and the senior professional phase.

The lay helper phase is characterized as the pre-training period, individuals in this phase use personal knowledge and common sense ideas to inform how they support distressed people. Individuals also project their own solutions onto identified problems, which can result in over-involvement and identification with persons receiving support (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). In the beginning student phase, students enter professional training and experience the challenges and excitement that results from learning. They also experience ambiguity in their newfound role as professionals especially upon meeting first clients. Students in this phase tend to question their professional competence based on personal characteristics and perceived ability to bridge gaps between theory and practice. In addition, they are vulnerable, susceptible to criticism from professors and supervisors, and dependent on them for support, encouragement, positive feedback and role modeling. They also rely on clients for positive feedback and validation and react to negative feedback (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

The advanced student phase occurs at the latter end of students training during practicum and internship when students integrate learning with practice under the formal supervision of an experienced practitioner. Students in this phase have high ambitions for their functioning, are wary of making mistakes, and keen to demonstrate competence. They continue to experience vulnerability and insecurity, and require positive feedback, guidance, and confirmation from

seniors and peers. Furthermore, students employ modeling as part of their learning process, but they are discriminatory in deciding who their models are or what aspects of modeled behaviors they wish to emulate (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

The novice professional phase, experienced professional phase, and senior professional phase occur in the field during professional practice. Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) identified the novice professional phase as the first years following graduation and a period characterized by isolation and reformulation. Professionals at this phase seek confirmation on the legitimacy of their training, become cognizant of the gaps between learning and practice, experience disillusion in the face of professional challenges, and engage in exploration of self and professional environment. They recognize the extent to which personalities are expressed through work and the implications if they lack confidence about their suitability. Novice professionals also have an increased understanding of counseling work and recognize the significance of the therapeutic relationship to clients' progress (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Individuals in the experienced professional phase have achieved counseling roles congruent with their values, interests, and attitudes, which ensures they can practice with competence and authenticity. Experienced professionals have an increased understanding of the therapeutic relationship and the implications for clients' growth. They conceptualize their professional roles in context of techniques and methods delivered in a personalized flexible style. Furthermore, experienced professionals have learned to work within established professional boundaries and they have become comfortable with ambiguity in recognition that there are no

clear answers to challenges. Finally, experienced professionals have learned by reflecting on interpersonal experiences in their professional and personal lives (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Professionals in the senior professional phase are well-established with over 20 years of experience and leaders to novice professionals. The authors identified that while practitioners in this phase have the potential to succumb to intellectual apathy and feelings of boredom, participants in their study demonstrated continued commitment for professional growth (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2003) study included 14 themes relevant to counselors' professional identity development, which Goodyear, Wertheimer, Cypers, and Rosemond (2003) collapsed into 6 clusters. Using groupings, which were absent of definitions, themes 6, 7, and 4 focus on practitioners' developmental process and learning as a lifelong process. Themes 1 and 3 highlight professional identity as an integration of personal and professional self and includes a process of continuous reflection. Themes 2 and 5 highlight that practitioners continually experience a process of internal and external validation as they progress through their careers. Themes 8 and 12 emphasize the anxiety experienced by beginning practitioners at the start of their careers and the role played by authority figures in their development and growth period. Themes 9, 10, and 11 identified that practitioner growth and professional identity development is a function of interaction with clients, personal life experiences across the lifespan, and interpersonal meaningful relationships with professional elders and peers. Finally, themes 13 and 14 emphasize the importance of wisdom on practitioner awareness, and acceptance and appreciation of human variability leading to recognition of clients and their strengths as integral

aspects of the change process (Goodyear, Wertheimer, Cypers, & Rosemond, 2003; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Theory of Transformational Tasks of Counselors

Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2003) provided the foundation for Moss, Gibson, and Dollarhide's (2014) study exploring counselors' professional identity development process at nodal times in their careers; novice, experienced, and expert counselors. The study included 26 participants (15 school counselors divided between elementary, middle and high school students, and 11 community-based counselors) divided into 6 focus groups based on their area of expertise and years of experience; 1-2 years, 5-15 years, and 20 years plus. The authors explored participants' experience of their professional identity development by exploring their evolving definition of counseling, professional identity and influential factors, and future professional identity development needs. The authors identified 6 themes that were instrumental to the counselors' professional identity development and 3 transformational tasks completed at nodal points of counselors' careers (Moss et al., 2014).

The themes included adjustment to expectations, which represented counselors understanding of their expectations in contrast to the expectations held by other stakeholders. Confidence and freedom involved counselors' confidence and freedom acknowledging their limitations; with the more experienced practitioners expressing freedom through their ability to utilize referral resources in the wider counseling and helping professional community. Separation versus integration highlighted the capacity of counselors to integrate and establish congruency

between their personal and professional selves. Experienced guide addressed the role played by mentors, supervisors, and peer supervisors in counselors' professional identity development. Continuous learning emphasized the importance counselors placed on lifelong learning through classes, conferences, and trainings. Finally, work with clients highlighted the importance played by clients and the counselor-client relationship in participants' professional identity development (Moss et al., 2014). The authors found that within the first three themes, counselors experienced movement towards professional identity development as they gained working experience, while the last three themes provided catalysts for the movement. In addition, to the themes, Moss et al., identified 3 tasks, idealism towards realism, burnout towards rejuvenation, and compartmentalization towards congruency (Moss et al., 2014).

Moss, Gibson, and Dollarhide (2014) found that transformational tasks integrated with themes, provided a foundation for participants' experience in their professional identity development process. Therefore, beginning counselors engaged in the transformational task of idealism towards realism, when confronted with the contrast between ideals developed in their training and the reality of practice. Realities that included non-counseling duties, administrative tasks, and paperwork that interfered with counseling tasks, and knowledge that their roles were being defined by other stakeholders and organizations. For novice counselors, the transformational task of idealism towards realism involved themes of adjustment to expectation and confidence to freedom. Experienced counselors also addressed the theme of adjustment to expectations when challenged with moving through the transformational tasks of burnout towards rejuvenation brought on by job dissatisfaction and work frustrations. As they negotiated

the task, experienced counselors also utilized themes of experienced guide, continuous learning, and work with clients, as catalysts to move them forward professionally and counter their frustrations and dissatisfaction in the job.

Counselors engaged in the third task were encouraged to shift from compartmentalization towards congruency, which involved a process of separating and integrating personal and professional lives into professional identities. The authors identified that beginning counselors separated work from other aspects of their lives and they had a tendency to compartmentalize roles. Experienced counselors were able to integrate professional and personal selves into one identity. Expert counselors expressed a level of congruency with their personal and professional selves and they were able to reflect on the influence one had over the other. Counselors involved with the compartmentalization towards congruency transformational task also utilized the themes of separation versus integration, confidence versus freedom, and a process of interacting with others through experienced guides, continuous learning, and work with clients. Overall, the authors identified that the themes were central to counselors' professional identity development and that individuals experienced transformation at completion of each task (Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014).

Theory for the Blending of Influences

Brott and Myers (1999) theory for the blending of influences developed from their research into the professional identity development of school counselors'. The authors conducted their research with 10 school counselors divided between elementary and middle school settings

who were practicing in the United States and the Caribbean. They gathered data through observations and structured open-ended interviews, based on research questions framed around the professionalization of school counseling, specifically conflict decisions. The authors' problem focus was to understand school counselors' professional identity development in context of their self-conceptualizations or personal guidelines when performing professional roles (Brott & Myers, 1999).

Brott and Myers (1999) found that participants, when performing their roles in context of school settings engaged in a process, which the authors titled, a blending of influences. The authors identified that the process involved conditions (experiences, counselors in service, and essentials) and phases (structuring, interacting, distinguishing, and evolving), which were relevant to the performance of school counselors' roles. The authors described experiences as the length of years' individuals have worked as school counselors', knowledge professionals have of the school in respect of past practice, and the contextual setting. They defined counselors in service as the number of counselors providing services to students at a given school. They described essentials as students' needs, developmental issues, and directives pertaining to student needs, which are issued by principals, supervisors, and administrative stakeholders (Brott & Myers, 1999).

In expatiating on the phases, Brott and Myers (1999) identified that novice counselors at the onset of their professional roles are in the structuring phase, where they employ an external perspective in their work based on learning from graduate training programs. At the interacting phase, counselors manage and respond to multiple influences and make decisions about their

roles. Individuals in this phase engage in personal or internal perspectives of self-conceptualization, as a result, personal guidelines appear as the meaning-making framework within which decisions are made. The distinguishing phase is fluid as counselors' base their entry or exit into this phase on role changes, performance goals, and perceptions (Brott & Myers, 1999). The evolving phase consists of a dynamic interplay between the structuring, interacting, and distinguishing phases. However, the professional identity resulting from this process is not the finalized outcome, rather an evolving concept spanning the entirety of a school counselors' career (Brott & Myers, 1999). Overall, the authors identified that the theory for the blending of influences process, involves a dynamic interaction of external (structural and training) and internal (attitudinal) perspectives and conceptualizations of the role. The authors' surmised that professional identity develops over time as part of an experiential maturation process and continues to develop as individuals engage in role internalization, identification with the profession, and highly individualized personal guidelines (Brott & Myers, 1999).

Research Findings on Professional Identity Development

The above studies provide a framework to conceptualize professional identity development of counselors in general and school counselors specifically. Underlying each of the models is the notion that professional identity development is a process not a stagnant individual occurrence or outcome. The process begins during professional training and evolves through maturity and experience across the lifespan of the counselors' professional career (Brott &

Myers, 1999; Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). The models highlight that novice counselors begin their careers trying to integrate training into practice, and in the process can experience loss of confidence, isolation and reformulation (Brott & Myers, 1999; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Experienced and expert counselors on the other hand, have achieved a professional counseling identity that is congruent with their values, interests, and attitudes and they are able to practice with autonomy (Brott & Myers, 1999; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). In addition, they are comfortable with ambiguity, accepting of their limitations, and willing to utilize resources from the professional community (Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014).

This section of the review provides information on findings pertaining to the professional identity development of counselors-in-training and working professionals. Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003) researched the professional identity development of 8 masters-level counseling students and found three occurring interactive cyclical processes of conceptual learning, experiential learning, and external evaluation. They found that participants relied heavily on conceptual learning experiences, such as listening to lectures, submitting papers, and reading, during the early stages of academic endeavor but this diminished as students matured. As participants progressed through the program, experiential learning activities such as basic skills, practicum, internships, and small group experiences become significant sources of identity development. Finally, participants experienced challenge and increased vulnerability resulting from external evaluation and feedback from supervisors or peers, which they either validated or disconfirmed. Participants who disconfirmed the feedback engaged in a process of reflecting,

retaining awareness of the evaluation, accumulation of additional information, and verifying disconfirmation through consultation and practice (Auxier et al., 2003). The authors identified that as participants engaged in experiential activities, received feedback, and engaged in autonomous and personally directed learning in response to feedback, they formed attitudes and behaviors, and developed a clear personal professional counseling identity.

Gibson, Dollarhide and Moss (2010) also explored the professional identity development of counselors-in-training at different points of their training, pre-coursework, pre-practicum, pre-internship, and pre-graduation, with specific focus on transformational tasks. The study consisting of 43 participants divided into focus groups of 4-8 participants, highlighted three main tasks, definition of counseling, responsibility for professional growth, and transformation to systemic identity. The authors identified that professional identity evolved from how individuals defined their professional work in counseling. Responsibility for professional growth highlighted the views of counselors-in-training about sources of professional growth beginning with external authorities, leading to internal initiation of learning goals, and belonging to professional organizations (Gibson et al., 2010). Finally, transformation to systemic identity described the ability of counselors-in-training to develop an internal locus of evaluation relative to feedback from the professional community. The authors identified that the process begins with focus on individual skills and qualities (certification, licensure, or job title) and culminates in the individuals' integration of personal and professional self with the professional community (Gibson et al., 2010).

Nelson and Jackson (2003) explored themes that were central and distinct to the professional identity development of 8 counseling interns, who identified as Hispanic. The authors found 7 major themes that were fundamental to the interns' professional identity based on their ethnicity. The themes are as follows, gaining and applying knowledge including lifelong learning, personal growth, experiential learning, relationships and social networks, accomplishment, financial and emotional costs, and perceptions of the counseling profession (Nelson & Jackson, 2003). Murdock, Stipanovic, and Lucas (2013) conducted qualitative research on the role of co-mentorship relationships in developing the professional identity of counselors-in-training. The participants consisted of 12 doctoral students who served as mentors for 16 masters' students or mentees. The authors found that both doctoral and masters' students reported improved professional identity development as counselors. Masters students also highlighted additional themes of personal growth and culture, while doctoral students recognized similarities between mentoring and the counseling process. Furthermore, doctoral students identified the intrinsic value of giving back, and valued the development of collegial relationships and friendships (Murdock et al., 2013).

Alves and Gazzola (2011) developed their study using the works of Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) and Brott and Myers (1999). The authors explored the professional identity development of 9 Canadian counselors consisting of two high school counselors and 7 counselors divided between community organizations, university communities, and private practice, with a minimum 10 years' post-masters experience in the counseling field. The authors found 8 major themes and developed a provisional model of counselor professional identity with

three categorical levels, core, primary, and instrumental. They identified that personal identity is located at the core of professional identity development, with personal characteristics and life experiences influencing professional identity development. The primary category explores professional identity development through factors such as work experience, roles, self-directed learning, professional membership and affiliations, context and place of work, and development over time. Finally, the instrumental category consists of certification, considered extrinsically significant to professional identity development but not intrinsically important (Alves & Gazzola, 2011).

Mellin, Hunt, and Nichols (2011) explored the professional identity of 238 professional practicing counselors in context of how they defined counseling and distinguished the field from social work and psychology. Mellin et al., found that participants consisting of community counselors, mental health counselors, and school counselors tended to identify as counselors working with a certain population or as specialty counselors for instance school counselors (Mellin et al., 2011). Participants defined professional counseling under three main categories, “counseling tasks and services provided, counselor training and credentials, and wellness and developmental focus” (Mellin et al., 2011, p.143). Although, a small group of participants identified no differences between professionals in the three fields of psychology, social work, and counseling, certain participants differentiated themselves from other helping professionals through tasks such as case management and community systems, personal growth and wellness, testing and assessment, and individual versus global foci (Mellin et al., 2011).

The above studies, similar to the frameworks discussed above, highlight the professional identity development of counselors' as an interpersonal and intrapersonal process. The process begins with reliance on supervisors, other authority figures, or role models and leads to an internal validation process where counselors develop autonomy and integration of their personal and professional selves. The literature also conceptualizes professional identity development in context of how professionals define the counseling profession and differentiate themselves from other helping professions such as social work and psychology. Currently, missing from the literature is an understanding of how professional identity develops in career changers, specifically for school counselors who are transitioning from other helping professions. In fact, a wide search of several databases such as EBSCOhost, JSTOR, ProQuest, the American Counseling Association (ACA) publications website, and Google Scholar found no articles on career change from other helping professions such as mental health/clinical counseling or social work to school counseling. However, two studies were identified, which could be of relevance to this literature review because they provide frameworks within which to conceptualize career change. Barclay, Stoltz, and Chung's (2010) consideration of voluntary midlife career change through the integration of Supers life-span and life-space approach and the transtheoretical model as proposed by Prochaska and DiClemente and Ajzen's theory of planned behavior, which provides some insight into the career change process. These frameworks will be discussed in some detail in the next section.

Frameworks on Career Changers

Heppner (1998) conceptualized career transition as either task change, position change, or occupational change, which could involve different duties from those previously held or transition to a new work environment. There is a scarcity of literature on career or occupational change from other helping professions to professional school counseling; however, the models discussed below can provide some insight on how to conceptualize career transitions generally with a view to specific application to professional school counselors.

Transtheoretical Model and Life-Span, Life-Space Approach

Barclay, Stoltz, and Chung (2010) conceptualized voluntary midlife career change, in context of career counseling, using the combination of transtheoretical model (Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992) and life-span and life-space approach (Super, 1980). Super (1980) theory of career development is based on the life-span and life-space approach. The life-space consists of nine salient roles (child, student, leisure, citizen, worker, spouse, homemaker, parent, and pensioner) and four theaters, where these roles are enacted, home, community, school, and workplace (Super, 1980). The model also considers life stages of growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline (Super, 1980) or disengagement.

Prochaska and DiClemente model of transtheoretical change is a stage and process model for people with addictive behaviors. The model consists of five stages pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation or decision making stage, action, and maintenance. Prochaska et al.

identified that as individuals moved between and through each of the stages, except for pre-contemplation, they engaged in certain processes or techniques of change. In the contemplation stage individuals engaged in processes of consciousness raising, dramatic relief, and environmental reevaluation. Individuals moving between contemplation and through preparation engaged in processes of self-reevaluation. As individuals moved from preparation towards action they engaged in counterconditioning, stimulus control, reinforcement management, and helping relationships. During the action stage individuals engaged in self-liberation, as well as counterconditioning and stimulus control (Prochaska et al., 1992).

Barclay, Stoltz, and Chung (2010) aligned the stages of the transtheoretical model and life-span life-space approach to explore career change in voluntary midlife. They identified that career changers in the pre-contemplation/disengagement stage show no desire for or awareness of the need to change careers, despite experiencing occupational dissatisfaction linked to discouragement or lack of job interest. Career changers at the contemplation/growth stage, develop awareness of their career problem and begin to think about career change. In the process they experience doubt, engage in self-examination, develop a self-concept, and renew commitment to career related issues. At the preparation /exploration stage, individuals begin to search and experiment with new self-images. Furthermore, they start to integrate intention and behavior, clarify and specify career choices, and move towards career change. Career changers at the action/establishment stage have developed a plan, and engaged in retraining, and redefining their career selves. As part of the establishment stage, individuals also undergo a process of stabilization and commitment. In the maintenance/maintenance stage, career changers make the

final transition to a new career, experience confidence integrating newly acquired skills into existing repertoires, build new career relationships, and develop congruent self-concepts (Barclay, Stoltz, & Chung, 2010).

Theory of Planned Behavior

A study by Khapova, Arthur, Wilderom, and Svensson (2007) demonstrated the potential value of using Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior to understand career change intentions. Their study is not relevant to the literature review due to the population under investigation; however, Ajzen's theory could provide insight into the intentions of career changers from other helping professions to school counseling. Ajzen's identified that behaviors, in this case career change behaviors, are a product of intentions or indications of the effort individuals are willing to exert in order to perform behaviors. Intentions must take account of the extent to which the behavior is within the individuals control and second, the extent to which other opportunities (retraining) and resources (financial), are available to ensure successful accomplishment of the behavior. Intentions are also a factor of three conceptually independent determinants. First, attitude towards behavior, is based on behavioral beliefs, and it reflects the extent to which individuals evaluate or appraise the behavior, in this instance career change, as favorable or unfavorable. Second, subjective norms refer to the perceived social pressures to engage or not engage in the behavior, and it involves normative beliefs as underlying determinants of subjective norms. Finally, perceived behavioral control, reflects the perceived ease or difficulty

performing the behavior and it might encompass past experiences, anticipated impediments, and obstacles (Ajzen, 1991).

The combined theories of transtheoretical model (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1992) and life-span and life-space approach (Super, 1980) provide a basis for understanding the stages, processes, and tasks, career changers from other helping professions might engage in as they negotiate their new profession and professional identity as school counselors. Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behaviors has the potential to explain the decision-making intentions and process adopted by career changers to school counseling. However, the frameworks do not provide information specific to the lived experiences of career changers who are transitioning to the field of professional school counseling. The study following this review will address this gap, by exploring how the professional identity of career changers to school counseling evolves. The study will also consider components that support professional identity development of career changers to school counseling and the challenges they face in the transitional process.

Conclusion

Over the decades, the school counseling profession and professional identity of school counseling practitioners has shifted to accommodate societal requirements, government legislation and policies, and education reform initiatives. Initially teachers with no formal training were employed in the role of school counselors, and the focus was on vocational counseling. The decision to employ formally trained school counselors occurred following

concerns from interested parties and the introduction of legislation such as 1917 Smith-Hughes Act and the 1936 George-Dean Act. Vocational counseling remained the focus of school counseling but included the use of psychometric intelligence scales for determining students' interests, strengths, and limitations and for assessing recruitment eligibility in World War I (WWI) and World War II (WWII).

The 1940s-1960s witnessed a change in school counselors' perspective from vocational counseling to providing remedial individualized services with focus on student concerns and reducing achievement gaps of children from non-dominant populations. Also of significance during this period was the 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA). The act supported an increase in the number of formally trained school counselors, who were tasked with identifying, guiding, and supporting students with high capacity for the sciences, first in the high schools and then at the elementary level following introduction of the 1964 amended act.

The transformation of school counseling, 1960s to the current day, spanned the developmental guidance movement and comprehensive school counseling programs. The developmental guidance movement compelled school counselors to be responsible and accountable for student success. The movement also required that school counselors provide evidence-based school counseling services with focus on decreasing achievement gaps, sometimes to the detriment of services emphasizing emotional, personal, and social needs. The comprehensive school counseling programs also emphasized the importance of developmental programs in context of a results-based framework. Furthermore, comprehensive programs such as the ASCA model (2003, 2005, 2012) encouraged school counselors to become leaders in

students' academic, career, and personal social development through their role as advocates and social change agents.

Theoretically, with the introduction of comprehensive school counseling programs such as the ASCA national model, the school counseling profession and school counselor professional identity should be easier to conceptualize and define. However, in practice school counselors' professional identity is still beset by challenges linked in part to inconsistent implementation of the ASCA model and role ambiguity, a product of continual shifts in responsibilities, the conflicting agendas of stakeholders, and ongoing debates about school counselors as mental health specialists or educators. A strong professional identity is needed to mitigate against the effect of role ambiguity. A solid professional identity supports advocacy for clients and the profession, increases inter-professional collaboration and credibility, and enhances understanding of the counseling field. Most importantly, a solid professional identity is necessary for the growth of individual counselors tasked with meeting the needs of a diverse client group. In view of the importance, understanding how counseling practitioners develop and experience their professional identity should be an essential part of any literature. Given the unique challenges presented by the school counseling field, understanding how career changers negotiate and adapt to their changing professional identity should be an integral part of the dialogue.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

The focus of this study was to understand and explain the process by which novice school counselors, develop a professional school counselor identity. In addition, the study addressed questions on how professional identity presents in practice and professionalism, how practitioners experience the process, and the unique challenges they face as they transition from other helping careers into the specialist area of school counseling. In conducting the study, I utilized a grounded theory approach. Creswell, identified that grounded theory “is a qualitative research design in which the inquirer generates a general explanation (a theory) of a process, an action, or an interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants” (Creswell, 2013, p.83). I chose grounded theory because it allows research to extend beyond description to generate theory on a particular process (Creswell, 2013) especially in areas where there is minimal research relevant to the population under study (Thai, Chong, & Agrawal, 2012). Grounded theory subscribes to two main principles, first the principle of change, which proposes that a significant component is to build change through process into the method. Second, participant or actors are viewed as having the means to control their destinies by the way they respond to conditions and make choices based on perceptions (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Overall, grounded theory attempts to “uncover relevant conditions . . . [and] to determine how the actors respond to changing conditions and to the consequences of their actions” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p.5).

According to Corbin and Strauss (1990) researchers employing a grounded theory design utilize specific procedures in data collection and analysis. Researchers

- Engage in data collection and analysis as an interrelated process; therefore, data from interviews or observations is analyzed from the first information collected and relevant arising issues are incorporated into subsequent interviews or observations.
- Utilize conceptualizations of data rather than actual data; therefore, categories are compiled from concepts pertaining to similar phenomenon.
- Engage in theoretical sampling based on the phenomenon under investigation and conduct research in the natural setting of participants.
- Carry out constant comparisons as part of the analysis while taking account of patterns and variations.
- Build process into the theory.
- Utilize theoretical memos as part of the formulation and revision of theory. Memos become part of the process from beginning of coding to the end of the research.
- Develop and verify hypothesis about categorical relationships during the research until they hold true for all the evidence supporting the phenomenon being investigated.
- Consider the broader issues affecting the phenomenon in context of economic conditions, political trends, and cultural values (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

My practice in this study reflected the characteristics of grounded theory. I will discuss how I fulfil the characteristics in the body of the chapter under the following sub-headings: participants, data collection, and data analysis. In addition to the above, I will also discuss the

purpose of the study, the research questions, the role of the researcher in context of ethical issues, and trustworthiness.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to explain the process by which the professional identity of novice school counselors evolves. Participants were career changers to the field of school counseling. They graduated from a school counselors certificate program (SCCP), where they completed partial requirements towards the professional educator license with a school counseling endorsement. The second purpose was to explain the meaning school counselors attach to their evolving professional identity development. The third purpose was to explain the perspectives of school counselors about the significance of professional identity to their development in the field. Finally, the study explored dimensions of career change transitions and considered those factors that differentiated school counseling from participants' previous professions and those aspects of previous professions that are retained in participants evolving professional identity as school counselors.

Research Questions

The central focus and question for this study was to examine and explain the process by which the professional identity of novice school counselors develops or evolves.

The following research questions guided this study and informed the questions for the interview schedule:

1. What are novice school counselors' perceptions of their developing professional counseling identity?
2. What are novice school counselors' perceptions of the various components (supervision, ethical, teaching/education, professional membership, and clinical practice) that contributed to their evolving professional counseling identity? What components were instrumental in supporting the transition from one professional identity to their current evolving school counselor professional identity?
3. What factors created challenges for the evolving professional school counselor identity of novice school counselors? What factors created challenges in the transition from one professional identity to their current evolving school counselor professional identity?
4. What factors enhanced the evolving professional school counselor identity of novice school counselors? What factors enhanced the transition from one professional identity to their current evolving school counselor professional identity?

Participants Criteria and Recruitment

The literature differs on the recommended sample size needed for grounded theory research; however, studies are agreed on the criteria of data saturation when researchers cease sampling participants because collected data has become repetitive (Creswell, 2014; Seidman, 2013). Similarly, theoretical saturation in grounded theory, can be used to decide cessation of sampling participants. Theoretical saturation occurs when all variations of the phenomenon have been identified and integrated into the emerging theory (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). In this

study, data saturation for the emerging themes was reached after collecting data from 8 participants.

In line with the characteristics of grounded theory, participants were chosen applying theoretical sampling, to reflect the phenomenon and context under investigation (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Therefore, participants were recruited from graduates of a school counselors certificate program (SCCP) at a Mid-Western University. In addition, participants meet the following criteria; they are working as school counselors in K-12 schools. Participants have a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 4 years' experience in the field. Finally, participants are career changers from other helping professions such as clinical mental health counseling, clinical psychology, or social work.

In recruiting participants, I employed several approaches. First, in line with approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) letters were sent from the department to graduates of the program, informing potential participants of the research details and asking them to email the researcher if they wanted to participate. Second, I employed snowball sampling utilizing personal networks developed through the doctoral program, so I emailed contacts to request potential research participants who met criteria, and from these contacts other potential participants were introduced. Third, as part of a routine follow-up SCCP graduates were contacted and opportunity was provided to those currently working in schools to share their experiences working as a school counselor.

Prospective participants who expressed an interest in contributing to the study received an adult consent form (see appendix A) via email, to be read and signed by them. The consent

form contained a description of the study purpose and information on participants' rights. In addition, as part of the process, participants were sent a demographic data sheet to be completed and signed by them. Finally, I contacted participants to schedule a semi-structured 60-90-minute interview over the phone or in person at a place of participants choosing, provided it allowed for confidentiality and audio-recording.

School Counselors' Certificate Program

Information on the school counselors' certificate program (SCCP) was obtained during a conversation with one of the program coordinators. The SCCP provides an intensive school licensure training program to career changers or professionals who have completed masters' degree programs in other helping fields such as clinical mental health counseling, clinical psychology, and social work. Students are expected to attend classes for 5 weekends and two 4-day weeks in the summer months. Students must have completed practicum and internship experience prior to admission into the SCCP in order to meet state requirements (T.A. Fisher, Personal Communication, May 23, 2016).

The SCCP aims to provide students with opportunities to learn effective school counseling programming, developmental curriculum in schools, classroom management, academic program planning, career and post-secondary counseling, and individual and group counseling for children and adolescents. As part of the learning process students are supported to understand the national standards for school counseling programs, the American School

Counseling Association (ASCA) national model for school counseling programs, ethical standards for school counselors, career development competencies, and social emotional learning standards covering elementary, middle, and high school (T.A. Fisher, Personal Communication, May 23, 2016). Furthermore, course objectives are based on the 2009 standards from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) with focus on knowledge in areas of foundations (A. 1-7), counseling, prevention, and interventions (C. 1-6), and diversity and advocacy (E. 1-4). In addition, the course objectives are linked to knowledge areas of assessment (G. 1-3), research and evaluation (I. 1-5), academic development (K. 1-3), collaboration and consultation (M. 1-7), and leadership (O. 1-5).

In addition to the above, an essential component of the course curriculum involves experiential learning activities, such as school visits to interview and observe school counselors, visits to a community college for half a day, classroom observations including special education classrooms, and interviews with key stakeholders (T.A. Fisher, Personal Communication, May 23, 2016). Furthermore, students are required to complete direct work with a child aged 5-17 years' old, to include rapport building and identification of concerns, brief assessment and goal planning, and intervention. Finally, students complete an experiential consultation experience, which involves completing a needs assessment highlighting what students require from their school counseling programs, developing and implementing a developmental counseling activity, and evaluating the outcomes (T.A. Fisher, Personal Communication, May 23, 2016).

Following completion of the program, students can apply for the professional educator license with an endorsement in school counseling, but only after they have completed the

following steps: (1) signed the declaration of intent. (2) Completed requirements for the school counseling area of specialization including state testing through the test of academic proficiency (TAP) and the school counseling content test. (3) Completed a school-based counseling internship through the university. (4) Completed a course focused on the education of students with special needs. (T.A. Fisher, Personal Communication, May 23, 2016).

Data Collection

Interviews, over the phone or in person, was the primary data collection technique. Interviews were semi-structured, open-ended, and cautiously followed an interview schedule (Seidman, 2013). The interviews, which lasted between 60-90 minutes, were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for purposes of member checking, analysis and coding. In line with the characteristics of grounded theory, data collection and analysis occurred systematically and concurrently. Therefore, from the first interview, themes requiring further exploration were incorporated into subsequent interviews until all the data was gathered (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In addition to conducting interviews with participants, I met with one of the program coordinators from the SCCP to gather information on how learning outcomes conform to the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standards and the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) model; because these organizations are the standards through which school counselor professionalism and professional identity are defined.

I also asked participants to provide documents supporting their perceptions of their evolving professional school counselor identity in context of their practice in schools and school counseling programs. Saldaña (2013) identified that “Documents are social products that must be examined critically because they reflect the interests and perspectives of their authors . . . and carry values and ideologies, either intended or not” (p. 54). Lindlof and Taylor as cited by Saldaña (2013) further identified that official documents “are a site of claims to power, legitimacy, and reality” (p. 54). Only three participants were able to provide documentation; as a result, the documents were only utilized as additional supporting evidence.

Data Analysis

Coding is the fundamental process for data analysis in grounded theory and it occurs in three stages open, axial, and selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Walker and Myrick (2006) described Corbin and Strauss’s three phase stage as “fracture in open coding, relate and integrate in axial coding . . . select and integrate in selective coding” (p.556). Open coding or initial coding refers to a process of breaking down qualitative data into discrete parts for close examination and comparisons of similarities and differences (Saldaña, 2013). Open coding is used to analyze data in order to develop concepts, categories, and subcategories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In the open coding stage, I analyzed transcribed interviews line-by-line, identified potential categories, and entered these into a coding sheet based on the research questions, which were used as a structural framework for initial analysis of the data. From this analysis, I found

concepts, which were incorporated into subsequent interviews for further exploration. As each interview was transcribed, I grouped concepts with similar phenomenon into categories and subcategories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Axial coding provides descriptions on category properties and dimensions, and explores the relationships between categories and subcategories. Properties and dimensions refer to components such as contexts, conditions, interactions, and consequences of the process (Saldaña, 2013). Using axial coding, I made connections between themes and categories through coding paradigms of conditions, context, strategies, and consequences, in the process I also considered relationships against data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Walker & Myrick, 2006). Related categories were used to formulate theory and hypothesis about relationships, and again identified categories were returned to the field for further testing, review, and identification of variations.

Selective coding, also described as theoretical coding, proceeds towards identifying the core category or phenomenon which unifies all other categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Saldaña, 2013). Using selective coding I identified the central phenomenon, which unified other identified categories and from this I developed grounded theory specifying conditions connected through action and interaction, including consequences (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In order to ensure an audit trail of the data analysis procedure and process, I completed an analytical memo reflecting on the conceptual and theoretical concepts emerging during the analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Walker & Myrick, 2006).

Trustworthiness

In qualitative research reliability, validity, and generalizability are replaced with the concept of trustworthiness (Loh, 2013). Trustworthiness refers to “how much trust can be given that the researcher did everything possible to ensure that data was appropriately and ethically collected, analyzed, and reported” (Carlson, 2010, p.1103). There are four aspects of trustworthiness, which parallel scientific concepts of reliability and validity; credibility parallels internal validity, transferability parallels external validity and generalizability, dependability parallels reliability, and confirmability parallels objectivity (Guba, 1981; Loh, 2013; Morrow, 2005).

For purposes of credibility, I used peer debriefing, therefore I engaged the support of a faculty member with knowledge of the subject to review my transcripts, coding sheets, and final findings. The faculty member provided alternative perspectives outside of my purview and ensured that meanings or interpretations given to the data maintained only the participants lived experiences (Creswell, 2014; Guba, 1981). I also conducted member checks by inviting participants to review transcripts for content, and findings for the emerging themes and categories developed from their transcripts, so they could provide feedback on whether my analysis was congruent with their experiences (Carlson, 2010; Creswell, 2014; Loh, 2013). The member checks did not reveal any new information or highlight any need for correction to the findings.

Confirmability acknowledges the potential subjectivity of research and the importance of the researcher role in demonstrating rigor and coherence to ensure readers can confirm adequacy of findings (Kline, 2008; Morrow, 2005). I met the requirements of confirmability by practicing reflexivity; therefore, I was intentionally transparent about the underlying assumptions, personal backgrounds and experiences informing and shaping the direction of the research study especially in respect of research questions and presentation of findings (Creswell, 2014; Guba, 1981). In addition, I utilized a confirmability audit where I regularly discussed with faculty the data supporting my interpretation using highlighted transcripts, coding sheets, and memos completed post interviews and during coding (Guba, 1981).

Transferability refers to the extent to which readers can generalize findings from the study to their own context (Morrow, 2005). To fulfil transferability, I gathered and developed rich thick descriptions of participants phenomenological experiences and the cultural context in which the experiences occurred; for example, schools and school counseling programs where they worked and in which their school counseling identities are developing and evolving (Creswell, 2014; Geertz, 1973; Guba, 1981; Morrow 2005). In fulfilment of the dependability criteria, I employed audit trails using interview transcripts, coding sheets, and analytic memos, to ensure detailed documentation of all components of the study, for instance collection, analysis, and interpretation (Carlson, 2010; Guba 1981). I also conducted member checks of interview transcripts and review of tentative themes and categories developed from the findings (Guba, 1981).

Role of Researcher

In this section, I consider my role as the researcher in context of prior experience with the participants or the phenomenon under investigation. As the researcher, my experience with the participants must be understood in context of my involvement with the SCCP. My experience with SCCP has been limited to participating in one pre-admission workshop as an interviewer and being a guest speaker at one of the classes discussing multicultural practice with children and adolescents. These events did not give me power over the participants or obligate them to engage in the research study.

The phenomenon under investigation mirrors my experience as a career changer who left the field of social work to enter the field of school counseling, and counselor education and supervision. Personally, the journey to solidifying my professional identity has been one of self-discovery. In the process, I have learned to negotiate the differences and similarities between the professions regarding roles and responsibilities, legislation, and ethical practice, and application of theory to practice. I have also learned to appreciate those aspects of my previous professional identity that support my current professional identity as a school counselor and counselor educator for example my experience in clinical practice and advocacy for clients.

My experience reveals my bias; but I am aware participants will have experiences both similar and different to mine. I am also aware of my ethical responsibility to report participant narratives accurately and honestly, and that I must avoid imposing my agenda on participants at different stages of the study for instance data collection and analysis. In managing my biases, I

have fulfilled the requirements of trustworthiness through techniques such as researcher reflexivity, audit trails, and member checking.

Ethical Considerations

In this section, I reflect on the ethical issues that arose as part of this study. I was aware that participants would have concerns about issues of confidentiality and privacy. Participants would also be concerned about and question my intentions with the data collated and the final report. In order to address these concerns, the paperwork I completed for the institutional review board (IRB) included a research invitation letter and an informed consent form. The informed consent form contained information on the purpose of the study, benefits to future research, and clarified that the study was voluntary. The form verified that there was no risk to participants, and confirmed participant confidentiality and privacy through pseudonyms and data security strategies such as passwords on laptops and safekeeping of data contained on USB sticks. The consent form also informed participants of the deadlines for researcher contact and member checking.

Creswell (2013) identified reciprocity as one of the key ethical considerations. Reciprocity speaks to the need to ensure that participants benefit from the study and are not subject to exploitation or power imbalance (Creswell, 2013). Seidman (2013) acknowledged that participants might not benefit from the study or interview process as much as or in the same manner as the researcher; however, they can derive benefit from being listened to and having

their narrative reported accurately and honestly. In my interviews, I listened to participants and accurately transcribe recorded narratives. I also conducted member checking by providing opportunity for participant feedback on transcripts and findings. As the researcher in this study, I did not consider myself to be in a position of power over participants; as stated above my previous experience with the SCCP did not create a power differential or compel participants to participate in the study. Furthermore, potential participants were invited to participate in the study via email and interviews were conducted and recorded only with participants' signed permission.

Conclusion

In this study, I employed a grounded theory research design to understand and explain the process by which novice school counselors, initially trained in other helping professions (counseling, social work, and psychology), develop a professional school counselor identity. Grounded theory allows the researcher to generate theory on a process, especially when there is sparse research on the subject matter or population under discussion. I chose to use grounded theory as defined by Corbin and Strauss (1990) because I wanted to show fidelity to one model. Researchers using this method must employ specific procedures in data collection and analysis, and I have highlighted how I intend to fulfil these requirements through my discussion considering participant selection, data collection, and data analysis.

In selecting participants, I employed theoretical sampling; therefore, participants were graduates from a school counselors' certificate program (SCCP) currently working in K-12

schools, with 1- 4 years' experience. In gathering data for the study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 8 participants and collected documentation, as supporting evidence, related to three participants' practice in their schools and school counseling programs. I also met with one of the program coordinators from the SCCP, to discuss course curriculum and how learning outcomes conformed to the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) standards and the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) National model. Finally, I analyzed interview data using a three phase coding process of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding, as provided by Corbin and Strauss grounded theory model.

Qualitative research depends on the concept of trustworthiness and its components of credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability to meet the requirements of reliability, validity, and generalizability. In order to fulfil requirements of trustworthiness, I utilized techniques such as audit trails, member checking, and rich thick descriptions. I concluded the chapter by reflecting on my role as the researcher undertaking this study giving consideration to my prior experience with participants, the phenomenon under study, and ethical issues that might arise for the participants.

CHAPTER 4

PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHIC AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In this chapter, I provide individual profiles of the participants concentrating on their professions or careers prior to school counseling, the decisions informing their transition, and the context in which they currently practice as school counselors. I also include a description of how participants define the concept of professional identity generally and professional school counseling specifically. The 8 participants in this study were recruited from graduates of a school counselors' certificate program (SCCP) at a Mid-Western University. They currently work as school counselors in K-12 schools, have a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 4 years' experience in the field, and they were career changers from other helping professions such as clinical mental health counseling, clinical psychology, or social work.

Below (see table 1) is a summary of the participants. They were given pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Participants self-identified as three males and five females, ages ranged from 27-42 years, mainly White/Caucasian with one Asian Indian, one African American, and one participant who identified as American. All of the participants graduated from the SCCP within the last 4 years. Five participants had a minimum of 1-year experience working as a school counselor, two participants had 3 years-experience, and one participant had 4 years-experience. Five participants currently work as high school counselors, one participant works as a middle school counselor, and two participants as elementary school counselors. Six participants came from counseling or counseling psychology, one participant

Table 1
Participants Demographic Information

Pseudonym	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Years of Experience	School Counselor Position	Qualifications and Licensure
Naveen	Asian Indian	M	38	3yrs	High School	Masters, LCPC, CADC
Patricia	Caucasian	F	28	1yr 1 month	Long-term Substitute High School	Masters, Ph.D. Counseling Psychology
Grant	Caucasian	M	33	3yrs	Middle School	Masters in Counseling- LPC
Samantha	White	F	42	4yrs	High School	Masters Family & Consumer Science in Family Services-LPC
Nicole	African American	F	37	1 year	High School	Masters' Social Work- MSW
Anne	Caucasian	F	27	1 year	Elementary School	MA Counseling Psychology - LPC
Harry	American	M	28	1 year	Elementary School	MA Counseling
Carly	White	F	33	1 year	High School	Masters in Forensic Psychology- LCPC

came from a social work background, and one participant had completed a masters' in family and consumer science.

Participants Individual Profiles

In this section, I provide a brief overview of the participants in the study. The participants are referred to solely by their pseudonyms in order to protect their anonymity and any identifiers are referenced based on their descriptors.

Naveen

Naveen is a 38-year-old Asian Indian male. Naveen began his career as a frontline counselor providing individual and family counseling on issues related to family conflict, substance abuse, and delinquency. He also worked as a drug and alcohol coordinator before assuming the role of clinical supervisor for interns and case managers working with adolescent clients in juvenile justice or probation. In this role, Naveen also facilitated some drug and alcohol intervention groups in schools. Naveen's decision to change careers was motivated in part by financial insecurity and poor state funding. He reported:

So just fiscally, although I loved the job, it was not funded, you know our state, we have so many financial problems and we don't support the mental health needs of our youth and adults in our state. So when I started seeing that happen and I started seeing my friends lose their jobs, that's when I basically decided to pull the trigger and go to [name of university] and at least apply to [name of university] to pursue the school counselors' certificate program [SCCP].

Naveen has 3-years-experience working as a school counselor in a suburban high school. The school is big with 11 school counselors, three psychologists and three social workers. Naveen has a caseload of 230 and he serves a mixture of student needs, which includes challenges in the form of unresponsive parents, students forced to assume independent roles because of absent parents, and students living in families where there is alcoholism and/or mental health concerns.

Naveen defined professional identity in his previous career in context of the opportunities it provided for feedback and growth. He reported “I was in a very feedback intensive environment, and so the nice thing about that I was going to get very objective feedback, but I also got a lot of supportive feedback, and so I felt I was in a place where I could grow.” He defined his school counselor professional identity as a chance to return to previously held personal beliefs, which included “public service [and] social justice.” He stated:

I really wanted to go back to what my beliefs are in helping everyone and I just felt the more I was doing stuff for [name of previous organization], the less I was able to work with the families really in need. And as a result of going in schools, I didn’t have those restraints anymore.

Patricia

Patricia is a 28-year-old Caucasian female, who initially graduated with a doctorate in counseling psychology but decided she did not wish to practice in the field. Prior to her current profession, Patricia held multiple posts as a pre-school teacher and an educational testing consultant. Her decision to transition into school counseling arose following a period of reflection and recognition that she enjoyed working in career counseling. She reported “And I

realized that's what I really like doing, the four-year planning for working your way through college, and getting the major you wanted, and getting internships you wanted, and devising what you as a graduate were going to look like and setting yourself to be marketable. And I really loved the career counseling aspect of it."

After graduating from the SCCP, Patricia had difficulty finding permanent employment in school counseling; but she eventually secured employment as a long-term substitute school counselor at a Suburban high school, where she has worked for a little over 1 year. The school is a private Catholic school, because of which services for meeting student needs might differ from those found in public schools. For instance, the school does not have social workers and Patricia identified "Because it's a private school, we don't have IEPs (Individual Education Plans) but we might individually see the student needs extra support or extra services and help them connect in." The counseling department is RAMP certified, in other words it is recognized as a program by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and this is reflected in school programs around curriculum delivery and college and career counseling.

Patricia defined her professional identity past and present from the perspective of having a professional school counseling identity and obtaining licensure. She stated "So having this license for me felt so good and comfortable and a relief and right." She also defined her school counselor identity in context of her role as a student advocate who was able to effect change for students; a fact that she felt was recognized by teachers.

I really see my role as an advocate for the students. And so I think that being a professional school counselor is really giving me a title to be able to do that job within the school . . . But I think that identity of being a school counselor gives more weight,

and I think that the teachers understand that our job is hard and that we're dealing with some really serious issues. And they're so relieved that there is a professional doing it, so they don't have to.

Grant

Grant is a 33-year-old Caucasian male. Since graduating from the SCCP, he has been working as a middle school counselor in the Suburbs for over 3 years. The school is relatively small with three school counselors and Grant currently holds a case load of 283 students and a small caseload of 504 case management for students requiring accommodations. He summarized his and the other school counselors' role as student support and identified that "All three counselors have check-ins with a long list of students we check in with on a regular basis. So student support is the short answer but we cover all three tiers, in how we support them." Grant worked in a non-counselor related job following completion of his masters in counseling. He decided to pursue school counseling out of a desire to help young people develop coping skills.

And that flexibility to me is just good coping skills. You know improvisation taught me good coping skills. If I could teach that to other people . . . I'll tell them we're going to have fun and I tell the parents that I'm going to teach them coping skills. I'm going to teach them how to live life better. And it's good for everybody.

In addition, he wanted to do preventative tier one work, so once he found out that this was the focus of the program at the SCCP, he decided to apply and pursue a career in school counseling. He stated "Upon learning about that, I applied and just began that furious non-stop process of the [program] and that's how I got into school counseling, that tier one that I want to do."

Grant immediately defined professional identity through the lens of his role as a school counselor and he likened it to having a career and professional values.

I think a professional identity is a better way to say career in short. Its one of those things where I try and differentiate with the kids, what's the difference between a job and a career. I had a job as a shipping receiving guy, I have a career as a school counselor. But that professional identity I feel, is your professional values. And that's, I think, the difference between a guidance counselor and a school counselor, the school counselor my identity of that is very different and what that looks like in terms of actual action is very different than a guidance counselor. And so I think that identity helps drive and determine your work.

He identified his school counselor professional identity specifically as dynamic stating "So that identity is fluid, it's very flexible and it's something that is going to continue to grow and evolve based on what student needs are, and what the current state of schools in our nation are, and how that relates to other countries. It's something that demands me to always reflect, which means that it's always changing. The identity is always in flux and I'm okay with that."

Samantha

Samantha identifies as a 42-year-old White female. She has worked as a school counselor for a Suburban High School for 4 years. The school is relatively small with two school counselors to 600 students. The counseling department is RAMP certified, but when asked how the ASCA model informs her practice, Samantha replied:

I know about it, and I'm familiar with it and everything, but it's hard to stick to some of the dynamics. Like you should do 30% of this, and 30% of this, and 30% of this, it doesn't work that way, every day you just have to be flexible. It's called situational flexibility, you know one day you might see all kids struggling with academics, the other day you're tied up all social emotional, so for me it never really balances out and it

depends on the age of the students too. When I have seniors, I'm doing a ton more college and careers stuff, than I am when I have freshmen, because freshmen come in with all these little social emotional problems.

In addition to her school counselor role, Samantha also facilitates a student group. She reported that the group started last year after the school experienced a significant loss and crisis in the form of three separate student deaths. She identified that the focus of the group is "On making the school a more positive environment, doing things for other people." She expatiated further "Right now they're doing a drive collecting personal hygiene items, like soap, and deodorant, and toothpaste, and all that stuff and they want to donate it to a homeless shelter. So its student led, it's what they want to do. I'm just there trying to support them."

Prior to her career transition into school counseling, Samantha had held multiple roles working with adult substance users, adolescent substance users, youth and family counseling and drug and alcohol counseling, and a youth and family therapist. After her position as a youth and family therapist was dissolved, Samantha decided to transition into school counseling because it provided more job opportunities and aligned with her past experiences and current interests "I think I saw it as more job opportunities, plus my experience that I already had, and I could still do some art stuff within there."

Samantha viewed professional identity in context of certification, which she described as an achievement. She said:

It's like an achievement you know, like this is me. I remember when I was just doing drug and alcohol counseling and I became a certified drug and alcohol counselor, that felt so cool. My first certification, I did this, I passed the test, it just felt so cool. I'd never got that excited since that first one, you know the thrill wears off, it's not that big a deal, but it is important. And it's just a positive experience to be able to say, you know you run

into someone you haven't seen in a long time and they can be like what are you doing, well I'm a school counselor.

She defined her professional school counselor identity as having a sound knowledge base "It means, well I love the word professional school counselor title, you know having that word professional, make me feel like a professional. You just kind of hold your shoulders up more, I'm the professional school counselor I know what I'm talking about [laughs]." She also described professional school counselor identity in context of student advocacy "But it means that I have the ability to make a difference in a student's life, I can help guide them to what they're going to do;" and in context of student relationship "Maybe something I say is going to influence them to make some career choice down the road. You don't know that, but you have to be aware of how you interact with these students, and you want to make it a positive one, so they remember you, and it's one thing I always wanted, was for my kids to remember me."

Nicole

Nicole is a 37-year-old African American female. She has one-year experience working as a high school counselor in a large district public schools' systems. The school is a Magnet school and sizeable with eight school counselors each carrying an individual caseload of 270-275 students, a social worker, part-time nurse, psychologist, speech pathologist, and a case manager. Nicole advised that the school is academic focused and competitive with a gifted program. It also has a large population of students with learning disabilities, a good population of students with severe profound disabilities, and students who are supported through IEPs and or 504 plans.

As part of the interview process, Nicole provided a copy of her 2016-2017 school counselor/administrator annual agreement outlining her work in the counseling program for the academic year. The agreement identifies that Nicole's caseload consists of 284 students divided across grade levels freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and diverse learners divided between ten homerooms. The agreement also provides an outline of her time distribution, for the school calendar year, based on components of the ASCA model as follows: direct services (divided into school counseling core curriculum-10%, individual student planning-15%, responsive services-20%), indirect services (divided into referrals-10%, consultation-15%, collaboration-10%), program planning and management (12%), and non-counseling duties (8%). Major roles and responsibilities listed in the agreement range from counselor responsibilities to collaborative committee responsibilities to PSAT testing. The agreement also outlines her professional development commitments.

Nicole completed her masters' in social work but she never practiced. Prior to her career transition into school counseling, Nicole worked as a non-profit services manager. She decided to change careers to school counseling after a number of years, because as she reported, "I stayed there for a while [referencing her previous job] till I decided that I really want to use my clinical skills. And I had to think about, how do I want to use it, with whom, and I thought about doing school counseling." The decision was also linked to a passion for working with young people. Nicole reported "I think it was a lot of different factors, number one, just my passion working with young people. Like I said when I first started my masters' program I was working at a children's home, I was working with teenagers, and I just wanted to go back to that passion."

Additionally, her decision was linked to her positive experience working with her own high school counselor. She advised “School counseling just based off of the school counselor that I had in high school. You know coming from first generation and low income I felt my school counselor was very helpful for me and just seeing what she does currently, she’s still a counselor, so I’m looking at her and I’m thinking that I want to give this a try.”

Nicole defined professional identity generally as related to having relevant education and membership in a supportive organization:

Professional identity means that number one, you have the education that you need to do whatever tasks. Number two, you are part of maybe a larger group, like an association or something, that is advocating on your behalf or providing professional development opportunities and further training and different things on your behalf.

Nicole defined her professional school counselor identity in terms of expert knowledge “I feel I have a knowledge base on school counseling. I feel I can be someone teachers or administrators can come to if they have a question in one of the three domains.” She also defined professional school counselor identity in terms of professional membership:

I’m a member of the American School Counseling Association and if I have a question I have somewhere I can go, I’m on a list serve, I can go read up on somethings. Amongst other things I have some place I can go to if I can’t get something from my colleagues here. I can go to this association and get further professional development or training, and different things like that.

Anne

Anne is a 27-year-old Caucasian female. She graduated with a masters in counseling psychology and transitioned immediately to the SCCP. Anne identified that while “in grad school I decided that I liked counseling, but I didn’t like the private practice, I didn’t like the feel

of just having client after client after client.” She chose school counseling after some soul searching and she readily admitted that her reasons were both deep and shallow.

On the deeper side I found myself bored during the day of, I called it, my revolving door of clients that are just one client after another in the same room and there wasn't a whole progress. I'm sure there was progress being made but it's much more difficult to see because it's much slower, and I found that, just for myself, I wanted to be doing more. So, I wanted diverse responsibilities, I wanted to do some individual counseling, some group counseling. I wanted to do a little bit of the academic piece, a little bit of the socioemotional piece, I wanted to do just a lot of different things.

On the shallower side, Anne identified:

And then on the shallower side I know I wanted to work with kids and when you're outside of the school you have to work around the school hours, so I knew if I stayed in private practice my work day would be in the afternoon, in the evenings, or on the weekends and selfishly I didn't like that. So I liked the idea of having a consistent schedule, like a school day or a school calendar.

Anne has worked for 1 year as a K-8 elementary school counselor in a large district public schools' systems. She is the only school counselor for approximately 750 students. The school also has a separate case manager, a social worker who visits two and half days, and a psychologist who attends two days a week. In respect of the school, Anne said the following “And my school, it's on the West side of [name of city] so it's primarily Hispanic. They're fairly poor and a lot of violence. So my students are just young enough, some of the middle schoolers are a little bit involved, but just young enough to not really be in the gangs themselves yet, but their parents, their cousins, their neighbors are very affiliated. So it's kind of routine to come in Monday morning, and learn that someone's uncle was shot.”

Anne could not say what it meant to have a professional identity generally; because as she pointed out “I would have to say, I didn't have a professional identity, I was young, I went

straight from undergrad to grad school too. So when I was in grad school I was 23 and 24. To me I was young, it's kind of an extension of college." Furthermore, she struggled to articulate and describe what it means to have a professional school counselor identity; because as she said in her own words "Its a tough question, I mean again, I still feel like I'm very new at this, even though I often feel like I have to pretend to be much more of an expert than I actually feel." But she was able to describe her professional school counselor identity in context of roles and relationships with significant stakeholders stating:

I view my role as a counselor as a good grounding point in the school. So I'm not giving students grades, so you know I can pull them out of class, I don't have to worry about that type of relationship. But I see myself as just someone that students, teachers, everyone can come talk to and I just try to be very empathic and provide a different perspective.

Harry

Harry identifies as a 28-year-old American male. Before transitioning to school counseling, Harry was a family worker at a private agency affiliated with the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), where he supported children in foster care to reunite with their families. He decided to pursue school counseling because in his words:

I knew that I didn't always want to be a family worker, instead I loved the idea of working in a school. The reason why I changed over to school counseling is because, I would think about when I was younger, the people who had the most impact on me as a child growing up were the ones in the school system. And so I felt if I wanted to have an impact on children, the best way I could do that was to be in the school system with them every single day as opposed to working for an outside agency where I might only see them once a week or once a month.

Harry has 1-year experience working as an elementary school counselor across four elementary schools. The schools are divided by age levels Pre-K, K-1, grade levels 2-3, and grade levels 4-5. The four schools are managed between two administrators. Harry is the only school counselor serving 630 students. He has a caseload of 80 students and between 50-55 students who he checks in with regularly. He works closely with a school social worker and psychologist, both of whom are attached to several schools and districts. He described the schools as follows “It is primarily or predominantly Caucasian and I think 70% of our students are on the free or reduced meal plan, so it’s a poverty stricken community. And I will also add, of the kids that I see on a regular basis about 80% of them are from broken families where they live with only their mother or father or neither.”

Harry defined professional identity generally in context of roles “I think the term professional identity refers to how we see ourselves in the role that we do for our job.” He integrated this description with his understanding of school counselor identity as follows “My professional identity as a school counselor is how I perform that role as a school counselor. And so I think a professional identity in general is how we perform the role that we’re in.” He also defined school counselor identity as having expertise, competence in their role, and as being different from a typical guidance counselor.

School counselor identity, when I think about that I think of somebody who is well versed and isn’t your typical guidance counselor, that you’re prepared to take on more of the individual and small group counseling. And I, as a school counselor, what’s school counselor identity, I feel you’re more prepared for a variety of students and like I said specifically to be able to counsel them and work on the individual and small group counseling.

Carly

Carly is a 33-year-old White female. She graduated with a masters in psychology and is licensed as a clinical professional counselor (LCPC). Prior to transitioning into school counseling, Carly held multiple roles first, as a therapist working with sexual offenders at a detention facility, and second, as a therapist at a not for profit youth agency with children and families'. As part of her work at the not for profit youth agency Carly provided services to a local high school doing outreach services, crisis work, and connecting students to services. This experience sparked an interest in school counseling. She said "I got to interact with the other staff and I got to interact with some of the students and I really liked the counseling environment that was there. I was right in the middle of all the counselors and social workers, and so I think that I was like wow this is really great. I liked the energy there, I liked the kind of team work feel, that there's all these people working together so closely, so that just kind of spoke to me." Carly also had personal reasons for her decision. She reported "I was also preparing to have a family of my own, where we were trying to get pregnant and thinking about that down the road, and I felt its really nice working in a school and having a similar schedule to the kids and then having time off to be with my family as well."

Carly has 1-year experience working as a high school counselor. The high school where she currently works is a Catholic college preparation private school for girls only. In view of the college preparation status, the school provides dual credit, AP classes, and it has a very high grading scale of 93%. In addition, students are required to sit for a placement test as part of the

admission process. The school has approximately 330 girls, predominately White, with small numbers of Hispanic and African American populations. A majority of the students are middle to upper class with some students on scholarship. In addition to academia the school has a gifted athletes program with swimming being the most sought after sport by students at the school. The school has two school counselors with a caseload divided between grade levels. In addition, the counselors are 504 case managers. They have no social workers or psychologists. Although they have access to services such as psychologists, speech pathologists, or other language services through the school district.

Carly defined professional identity as what she does. She stated “I guess my professional identity I think is like a helper. You know that I really want to help, and guide, and mentor youth. So I guess that’s kind of how I consider, my professional identity what I see as the most important aspects of my job.” Carly identified her school counselor professional identity as evolving and fluid and she linked her growth to an ability to make autonomous decisions “So I feel I learned a lot but then I guess my professional identity is still evolving, to where I’m kind of developing how to make more decisions. Just independent without needing that constant reassurance from someone else, well is that what I should do, I should do this right, like I should just make a lot more decisions on my own.” She also defined her school counselor identity in context of building relationships with students. She stated:

I think I still see myself as new, a new counselor, new to the field, so I think I still see myself very much in the learning process, you know where I feel pretty confident in my ability to connect with the students and build relationships. I feel that is a real strength of my identity that I can build relationships and I can connect. And I think create a safe place where girls can come when they have questions about things or need guidance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced the study participants focusing among other things on their previous careers, current professions as school counselors, and definitions of professional identity both general and specific to school counseling. The participants, who graduated from an SCCP at a Mid-Western University, came from a range of backgrounds prior to school counseling, including counseling, forensic psychology, counseling psychology, and social work. Participants self-identified as three males and five females, and for the most part they were White Caucasian, with one Asian Indian, one African American, and one participant who identified as American. Currently, five of the participants work as high school counselors, one as a middle school counselor, and two as elementary school counselors.

In general, participants described professional identity in context of opportunities for growth, licensure or certification, level of education, professional membership, roles performed, and helping children. The participants defined professional school counselor identity specifically through a lens of public service and social justice, student advocacy, student relationship building, having an expert knowledge base, professional membership, being in a professional career and counselor roles. Professional school counselor identity was also defined by participants as professional values or competence that differentiates a school counselor from a guidance counselor. Finally, participants defined professional school counselor identity as fluid and dynamic. The fluidity was viewed as a product of student needs, changes within the school

system, relationships with other countries, or as being linked to experience and autonomous decision-making.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore the process by which novice school counselors develop a professional school counselor identity and the meanings they attach to their professional identity. Second, the study examined how professional identity presents in practice. Finally, the study considered the unique challenges and support experienced by novice school counselors, as they transition from other helping careers into the specialist area of school counseling. The findings from the study are presented in two ways. First, table 2 below provides an overview of the results of the coding process through their themes and categories using the research focal areas as a framework. Second, the themes and categories from the data are discussed in-depth using excerpts from participants' accounts and lived experiences to support thematic points. As part of the discussion, the meanings given to the themes and categories will be described to provide clarity on the analytic process. Since the focus of the study was to develop theory on the evolving professional identity of novice school counselors, the discussion will begin with an extensive discussion and description of professional identity, based on participants' personal definitions. Second, the chapter will consider factors that contributed to and enhanced participants transition to school counseling. Finally, consideration will be given to factors that are challenging and/or enhancing participants evolving professional identity.

Table 2
Summary of Themes and Categories

Research Focal Areas	Themes	Categories
Counselor perception of evolving professional identity	Personal definitions of school counselor professional identity	Counselor roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Collaboration ○ Consultation ○ Referral source ○ Delivering counseling curriculum and presentations ○ College and career counseling ○ Crisis support ○ Accountability ○ ASCA Model ○ Work with Parents
		Student relationships and engagement
		Wealth of knowledge
Components supporting and enhancing transition	Dimensions of Career Change for School Counselors	Attraction to school counseling
		Program accessibility
		Learning Environment
		Internship experience
Factors challenging evolving professional identity	Undefined Teacher-Counselor Relationships	
	Non-counselor related tasks	

(Continued on following page)

Table 2 (Continued)

Research Focal Areas	Themes	Categories
Factors supporting and enhancing evolving professional identity	Achieving School Counselor Outcomes	
	Previous experience and knowledge	Prior clinical mental health experience
		Understanding of lifespan development
	Adjusting to role challenges	Professional relationships Building
		Adapting clinical skills
	Administrative support	
	Stakeholder perspectives	
	Continuing education	

Personal Definitions of School Counselor Professional Identity

Participants provided personal definitions on the meanings given to their professional school counselor identity. Some participants defined the concept in context of counselor roles. Others defined the concept through student relationship and engagement, while others considered professional identity as wealth of knowledge.

Counselor Roles

Several participants defined their professional school counselor identities through the roles they perform, for instance, Harry stated “My professional identity as a school counselor is how I perform that role as a school counselor, and so I think a professional identity in general is how we perform the role that we’re in.” Naveen also defined his professional school counselor identity through roles he performs with students, but he added another layer when he described himself as a one stop shop, thus highlighting the multifaceted nature of the work. He reported “So for me that’s another aspect of this identity you know, I truly believe that I’m a one stop shop for a lot of my students and I try to convey that to them, so then they don’t feel like oh I can only come to my counselor with this problem.” Grant also described his professional identity in terms of multifaceted roles:

My identity as a school counselor is something that is broad ranging, I think for me it incorporates and encapsulates every aspect of my life. I’ve always been kind of a jack of all trades master of none, I have always had a lot of varied interests, and I think that plays very well into being a counselor and especially a school counselor.

Anne, when asked what it means to have a professional school counselor identity, also described it in context of the many roles she performs with other stakeholders specifically teachers, students, and community resources:

I see myself as just someone that students, teachers, everyone can come talk to and I just try to be very empathic and provide a different perspective. So you know, I have my own little office in the school and I see it as a hub, like the tire with all the spokes coming out, because I do a lot of work with a lot of community resources too and bringing people in to partner with different community programs in the school.

Participants' conceptualization of professional identity in context of counselor roles requires further discussion on what constitutes the identified and sometimes distinct roles and responsibilities performed by the school counselors in this study. Analysis of the data identified several roles: collaboration, delivering counseling curriculum and presentations, college and career counseling, crisis support, management and accountability, consultation, referral source, the role of the ASCA Model, and work with parents.

Collaboration

The concept of collaboration explores participants' role in multidisciplinary practice or working with other helping professionals and/or stakeholders at their schools. It also provides an overview of participants' perceptions on the differences and similarities between their roles and that of other school helping professionals such as psychologist and social workers. Some participants spoke about collaboration from the perspective of multidisciplinary teamwork. Grant's description encompassed all stakeholders in the school "And something else that I've

kind of loved about school counseling is that I am placed right at the middle. I'm in a team with the student, I'm in team with the teacher, I'm in a team with the parent, I'm in a team with the administrator, I'm in a team with the staff." Anne described collaboration based on membership with multiple teams "I usually have a meeting of some sort and sometimes it's our school climate team meeting. We have our continuous school improvement work plan, I'm part of that team or I'm part of the __ academic team." Samantha stated "Well we have department meetings often, which would be the principal, the vice principal, myself, the other counselor, and our receptionist, we all meet and cover a variety of topics. Those meeting usually go pretty long because we talk about students that are coming up, we talk about events we have coming up, just all kinds of things, whatever we need to get worked out."

Other participants identified working collaboratively with stakeholders to meet student needs. Harry described his collaborative role as "Working with teachers on behavior charts, and learning how to manage certain individual behaviors that teachers are seeing." Samantha provided an example of her collaboration with a teacher around a particular student. She stated "A math teacher came to me with a concern about a certain student, like you know could you call her down and talk to her, she's really struggling, she went from doing really well to very poorly very quickly, I think somethings going on, so then I'll touch base with that student."

The 2016-2017 school counselor/administrator annual agreement provided by Nicole identified that 10% of her time is spent in collaborative working and her professional collaborative responsibilities include membership in a __ parent group and the Counseling department. She identified one purpose for her collaboration as supporting student re-entry to the

school following a period of hospitalization “And the case manager we work closely, because I may have someone who is trying to reenter, maybe they were hospitalized and they’re coming back in, so I work with her. Maybe they don’t have any 504 or any accommodations plan, but it’s something that I feel would be helpful for the students, I will work with her closely to get that started.”

Naveen spoke about regular team meetings to discuss student concerns and problem solve “So when we meet on a weekly basis, I call it our problem solving team, we’re pulling up our data, we’re looking at whose getting failing grades, whose having unexcused absences, whose having disciplinary issues.” Anne spoke about her interaction with the social worker “The social worker, we have what we call a behavioral health team, which the social worker is a part of, and that’s just where we kind of go over the behavioral needs of the school. Teachers can make referrals, and that’s where we assign students to interventions.”

Pertinent to the discussion on collaboration was participants’ ability to differentiate between their roles and that of other helping professionals in their schools, whilst acknowledging instances where responsibilities overlap. Naveen provides a typical example when he reported on the differences between his role, the social worker, and the psychologist as follows:

So the social worker and psychologist are not going to see as many students as I see, there’s more counselors than them, there’s 11 of us, there’s in total six psyches and social workers in our building. So as a result, I end up seeing all of my caseload at some point, some more than others. They end up seeing more of the at risk population or the students that have [Individual Education Plans] IEPs. And so, I guess their screen time with people is the problematic situations or the kids that have to come in because their IEP mandates it. I’m kind of a screener. And I do view myself in that role, where I start to look at the data, I start to pull these students into my office and I check in on them and I keep them on my radar.

Grant acknowledged differences and overlap between his role and the social workers based on the tier system, while acknowledging differences between his role and the psychologists.

My school psychologist is our testing person, which means that when we need testing done, she's on it. Our social worker, well I see the most overlap between the school social worker and school counselor, with the pushing of school counselor that's where I draw the differentiation. While I might meet with students and I check in with them, those are going to be added on, that's not my core responsibility. To me I see my core responsibility as working towards that tier one intervention, whereas her core responsibility is tier three and tier two.

Anne also described overlap between her role and the social workers during periods of crisis and differentiation at other times "So in a crisis we're both working, sometimes, a student will come her way, upset about something and she'll send the student down to me if she doesn't have the time to do something [inaudible], manage it. So proactively, we have very separate caseloads and responsibilities, reactively we collaborate a lot."

Consultation

Consultation focuses on the counselors' role providing guidance or advice to other stakeholders in respect of how to meet students' personal-social or academic needs. Patricia, who works as a long-term substitute school counselor, described consultation with a number of professionals. She identified "Consulting with the college counselors, if you had juniors or seniors just starting that process," and consultation with teachers to highlight student needs impacting classroom learning:

Even though there aren't IEPs, there's a program at [name of school] for students who score lower on their literacy. So one of my responsibilities was to know what was happening in that program and to consult with the teachers who were in that program. And the counselors, we would get together and talk specifically about the students who were in that program, where are they, what's their personality, how can we help them? What's happening in their home life? Just, you know [things] that might play a factor in why they are behaving a certain kind of way in the classroom

Anne spoke about consulting with teachers about student needs "I encourage teachers to come and talk to me and say you know I've noticed XY and Z with this student do you have suggestions, do you think you should talk to her." Finally, Grant spoke about consultation with teachers and other school professionals, as a significant aspect of his day "Then I'll spend probably about a quarter of my day doing consultation with other professionals, teachers, administrators, the school social worker, the school psych, the other counselors, some consultation with them about student supports, next steps stuff like that." He also spoke about consultation with teachers to discuss students' needs:

Or I'll go to teachers too, like if I meet with a student and there's something that the student and I talk about that they should know, or just something of value, I might go up and consult with that teacher and say, hey here's what the student has permitted me to tell you, they want you to know this, how can I support you the teacher in implementing whatever it is we're talking about.

Referral Source

The concept of referral source refers to the counselors' role connecting, referring, or supporting the access of students, parents, and families to in-school services or community resources. Patricia reported "So because it's a private school we don't have IEPs, but we might individually see the student needs extra support or extra services and help them connect in."

Nicole discussed being a referral source for students in the upper continuum of crisis “I’ll have someone that’s having a breakdown or something that I deal with and its done. And then I have a smaller percentage of students, who I either have to call _____ or call someone to give them assistance outside of the school.” Finally, Anne described supporting families and students access to services through extensive community liaisons:

We partner with [name of a university] community counseling center and so 3 days a week we have a clinician in the building, who through different needs or assessments, we’ve assigned a caseload of students. We organized a community resource fair. So I had different organizations, whether it was community medical centers, or the YMCA, and community counseling centers in the neighborhood, come to school during the parent teacher conference day and just set up booths with materials so that parents could see what’s nearby and maybe there’ll be able to take advantage of some of those resources.

Counseling Curriculum and Presentations

This section speaks to the counselor role delivering developmental counseling curriculum or presentations to students in classrooms or large groups. The participants in this study differed in the frequency of delivering counseling curriculum or presentations. Naveen reported going in to specific subject classes, for example social studies or English once a semester to deliver counseling curriculum “So all of us counselors we go into the classroom and we teach the actual curriculum. I think we’re going into our social studies section, it’s usually English or Social Studies that gives us one day out of the semester to come in and to deliver our curriculum.”

Patricia spoke about delivering counseling curriculum and she provided a counseling department calendar as a supporting document. She reported “But at [name of school], all of the school counselors teach classes, we teach 3 classes, it’s like every other day, so like Monday,

Wednesday you teach 3 classes of juniors and Tuesday, Thursday you teach 3 classes of freshmen. So you see all of your counselees, you teach all of your counselees twice a week and it's all counseling curriculum." She also expanded on areas covered within the curriculum:

For instance, there was a program called erasing the distance, which was teaching the students about how to destigmatize mental illness and then freshmen we were teaching them about all the support groups that we have in the school. And then on Wednesday, we did a small group follow-up for the program that we had, had about destigmatizing mental illness and then freshmen we began a unit on time management and organization. This week, juniors we did another small group program on mental illness, freshmen we continued with a lesson plan on time management and organization then on Wednesday the juniors we taught them building an inclusive school community. It was a lesson plan on anti-bullying, and using kindness, and inclusion and acceptance. That was a 3-day lesson plan so we taught that Wednesday, Monday and the following Wednesday. Then on Thursday we taught freshmen habits for success, talking to them about what they're short term and long term goals were for the year, and teaching them how to write measurable, obtainable, deadline driven goals.

Harry advised that he attempts to deliver classroom curriculum monthly "We have 5 classes per grade level and so I try to get in each classroom, besides Pre-K, I don't worry about Pre-K as much, but the other 20 classes, I try to get in once a month." Harry's curriculum followed district guidelines for character education lessons "The district had outlined different character Ed lessons such as responsibility, respect, caring, to go along with once a month, we focus as a district on one of those topics. And so I try to base my lessons around what the district is focusing on, what the word of the month is."

Anne, spoke about doing presentations with grade level assemblies using a calendar of monthly themes and following this up by providing teachers with curriculum materials to be delivered in class:

So one of the things I've done this year is set up a calendar of monthly themes. There are themes like respect, empathy, values, generosity. Our February theme is leadership. I do grade level assembly time to introduce the theme and do some sort of activity with it and then I usually provide some material for the class room teachers, for discussion topics, books to read, that you know, hopefully some of them, I think some of them continue the theme, others I'm sure don't.

Samantha described going to the driver's education class albeit infrequently to provide career counseling curriculum:

I sometimes go into classrooms. Today second hour I taught the drivers' Ed class. I did a whole lesson on job applications. We talked about applying for jobs, because they're turning 16, and we did some mock interviews. It was a lot of fun. And I'm going to follow up next week, I'll be teaching the same group of kids how to write a resume, we're going to do that on career cruising.

Samantha also described visiting the introduction to computers class to deliver career counseling:

I do also go into the intro to computers class and we use over-grad, which is a college and careers search engine. I go in there and talk about college and careers and I give them scenarios and they use the scenarios to find information, based on the person, on over-grad and then they plug that information on to an excel spreadsheet as part of their lesson.

College and Career Counseling

Participants identified college and career counseling as an essential part of their counselor roles and responsibilities. However, the tasks only occurred at certain points of the semester and they were based on participants grade level responsibilities. The 2016-2017 school counselor/administrator annual agreement provided by Nicole identified one of her major roles and responsibilities as coordinating the annual college fair as a result of her grade level responsibilities. Nicole also identified "I'm in the time of the year where I'm doing letters of recommendation for scholarships. I'm helping some of the seniors who may be still looking to

apply for college, most of the seniors on my caseload have already applied, but there's a few who are still going through the process." Carly in discussing a typical work day reported being in a similar position:

I guess the other big piece is that lots of scholarship opportunities have been coming in and so I'm posting those on line, but then I've also been trying to identify what girls might meet certain requirements and I'm reaching out and tracking down those girls and offering them the scholarship opportunities. The last couple of weeks has been very busy for that and scheduling like spring college visits and rep visits to come. And then some girls are still sending transcripts to colleges so we've been doing that as well. So that's something that kind of intermittently I'm doing throughout the day often times.

Finally, Samantha spoke about her work with first generation college students, "So then we talk, I ask them about their parents' education because I want to identify those first generation students. Because we also run a group, senior year, for first generation college students and give them support to figure out what they want to do, where they want to go, how to apply, everything."

Crisis Support

Participants' role in reactive services is considered crisis support. Almost all of the participants identified crisis support as an essential and sometimes daily part of their counselor roles and responsibilities. Naveen identified crisis support as a part of his average working day through his role as on-call person "I am trying to think about my average day, we also have on call, what that means is depending on the day of the week we have a counselor identified as being the on call person. If there's a crisis and if I'm not available and the psychologist isn't

available whose Alpha I'm on, and there's a crisis going on the student can meet with this on call staff. And I'll meet with someone else's if I'm on call. So you never know what you'll walk into, some days can be very unpredictable."

Grant also identified crisis support as a feature in his average daily work "Garden variety, if I average it out in my head, there will most likely be, between, at least, probably one crisis of some kind. And crisis can include something like suicide injury, something that requires me to call home, an obligation of duty to inform, like hey you know your parents need to know this. That's probably if it's averaged out, to about once a day, maybe a little less than that." Samantha reported "Then I also have students, who just will come in like I need to talk to somebody right now. One student came in yesterday, you know, just in tears, and so I saw her right away."

Anne identified crisis oriented tasks as reactive, covering a range of services "Reactive, I think is all the things that I do that aren't on my calendar [laughs]. So that's the students who come down, that's a student [who] was hospitalized, so the work that I'm doing to prepare for the transition back to school from the hospital." In addition, it is assessed that the particular needs of her student population lends itself to crisis oriented work. She stated "And my school, it's on the West side of [name of city] so it's primarily Hispanic. They're fairly poor and a lot of violence. So my students are just young enough, some of the middle schoolers are a little bit involved, but just young enough to not really be in the gangs themselves yet, but their parents, their cousins, their neighbors are very affiliated. So it's kind of routine to come in Monday morning, and learn that someone's uncle was shot."

Management and Accountability

Participants use of data to develop and evaluate interventions was referred to as management and accountability. Samantha identified that her counseling department utilized data from needs assessments completed by students, parents, and teachers to determine services. She stated “We do a needs assessment every year and put that out and kind of base some of our groups on that. Right now it was a big academic need, so I have two academic groups and my other counselor has a couple academic groups.” Grant developed and provided sample copies of his time-tracking sheets starting from 2014-2015 and revised in 2015 and 2016. The 2016 form tracks data for the 2016-2017 school year and covers direct services (classroom lessons, individual student planning, and responsive services), indirect services, program development, non-counselor responsibilities, and supervision. He identified that tracking data aligned with his professional identity, stating “And that’s something that I pulled from my identity, given to me by the [SCCP] is let’s do this with data. Let’s do this so that we’re making informed decisions about how we help our students.” Grant also viewed the tracking sheet as a tool to inform others on how he uses his time, in order, to minimize the possibility of being allocated non-counselor related tasks. He stated:

And collecting this data, helps me go to them and say this is why I shouldn’t do this, I already do this and you want me to do more, where do you expect me to do that. So I think it [referring to the data collected from tracking sheets] helps me not only determine how to best spend my time but it also helps me inform other people how I’m spending my time, and where. If they’re making requests of me what’s reasonable and what’s not.

Naveen used data to monitor students' progress "I'm kind of a screener. And I do view myself in that role where I start to look at the data, I start to pull these students into my office and I kind of check in on them and I keep them on my radar."

ASCA Model

In 2001, the American School Counselor Association developed a national model for school counseling, which was released in 2003 and revised in 2005 and 2012. The model is reflective of a comprehensive school counseling program and clarifies school counselor roles and expectations. Participants in this study utilized the model to inform their practice with students, use of data in decision-making around school counseling programs, and/or to inform their vision for school counseling programs. Naveen viewed the model as integral to his professional identity and informing his practice with students:

I feel like you know whenever I'm problem solving with students its actually like having that ASCA framework is such a helpful attitude to have on, because I can double back with all, most of my problem students, the ones that really struggle, and I feel like we always go back to those at some point. Starts off academic, but then we end up in the personal, and the closer we get to graduation now we're really focused on college and career. And so I kind of feel like as part of my identity its forced me to grow, especially in the college, career, and academic, because that was new territory.

Harry stated "I try to incorporate as much ASCA standards and the ASCA model as I possibly can . . . [its] playing a big part of doing individual, small group, and classroom lessons. Doing those three facets and being comprehensive in that and not just sticking to you know one of those components but trying to incorporate all three of those in order to reach all the students as

opposed to just a select few.” Similarly, Carly identified “I mean I think definitely just kind of focusing on the three areas of socioemotional, career, and then academic, I mean I think that is just a general framework for what we’re doing. Its important and I try to find a balance between doing all of those things.”

Participants also used the model to inform their responsibilities in respect of data collection, needs assessments, and program evaluation. Patricia when asked how the ASCA model influences her practice responded “We do a lot of needs assessments and we do a lot of evaluation of our programs, and our curriculum is very intentionally developmental and we’re collecting data a lot about the program and working to improve and make adjustments in the program.” Nicole added another perspective, advising that program evaluation through the framework of the ASCA model could prove her effectiveness in the school counselor role and support job security:

Also just evaluating to make sure, especially in a climate like [name of city/district] where our jobs I feel are always on the line, to say this is how, as a school counselor we’re making a difference. And I think that I took that piece from it, more than anything, evaluating what you do showing that you’re being effective. Because as a system where the budget is in crisis, they’re always looking for where to cut. And it’s usually we don’t want to make cuts in the classroom so where else can we make cuts, and school counselors come up. So I think that is one piece, using the ASCA model to show why you are important in the school.

Finally, and of significance to those school counselors from Non-RAMP certified counseling programs, participants viewed the ASCA model as informing their vision for future counseling programing and accountability. Grant described the ASCA model as germane to his vision of building a tier one preventative counseling program, “So my projects since I started

here has been cultivating relationships and starting the process of building a tier one comprehensive school counseling curriculum for our building, where school counselors, it's expected and it's accepted that counselors push into the classroom multiple times a year to deliver socio-emotional curriculum as part of an existing curriculum." Carly also spoke about the ASCA model informing her practice and vision around data collection "So I think we're going to start doing a lot more data collection, which I also think is from the ASCA model, something that was really hammered in to me was the importance of collecting data and then really looking at what's working, what's not working, versus just doing things because it seems like it helps."

Work with Parents

Supporting parents was another area participant's viewed as salient to their school counselor role. Patricia, in response to a question about additional responsibilities, apart from delivering curriculum, identified parent meetings as part of her responsibilities. "Sometimes it would be parent meetings, if a parent wanted to meet with me to talk about what was going on at home or academically with their student. So even though I was a sub, parents would still want to meet with me and I would have those kinds of individual meetings with parents as well."

Grant provided variations on his work with parents. In one example a parent sought advice on how to engage their child "The father was like I am so impressed with how you talk to my daughter, I don't feel like I've got a handle on things, what would you recommend. How can I connect better with my daughter in a similar way that you just did?" In another example, Grant

reflected on being the liaison between home and school after a child engages in self-injurious behaviors “Now am I also the guy that a good chunk of the time I have to call parents? I’m the one saying hi your child self-injured again. Oftentimes, I’m that guy on the other side of the phone, but I still try and support those parents, like what questions do you have. I try and explain developmentally how this fits into the big picture, help try and instill hope.” Nicole when asked about a typical work day identified flexibility as an essential part of her work and meetings between parents and teachers as one of those flexible components “And you know today I had a meeting, I facilitated a meeting between a parent and a teacher, and just tried to get their child back on track in that class.”

Student Relationships and Engagement

Student relationship and engagement was the second category to emerge from the findings exploring personal definition of school counselor professional identity. Naveen when asked what it means to have a professional school counselor identity responded “You know for me it means being very intentional with how you work with students.” He expatiated further stating “I feel like part of my identity is making sure that I meet every student and that I’m familiar with that student and aware who that person is. I want that student to be known because that’s part of having engagement in this building and so if I’m willing to expand what I do, not just clinical, but the academic, and everything, that kids are going to come to me. And I want to be welcoming as a result.” Grant defined his professional identity in context of professional

values, “But that professional identity I feel is kind of your professional values” and he identified building relationship with students as one of his biggest values. He stated:

So if I want to be able to help these kids, not just give them tools and skills, but for the kids that might have other stuff that’s going on that requires that tier two or tier three intervention, they have to be comfortable telling somebody about it. So part of my value is to help build those relationships so they feel comfortable telling somebody. But to build those relationships is one of the biggest values.

Samantha also defined her professional school counselor identity in terms of building positive relationships with students “But you have to be aware of how you interact with these students, and you want to make it a positive one, so they remember you, and it’s one thing I always wanted was for my kids to remember me. I want my kids to know who I am, so I want to be in front of them, I want to be in the classrooms, I want to be sitting down with them one on one, I want them to know me.” Carly viewed building student relationships as a strength of her school counselor identity stating “I feel that a real strength of my identity is that I can build relationships and I can connect, and I think create a safe place where girls can come when they have questions about things or need guidance.”

The theme of student relationship and engagement resulted in further exploration on how participants in this study developed relationships or engaged students. The finding identified that the concept was less about developing individual student-counselor relationships using basic skills of rapport building or communication, but more about building relationships and engaging students by generating awareness of the school counselor presence in the school, and informing students’, as key stakeholders, of their school counselor roles and responsibilities. This was the case even when participants defined their school counselor professional identities in context of

individual student relationships. Some schools had structures already in place with the potential to support counselor-student relationship building or engagement. Patricia stated “So we have a full period for each of these days with those students and each class has a maximum of 28 students in it. And so you really get to know your students.” Grant identified the benefits of rotation when developing student relationships “I love the way that our school has it structured, so I am going into my third year, and when I started, I started with 6th graders. When those students graded up into 7th I moved with them. And then when they graded up into 8th this year, I moved with them again. So I have existing relationships with my 283 kids on my caseload that’s two and a half years old.”

Other participants were intentional in their efforts to build relationships or engage students by generating awareness of their presence and school counselor roles within the school. Harry stated “So from time to time, I will do a different morning opening activity whenever students are arriving. [For instance] with red ribbon week doing different activities so they see what my role is there. And then at the beginning of the year obviously go around and talk about what my role is and how they can get help.” Nicole stated “Well I know me personally, although we don’t do guidance lessons, we do have divisional homerooms, so I’ve made sure, especially for my freshmen, that I would go in and I will talk to them about the role of a school counselor, so that they understand better.” Anne stated “I made a point to go into every single classroom and I did a game or an activity for 20 minutes, just so the students would see my face, you know get to have some fun with me. And I see it still building, so in [name of district] 8th graders have to apply to high school so I made a point to meet individually with every 8th grader and have a

quick sit down meeting and help them figure out what they wanted to do, which then gave me face time with a lot of students.” Finally, Carly, similar to Anne, also adopted a two-pronged strategy of classroom and individual meetings. She reported:

So being new, I went into all of the classrooms, all of my sophomore girls and then all my senior girls, like everybody takes theology at my school, so I went in all of the theology classrooms and just introduced myself and provided a little background and you know just encouraged the girls to come down and stop in and see me and say hi, so just to sort of get my name out there . . . And then I’ve really been sort of going through the class list and calling girls down individually and just trying to get to know them. Just ask them basic questions about themselves and what they are passionate about, and what they do, are involved in, and again sort of reiterating come down see me anytime, that kind of thing.

Wealth of Knowledge

The third and final category to emerge as a personal definition of school counselor professional identity was wealth of knowledge, where participants conceptualized professional school counselor identity as having a solid knowledge base in school counseling, competence working with a diverse student body, and experience. Harry said “School counselor identity, when I think about that I think of somebody who is well versed and isn’t your typical guidance counselor. That you’re prepared to take on more of the individual and small group counseling. And I, as a school counselor, what’s school counselor identity, I feel you’re more prepared for a variety of students and like I said specifically to be able to counsel them and work on the individual and small group counseling.”

Nicole stated “I feel like I have a knowledge base on school counseling. I feel I can be someone teachers or administrators can come to if they have a question in one of the three

domains.” Samantha identified “It means, well I love the professional school counselor title, you know having that word professional, it makes me feel like a professional. You just kind of hold your shoulders up more, I’m the professional school counselor I know what I’m talking about [laughs].” Carly also identified knowledge base as evidence of professional identity but she viewed it as part of her ongoing development, which would materialize after years of experience. She stated:

I just wish I had all the answers and the experience that comes from doing it for a long time, but at the same time I understand that it’s going to be a process. I still see myself as new and learning . . . compared to where I was when I started my internship I think I have a lot more knowledge . . . so I look forward to down the road at some point when I just have that experience.

Dimensions of Career Change for School Counselors

An exploration of the factors supporting and enhancing participants transition from previous careers into school counseling, yielded several categories; attraction to school counseling, program accessibility, learning environment, and internship experience. The categories, which have been contained under the theme dimensions of career change for school counselors will be explored in detail in this section.

Attraction to School Counseling

Attraction to school counseling refers to the various reasons participants chose school counseling as their preferred career to transition in to over other helping professions. Patricia’s

decision was linked in part to past experience offering career counseling at a university career counseling center and the interest she developed in that specialist area. She stated “I was reflecting back at all of the previous jobs that I’d had and what I’d liked best and who I was and what fit. And I realized that’s what I really like doing, the four-year planning for working your way through college, and getting the major that you wanted, and getting internships that you wanted. And kind of devising what you as a graduate were going to look like and setting yourself to be marketable. And I really loved the career counseling aspect of it.”

Nicole had several reasons for choosing a career in school counseling, one of which was her passion for working with young people. She reported “I think it was a lot of different factors, number one, just my passion working with young people. Like I said when I first started my masters’ program, I was working at a children’s home, I was working with teenagers, and I just wanted to go back to that passion.” Nicole also identified her past experience receiving support from her high school counselor as a reason for her attraction to the field “School counseling just based off of the school counselor that I had in high school. You know coming from first generation and low income, I felt my school counselor was very helpful for me and just seeing what she does currently, she’s still a counselor, so I’m just looking at her and I’m thinking that I want to give this a try.” In addition, Nicole wanted to return to clinical practice “So I stayed there for a while [referencing her previous job] till I decided that I really want to use my clinical skills. And I had to think about, how do I want to use it, with whom, and I thought about doing school counseling.”

Anne chose school counseling because she wanted diversity in her work, she stated “I wanted diverse responsibilities, I wanted to do some individual counseling, some group counseling, I wanted to do a little bit of the academic piece, a little bit of the socioemotional piece, I wanted to do a lot of different things.” Furthermore, she wanted an environment that supported preventative work. She stated:

I sort of realized that I liked the prevention side a little bit more than I liked the clinical side. So by the time I was getting children in the agency so many different things had happened, that I would say, well why didn't someone intervene a year ago. And I love the idea, as a school counselor, working with the teachers who see the student every single day, when you know, the grades start dropping or when they notice behavioral changes, to really be able to intervene with what's going on, the root cause of the changes we're seeing.

Carly, whose previous role involved regular visits to schools, identified the counseling environment as instrumental to her decision-making “I got to interact with the other staff, and I got to interact with some of the students, and I really liked the counseling environment that was there. I was right in the middle of all the counselors and social workers and so I think that I was like wow this is really great. I liked the energy there, I liked the kind of team work feel, that there's all these people working together so closely, so that just kind of spoke to me.”

Program Accessibility

Participants highlighted the ease with which they were able to change professions as one of the factors supporting their transition to school counseling, especially as it related to obtaining additional qualifications. Patricia initially thought she would have to obtain another masters'

degree and then her research led her to the SCCP “Then I stumbled upon this program at [Name of University] and it made so much sense, I could just use my masters’ degree I already had, and six months later do this, and then get a job no problem.” Grant also researched available programs and found the SCCP more suited to his needs. He advised:

That was the other part of it, there are no other programs that essentially say we acknowledge and respect that you have this degree we want to build off it. That was the bigger thing that I didn’t want to have to back for another master’s degree. I didn’t want another two years. I didn’t want to have to go through two years of education. The [program] offered exactly what I was looking for, which was a way to transition into the school setting without having to get another masters’ degree.

In addition to accessibility based on previous qualifications, participants also identified accessibility based on cost. Grant identified that he chose the program for a couple of reasons, one of which was cost “Couple of reasons, financially it was the best deal around [laughs] . . . Not that it’s cheap, it’s very efficient. the school I went to was a for profit education and I’m still paying for it and I will be paying for it, and that scared me. I was burned by that and so I did not want another masters’ degree.” Similarly, Harry identified “But I would say the biggest reason, the biggest factor that I had was just the time length that the [program] was going to take. The time length and financial cost that it was going to be at [name of university] compared to other schools.”

Learning Environment

The learning environment helped maintain participants interest in their newly chosen career path. Additionally, it laid the foundation for participants’ transition to school counseling, and provided them with necessary tools and frameworks for future practice. Participants

identified several factors within the learning environment that supported and enhanced their transition to professional school counseling. First, the professors' created environments conducive to learning. Harry provided "I found the instructors to be so knowledgeable in the field of school counseling and they each had their own different unique set of skills that they were able to incorporate into the learning." Grant identified similar factors stating "These professors know the questions to ask. They know the activities that will do the best job at helping you, be as close to possible about putting your boots on the ground and moving, the second you're done with that program. They're supportive, they're encouraging, they're accommodating. So I mean the learning process was just fantastic." Samantha stated "I felt the environment was good, like they talked to us like we were adults not kids in a classroom." Naveen also spoke about the interaction with professors "I really just liked our professors very much. I thought they were great. They were very affirming, in terms of why we go into a helping field."

Participants also identified the rigor of the curriculum as an important factor supporting their transition. Grant in describing the learning experience stated "It was fast and furious and intense, but it was so enriching and challenging at the same time." Nicole concurred stating "They crammed as much as they could into the little time that we had. I think that they tried to focus more on things like school systems and working with children, and different things like that. Instead of just basic counseling 101 type of stuff, because we all kind of had that so I think that was good." Naveen also welcomed the challenge of the curriculum, the stage approach to assignment completion, and the constructive feedback from professors. He provided an example

to support his point “We had to do a curriculum assignment and that was a really good challenge. But I like how it was parceled piece by piece and [Name of professor] was my advisor at the time, she just gave really good feedback, really helped me fine tune things.”

Carly felt the learning prepared her for real life practice working in a school “You know, knowing about executive functioning and the best ways to address different learning styles and I think there was some specific information about that at the [program]. But for me I think the biggest piece was learning what a school counselor actually does and the different areas to be focused on.” Nicole also recognized the benefits of the learning on current practice “We also have an implementation plan, which I remember doing a project exactly like it saying this is the issue we’re going to address, this is the need, this is how we going to address it with these classroom guidance lessons, these are the standards that we’re going to meet, this is how we’re evaluating it. So that’s something that we have to do every year as well, which I felt I did exactly that through the program.”

In addition to the above, participants identified the significance of learning about the ASCA model as a framework for their future practice. Carly highlighted the importance of learning about the model when planning to meet her students’ developmental needs:

We talked a lot about the ASCA model and delivery and that was really helpful for me to know, so here are the three areas to be focusing on and learning some specific information about each of them . . . And I guess just the whole idea of a developmental guidance program, that was really huge for me, that we’re not just sitting in an office and kids may stop by, but the idea that its actually really proactive, where you’re thinking about developmentally each year what do the girls need, what are the milestones they should be achieving, how can we best support them, and so again kind of developing a curriculum was super helpful.

Grant identified that the program provided a framework, which aligned with his views on what a school counselor should be, and supported his development as an effective practitioner “But in terms of being an effective school counselor that program did the best job at preparing me in terms of here’s what you can expect . . . But they helped install a lot of those frames and structures in my brain about what it means to be a school counselor so I could build off that.”

Participants also welcomed the fact that the learning environment provided opportunities for dialogue, discussion, and differing perspectives from other colleagues. Harry stated “And just the idea of being able to work with other students who were going through the same process was fantastic and being able to bounce ideas off each other. It wasn’t your typical sitting through and listening to a lecture for four or five hours, it was very hands on and being able to talk it through with our other classmates.” Nicole appreciated the opportunity to learn from people who came from different backgrounds with multiple perspectives “I think that the other students in the program were helpful because everyone came from different backgrounds and different things. I know we had a few students who were actually working in the school system, so I think that was helpful to see what their experience were in their current profession . . . So just kind of getting the ability to hear from other students.” Anne described the opportunity to learn from peers as impactful “We had those few classes after the summer part, and hearing about everyone’s diverse experiences, and what people were doing, and the types of groups they were leading, and how they were coming up with different ideas of doing things in their schools. I think that was probably more impactful.”

Naveen and Carly appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues pertaining to social justice and advocacy. Naveen welcomed the chance to discuss issues he considered pertinent to his identity as a person in public service with a social justice philosophy. He reported “I didn’t feel the restraints that I felt before, and I could come here, and I could address those issues in a very open environment, and more even so in [SCCP] be able to talk about those issues that really mattered, you know race, gender, inequity. And I felt like wow this is actually who I am and I just really hadn’t time to go back to that person.” Carly also welcomed the discussions around equity in education, she stated “One thing that we talked about at the program a lot was equity in education and what that looks like. That equal doesn’t necessarily mean everybody gets the same thing, but identifying where things did not appear to be equal, and where those gaps were, and maybe certain groups weren’t achieving at the same rate as the other groups. And instead of there’s something wrong with that group, looking at more systematically what can we do as counselors.”

Finally, findings identified that the learning environment fueled or re-fueled participants interest in advocacy and social justice issues. Naveen referred to his attendance at the program as a time out or opportunity for reflection, to rethink his values and return to previously held beliefs:

So it was a very good time out for me because . . . it forced me to stop and rethink about my values and rethink why did I come into the field of just helping people in general . . . But just relooking at who I am as a person and what I really appreciate about the [SCCP] it forced me to re-evaluate what is it that I am here to do . . . I really wanted to go back to what my beliefs are in helping everyone and I just kind of felt the more I was doing stuff for [name of organization], the less I was able to work with the families really in need. And as a result of going in schools, I didn’t have those restraints anymore. I get to do

what I want to do, which is help everyone. So that was a huge part of my personal identity, of going back to that public service end of things . . . and also just the social justice aspect.

Carly reflected that the learning environment changed her perspective regarding her practice with students. “Really kind of changed my perspective to where I want to be proactive versus just reactive. I really want to look at things from a systematic perspective and be thinking about what can I do on a school level. What could I do even on a community level to try to help the girls or the students that I’m working with and support them in that respect. So looking at the whole system and seeing where are we serving girls well, and where are we not serving girls well, and what can we implement to change that, as well as doing some of the individual reactive work.”

Internship Experience

For the most part, participants identified their internship as a positive experience that supported their understanding of school systems and prepared them for future practice. Naveen identified that “I got to see what school guidance curriculum looks like and develop my own curriculum. I got to see what the year really looks like, the flow, because there really is a flow, when things get busy, when things get quiet, when kids go into crisis, so I got to see that, and that was a very educational experience.” Patricia also saw the internship experience as increasing her understanding of the school counselor role “I didn’t feel like I had as much practical knowledge as I needed. I don’t even know that I really knew what a school counselor did exactly, until I started my internship.”

A number of participants spoke about the numerous learning and experiential opportunities the internship experience offered. Carly's statement below mirrors the views of a number of participants.

I mean the internship was very valuable. I got the opportunity to deliver their developmental guidance curriculum. See what their developmental guidance curriculum was, so start to understand, here is what freshmen do and here is what sophomores do. I learned a lot more about the college process, about helping students apply for financial aid, and learning about the different systems [name of program] where students can do a college search, and they can apply for colleges, and see what it looked like to send a transcript, practice writing letters of recommendation. Sit in on meetings and see really kind of the inner working of the counselor department, I think that was helpful. See how the social workers interacted with the counselors, interacted with the teachers. And then definitely just have the opportunity to meet individually with students and they had me doing a lot of the academic kind of advising and check ins.

Anne valued the internship experience because it prepared her for practice in an Urban inner city district "I also was doing my internship in [name of district] public school, which is very different from [inaudible] or suburban schools in terms of resources and in terms of population. So I would say that internship year being in the school, and maybe this is the case with any internship, [when] I think about, oh how should I do this, I think back to that experience, less than I think about the classroom experience." Harry felt that his experience prepared him for collaborative work with different stakeholders "And then my internship really helped give me that firsthand experience working in a school setting and seeing what goes on and how important it is to work with parents and teachers and administrators."

Participants also viewed their supervisory experience at their internship as positive and in some instances as contributing to their current practice as school counselors. Carly valued the guidance of her supervisor when she worked with individual students "I would meet with

students and they'd be struggling in different areas and I was like what should I tell this student, what would be a good idea, and run it by my supervisor, and she's like well here's what I would do, and so I learned how to do that with a student. If a student's struggling in a class, try to walk through where your struggling and identify here is some different options or here are some study strategies." Samantha valued that her supervisor allowed her to have multiple experiences both counselor and non-counselor related "But I was lucky, I had a great site supervisor who was willing to let me be a part of anything. There'd be a meeting coming up and I'd be like can I attend that. Can I go to this IEP meeting, can I do this, can I do that, and they were great about it." Nicole who, similar to Anne, works in an Urban inner city school district, which she identified as "very different from a suburban school" viewed the internship experience and her supervisory support as preparation for future practice. Nicole stated:

I think that she was really beneficial, seeing how I am working now in [name of city] school system. Number one, I think in terms of leading me to different things, I'm not reinventing the wheel, leading me to resources that I can use. Helping me learn the [name of district] school system so that I could be effective as a counselor in this system. So there were some things I felt like in the program I didn't get, like the college career. I think we talked about a calendar in the program, I don't remember that well, but how important a calendar is in your school counseling program to set up this August, September having your stuff planned in advance. Those type of things, I think I really got from my supervisor.

Challenges to School Counselor Professional Identity

Two major themes emerged when the research focal area of challenges to participants evolving professional identity was discussed; undefined teacher-counselor relationships and non-

counselor related tasks. These themes will be explored through participants lived experiences in this section.

Undefined Teacher-Counselor Relationships

Undefined teacher-counselor relationships reflect the challenges participants' experienced negotiating relationships with teachers and the possible impact of this on their ability to perform specific school counselor roles. Samantha stated "Well I find a lot of times in the school setting, a lot of the teachers don't understand what we do. I even had a teacher once think that we were paid like administrators, and I was like no we're on the same pay scale as you [laughs]." Samantha acknowledged that there had been a shift in teacher-counselor interactions but she still saw room for improvement especially in relation to teachers understanding the needs of students and the role of school counselors within that. She expounded on the complexities of the relationship further, saying:

I think it's pretty good now, there may be a little bit more room for improvement. I think some of the older teachers have more of a problem with it [referring to school counselors' work with students] because I think they don't have as much understanding, like why do they need to do this [referring to school counselors' work with students] or they just need to do their homework [referring to students]. Some of them just might be grumpy and not understand that they [referring to students] might have issues going on at home and they don't have internet and they can't do this. I think education has changed so I think younger teachers are more accepting of stuff than the older teachers.

Nicole indicated that teachers lacked a clear understanding of the school counselor role "I definitely think that the teachers look to the counselors as someone to deal with the emotional issues or mental health issues. I think they always feel like, oh call the counselor, like whatever it is, call your counselor. And it may not even be something that... [is relevant] . . . right, right."

Grant felt the lack of teacher-counselor relationship had implications for counselors entering the classroom to deliver developmental curriculum “Our teachers at this school they know counselors push into classes, but they think its exclusively for Erin’s law and for suicide prevention presentations, it’s not quite expected or accepted for me to be in a classroom co-teaching.” Anne experienced challenges linked to her age “I mean I also think there’s some teachers who see me as someone whose young and inexperienced and trying to make changes.” She also experienced challenges with teachers questioning her style of practice:

So you know we’ve had meetings where I’ll sit there and I encourage the teachers to talk among themselves and solve a problem or to identify patterns and I’ll get feedback sometimes, well that meeting wasn’t helpful because you didn’t give us any solutions. And I’ll say well the point wasn’t for me to give you the solutions, the point was just to facilitate the discussion.

Non-Counselor Related Tasks

Non-counselor related tasks was another challenge identified in this study and it references those roles and responsibilities performed by the participants, which are outside the remit of school counselor tasks. Participants identified that some tasks were mandated by the district in which the school was based, while other tasks were allocated by stakeholders within the school. Samantha identified a multitude of non-counselor related tasks “But then on top of that we have other responsibilities, I’m the AP coordinator, so I order all the AP exams. I proctor the AP exams, I pack them up, ship them, do all the work on college board with ordering them and everything, and then get the score reports when they come out, and distribute that to the appropriate people. I also do the PSAT exam, it’s the practice SAT and the NMSQT, the national

merit scholarship qualifier exam. They take that in October, so I coordinate that, I order it, get the kids sign up, we collect the money, and we do the whole thing. And then now this year, we're doing the SAT, so I'm involved in that and I'm the coordinator for the SAT."

Grant reported that there was no job description for school counselors in the district where he worked, which has consequences as it leads to ambiguity in job description and allocation of responsibilities by other stakeholders, he stated:

Currently there is no job description for school counselors in this district. And so, in some ways that's really bad, because that means people can ascribe me whatever responsibilities they want. For example, my current soap box is that it was recently decided that school counselors should be 504 case managers in the middle school . . . But you talk about professional identity, and it's not just the identity that I don't see myself as a 504 case manager, but my mental health background, my ethical responsibility is that I don't provide therapeutic intervention outside of my ability. That it's unethical for me to try and provide intervention in an area that I'm not comfortable with. I would easily say that 504 case management is an area I'm not comfortable with. So, it's an ongoing process.

Although highlighted as a challenge, some participants saw benefits to performing non-counselor related roles, this finding will be presented in the next section under supports to school counselor professional identity.

Supports to School Counselor Professional Identity

Findings from the study revealed a number of themes on factors supporting and enhancing participants evolving professional identity. The themes, which will be discussed under this section, include achieving school counselor outcomes, previous experience and knowledge,

adjusting to role challenges, administrative support, stakeholder perspectives, and continuing education.

Achieving School Counselor Outcomes

Achieving school counselor outcomes reflects participants' views on the benefits derived from engaging in non-counselor related tasks. Participants identified that performing non-counselor related tasks allowed for variety in job description, supported autonomy, and gave them increased access to students with the potential for developing counselor-student relationships. Anne identified "Sometimes I become a dumping ground, which is fine because I like the variety . . . And then a lot of just like non-academic tasks fall to me, so for example we have optometrists come twice a week, I didn't set it up but they've been doing it, so now I coordinate it. The library was doing an initiative where they wanted to send home the applications about kindergarteners for library cards, so that fell to me. And these are things I don't mind doing, because I think, to go back to one of your earlier questions, those tasks have helped me form relationships with a lot of students, who I wouldn't ordinarily have gotten the chance to see."

Carly's school is small and private and therefore it does not have other helping professions such as social workers or psychologists, which means additional responsibilities for school counselors. However, Carly saw the benefits of this because she thought it allowed for autonomy. She stated "Like I said, now there's a lot more autonomy and a lot more individualized decision-making, where if a student's having an issue I'm not like let's consult

with the social worker or why don't you meet with the social worker, I'm like okay let's figure out how to best handle this. So yes it's different, it's a small school we're wearing many hats." In addition, Carly performs other responsibilities, she reported "Every day I do extended time testing for girls with 504s, who need additional time, and then I go to lunch duty and I work in the lunch room, I monitor and I check students' food in. At a small school, it's different, we pitch in and do a lot of stuff." However, similar to Anne, Carly saw opportunities for developing counselor-student relationships, she stated "I actually don't mind that because it's the opportunity to get out of my office, and be in the lunch room, and to see a bunch of my girls, and just briefly check in, hey how you doing. Also just see where girls are sitting, and what's going on, and monitor that. So I actually don't mind it, I think it's actually helpful."

Grant identified himself as a potential consequence for students' discipline issues through modified detention, but he also saw benefits to this interaction as a form of restorative justice. He stated "I'm not prescribing discipline but I am a potential consequence that our students can receive. I will stay after school twice a week to do, essentially, a modified detention program, where its processing. It's not just sit there, it's what happened, why are you here, what got you here, what behaviors, how did those behaviors affect other people, and how are we going to help modify those behaviors in the future. So it's not just, a you done a bad thing, it's a how did your behaviors affect others, was it in positive or negative way, how do we change that? So it's meant to be more productive and more reflective, rather than just stop it."

Although not a benefit identified by the participants, findings suggest that for some of them non-counselor related tasks created opportunities for additional learning and professional

development. For instance, Carly, like Grant, also had responsibilities for 504 case management and similar reservations about assuming the task absent proper training, and she was able to articulate this requirement to her administrators. She stated “I mean we are the 504 case managers, so we’re responsible for making sure that the services are being implemented and we write them. So I have not done that yet, because I’m newer and that is an area that I would like to have continuing education in. I told them, if I’m going to be writing 504’s I really feel I need training in it.”

Previous Experience and Knowledge

Previous experience and knowledge considered those components transferred over from participants’ previous careers, which inform current practice and it comprises prior clinical mental health experience and understanding of lifespan development.

Prior Clinical Mental Health Experience

Participants identified prior clinical mental health experience as valuable to their current school counselor practice and inadvertently their evolving professional identity. In fact, some of the participants expressed that they would not be effective in their current practice without that prior experience. Naveen remarked:

I’ve told [name of mentor] before, I don’t think I could be effective in this current job had I not done the clinical stuff I did. I value that tremendously, maybe that’s why I don’t let go of that, I still do that you know. Because I think I know how to talk to parents. I think I know how to communicate better as a result of my experiences there. I also feel like I have the maturity to deal with some of the challenges that comes along with working in

an environment like this, from a small to a big environment. So I think it's played a huge role.

Samantha also viewed her past clinical mental health experience as significant to her work with parents "I think, my past work really influences me a lot, not only in work with students but with the parents . . . I used to teach active parenting of teens, so I've all kinds of little things to bring to the table when we're talking with parents, when parents [say] I don't know what to do with him, I don't know how to make him do his homework, and things like that. So it gives me, maybe a little, more confidence going into it having worked with parents a lot."

Anne viewed her prior experience as integral to building relationships with students "So I don't have a great methodical approach, I think it just has to do with being conscious of relationship building. And I think that's where my clinical experience is helpful in understanding at what pace to take things and how to build relationships through you know reflective listening or empathy and all of that." Patricia spoke about use of basic skills in her work with students "And of course the counseling skills, you know how you talk to people, basics like asking open-ended questions, and reflecting, and showing empathy, and giving different perspective than the person came in with, and some of the cognitive psychology stuff that I'm getting better at as I've been doing it more."

Anne also felt that the benefits of prior clinical mental health experience lay in her ability to manage and adapt to crisis situations "I think the best part of having a background in clinical counseling was that . . . someone can come to my office fuming because they're so angry and I stay calm. Someone can come in and say they're thinking about hurting themselves and I can

stay calm.” Nicole reported the same about her crisis oriented work stating “I do think sometimes I’m pulling a little bit of that [referring to clinical skills] if I have a student that comes in and they are having a bad day or something. Like I said, I had a kid today crying in the bathroom and I had to really use my clinical skills because she didn’t want to even tell me what was going on. So, anytime I have a crying student, or a student that maybe a teacher has referred to me because they felt something wasn’t right, I’ve definitely used my clinical skills with that.”

Understanding of lifespan development

The category understanding of lifespan development emerged following exploration of the values, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions informing participants profession and professional identities, or in response to questions about transferrable skills. Participants responses revealed a knowledge base that underlies their practice with students. Patricia stated “When the kids are drawing attention, negative attention to themselves, they’re really telling you something and they need more love. You can say that about a 4-year-old, but I think you can also say that about the teenagers too. And I really try to use that, they’re telling us things by their behavior, and our job then as professionals can be to help them through that. And sometimes figure it out for themselves, sometimes connect them to resources, sometimes even do individual work with them when there’s time and if you can build that trust with them.” Anne provided an additional perspective, which highlighted her understanding about the impact of systems and development on children’s current functioning. She stated:

I look a little bit deeper into issues sometimes, so if a student's not doing their homework I don't jump to, oh the student's not motivated, or the student doesn't care, my first question is what's going on at home. I think a belief I have is that there are . . . often extenuating circumstances and that maybe it's more that environmental factors play a huge role especially in the community that we're in. That a lot of the behaviors that students exhibit are learnt behaviors . . . And then other values, beliefs, I also think I probably bring more of just an understanding of what is and what's not developmentally appropriate.

Finally, Harry considered the issue in context of transferrable skills from previous learning impacting current practice "It would be knowing the developmental stages of the same age group of students that I'm working with now, has probably been one of the biggest transferrable skills."

Adjusting to Role Challenges

Professional relationship building and adapting clinical skills materialized as two strategies participants employed in their attempt to adjust to some of the challenges they experienced in their evolving professional identities.

Professional Relationship Building

Participants adjusted to the challenge of undefined teacher-counselor relationships by actively developing professional relationships with these key stakeholders. Carly's strategy, in addition to visiting classrooms to introduce herself to students, was to find opportunities for meeting with teachers, "And I also went around and tried to introduce myself to all the teachers so they would know me." Furthermore, she positioned herself as someone willing to listen and

actively address teacher concerns “Some of the teachers had been talking about the way we do extended time . . . So they raised concerns about that, and I ended up informally polling some of the other teachers, and I was like you know what let’s look at that and examine is there another way we could do it.”

Grant’s vision to develop a tier one counseling program that supports delivery of a developmental curriculum included professional relationship building as part of his strategic planning. He stated:

So my projects since I started here has been cultivating relationships and starting the process of building a tier one comprehensive school counseling curriculum for our building, where it’s expected and it’s accepted that school counselors push into the classroom multiple times a year to deliver socio-emotional curriculum as part of an existing curriculum . . . And I’ve only had one year of relationship building with each grade level so far. So I want to keep cultivating that, so that it becomes a better smoother and more efficient process. If I can go to a teacher with whom I have an existing relationship and say hey, what is your curriculum looking like this year, what books are you going to do, or what specific units are you covering in math, how can we incorporate some socio-emotional learning into that in different places, where are you comfortable, where do you have a little flex, because I want it to be a collaborative process.

Samantha recognized the importance of educating teachers about the school counselor roles. She reported “I mean now I feel they’re getting a better idea of it, because I’ve been educating them a little bit on what we do. We’re really more transparent, we talk about it at the staff meetings, and this is what we’re doing, this is why we’re doing it.” She also acknowledged a process of relationship building, which involved having lunch with teachers and students and keeping teachers apprised of reasons for the counselor-student meetings.

So we started having lunch with everyone else, and just being more friendly, and out there, and talking more, and just being available, and even available to teachers. Like I’ve had teachers come in, and just want to talk, and get stuff off their chest, and being a

welcoming environment, that's made a difference. I think explaining why we're seeing the kids and stuff, and giving them a heads up, like we're going to be doing conferences so your students are going to be leaving, and giving them the option. Like we've told teachers, if you have a test going on or a quiz or something you can tell the student, no. So giving them that permission to do that, I think has helped.

Adapting Clinical Skills

The benefits of clinical skills came with challenges linked in part to the unique setting of the school environment. However, participants were able to overcome the challenges by adapting their clinical skills to the context. Naveen stated:

I had to compromise a lot and it's been good to compromise . . . And so what I've compromised to now is that I can still be clinical, I could still be the outreach person of connecting people to clinical resources in the community, I can still do family counseling in different terms, but it doesn't look at all like what I used to do. And I've had to come to peace with that.

Naveen expatiated further on the changes that have occurred "It happens way less frequently here, way less frequently. In this environment I have to be so mindful of the academic schedule and I'm having to be very mindful of pulling kids too long from classes. I'm having to be very cautious of not keeping students too long. So, I have those clinical moments but there very compacted." Carly identified "So, the counseling work is brief, I think more brief counseling techniques are utilized, where instead of curing their problems, its more let me help you in this moment, what's going on for you, what coping skills can we use, how can we plan for the rest of your day, and then connecting students with outside resources if they need it to do more of that work." Finally, Nicole recognized the needed adjustment as a time management issue. She provided "I still had a little bit of time management and when I say time management, and

maybe this comes from my social work thing, getting the kids out of my office, sooner, quicker, like trying to deal with the problem really quick. So I've had to adjust to that." In order to adjust Nicole advised that she used brief counseling "I mean that's the only way to get the students, not spending 30 minutes with me, is just to use brief counseling with them.

Administrative Support

The theme of administrative support explored participants' perceptions on the support they received from administrators such as deans, principals or assistant principals and the impact of this on their profession and their evolving professional identity. For the most part, participants described the support from administrators as valuable, because it enabled them to assume leadership roles within their respective schools or to develop at their own pace in areas where they still experienced gaps in learning and practice. Naveen identified gaps in his understanding of college, career, and academic components following the transition to school counseling, but he perceived his Assistant Principal as affirming and encouraging. He said "You know in my conversations with [name of assistant principal] it was helpful because he affirmed the college aspect, like it just takes time, because it's such a nebulous domain that you can't just learn it right away. It just takes experience, and things change, and being curious . . . I also walked in feeling very insecure about the technical aspects of the job so scheduling, all the nuts and bolts of just knowing what classes to take and all that, and I felt a lot of support from [name of assistant principal] in terms of don't worry about that."

Grant believed his administrators would be supportive of his vision to develop a comprehensive school counseling program indicating a belief in his leadership abilities. He stated “My principle trusts me, if I come into him and I say this is what I want to work towards, his just going to look at me and say what do you need from me. And if I tell him nothing right now, then his going to say let me know when you do need something.” Harry circumstances are unique because he works across four schools with two administrators, but he perceived both administrators as being supportive of his autonomy to develop the counseling program “I’m fortunate to where my administrators have kind of said make the program what you want to make it. And so I try to incorporate as much ASCA standards and the ASCA model as I possibly can.”

Carly also thought she would have support of the dean of student services and autonomy to implement her vision for a comprehensive school counseling program to include increased parental involvement. She stated “I really think that I’m going to have a fair amount of autonomy because it is a smaller counseling department, it’s just myself and another counselor, and we have a supervisor, she’s the dean of student services, and she’s pretty supportive . . . I feel the administration is really supportive, if you want to do things great. I mean certain things I wanted to do, I’m sure they would take issue with, but I think if it was like a parent night or going into the classroom some more, I think I would have some leeway to do that.”

Stakeholder Perspectives

The theme explores participants' self-reported views on other stakeholders' (students, administrators, and teachers) expectations and perceptions of them and their school counselor roles. It was noted that despite the challenge of undefined teacher-counselor relationships, participants felt that stakeholders understood and welcomed their roles within the school. Naveen perceived teachers as respecting the school counselors probably due to the influence of the assistant principal "I think knowing [name of assistant principal] in particular and how respected he is, I got the sense that school counselors carried a little bit more weight in terms of their level of respect and how teachers lean on them." He also felt other stakeholders had a clear understanding of the school counselor role and were able to bring relevant issues to his attention "The attendance officer will say, oh did you know this person's been out of school for a whole week, or a teacher will walk a student down in crisis and say this kid just mentioned to me that he tried to overdose two weeks ago."

Carly felt that teachers viewed her as an expert in certain issues and lean on her for guidance around career and college counseling:

I really think they see us as the experts in the registration process and getting girls in the right classes. [They] will come to us if they've specific concerns about girls and they expect us to be able to work with the girls, be a bridge sometimes if they feel that their not having any luck with the girls or having trouble understanding them, and come to us for a little bit more information to kind of link that together. And again I think with the college piece, they expect us to be the experts on that and handle the college application process, and even for them if they have questions, like we went to a new system this year where everything was on line, so some of them needed assistance uploading letters of recommendation, wanting us to look over their letters of recommendation for them and edit it. So I think they see us as partners overall, but expect us to work on their team, and

again when we meet with girls, I think they expect us to help guide the girls back to them or at least fill them in on things that are going on.

Harry when asked how other stakeholder viewed him, also felt that teachers welcomed his presence and leaned on him for guidance on how to work with students, “So the feedback that I’ve taken from teachers was how it was needed [referring to the position of a school counselor] and in that first month or two referrals were flowing in and even up to this point still getting referrals from time to time. And so from the teachers’ standpoint it’s been well accepted. I know that with my role they are always quick to ask for advice on working with their student and I have heard from my administrators that there haven’t been any complaints about the school counselors just sitting in his office or not picking students up, or wondering what the school counselors doing, so that’s been good to hear.” Anne had multiple perspectives on teachers, which served as both a challenge and a support. On the supportive end, she identified that teachers viewed her as a positive addition to the school “I think most teachers see me that way, oh look at what can happen in a school, what changes can be made when there’s a counselor who makes the effort, or you know has the ability to work with all these different students.”

Participants assessed students as understanding their role and welcoming the support they provided. Carly remarked “I mean I think that students’, their expectation is that I’m there to help them. I think they really just expect and see the counseling office as a place where they can go and get help with whatever they need, because the girls do come down quite a bit. I know a lot of them said, we just wanted you to be nice, and so I think it’s just sort of a safe place to go and someone that will support them.” Harry also perceived students as being receptive to the

school counselor and engaged in school counseling activities “But I feel it’s been well received and probably about 15 or 20% of my students that I see in the 4th and 5th grade level have been self-referred, and so I’m happy with that age group of having that many self-referred students. And whenever I come in, and I do classroom lessons, students are always engaged and excited about doing the lessons. So that’s been my feedback that they’re happy with having a school counselor.”

Participants assessed that parents also viewed them positively and they appeared to recognize their role as active sources of support for their student. Harry stated “From the community standpoint with parents, about a quarter of my referrals, 26% to be exact, are parent referrals. And so I feel positive about the number of parents who are also referring their students as well, and seeing the importance of having a school counselor for the district.” Carly was able to articulate parents’ expectations of her as the school counselor, “Parents I think just expect that we have the best interest of the girls at heart and are trying to guide and assist them moving forward. I think parents more so feel like you know make sure they’re in the right classes and doing okay. And a lot of them have the expectation that they will be kept in the loop and sometimes we’re a point person to kind of let them know how things are going.” Anne reflected that parents and families welcomed her as someone who provided a more visible presence than her predecessor “So before I came, there was a counselor but she wasn’t very visible, she was kind of your old school counselor just stayed in her office, and so I think families feel comforted and maybe relieved that I’m doing a lot more in the school, and that they see me, and that their children talk about me.”

Anne felt that administrators welcomed her as a mediator between teachers and administrators and as a professional with similar values and practice “I would say the administrators see me as kind of someone who straddles the line between teacher and administrator . . . You know they consult with me a lot and they are happy to have a third person who shares the same values or drive that they have, to really make this school a better place.” Nicole identified administrator expectations that appear to align with the school counselor roles “I think administrators look to us to make sure that students are taking the appropriate classes, students are challenging themselves, if someone is crying take care of it, if we run across issues like bullying or something that’s being taken care of, and students are applying and being accepted to appropriate matched colleges and things like that.” From Carly’s perspective administrators expected her to be a role model and source of support to students “It seems like the administrators’ expectation is that I follow the policies and procedures, again that I have the girls best interest at heart, that I set a good example, that I’m a role model.”

Continuing Education

Continuing education explores participants’ active engagement with professional development opportunities that support and enhance their profession as school counselors and their evolving professional identity. Participants in this study accessed continuing education in a variety of ways, attendance at conferences, further education, attendance at district or privately arranged training opportunities, and professional membership. Patricia highlighted ongoing

learning as essential to her professionalism “And so that idea of being a professional school counselor, I noticed you had written down the initials PSC, I always write that too because I really feel like that was instilled in me at that program, the sense that you [should] always be working to improve, to always be understanding what’s current, to always be understanding what you know and what you don’t know, working to learn more.” Patricia identified training opportunities through in-service learning “And we definitely do that [referring to in-service training] at [name of current school] all the time so we just had an in-service about working with students who have experienced sexual assault and talking to the students in general about sexual assault.”

Naveen indicated an affinity for lifelong learning “I like being a student. And I think I’m just a better professional when I’m a student.” Grant also saw himself as a lifelong learner through his daily interaction with students “I walk in everyday thinking these kids could teach me something. And that constant state of open-mindedness, that constant state of what can I get out of this, that growth mind set I am using is something that serves me very well.” And he saw benefits of that interaction to his professional school counselor identity “But I also think the development of my professional identity happens every day when I’m working with these kids. I mean they genuinely do, they teach me stuff every day, and I’m really willing to learn that, because it can be really small, but the value these kids get out of it.”

A number of participants used external trainings opportunities to fill identified gaps in their knowledge base of college and career counseling. Naveen accessed additional training through a counseling certificate course “So I am taking a college counseling certificate course on

line, because I told [name of assistant principal] I need to do that because I don't know enough, and he was very supportive." Carly attended multiple trainings on college and career counseling, through a private organization with funding support from her school "I was able to do this program called college counseling . . . And they put together this curriculum for newer counselors and they walk you through the whole process." She also attended college training through a university "And I went to a presentation by [name of university], where they gave us actual essays and applications that they had received and we would decide who we'd accept and why. And then they'd walk through their process and told us, well here is who we actually accepted, and here is why, and this is what we are looking for, and this stood out for us. And so that was really helpful to understand the admissions process."

Patricia, a long term substitute at a local high school, also engaged in active professional membership and service as part of her development "I became pretty active in [name of professional organization], it's a little bit hard when you aren't connected to a school, but as much as I could, and I joined committees, and I helped plan the sharing the dream conference, and I worked at the national college fair. I was one of the volunteer coordinators, and I volunteered at the conference, and I try to go to as many [name of professional organization] things as I can." Samantha stated "I'm motivated to go to trainings, and conferences, and stuff, I really enjoy that. I attend the yearly [name of professional organization] conference, and just trying to be involved in that and the community, so it's a big thing with personal development and trainings."

Some participants viewed the benefits of professional membership as extending beyond attendance at conferences to include accessibility to organizational resources. Carly used the resources offered through the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) to seek suggestions on practice “So I posted on the ASCA list serve a couple of days ago, here is something we’re doing does anyone have suggestions. So I feel I may even be able to tap into ASCA’s greater knowledge base and kind of coordinate with other counselors all over the place, to get some other ideas for how we could start to make some changes.” Nicole when asked what it means to have a professional school counselor identity, responded with the following “I’m a member of the American School Counseling Association, and if I have a question I have somewhere I can go. I’m on a list serve, I can go read up on somethings. Amongst other things I have some place I can go to if I can’t get something from my colleagues here, I can go to this association and get further professional development or training and different things like that.”

Conclusion

Findings from the study on the evolving professional identity of novice school counselors yielded several themes and categories framed around the research focal areas and purposes of the study. The chapter started with a focus on the meanings participants gave to their professional school counselor identities and found major categories such as counselor roles, student relationships and engagement, and wealth of knowledge. Counselor roles as a definition for school counselor professional identity generated further discussion on what constitutes school

counselor roles and responsibilities for participants in this study, and found roles such as consultation with teachers and other professional stakeholders, being a referral source for students, delivering counseling curriculum or presentations to students, college and career counseling, crisis support as reactive services, management and accountability focusing on data collection for program evaluation or needs assessment, ASCA model as a framework for practice, and working with parents. The category of student relationships and engagement revealed further findings on strategies utilized by participants to develop student-counselor relationships. Some schools had in-built systems that facilitated the development of these relationships, for example delivering counseling curriculum on a weekly basis, and using grade level rotation where counselors remained with their students for the duration of their school life. Other participants were intentional and engaged students through school activities, class or home room visits, and individual student meetings.

The theme dimensions of career transition highlighted several categories that supported and enhanced participants transition from other helping professions to school counseling. Attraction to school counseling found that participants transition was linked to past experience, a desire for a diverse roles and responsibilities, desire to do preventative work, the school work environment, and a passion for working with children. Program accessibility reflected participants' views on ease of access to additional training based on previous qualifications and cost. Learning environment explored those factors that supported and enhanced participants transition and continue to influence their current practice, such as professor knowledge and characteristics, rigorous curriculum, introduction to the ASCA model as a framework for

practice, opportunities for dialogue and discussion, and occasions for reflection that fueled or refueled participants values on advocacy and social justice. Finally, internship experience explored participants experiential learning that supported their professional identity development and enhanced their current practice.

Two themes arose when the research focal area of challenges to participants evolving professional school counselor identity was discussed. Undefined teacher-counselor relationships reflect the challenges participants' experienced negotiating relationships with teachers and the possible impact on their ability to perform specific school counselor roles. Non-counselor related tasks, referenced those tasks performed by participants, which fell outside the remit of the school counselor roles and responsibilities.

Finally, the research focal areas of factors supporting or enhancing participants evolving professional school counselor identity, revealed that most participants identified benefits in performing non-counselor related roles, because they offered opportunities for additional training or to develop relationships with students who they would not otherwise have had access to. Other themes, included previous experience and knowledge, consisting of prior clinical mental health experience, which most participants identified as germane to their current practice and effectiveness as school counselors. Second, understanding of lifespan development came from discussions around transferrable skills, values, attitudes, and beliefs underlying participants practice. Adjusting to role challenges was another theme, which focused on professional relationship building mainly with teachers to redress the challenge of undefined teacher-counselor relationships and adapting clinical skills to the uniqueness of the school environment.

The theme of administrative support considered participants' perceptions on the support they received from administrators such as deans, assistant principals, and principals and its impact on their ability to fill gaps in their knowledge base and/or assume autonomous leadership roles in the school. Stakeholder perspectives reflected participants' views on how they are perceived by stakeholders or the expectations stakeholders such as students, parents, administrators, and teachers, have of them. Continuing education, the last theme to emerge, addressed participants use of professional development opportunities to support their profession as school counselors and enhance their evolving professional identity. Participants from this study identified in-service training, external training opportunities, attendance at conferences, and use of organizational resources, as strategies utilized in their professional growth and development.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the process by which the professional identity of novice school counselors develop or evolves, the meanings they attach to having a professional identity, and how professional identity presents in practice. In addition, the study considered (a) dimensions of career change, including aspects of participants' previous background that are retained in their evolving professional identity as school counselors, and (b) the challenges and supports they experience as novice school counselors. The chapter begins with a discussion of key contributions from the research based on the findings identified in the previous chapter. Second, and in line with the intent of grounded theory, a proposed theoretical framework is discussed in context of the findings and existing literature. Third, the chapter considers implications for counselor educators training professionals who are transitioning into school counseling. The implications, could also be relevant to teachers transitioning to school counseling and students pursuing school counseling as an initial profession. Finally, study limitations and suggestions for future research will be discussed.

Key Contributions from Research

This section considers key contributions that emerged from the research based on findings from the previous chapter. The contributions consist of definitions of school counselor professional identity, dimensions of career change for school counselors specifically attraction to

school counseling, challenges experienced by school counselors with focus on undefined teacher-counselor relationships, and supports experienced particularly achieving school counselor outcomes. Definition of school counselor professional identity reflects the meanings, participants attributed to their school counselor professional identity. The definition encompasses *counselor roles, student relationships and engagement, and wealth of knowledge*, and provides a different perspective on the features that constitute each category. Therefore, counselor roles were described through phrases such as ‘one stop shop,’ ‘a tire with many spokes,’ and requiring ‘varied interests,’ all of which emphasized the multifaceted nature of the roles performed by school counselors. Student relationship and engagement as a definition of professional school counselor identity was defined from the perspective of interaction with individuals and whole student bodies and considered through multiple lens, for example creating a safe place conducive to supporting individual students, intentional work with students, contact and positive relationship building with students at a whole school level, and tier one to tier three intervention with individual students and groups. Finally, wealth of knowledge revealed three main features: knowledge base, competence, and experience, which came from the definition of school counselor professional identity as ‘well-versed’ and able to work with a variety of students, being a resource for key stakeholders such as administrators and teachers because of a sound knowledge base on the three domains in the ASCA model (personal/social, academic, and career and college counseling), and having knowledge linked to years of experience.

Dimensions of career change for school counselors addresses the factors: (1) supporting the transition for school counselor career changers and (2) contributing to the early development

of school counselor professional identity. The dimensions represent a unit containing four categories: *attraction to school counseling, program accessibility, learning environment, and internship experience*. Attraction to school counseling is considered a major category, because it provides the base from which the decision to transition into school counseling originates and the motivation to engage in research on how to achieve career change goals.

Undefined teacher-counselor relationships reflect the challenge participants' experienced negotiating relationships with teachers, and the possible implications on their ability to perform specific school counselor roles, for example delivering counseling curriculum or offering consultation on student concerns. The challenge is one of differing perspectives and it is linked to two main factors: first, teachers understanding of the roles performed by school counselors especially as it pertains to attending to student needs. Second, teachers' expectations of school counselors and the services they provide, for instance how tasks such as consultation present in practice.

Achieving school counselor outcomes contributes to school counseling literature on the potential benefits of performing non-counselor related tasks. The non-counselor related tasks identified from the results were numerous and ranged from proctoring tests to scanning items for students as part of lunch duty. However, the benefits identified were more succinct and covered autonomy in school counselor practice, opportunities to develop counselor-student relationships, and opportunities for professional development in special needs training.

Framework of Career Transition and Professional Identity Development

The findings from the study have provided a proposed theoretical framework (see figure 1) within which to conceptualize factors that are significant to the career transition process and evolving professional identity of practitioners moving from other helping professions to professional school counseling. The framework of career transition and professional identity development for school counselors, has two major sections: a transitional piece in the dimensions of career change for school counselors and the professional identity piece in the personal definitions of school counseling, and the supports and challenges to professional identity. The framework highlights that professional identity begins in the dimensions of career change as part of the transitional process, continues to grow once employment is secured, and evolves through the meanings school counselors give to their professional identity, the challenges they experience, and the supports they receive. The framework, fills a gap in the school counseling literature, where none currently exists and provides a foundation for further research and discussion on components that support, challenge, and develop school counselor professional identity for those transitioning to the field from other helping professions.

Dimensions of Career Change for School Counselors

Dimensions of career change for school counselors, forms a unit comprised of attraction to school counseling, program accessibility, learning environment, and internship experience.

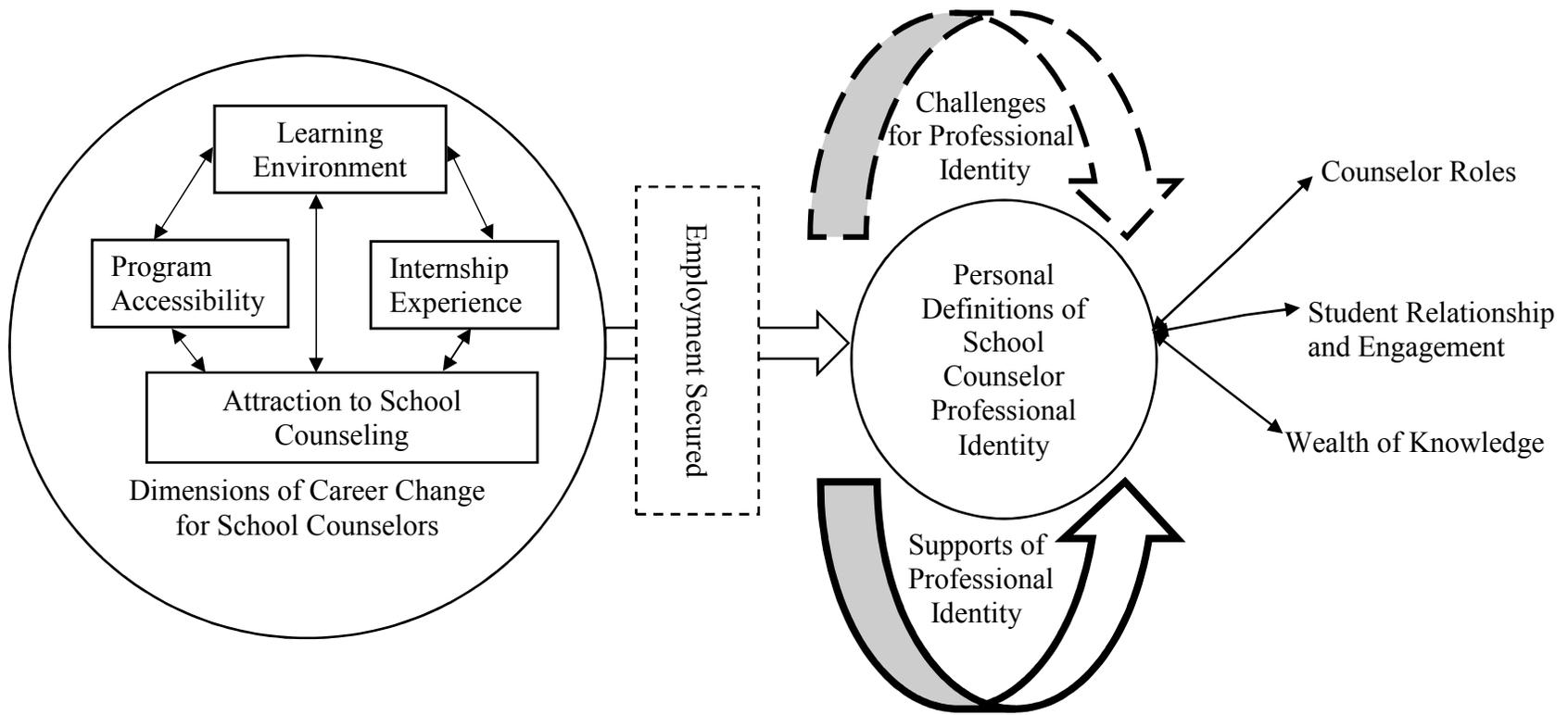


Figure 1:

Framework of career transition and professional identity development for school counselors.

Together the categories influence one another and highlight factors supporting the career transition process for individuals moving from other helping professions to school counseling. In addition, they are foundational to school counselors' professional identity development process, especially the components of learning environment and internship experience. Overall as a finding, the unit is relevant because it highlights participants' experiences in the transitional process and early stages of professional identity development. Second, since there is a lack of school counseling literature on transition to school counseling from other helping professionals, the unit provides a model to build on as we attempt to understand the transitional process for school counselor career changers.

Individually, the categories perform different functions, for instance attraction to school counseling provides the base for understanding reasons why participants chose school counseling as the transitional career over other helping professions. School counseling literature has not addressed what attracts people to the profession. However, in this study, participants' attraction ranged from past experience implementing career counseling at a university career counseling setting, personal experience receiving school counseling support as a high school student, opportunities for a diverse work experience, desire to do preventative work, a passion for working with teenagers, and an interest in the school work environment. Furthermore, as one of the category's in the dimension of career change process, attraction to school counseling forms the base from which all other categories develop and serves as a motivator for participants to research career transition options and opportunities. This motivation led them to the school

counselors certificate program (SCCP), which they considered accessible for a variety of reasons.

Program accessibility shifted participants thinking from contemplation/growth stage to the preparation/ exploration stage. This finding aligns with the characterization of stages in the integrated transtheoretical model and life-span, life-space approach regarding voluntary mid-life career change as provided by Barclay, Stoltz, and Chung (2010). The finding also demonstrates a progression from contemplation/growth stage where individuals are merely thinking about career change to the preparation/exploration stage, which is a period of integration of intention and behavior, clarity and specificity of career choice, and movement towards change in a career (Barclay et al., 2010). Accessibility of the program also reflects that the career change behavior was within participants' reach, based on retraining opportunities that were cost effective and took account of previous qualifications (Ajzen, 1991). In addition, program accessibility coupled with the learning environment supported the career change process, because it affirmed participants' attitudes in respect of their career change decision through conducive learning environments that maintained their attraction to school counseling.

Participants' experiences in the categories of learning environments and internship experience mirrors characteristics of the beginning and advanced student phase as defined in the phase model of counselor development (Rønnestad and Skovholt, 2003). The learning environment provides the beginnings of school counselor professional identity development as participants begin to engage in evaluative assignments around curriculum development, learn about the school counselor role, and understand frameworks informing practice. The internship

experience builds on this learning when career changers are tasked with integrating learning and practice, while being introduced to the uniqueness of the school system and environment.

Employment Secured

The component of employment secured resides in that transitional space between dimensions of career change and personal definitions of school counselor professional identity. Participants' experiences here prepare them for the next section; because it is in this space that they secure employment, begin the process of translating learning to practice, accept the reality of gaps between what is learnt and real life practice, and gain experience. As a result of all their experiences, in time, participants are able to articulate or define their school counselor professional identities. The component of employment secured was not the focus of this study; therefore, it has been identified as an area for future research.

Personal Definitions of School Counselor Professional Identity

Participants in this study, defined their school counselor professional identity through three main areas: *counselor roles, student relationships and engagement, and wealth of knowledge.*

Counselor Roles

Typically, counseling literature defines professional identity through behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and values (Mascari & Webber, 2013; Weinrach, Thomas, & Chan, 2001). However, Alves and Gazzola (2011) defined professional identity through the activities and roles performed by counselors and Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003) defined it in context of “attitudes about responsibilities” (p.25), findings from this study support both definitions. Participants decision to define their school counselor professional identity through the roles performed could be linked to multiple factors. Participants might have been trying to grapple with the enormity of the numerous responsibilities that come with being a school counselor, especially because these roles and responsibilities were markedly different and probably more diverse than those performed in their previous professions. In addition, participants might have been responding to the demands placed on them and the resulting feedback on their performance by multiple stakeholders for instance students, teachers, and administrators.

For the most part, the roles and responsibilities identified by participants in the study aligned very closely with the description of counselor related responsibilities provided in the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) national model (2012). The model comprises four components: *foundation, management, delivery and accountability*. The counselor roles identified through this study fall into two components: *management* with focus on use of data to define interventions, evaluate programming and monitor student progress, *delivery systems direct services* focused on delivering counseling curriculum and presentations, college and career

counseling, crisis support, and student relationships and engagement, and *delivery systems indirect services* with emphasis on collaboration [inter-professional and parent-centered collaborations], consultation, and referral sources. The benefits of performing school counselor related roles and responsibilities should be acknowledged because it leads to job and work satisfaction and promotion (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Pyne, 2011) all of which have implications for establishing a solid professional identity. Pertinent to the discussion on counselor roles, especially in respect of collaboration, is the fact that participants were able to accurately discuss differences, similarities, and overlaps, between their roles and those of other helping professionals based on their lived experiences. Mellin, Hunt, and Nichols (2011) assessed that the ability to identify knowledge and skills both shared and unique with other helping professionals (social workers, and psychologists) was an important requirement for inter-professional collaboration.

Student Relationships and Engagement

As a definition of school counselor professional identity, student relationship and engagement has not been extensively explored in the school counseling literature, even though the construct is clearly integral to the counseling role. In instances, where relationship building or engagement is discussed the focus has been on the counseling process including use of basic skills, communication, building trust and rapport, the counseling environment, and counselor attitude (Henderson & Thompson, 2011; Velsor, 2004). Whereas, in the current study, when the

concept was explored further, the focus was more on how participants generated awareness of counselor presence in the school and developed student relationships and engagement through existing school structures, class and homeroom introductions, school-based activities, and individual meetings. The participants' focus could be linked to the fact that the clinical piece already existed for them because of their clinical backgrounds, whatever the reasons might be, the finding contributes to the literature as it provides a different perspective, on what constitutes student relationships and engagement as a concept, and highlights strategies employed by participants to achieve it.

Wealth of Knowledge

The concept, wealth of knowledge, speaks to perceptions of knowledge base, competence, and experience as a definition of school counselor professional identity. As part of the dialogue participants assessed that school counselor professional identity means, that they demonstrated competence counseling and working with a variety of student needs, individually and in groups, in a way that differentiates them from the typical guidance counselor. Participants also conceptualized wealth of knowledge as competence in the three domains (personal/social, academic, and career counseling) of the ASCA model (2012), such that they could be a resource for teachers or administrators. The definitions provided speak to an idea of the transformed school counselor, where practitioners are encouraged to understand and meet diverse student needs (Cigrand, Havlik, Malott, & Jones, 2015), using both individual and groups modalities. In

addition, they are called upon to be leaders in students' academic, career, and personal social development through their role as advocates, agents of social change, consultants, and active collaborators (Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Wingfield, Reese, West-Olatunji, 2010). Participants also defined school counselor professional identity in context of a knowledge base that comes from having years of experience. In this instance, being new to the field was perceived as a disadvantage, which had implications for participants' confidence in the school counselor role. However, participants saw potential for increasing confidence following experience in the field.

Research on professional identity in context of wealth of knowledge is scarce; although, current results support aspects of Alves and Gazzola (2011) definition of individual professional identity as personal work values, skills, knowledge, personal growth, and work success. The results also support Brott and Myers (1999) who acknowledged professional identity development as an experiential maturation process that grows through role internalization, identification with the profession, and highly individualized personal guidelines. This study will contribute to the literature by acknowledging wealth of knowledge as a salient definition of professional identity, and by highlighting what constitutes wealth of knowledge as a concept.

Challenges to Evolving Professional School Counselor Identity

In the process of developing a school counselor professional identity, participants encountered challenges, categorized through this study as undefined teacher-counselor relationships and non-counselor related tasks.

Undefined teacher-counselor relationships

The challenge of undefined teacher-counselor relationships reflect teachers lack of clarity on the school counselor role, which disrupts and has implications for the relationship that should exist between professional school counselors, the counseling program, and teachers. Most studies in this area concentrate on teachers' perceptions of the school counselor roles and responsibilities, but from these studies challenges can be inferred. For instance, Power and Boes (2013) found that teachers were accepting of school counselors performing both counselor and non-counselor endorsed tasks and that in some instances teachers had no understanding of the work school counselors did. A perspective that presents a challenge, because it puts school counselors in a catch all position and contributes to the already existing ambiguity around roles in the profession.

Findings from the current study confirm the works by Power and Boes, on teachers having mixed perceptions about school counselors. Participants either identified teachers had no understanding of their roles within the school and that they questioned their practice or they respected the school counselors' presence and actively referred students to them for support that aligned with counselor related tasks. Established teacher-counselor partnerships have the potential to develop programs that are academically and psychologically supportive, suited to students' needs, improve school performance, and create safe conducive school communities (Bemak, 2000). The reverse can create dichotomous relationships with implications for how students' needs are addressed by school counselors and school counseling programs. In the

above framework (see figure 1) undefined teacher-counselor relationships is considered a challenge that participants sought to overcome through professional relationship building, this will be discussed further under supports to professional identity. However, it is important to recognize here, that the challenge of undefined teacher-counselor relationships also contributed to participants evolving professional school counselor identity, as through the challenge they were forced to clarify their school counselor roles, develop confidence in their way of working, and build relationships that furthered the school counseling program agenda.

Non-counselor related tasks

Findings from the study also identified non-counselor related tasks as one of the challenges to the evolving professional identity of school counselors. The literature has identified that performing non-counselor tasks has the potential to result in role conflict and role ambiguity with consequences of job stress, dissatisfaction, and burnout (Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014; Moyer, 2011; Powers & Boes, 2013), which threatens solidification of professional identity. Furthermore, professional identity literature has identified that when confronted with the discrepancies between knowledge base acquired during training and real world practice that includes non-counselor related tasks delegated by other stakeholders, novice counselors engaged in the transformational tasks of idealism towards realism, which requires adjustment to expectations and confidence to freedom (Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014). Contrary to school counseling literature, findings from this study identified that participants had learned to reframe

non-counselor related roles as a benefit, therefore, these will be discussed as supports to school counselor professional identity under the theme achieving school counselor outcomes. The result does not minimize the concern that adopting such tasks could continue contributing to the already existing confusion on what a school counselor does and impede solidification of the school counselor professional identity.

Supports to Evolving School Counselor Professional Identity

In addition to challenges, the framework acknowledges that there are factors supporting the evolving professional identity of novice school counselors. Factors revealed from this study include achieving school counselor outcomes, previous experience and knowledge, adjusting to role challenges, administrative support, stakeholder perspectives, and continuing education.

Achieving School Counselor Outcomes

The support achieving school counselor outcomes, reflects the benefits participants derived from performing non-counselor related tasks. The findings from this study, which corroborate the works of Bardhoshi et al. (2014) identified that most of the participants, considered non-counselor related tasks inevitable due to shortage of personnel resources within the school and lack of other helping professionals linked in part to school size and type (e.g., private). Consequently, tasks were reframed as opportunities that positively affected their jobs; because they allowed for diversity in work load, increased autonomy, and probably most

importantly supported relationship building opportunities with students that ordinarily would not have occurred. Participants decision to utilize non-counselor related tasks as an opportunity for building relationships with students is important. First, it adds to the dialogue on student relationship and engagement as a definition of school counselor professional identity, and highlights the extent participants might go in order to achieve this task. Second, it asks the question can this aspect of school counselor professional identity be achieved through counselor related tasks only, using existing school-based strategies, or by implementing those strategies where they do not exist, for example delivering counseling curriculum. Third, if the decision is understood in context of participants lived experiences and the current climate of personnel shortage and financial restraints, a dialogue still needs to occur regarding (a) what non-counselor tasks should be considered beneficial and (b) where the boundary lies between acceptable and unacceptable. The dialogue should also explore frequency of these non-counselor related tasks and the appropriateness of making them voluntary versus mandatory. The discussion is important, because there is a risk of expanding the school counselor roles to the point where counselor-related tasks are lost under the bulk of non-counselor responsibilities, which can be performed by other professionals.

A further evaluation of the findings revealed that performing non-counselor related tasks created opportunities for additional training around working with children who have special needs, so that participants could perform in their mandated role as 504 case managers and writers. Furthermore, performing non-counselor related tasks put some participants in good standing with administrators and other key stakeholders and established their roles within the

school as essential personnel. In some respects, these stakeholders might have considered the tasks an extension of the school counselor roles and responsibilities and the participants might have viewed it as another strategy for professional relationship building.

Previous Experience and Knowledge

Two categories emerged when the support of previous experience and knowledge was explored: prior clinical mental health experience and understanding of lifespan development. In respect of the former, all of the participants in this study identified that their history of clinical mental health experience was integral to current practice and their identity as professional school counselors. It enabled them to be effective in talking to parents, supported relationship building with students, and provided them with the skills to manage complex crisis situations. The findings are confirmed in the literature that school counselors do perform in the clinical mental health role in order to meet diverse student needs (Cervoni et al., 2011). The findings also indicated that participants viewed their role and identity in context of both counselor and educator. The finding contradicts ASCA's position of school counselors as educators, but adds to the ongoing debate in the school counseling literature regarding the roles and professional identity of school counselors as, professional counselors working in schools, or educators with counseling focus and responsibilities (Cinotti, 2014; Perkins, Oescher, & Ballard, 2010; Stroh, 2004).

Understanding of lifespan development emerged following exploration of the values, attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions informing participants practice, or in response to questions on transferrable skills. The concept speaks to the knowledge base career changers brought into their role as professional school counselors and the impact of this knowledge on their practice. The participants in this study recognized the importance of understanding student behaviors in context of their development, unarticulated needs, and the systems in which they live. The concept also reflects the expectation of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2009) regarding the general training needs of counselors-in-training to include human growth and development as a core competency area related to professional identity and the specific needs of school counselors-in-training.

Adjusting to Role Challenges

The support of adjusting to role challenges incorporates professional relationship building and adapting clinical skills. Participants viewed building professional relationships as essential to the successful implementation of school counseling programs, which considered from a cyclical perspective has implications for their ability to perform counselor related roles and therefore school counselor professional identity. Participants employed a number of strategies in their effort to develop professional relationships such as individual introductions, listening and addressing teacher concerns, educating teachers on the school counselor role, and being transparent about their practice. A search of the literature revealed that school counselor

relationships with other professions was mostly considered from the perspective of collaboration, advocacy for the profession, or stakeholder expectations of school counselors. However, participants in this study provided the beginnings of a conversation on how professional relationship building presents in practice through intentional cultivation of relationship building for purposes of developing and establishing a school counseling program.

The finding adapting clinical skills is new and reflects the uniqueness of participants in this study and the scarcity of literature on school counselors who transitioned from other helping professions to school counseling. The finding is appropriate given the complexities of the school environment and the other competing issues that make long-term counseling or therapeutic interventions in schools unrealistic. Furthermore, the participants' decision to adapt clinical skills to the school setting aligns closely with the requirements of the ASCA model (2012). The model clarifies that school counselors do not provide therapy or long-term counseling, but rather they should provide short-term goal-focused counseling concentrated on those issues that impact academic achievement (ASCA National Model, 2012).

The finding has several implications: it acknowledges that participants identified using clinical skills in the school setting as a struggle they needed to overcome, as they navigated the shift from one professional identity to another. A struggle, which required compromise and use of brief counseling techniques focused on temporarily alleviating students' symptoms instead of curing problems. Second, it highlighted where participants stood in the ongoing debate, regarding school counselors as educators or mental health practitioners, and recognized that they were trying to achieve a balance and integrate both identities. The findings support the works of

DeKruyf, Auger, and Trice-Black (2013) who proposed a conjoint professional identity, which could negate the need for the debate and allow practitioners to respond to the needs of diverse students (DeKruyf et al., 2013). In addition, a conjoint professional identity would allow practitioners to integrate both identities, rather than diminish one in favor of the other.

Administrative Support.

Participants from the study viewed their administrators as supportive of their competence to develop school counseling programs and indicated that administrators afforded them a degree of autonomy to perform in that leadership role. However, administrative support should be considered in conjunction with stakeholder perspectives and understanding of the school counselor role. Because administrators who lack understanding can contribute to role ambiguity for school counselors and promote leadership in non-counselor related responsibilities, that undermine solidification of a professional identity. Despite the challenge of non-counselor related tasks, participants in this study viewed administrators as having a positive and accurate understanding of their roles as mediators between teachers and administrators, consultants who could offer additional perspectives, and student support. As a result, administrative support was considered important to the participants' professional identity development and consequent framework.

Stakeholder Perspectives

Participants viewed other stakeholders like students, parents, and teachers, as having an accurate and positive understanding and expectation about their school counselor role. They assessed students as receptive to their support and as valuing the implementation of counselor related activities including curriculum delivery. This assessment is understandable given the efforts participants have made to initiate contact and develop student relationships and engagement. Participants saw parents as understanding of their role and a recognized referral source for their student/child. Participants believed that teachers, despite the challenge of undefined teacher-counselor relationships, respected them, understood their expertise in responding to students' personal-social, emotional, and career needs, and welcomed them as a necessary presence in the school.

The findings in respect of key stakeholders such as administrators and teachers are supported in the literature. According to Astramovich et al. (2013) administrators preferred school counselors to practice in leadership, consultation, individual and small group counseling, curriculum delivery, and crisis intervention (Astramovich et al., 2013). Edwards, Grace, and King (2014) identified that administrators viewed counselors as collaborative case consultants with expertise on students psychological, social, and educational needs, and a supportive liaison between parents and teachers on interventions and strategies to be employed in response to student needs. Perez (2016) identified that administrators described high school counselors as advocates, bridge agents for students living in poverty, and an asset to teachers in meeting

students learning needs. Perkins et al. (2010) found that stakeholders, consisting of elementary school principals, teachers, and school counselors, viewed the school counselor role as predominantly attending to students personal and social issues and they supported an emphasis on mental health support. Furthermore, they viewed school counselors as integral to the educational team through collaboration. However, they placed less value on the academic and career role of school counselors, which in many respects conflicts with the ASCA model.

The participants' perspective offers a foundation on which to build a solid professional school counselor identity. However, when considered in conjunction with the challenges to school counselor professional identity, as identified in the framework, it will require ongoing work on the part of school counselors and administrators. Cigrand, Havlik, Malott, & Jones (2015) suggested that school counselors advocate for their roles to key stakeholders by drawing on three factors, information from external authorities (school districts, national policies or guideline from ASCA), data to support proactive and preventative comprehensive program planning and delivery, and use of evidence based practices. Edwards et al. (2014) assessed that communication, trust, respect, leadership, collaborative planning are essential components of effective principal-counselor relationships. However, the authors put the onus on principals to take action that enhances principal-counselor relationships and removes barriers that impede counselors from performing counselor-related roles. They proposed increasing principal-counselor communication and collaboration, reducing the counselor-student ratio, and assigning tasks such as testing and 504 case management to other personnel.

Continuing Education

In the final theme, participants accessed continuing education opportunities through in-service professional development, attendance at trainings/conferences arranged by professional organizations and school districts. Some participants met their professional development needs through service, and online resources from ASCA. Utilizing continuing education has benefits for growth as a professional. Bultsma (2012) identified that participation in professional development opportunities supports the developmental needs of novice school counselors and he encouraged administrators to support their involvement in these activities. Konstam et al. (2015) found a positive relationship between attendance at maximum courses and workshops and levels of anticipated growth in school counselor expertise. Important to the current study, was participants use of continuing education to fill identified gaps in knowledge base on college and career counseling. The participants sense of difficulty in this area of counseling is not unique. Morgan, Greenwaldt, and Gosselin (2014) found similar findings from participants in their study exploring school counselors' perceptions on their career counseling competency. However, unlike the participants in the study by Morgan et al., these participants utilized a range of professional development opportunities to meet identified needs for example a college counseling certification, attendance at external agency trainings and/or university presentations.

Evolving Definition of School Counselor Professional Identity

Based on the findings, a tentative definition of school counselor professional identity is evolving as follows: school counselor professional identity, consists of the varied roles performed by school counselors, intentional student relationship and engagement in multiple forms, and wealth of knowledge based on a sound knowledge base that is demonstrated through competence in practice and developed through experience and maturation in the profession. The definition takes account of the personal definitions of school counselor professional identity and acknowledges that each element has multiple features constituting their make-up. Therefore, as an example, student relationship and engagement, should be considered not only from the perspective of creating conducive environments for individual work, but from the viewpoint of generating awareness on the school counselor presence at a whole school level.

Implications for Counselor Educators

This section offers suggestions for counselor educators, training professionals who are transitioning into school counseling. The suggestions, which arose from the findings and previous discussion, concentrate on how counselor educators support school counselors-in-training (a) to develop a school counselor professional identity and (b) to enhance factors that support professional identity development. Although the study focus was on the professional identity of school counselor career changers from other helping professions, it is plausible to believe that suggestions can be applied to counselors-in-training who are transitioning from

teaching into school counseling or those who initially opted to pursue school counseling as a profession.

Participants in the study reflected on how significant accessibility of the program and learning environment was to their career transition process. Counselor educators with responsibility for programing and curriculum development should take account of these factors as integral to the career transition process and to the foundation of a developing professional identity. Programs that consider students previous learning and qualifications, support the idea that past knowledge is relevant to current practice, a premise on which to build new learning, and a support for a smoother transition between helping professions. Programs that are cost effective, compacted, and can be completed within a shorter time period, are more suited to career changers from other helping professions. Mainly, because the majority of these individuals are mature students with families and financial responsibilities, which cannot be put on hold. Learning environments that support intentional dialogues around advocacy, social justice, and equity in education provide a foundation for developing school counselors who are leaders, advocates, and social change agents. Participants in this study indicated that discussions on social justice and advocacy were novel to them, and for some it was not a part of their earlier education; however, these discussions are integral to working in schools with diverse populations.

Internship experience was significant to participants in this study because it provided an opportunity to clarify and understand, the school counselor role, school systems, and for the experiential activities it offered new entrants to the field. Counselor educators, working in

collaboration with site supervisors, can enhance this experience by providing supervisory experiences that support and reinforce the benefits of internship. This support should extend beyond merely monitoring the practice of counselors-in-training with individual students or groups, to include discussions on ethical practice and advocacy. In addition, it should include dialogue and strategies for negotiating relationships with key stakeholders and acknowledging gaps between practice idealism, acquired through training, and reality. Furthermore, the support should include strategies for managing identified discrepancies, which could negatively impact professional identity development.

The definitions of school counselor professional identity in context of counselor roles, also has implications for how counselor educators support the professional identity development of school counselors-in-training. As part of the teaching/instructional process, counselor educators should proactively support school counselors-in-training to understand the difference between counselor related tasks and non-counselor related tasks using the ASCA model as a framework for practice. The dialogue should include exploration on the implications of counselor and non-counselor related tasks to job performance and professionalism, burn out, and ultimately professional identity development. To minimize or where possible eliminate the potential for non-counselor related tasks, counselor educators can support students to engage in direct professional advocacy for themselves. Advocacy can take the form of articulating to administrators and other key stakeholders, what constitutes counseling roles and responsibilities, and the positive impact of only engaging in counselor related tasks for the achievement and success of K-12 students'. Furthermore, as part of the practicum and internship experience,

counselor educators, working in partnership with site supervisors, can support students to arrange enhanced professional development opportunities with administrators, where students can discuss and educate administrators on effective school counselor roles.

In spite of the very best efforts to minimize or eliminate allocation of non-counselor related tasks, findings from the study and the literature have confirmed the inevitability of non-counselor related tasks (Bardhoshi et al., 2014) especially in the current climate of limited financial and personnel resources. Therefore, counselor educators should engage students in dialogue around how to reframe certain non-counselor related tasks as opportunities to achieve outcomes that align closely with school counseling programs. For example, scheduling can be used to develop counseling curriculum on college and career counseling and participation in modified detention can be used to implement restorative justice.

Student relationship and engagement as a definition of professional identity, also provides an area of focus for counselor educators. First, counselor educators should support counselors-in-training to understand student relationship and engagement as an integral component of the school counselor roles and responsibilities. Second, current focus in the literature limits this subject to skills for building individual relationships as part of the counseling process (Henderson & Thompson, 2011; Velsor, 2004). However, further exploration in this study revealed a process of initiating contact and generating student awareness of the school counselor presence and roles through a range of strategies. Therefore, counselor educators will need to work with students more expansively around this issue, building confidence, maturity, and a mindfulness that shifts students from passive to active relationship building and

engagement. Any work should include discussion around creative uses of available opportunities for instance presentations at assembly or classroom visitations. Furthermore, the literature needs to expand its understanding and focus on what constitutes student relationships and engagement to include whole school initiatives and strategies for generating awareness among students, as key stakeholders, about the school counselor presence, roles, and responsibilities.

Counselor educators should note the importance of wealth of knowledge as a precursor to a solid knowledge base, competence in practice, and leadership as social change agents and advocates. This understanding should inform their practice in developing curriculum that is rigorous and includes assignments and experiential activities tailored to the reality of work in schools. Furthermore, they should recognize the importance of a thorough understanding of the ASCA model as a framework for practice, in order to prepare school counselors-in-training as a resource for administrators, teachers, and other key stakeholders.

Participants in this study identified prior clinical mental health experience as integral to their current professional identity as school counselors. Societal changes and the increasing mental health needs of K-12 students supports the findings that clinical skills should come into current school counselor practice. However, the uniqueness of the school environment and setting requires that a balance be established between clinical intervention informing school counseling support and full scale therapeutic practice. The findings also point to the potential for a conjoint professional identity (DeKruyf et al., 2013), which negates the need for the ongoing debate, supports counselors in meeting diverse students' needs, and supports an integration of both the counselor and educator identity in the school counselor professional identity. Counselor

educators, working in collaboration with site supervisors, can support school counselors-in-training understand how to establish a balance between both, using experiential activities like role play, so that new entrants to the field are more prepared and adept at adapting clinical skills to their practice.

Professional relationship building with key stakeholders such as administrators and teachers is a strong consideration for counselor educators preparing new entrants to the field of school counseling. Because, there is evidence from the findings to suggest that counselor relationships with principals and teachers are essential to the development of school counseling programs. Counselor educators can enhance this process by providing school counselors-in-training with strategies that support professional relationship building. These strategies, which could be taken for granted because of their obvious simplicity, include utilizing individual personal introductions, self-invites to team meetings and teacher institute days, and an open door policy for teachers and other professional stakeholders as part of the normal school counselor interaction. Again the process should extend beyond increasing understanding of the school counselor role, to include educating these key stakeholders on the importance and benefits of a well-established school counseling program, to overall student achievement and school improvement. Furthermore, school counselors-in-training should be encouraged to employ strategies, for instance visual representations, that explain and support transparency of the school counseling processes and programing. Finally, based on school counseling literature, school counselors-in-training should be encouraged and supported to use evidence-based research and data that supports implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program.

Study Limitations

The study was based on the views and perceptions of 8 participants who graduated from a school counselors' certificate program (SCCP) at a Mid-Western University. The uniqueness of the participants' situation, the program setting from where they graduated, and the geographical regional location where they practice, could have implications for how we generalize findings from the study. A sample consisting of graduates from multiple setting of similarly intensive programs might add to the findings, especially in areas pertaining to dimensions of career change. The participant demographics also presents a limitation due to the lack of diversity. First, the participants were predominately White/Caucasian with only one participant who self-identified as Asian Indian and another who identified as African American. Second a majority identified as female with only three males and third, there was not enough range in age or years of experience. Overall, the lack of diversity might have had implications for the viewpoints and perspectives shared in the study. Future studies should seek to achieve a balanced participant sample, as this might provide a more expansive account of the school counselor professional identity development process.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are multiple suggestions for future research. The study had proposed to explain school counselors' perspectives on the significance of professional identity in the field. However, as the study developed, its focus became more of an in-depth exploration of participants' school

counselor experience and their professional identity in practice. Given the implications of individual professional identity to the solidarity of the whole profession, this is an area in need of further research. Additionally, aspects of the study such as stakeholders' perspective relied solely on the self-reported views of the participants. Researching the views of key stakeholders on their perceptions of school counselor professional identity in context of counselor and non-counselor related roles might shed a different perspective on the findings. Also, it could expand our knowledge, on how to support novice school counselors in negotiating significant relationships with key stakeholders, and add to the foundational piece on how to build comprehensive school counseling programs that support rather than impede school counselor professional identity development.

Findings from the study identified a number of unexplored areas for future research. The first, pertains to differences between schools in urban areas versus suburban areas; differences which participants reflected were linked to resources and diversity of population and needs. The question is do these differences have implications for school counselor professional identity development. A second area involves the unique circumstances of private schools, which were normally smaller in size, less likely to have other helping professions such as social workers, and more likely to rely on the school counselor to fill gaps in non-counselor related tasks. School counselor professional identities evolve and develop through their experience and interaction in school settings; therefore, research that sheds light on how the complexities of different school environments impact professional identity will add to the literature. A third area involves the role of school counselors in the writing and case management of 504 plans; tasks that participants felt

they were ill-equipped to assume without additional training. Future research should focus on how school counselors negotiate and adapt to the additional responsibility of working with children who have special needs, and the implications of this role on their professional school counselor identity.

Furthermore, the proposed theoretical framework would benefit from additional research to validate and develop the theoretical model. Such research will enhance conceptualization of the factors supporting the process and development of school counselor professional identity for career changers from other helping professions. For instance, studies exploring the dimensions of career change through quantitative research with a larger sample size, might expand on the current categories within the unit, and bring additional elements for consideration to the dialogue. Finally, although the framework developed from the findings includes a component for employment secured, the area was not adequately explored because it was not the focus of the study. However, the perspective of school administrators on factors influencing their employment decisions is an area in need of further exploration; because the literature, on stakeholder perspectives of school counselor roles, indicates that administrators might show a preference for these career changers, due to their history with mental health counseling and understanding of children's psychological needs (Perkins et al., 2016). Such research might also add to our understanding on how administrators support school counselors and the impact of this on their school counselor professional identity.

Conclusion

The chapter integrated study findings with the literature to discuss the proposed theoretical framework of career transition and professional identity development for school counselors. The framework provided a basis through which to conceptualize factors influencing the career transition and evolving professional identity of school counselors who came from other helping professions. The framework begins with consideration of dimensions of career change that include attraction to school counseling, program accessibility, learning environment, and internship. Considered together the categories are foundational to the school counselor professional identity development process with characteristics mirroring the professional identity stages of beginning and advanced student phase (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

Following entry to the field, participants start to translate learning into practice, gain experience, and in time they are able to articulate their understanding of what it means to have a school counselor professional identity. Personal definitions of school counselor professional identity from the study included counselor roles, student relationships and engagement, and wealth of knowledge. For the most part, counselor roles identified by participants aligned with the ASCA national model (2012) and indicated clear understanding of similarities and differences between the roles of school counselors and other helping professionals. Student relationship and engagement required participants' expertise generating awareness among students of the school counselor presence and roles and responsibilities within the school. Finally, wealth of knowledge recognized the importance of an established knowledge base

founded on experience and training. Participants encountered challenges in the process of developing a school counselor professional identity in the form of undefined teacher-counselor relationships and non-counselor related tasks. However, they utilized supports to overcome the challenges by reframing non-counseling tasks to achieve school counselor outcomes, professional relationship building, and adapting previous clinical skills to the context of schools.

The findings have implications for counselor educators tasked with educating school counselors who are transitioning from other helping professions or who initially trained as school counselors. In their role as instructors, they are encouraged to support students understanding of counselor related and non-counselor related tasks using the ASCA model as a framework of practice. In their supervisory roles, counselor educators are encouraged, to work in partnership with site supervisors, to provide experiences that enhance the benefits of internship and support students understanding on how to negotiate relationships with key stakeholders.

Study limitations acknowledge that participant size and demographic breakdown might have had implications for diversity of viewpoints and perspectives shared. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the participants' situation, the program setting from where they graduated, and the geographical regional location where they practice, could have implications for how we generalize findings from the study. However, the findings will begin the dialogue on career changers from other helping professionals into school counseling. Second, they provide a theoretical framework within which to conceptualize the professional identity development of school counselors who are transitioning from other helping professions. Third, the findings fill a

gap in the literature on issues/areas for consideration in counselor education preparation for this population.

Future research should explore the views of key stakeholders on school counselor professional identity in context of counselor and non-counselor related tasks. This research might increase our knowledge on how to support novice school counselors develop relationships with professional key stakeholders. Furthermore, future research should investigate unexplored areas such as school counseling in urban versus suburban areas or public versus private schools as such research might add to our understanding on how school counselor professional identity evolves through the complexities presented by each setting. Finally, an exploration of factors influencing the employment of school counselors transitioning from other helping professions, from the perspective of administrators, could add to the proposed theoretical framework of career transition and professional identity development for school counselors.

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APPENDIX A
ADULT CONSENT FORM

ADULT CONSENT FORM

I agree to participate in a dissertation project exploring the evolving professional identity of school counselors who graduated from the [REDACTED] and who have been working as school counselors in K-12 schools for a minimum of 1 year and a maximum of 4.

I am aware that the study is being conducted by Ola Bamgbose, a doctoral candidate at Northern Illinois University. I have been informed that the purpose of the study is to a) explain the process by which the professional identity of school counselors, initially trained in other helping professions, evolves, b) develop a framework for conceptualizing school counselors professional identity, c) explain the perspectives of school counselors about the significance of professional identity to their development in the field, d) explore dimensions of career transitions and e) consider those factors that differentiate school counseling from other helping professions and those aspects of previous helping professions, which are retained in the new evolving professional identity as novice school counselors.

I understand that the study will benefit the counseling field by contributing to knowledge on how school counselors who are new to the field develop professional identity. Second, the study will contribute to the knowledge and understanding counselor educators bring to curriculum development as they support the professional growth of school counselors-in-training. I also understand that while the risks are minimal, it is possible for cognitive dissonance to occur as I gain more insight into my evolving professional identity.

I understand that if I agree to participate in this study, I will be asked to provide brief demographic and professional information. I will also be asked to participate in an individual interview lasting between 60-90 minutes, which will be audio-taped and transcribed for review and analysis. I may be asked to participate in additional interviews for clarification and elaboration from the first interview for no longer than 20 minutes. I am aware that in the event follow up interviews are required, the researcher will contact me via email or telephone to schedule the appointment. Finally, I am aware that I will be asked to provide some written literature pertaining to my school's counseling program to support the researcher's understanding of my professional identity in context of my professional roles and responsibilities. The written material will take the form of policies and public knowledge information (parents and students informational literature) relevant to my school counseling programs and mission as it relates to the counseling program.

As part of the process, I am aware that the researcher will contact me via email within 1-2 weeks of my interview with a copy of the transcript so that I can review it. Second, the researcher will contact me within 4 weeks of my interview via email with a copy of her analyzed data for purposes of member-checking. I understand that my participation in this review is voluntary.

I am aware that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty or prejudice. I also understand that if I have additional questions concerning this study, I may contact Ola Bamgbose at obamgbose1@niu.edu or [REDACTED] or the faculty dissertation chair, Dr. Teresa Fisher at tafisher@niu.edu or [REDACTED]. I understand that if I wish to receive further information regarding my rights as a research subject, I may contact the Office of Research Compliance at Northern Illinois University at (815) 753-8588.

I understand that all information gathered during this study will be kept confidential. I also understand that steps will be taken to protect my identity. Therefore, I will have a pseudonym attached to my name and data. The key linking my identity and pseudonym will be kept separate from the data and used only by the researcher for purposes of member checking or follow up. No identifying information will be used for publication reports and finally interview data and transcripts will be securely kept on a USB drive and a password protected laptop. I am aware that while my school's practices in context of their school counseling programs will be described, if relevant to the current study, the name of my school will remain confidential and be referred to only by region and level (e.g., high school, middle school, and elementary school).

Finally, I understand that my consent to participate in this project does not constitute a waiver of any legal rights or any redress I might have as result of my participation. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Participant's Name (please print): -----

Participant's Signature for Research Participation: -----

Participant's Signature for Consent of Audio Recording: -----

Contact Number & Email Address: -----

Date: -----

****Please complete the attached demographic data sheet and return with a copy of your consent form. Thank you**

Demographic Data Sheet

Name:

Previous Profession and Title:

Qualifications Related to Previous Profession:

Current position and title:

Numbers of years I have practiced as a school counselor:

Date Graduated from [REDACTED]:

Ethnicity:

Gender:

Age (approximate is accepted):

Contact Information

Please provide the best contact number and email address for appointment scheduling purposes and follow up.

Phone number: -----

Email address: -----

APPENDIX B
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Semi-Structured Interview Schedule

1. Tell me about your profession prior to becoming a school counselor
2. What led you to this profession?
3. What does it mean to have a professional identity?
4. How would you define your professional identity within that previous profession?
5. What factors led to your transition from that profession to professional school counseling
6. Describe the process you went through in the transition from your previous career to school counseling?
7. As part of the transition process you attended the School Counselors Certificate Program (SCCP), can you expatiate on the reasons why you attended the SCCP
8. Describe your learning experience at the SCCP?
9. How has this learning affected your professional development? How has this learning affected current practice as a school counselor?
10. During your time at the SCCP what other factors supported your professional development What factors supported current practice as a school counselor?
11. What does it mean to you to have a professional school counselor identity?
12. How would you describe and define your role as a professional school counselor?
13. What other helping professionals are there in your schools
14. What is your perception of the differences and similarities in your role and that of other helping professionals within the school?

15. What expectations did you have of the school counseling role prior to coming into the profession?
16. What expectations do other stakeholders have of your role as a professional school counselor?
17. How have you continued to grow as a professional school counselor since graduating from the SCCP?
18. In your understanding what differentiates your current role as a school counselor from your previous profession?
19. What similarities exist between your current profession and previous profession?