

ABSTRACT

SHORES, ANGELA SMITH. Exploring Professional Identity of Counselors in Training: A Phenomenological Study. (Under the direction of Sylvia Nassar-McMillan.)

Counselor professional identity is a topic of interest within the profession, with individuals and groups seeking to understand more about what makes counselors unique as mental health professionals among other mental health professionals as well as what unifies counselors across specialties, settings, and client populations served. Using Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) constructs, principles of interpretive phenomenological research, and previous, related research studies, a survey was created in an attempt to further understand counselor professional identity. Following a pilot study, counselors in training from counselor training programs across one southeastern state participated in an electronic survey. Consensual qualitative research (CQR) was used to analyze qualitative question responses and descriptive statistics were used to describe demographic information of participants and responses to close-ended questions.

Results indicated a multidimensional yet interconnected understanding of counselor professional identity which consisted of three realms: personal/social, academic, and career. Further, results identified several factors that are perceived by counselors in training to be important or influential in either the development or understanding of counselor professional identity such as training program accreditation, experiences such as practicum and internship, and faculty members who discuss professional identity of counselors. Contextual variables and professional socialization activities such as the influence of family and friends, life experiences, one's own experiences in counseling, mentoring, and involvement in counseling related professional associations were also identified as influential factors. Implications for counselor training programs are discussed, with an emphasis on the role of counselor

educators as well as intentional, program-level focus on professional identity in counselor training programs. Limitations of the current study and areas for future research are also discussed.

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Exploring Professional Identity of Counselors in Training:
A Phenomenological Study

by
Angela Smith Shores

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DEDICATION

This is a three-fold dedication:

To my two beautiful daughters, Morgan Grace and Emma Joy. May you always fear God, always believe in yourself, even when others do not, always follow your dreams with all your heart, always have the confidence needed to succeed in your goals, and find a soulmate who is as supportive of your passion and dreams as your Daddy is of me. I am honored to be your Mommy.

To my parents, Don and Shirley Smith, who raised me to love learning, dream big, follow my heart, and believe in myself.

To my loving husband, Jonathan, who always knew I would accomplish this goal. May God bless you endlessly for the blessing you have been and continue to be for me.

BIOGRAPHY

Angela (Leigh) Smith Shores was born September 23, 1978 in Salisbury, North Carolina to Shirley Walser Smith and Donald Austin Smith, Jr. She attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill before transferring to Campbell University in Buie's Creek, North Carolina (NC) and graduating in December 2001 with a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in Religion. That following spring, in May 2002, she married her high school sweetheart, Jonathan Eagle Shores, Jr.. They returned, for a number of years, to Buie's Creek, North Carolina in order to pursue career and educational opportunities. Angela completed one-third of the required coursework for a Master's of Divinity degree at Campbell University Divinity School, knowing that a "traditional" ministry position was not where her gifts would be applied. Following an innate yet growing desire to help others and minister through teaching and counseling, she took a Family Therapy class that was part of the graduate counseling program. It was an instant fit and Angela earned her Master of Art's degree in Community Counseling from Campbell University in May 2006. She began the doctoral program in Counselor Education and Supervision at NC State University that same fall (August).

Early professional experiences for Angela included serving as Children and Youth Director at Dunn's Mountain Baptist Church, as Children's Minister at Memorial Baptist Church, and as E-Coordinator/Counselor for Campbell University Undergraduate Admissions where she counseled and advised prospective students and families about admissions requirements. Angela's graduate counseling internship was a blended position in

the Office of Academic Advising and the Career Center at Meredith College, a women's college in Raleigh, NC. Following her internship, Angela held the position of Assistant Director of Academic Advising at Meredith College. Additional professional experiences at Meredith College included serving as the Interim Director of Academic Advising and teaching First Year Experience (FYE) classes to incoming first year students. In these positions, Angela focused on helping students see the connection between academic coursework and their career interests, supporting at-risk students, serving on the Disability Committee for the college, and coaching students with learning disabilities. She also collaborated with and provided advising training and support for the faculty advisor program. While at Meredith, Angela also gained experience in supervision of graduate and undergraduate interns. Before leaving Meredith College, Angela returned to a blended position with advising and career counseling, which allowed her to return to a counseling focus which she is extremely passionate about – career development and following life dreams! This passion for career development led her to pursue certification in the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Angela has sought as many opportunities as possible to grow as a professional, holding positions as a contract counselor for Clayton Counseling Services in Clayton, NC during her doctoral program, and as an adjunct instructor for Mount Olive College, Peace College, and Campbell University at the undergraduate and graduate levels, and as an instructor at NC State University through the Preparing the Professoriate Program.

Angela is currently a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in North Carolina and National Certified Counselor (NCC); she serves a selective caseload of clients at a local

private practice while also working to grow her own private practice focused on counseling and consultation. She also teaches undergraduate and graduate courses at Lenoir-Rhyne University, Liberty University Online, and Montreat College, and serves as a writing consultant to Montreat College for curriculum development in the human services and graduate mental health counseling disciplines.

Beginning her in master's degree program, Angela has been a member and active in professional counseling associations, including the American Counseling Association, American College Counseling Association, NC Counseling Association, NC College Counseling Association, National Career Development Association, NC Career Development Association, the Licensed Professional Counselor Association of NC. She has served in leadership roles at the state and national level in these associations, as well as presented at state, regional, and national conferences for these associations. Angela was recognized as an Emerging Leader in the Southern Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (SACES) and currently serves as Membership Committee Chair of the NC Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (NCACES). Angela is a member of Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, and Chi Sigma Iota, the Counseling and Academic Honor Society International, where she has served as Secretary/Treasurer, President, and Past President for the Nu Sigma Chi chapter at NCSU.

Angela has also volunteered in positions that provided additional opportunities for personal and professional growth, including service to the Family Readiness Program of the 145th Logistics Readiness Squadron of the NC Air National Guard Base in Charlotte, NC, to

the Women's Ministry at Fuquay Varina United Methodist Church (FVUMC), as a Sunday School teacher at FVUMC, and as a member of the Preschool Program Support Team at First Baptist Church Preschool in Morganton, NC.

Angela and her family currently reside in Morganton, North Carolina. She continues to blend counseling and teaching opportunities while seeking God's call to serve in the ministry role God has planned for her.

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woman and example of how to rely on God for strength in life and all its challenges. And thank you, posthumously, to Mamaw Walser (Sweet Alice). I wish you could be here to share in this. You two showed me (and continue to show me) what it means to be a fighter and I believe I got my independent spirit from you! There are not enough pages to write all the ways our times together have shaped me and influenced me.

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The following is a testimony and acknowledgement of the work of my Lord Jesus Christ, my Creator God:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:1-5)

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 14, 6-17)

And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

*“For your sake we face death all day long;
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”*

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-39)

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, (Colossians 1:9-11)

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord. (Colossians 3:23)

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. (2 Corinthians 9:8)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the history and development of professional identity within the profession of counseling and the challenges that have emerged along that path. This examination of professional identity background includes possible contributing factors to professional identity as proposed by current research, a rationale for the current study, a statement of the current problem that the study will address and information regarding the purpose of the study. Additionally, terms significant to fully understanding the study are defined and an overview of the organization of the study is given.

Background

An individual's profession or career, what it is that he or she *does*, is a key component of who he or she is, a central aspect of identity, for many. Work or career contributes meaning to one's life, occupies a large amount of an individual's time, energy, and emotions, and significantly contributes to an individual's sense of self-esteem and identity (Bjorkland & Bee, 2008). While work contributes to one's overall personal identity, it also influences an individual's professional or career identity. Professional identity "is the term used to describe how a professional sees him/herself" (Dollarhide, Campen, Gibson, McCallum, & Camp, unpublished) and offers an opportunity for individuals to "make sense of their work and their lives" (Pistole & Roberts, 2002, p. 1). Brott & Myers state that professional identity is "one's self-conceptualization as a professional" (1999, ¶ 3). Professional identity, then, serves as a filter or lens through which individuals see themselves at work and while doing work, as well as a means for organizing their life roles

and what it means to do the work they do. It involves an individual's perceptions about self and work. Achieving this sense of professional identity is "usually thought to be a vital part of becoming a mature professional" (Hansen, 2010, p. 102). Developing a professional identity involves defining oneself, creating or understanding one's identity; it is a critical component of human development and can be translated into the career or professional arena. This translation means that defining one's self as a professional or career person is also critical to developing into a mature and stable professional (Hansen, 2010). Developing a sense of professional identity is a cornerstone for professional or career adulthood in a way that is similar to the psychosocial model of personality development where the task of developing an identity is critical for individuals as they move into adulthood. A stable identity involves "a set of values, belief systems, goals, and attitudes that provides individuals with a sense of coherence and continuity" (Blustein and Noumair, 1996, p. 433). Therefore, in the sense of professional identity, a stable identity lays the foundation for a professional image that aligns with the way an individual views him or herself and congruity with other life roles. In the process of developing a professional identity, individuals gain a sense of responsibility for their role in their profession, commit to ethical behavior as a member of that profession, and cultivate their pride for the profession (Bruss & Kopala, 1993; VanZandt, 1990). Both the professional identity itself and the process of developing the professional identity contribute to continued professional growth and dedication to the profession. Professional identity development is a life and career long process (Brott & Meyers, 1996).

The idea of professional identity is not unique to any specific profession; that is, all professions have a professional identity that individuals within that career possess or can develop. Brott & Myers (1999) and Pistole & Roberts (2002) state that professional identity for counselors provides a frame of reference for understanding one's roles. Counselor professional identity involves an individual picturing him or herself as part of the professional community in which he or she is involved (Gibson, Dollarhide, Moss, 2010). Furthermore, the professional identity for counselors involves integrating professional training with individual characteristics in the context of one's professional setting (Nugent & Jones, 2004). This means that counselors take the training they have received and combine it with personal characteristics such as beliefs, values, and work ethic, and interpret that based on their setting and the requirements of that professional setting and roles expected of the counselor.

Hansen (2010) suggests two approaches to considering professional identity. The first is from a "modernist epistemology" approach where "professional identity is established by the profession" (p. 102) and individuals who are part of the profession take on or adopt the identity that their profession prescribes to its members. The second is a "postmodernist view of professional identity that is informed by the value of diversity" (p. 102) and proposes that professional identity is defined by the individuals of the profession. Hansen further proposes, as part of the postmodernist view, that professional identity is "fluid and diverse" (2010, p. 103) and is dynamic, being influenced and altered by professional context or setting of the individual. This implies that a professional counselor could have a slightly different or

diverse professional identity in a college counseling setting than he or she would have in a community or agency setting. This does not negate the idea that there exists some core or central components to the professional identity, but that there are contextual factors that shape it and create diverse identities within a single profession.

Similar to professional identity are the concepts of professionalism and professional development. VanZandt explains that professionalism involves standards of competence, promoting the profession's image, and participation in professional development opportunities (1990). Skovholt and Ronnestad (1992) define professional development as "growth toward professional individuation" (p. 507), that is, continual growth in the direction of a professional body of "accumulated wisdom" (p. 507) from professional experiences. While professionalism and professional development are similar to and interwoven with the concept of professional identity, these involve behaviors and actions and can contribute to or influence professional identity as a way for an individual to perceive him or herself as a professional.

When considering the importance of professional identity to a profession, specifically the counseling profession, Hanna & Bemak (1997) state that professional identity serves to "conceptually unify counselors" (¶ 1) while Gale and Austin (2003) agree but expand the role of professional identity stating that it can also serve to differentiate counseling from other mental health professions and professionals. What is it that college counselors, school counselors, and agency counselors have in common as counselors? What components of their professional identity are similar between counselors who work with sex offenders, those

who provide career counseling to retired veterans, and those who use play therapy to assist children in their growth and development? In addition, what makes counselors different in identity from psychologists, social workers, or other professionals who practice psychotherapy (Gale and Austin, 2003)? Before understanding or defining that common professional identity, which can also articulate what makes counselors distinct from other helping professionals, it is necessary to explore how and why individuals enter the profession of counseling and identify as counselors. As previously mentioned, Hansen (2010) challenges readers to consider professional identity as being individually defined rather than being something that is universal. What do individuals have to say about their professional identity as counselors that can illuminate what makes counselors distinct as well as articulate what counselors have in common with one another across specialties and settings? What do the individuals within the profession and its training programs have to say about what it means to be a counselor and what contributes to that perceived identity as a counselor?

Rationale for the Study

Expanding on what was previously mentioned, the counseling profession as a whole has struggled to solidify its identity as a profession as well as to distinguish itself from other helping professions as unique (Gale & Austin, 2003). The professional identity of counselors continues to be a hot topic in the profession, as evidenced by the American Counseling Association's Vision 20/20 principles. Principle number one states "sharing a common professional identity is critical for counselors" (Kaplan, 2009, <http://www.counseling.org/20-20/index.aspx>). In order to move forward with the development of, or understanding of, a

common counselor professional identity, research has attempted to pinpoint the components of professional identity that exist for the counseling profession. In other words, “what exactly contributes to professional identity?” (Calley & Hawley, 2003, p. 5). Literature has suggested aspects of counseling, as a profession, that possibly contribute to a professional identity. Gale and Austin (2003) mention training and educational programs, membership in professional associations related to counseling, the counseling licenses and/or credentials that an individual pursues and holds, and the code of ethics that an individual subscribes to within his or her profession. Dollarhide, Campen, Gibson, McCallum, and Camp (unpublished) discuss the role of “professional context” (p. 5) in the development of or perception of a professional identity; this would mean that the setting or context in which one does his or her professional work is a contributing factor. Values, theoretical counseling orientation, history, counseling setting, counseling knowledge and skills, and professional activities have been identified as additional possible contributing influences to counselor professional identity (Brott & Myers, 1999; CACREP, 2009; and Calley & Hawley, 2003). To these components, Bruss and Kopala (1993) add “feelings of pride for the profession” (p. 686) as part of a professional identity.

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) dedicates its entire Section 2 of the 2009 Standards to the concept of professional identity in counselor training programs, identifying one set of core areas of competency and activity that constitute professional identity for counselors-in-training. Among the components of professional identity that CACREP requires training programs to address is a

core body of knowledge taught in the program. This body of knowledge is taught through courses that address professional orientation, ethics, diversity, human development, career development, counseling skills and helping relationships, working with groups, assessment and evaluation, and research. Even CACREP, however, does not limit professional identity to coursework. The 2009 CACREP Standards opens Section 2 with the requirement of student identification with the counseling profession through involvement in related associations as well as participation in learning activities that promote professional growth. This standard demonstrates an understanding of professional identity as influenced by the acquisition of knowledge related to one's chosen profession, but that it is not simply about completing a particular set of courses. It is also shaped by continued professional development and activity in professional associations that would provide an opportunity for socialization into the profession. Therefore, we can understand professional identity to be multifaceted and become aware that there is not yet a definitive set of factors or components that contribute to a sense of professional identity.

Statement of the Problem

As previously mentioned, the counseling profession is striving to articulate a common professional identity. Research indicates that the development of counselor identity is significantly influenced during the master's training program (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; Calley & Hawley, 2008; Furr & Carroll, 2003; Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Brott, 2006). The participants in the studies by Auxier, Hughes, & Kline (2003), Furr & Carroll (2003), and Nelson & Jackson (2003) are graduate students in counselor training programs. The

research aims at understanding professional identity development and significant factors that influence student development during training. Furthermore, a study conducted by Busacca and Wester (2006) reports that graduate counseling students are concerned about their professional development as reported in answers on the Professional Development Concerns subscale of the Counselor Trainee Career Questionnaire (CTCQ). The PDC subscale defines professional development as “broadening one’s sense of the profession and identity as a counseling professional” (p. 182). Students’ concern about professional development, using this definition, indicates that master’s level students in counseling programs are concerned about identifying with their chosen profession and developing an identity as a professional counselor. Additional literature (Bruss & Kopala, 1993) describes the training received in a graduate program as “professional infancy...[where students have] an undeveloped sense of professional identity” (p. 686). This implies that during the master’s program, students develop or become able to articulate their professional identity as counselors. There is a gap, however, in what these research studies and articles offer in terms of understanding counselor professional identity. Several available articles are literature reviews and points of view papers that do not provide definitive research findings which articulate what the professional identity of counselors is, what it consists of, or what influences it. These pieces outline the history of the counseling and related professions in regards to identity, or challenge the profession to continue its pursuit of a common identity. Another study addresses “critical incidences” (Furr & Carroll, 2003) in an attempt to broaden understanding of student development overall. Still other research (Nelson & Jackson, 2003, and Auxier, Hughes, &

Kline, 2003) focuses more specifically on professional identity but is limited by small participant pools and often focuses on identity development rather than professional identity per se. Additional studies address the professional identity of counselor educators (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Dollarhide, Campen, McCallum, & Camp, unpublished). What is missing is research that attempts to discover or describe how graduate students view professional identity and what influences it while gathering data from as large a participant pool as possible. Furthermore, previous studies approach professional identity from a developmental perspective with Furr & Carroll (2003) also approaching it from a cognitive perspective. Previous research has considered the concept of professional *development* from a career perspective, but has not yet used the career perspective to consider professional *identity*.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to expand the available knowledge of counselor professional identity found in current literature using a phenomenological approach in order to capture rich descriptions of graduate students' lived experiences and perceptions of professional identity. As mentioned above, studies and articles have been published that discuss professionalism (VanZandt, 1990) and professional development (Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992) as well as overall career development (Busacca and Wester , 2006) of counselors and counseling graduate students. There have also been studies that discuss graduate students' perspectives on their development (Auzier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; Nelson & Jackson, 2003) and regarding critical incidences in their training programs (Furr & Carroll, 2003). This study will attempt to expand on these studies and ideas and explore the

idea of counselor professional identity from the perspective of students in counselor training programs. The goal will be to provide more detail about the experiences of graduate students in counselor training programs in regards to their perceived professional identities as counselors. Also, this study will address professional identity of counseling students from a career perspective. More specifically, it will focus on the professional identity from a social cognitive career theoretical framework.

Using a phenomenological approach, there are no preconceived research hypotheses. This study will seek to describe the perspectives of graduate students in counseling training programs in regards to their professional identity, that is, how they see themselves as counselors, and will further seek to describe the experiences of graduate students in counseling training programs in regards to what or who has influenced their professional identity as a counselor.

Definition of Terms

CACREP is an acronym representing the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. Counselor training programs voluntarily seek CACREP accreditation. CACREP sets forth standards for counselor training programs in general, and various program specialties specifically which can be found on their website at www.cacrep.org.

Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) is a qualitative method of data analysis that seeks to describe and uses the participants' experiences to provide understanding of the phenomena

researched, as well as allows researchers to go about “drawing conclusions from the data” (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997, p. 520). This method uses a research team to analyze data and identify commonalities in the responses of participants as well as draw conclusions about the meanings within the responses.

Counseling training program is a graduate level (master’s) degree program at a regionally accredited college or university that prepares individuals for entry-level counseling positions and prepares them for professional counseling licensure in their respective state. These programs have titles such as Counselor Education, Counseling, Professional Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, School Counseling, Marriage and Family Counseling, College Counseling, and Career Counseling. Further, these programs are offered as Master of Arts, Master of Education, or Master of Science degrees.

Counseling student is an individual enrolled in a counseling training program at least half-time as defined by their college or university’s enrollment policies.

Counselor professional identity refers to the identity that an individual has of him or herself as a professional counselor.

Phenomenology is “the study of the shared meaning of experience of a phenomenon for several individuals” in which the data gathered during research are focused into “a central meaning or ‘essence’ of the experience” (McCaslin & Scott, 2003, p. 449). The CQR approach fits well into phenomenological study as the researcher attempts to identify a core meaning or essence, a key component of both phenomenological study in general and the CQR method specifically.

Interpretive Phenomenological Approach “goes beyond mere description of core concepts and essences to look for meanings embedded in common life practices”, meanings which “are not always apparent to the participants but can be gleaned from the narratives produced by them” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728). This specific approach to phenomenological study is, again, a great fit with the CQR method and does not stop at simply describing the collected responses or phenomenon studied. Rather, the researcher(s) make(s) conclusions about the meaning(s) embedded in the participants’ responses.

Professional identity “is the term used to describe how a professional sees him/herself” (Dollarhide, Campen, Gibson, McCallum, & Camp, unpublished); “one’s self-conceptualization as a professional” (Brott & Myers, 1999, ¶ 3).

Self-Efficacy refers to an individual’s “beliefs about their capabilities” (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002, p. 262). Lent, Brown & Hackett, referencing Albert Bandura, explain that self-efficacy is cultivated through learning experiences to include “(1) personal performance accomplishments, (2) vicarious learning, (3) social persuasion, and (4) physiological and affective states” (2002, p. 262).

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provides background on the topic of professional identity, discusses the rationale and need for the study, as well as the gap in current literature and research available. Chapter 2 is a literature review that critiques articles relevant to counselor professional identity that have informed the content or structure of this study. It also critiques Social Cognitive Career Theory and John Holland’s Person-Environment Fit theory

as possible theories that can inform the study. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology for this study and will provide information on the participants and instrument(s) used in the study. It will also describe the qualitative approach of the study and the data analysis procedures used. Chapter 4 will discuss the results of the research and Chapter 5 will examine the implications of these results for the counseling profession as well as the contributions to the current body of knowledge on counselor professional identity. Limitations and areas for future research will also be addressed.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will examine theory that can inform the current problem of professional counseling identity and that can, perhaps, assist in understanding professional counseling identity. Specifically, social cognitive career theory will be critiqued as a source of theoretical foundation. Additionally, this chapter will review and critique available literature on professional identity as well as current literature addressing self-efficacy as it relates to counselors in training. Finally, the chapter will synthesize the gaps in current literature and address directions for future research in the area.

Theoretical Foundations

To date, several studies and literature reviews have been published which consider professional identity of counselors and the counseling profession. The research studies that have been published consider professional identity from a developmental perspective, addressing the way counselors in training develop their professional identity using a phenomenological approach (Nelson & Jackson, 2003) or a grounded theory approach (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; Brott, 1996, and Myers and Brott, 1999). An additional study by Furr and Carroll (2003) considered professional identity in terms of critical incidences from a cognitive perspective. There have not been any studies found that consider professional identity of counselors or counselors in training from a career perspective. The framework of social cognitive career theory, as a component of the larger umbrella of career construction theory, provides a lens through which to consider professional identity development in general, as well as specifically for counselors in training.

Career construction theory attempts to understand the career journey from a variety of perspectives, and blends “person–environment fit and developmental, psychodynamic, and social learning–based perspectives on career” (Hartung & Taber, 2008, p. 77). Since career construction theory offers a broad framework for understanding career choice and career journey by considering a variety of elements and influences, it provides opportunity for a deeper and more complete picture of what contributes to counselor identity. It allows for the examination of significant and key influences that have shaped the career path and professional identity of counselors and counseling students. Career construction theory purports that careers “are constructed” (Savickas, 2002, p. 154) and consists of 16 propositions that focus on social and occupational roles, with career roles providing an opportunity to focus one’s personality, the influence of contextual factors on career pathway, characteristics of individuals and professions (that is, person-environment fit), and occupational satisfaction (Savickas, 2002). As previously stated, Hartung and Taber (2008) explain that career construction theory blends learning-based approaches to understanding career with other approaches. Social cognitive career theory (SCCT) is an example of a learning-based approach to understanding career (Brown, 2002) and provides opportunity to explore and understand the factors that influence career choice and pursuit among individuals. An overview of SCCT will examine the constructs and models of SCCT as well as explore the use of SCCT in understanding various phenomena and the career paths of individuals. The construct of self-efficacy will be examined in greater detail during the literature review as it relates to counselor training.

Overview of Social Cognitive Career Theory

Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) “focuses on several cognitive-person variables...and on how these variables interact with other aspects of the person and his or her environment (e.g...social supports...) to help shape the course of career development” (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2000, p. 36). SCCT looks at the environment, support systems, and influences, among other factors, from the individuals’ context that have also guided the career journey. Variables from the individual’s environment are divided into two categories depending on the level of influence they have on the process of making career choices (Lent, et al., 2000). These categories are distal and proximal, with distal variables referring to those that “affect the learning experiences through which career-relevant self-efficacy and outcome expectations develop....examples include the types of career role models to which one is exposed and the sort of support or discouragement one receives for engaging in particular...activities” and “proximal influences include[ing] the adequacy of one’s informal career contacts” (Lent, et al., 2000, p. 37-38). These two categories of influences, considered together, can help tell the story of why someone chose a particular career, how he or she was influenced and by whom or what in his or her journey, and how he or she understands his or her professional identity development as a counselor based on these contextual factors and influences.

Key Constructs and Definitions. Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) consists of three major constructs or key concepts: self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals (Chronister & McWhirter, 2006; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, 2000, 2002; Zunker, 2002).

The theory provides working definitions for each of these constructs that make the theory straight forward to understand and apply. Specifically, self-efficacy refers to individuals' "beliefs about a specific performance domain" (Zunker, 2002, p. 90) or their "beliefs about their capabilities" (Lent, et al., 2002, p. 262). Lent, et al. (2002) emphasize that self-efficacy is cultivated through learning experiences to include "(1) personal performance accomplishments, (2) vicarious learning, (3) social persuasion, and (4) physiological and affective states" (p. 262).

Outcome expectations also refer to personal beliefs held by an individual, this time in regards to the "consequences or outcomes of performing particular behaviors" (Lent, et al., 2002, p. 262). These outcome beliefs could refer to external motivators or rewards received from certain behaviors as well as personal or intrinsic rewards and can be shaped by learning activities (much the same as self-efficacy). Additional learning experiences that can influence one's outcome expectations include "observation of the outcomes produced by other people...[and] the reactions of others" (Lent, et al., 2002, p. 263).

The third key construct in social cognitive career theory is goals. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2002) explain goals as "the determination to engage in a particular activity" (p. 263). In other words, goals are the factors that drive individuals to pursue a particular activity related to a career interest; goals provide the foundation for an individual to maintain particular career behaviors. For Lent, et al. (2002), goals, within social cognitive career theory, provide a vehicle through which individuals implement "personal agency" (p. 263).

One central component of social cognitive career theory that is not identified as a core

construct, but which is infused in the three conceptual models as influential, is the idea of contextual and person variables. Lent, et al. (2002) identify “gender, race-ethnicity, physical health or disability, genetic endowment, and socioeconomic conditions” (p. 268) as examples of contextual variables that influence the career development of individuals. The idea of contextual and person influences is apparent in the choice model as impacting learning experiences and opportunities and thereby influencing the constructs of self-efficacy and outcome expectations, and the theory authors discuss the impact of contextual variables in a variety of ways (Lent, et al., 2002). With this emphasis on context and person factors, in addition to the five pages dedicated to defining and explaining both contextual and person variables in their 1994 monograph (Lent, et al.), it seems as though contextual and person variables would be a fourth construct for the theory to assist in explaining the processes and models put forth by the theory.

Social Cognitive Career Theory Models. In addition to the three core concepts (self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals), social cognitive career theory provides three models for organizing these constructs. The three models are also straightforward and provide concepts that build on each another. The interest development model states that self-efficacy and outcome expectations directly impact or influence the development of interests (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002). This model offers a cyclical view of the interplay of self-efficacy, outcomes, goals, and interests. The developed interests lead to the development of goals that allow individuals to be immersed in the area of interest and when successful achievement of goals is the result of this pursuit, self-efficacy is increased and outcome

expectations reinforced, thereby affirming interests (Lent, et al., 2002). Although the contextual factors that are influential components of this theory are not presented as key constructs of the theory, they are mentioned for their impact on the interest development model. Specifically, contextual factors such as gender-related bias in accessing specific careers or practicing related skills can limit the self-efficacy or outcome expectations an individual will develop, and in those instances, the interest in particular career fields would not be considered because the individual would perceive a low self-efficacy or low outcome expectation related to that interest (Lent, et al., 2002).

The second model within social cognitive career theory is the choice model. Lent, et al. (1994) express this model as “a developmental extension of the process of basic interest formation” (p. 94). The choice model expands on the ideas and processes of the interest development model by focusing on career-specific interests, goals, and outcomes. Within the choice model of SCCT, the theorists recognize the impact of contextual factors even more, emphasizing that context can impact one’s self-efficacy and outcome expectations and thereby impact career choice differently than one’s interests alone would. Lent, et al. (2002) identify two types of contextual factors that impact career choice and how the key constructs of the theory potentially interact within the conceptual models. These contextual factors are background influences, including “opportunities for skill development, cultural and gender-role socialization processes” (Lent, et al., 2002, p. 275), and “proximal influences [such as]emotional and financial support...job availability in one’s preferred field, sociostructural barriers” (Lent, et al., 2002, p. 275). As mentioned in conceptual model one (interest

development), contextual factors can influence an individual's self-efficacy and/or his or her outcome expectations, and therefore the choices he or she makes about careers and the goals that he or she pursues.

The third model proposed to organize the theoretical constructs is the performance model. Similar to how the choice model extends the ideas of the interest development model, the performance model serves to extend the connections among the constructs within the overall theory. It begins by taking the career-related choice that one has made and considering performance and the theory constructs through that career choice lens. Within the context of one's career choice, the individual's self-efficacy and outcome expectations are influenced by past performance and ability, which serves to inform future performance goals within the career path. Both performance goals (already shaped by self-efficacy) and the individual's self-efficacy for goal attainment per se, influence the level of attainment of the performance goal. As with the other models, this is a cyclical process whereby the level of attainment continues to influence and reaffirm outcome expectations and self-efficacy for the individual (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, Figure 3).

Considering the three models together, the "interest and choice models involved *choice-content goals* (for instance, the type of career field one intends to pursue), [and] the performance model emphasizes *performance goals*, referring to the level of attainment toward which one aspires within a given performance domain" (Lent, et al., 2002, p. 279). For example, the interest and choice models consider such goals related to an interest in helping others and a goal to pursue a degree in counseling while the performance model is

concerned with goals such as passing a state counseling exam or becoming a licensed counselor. The theory's comprehensiveness is evident when examining the three models, the way they each incorporate the key constructs of the theory, and the manner in which the models build upon one another.

Testability of Social Cognitive Career Theory. Lent, Brown, and Hackett (1994) conducted a meta-analysis of current research to test their theory hypotheses and propositions. The meta-analysis revealed that the theory construct of self-efficacy is correlated to the concept of interests as purported in the interest development model of SCCT, and that “a combination of self-efficacy and outcome beliefs predict interest better than does self-efficacy alone” (Lent, et al., 1994, p. 111). Further meta-analysis revealed that in regards to the choice model within SCCT, there is a significant relationship between interests and choice goals and that both self-efficacy and outcome expectations have an effect on goals (Lent, et al., 1994). When considering the performance model, the meta-analysis of current research indicated a correlation between the construct of self-efficacy and performance as well as a significant correlation between performance and outcome expectations (Lent, et al., 1994). In addition to providing the results of their meta-analysis, the theorists also suggested future directions for testing the theory. Lent, et al. (1994) suggested future testing of “the possible roles of self-efficacy and outcome beliefs in interest development...the connection of self-efficacy and outcome beliefs to goals...[and] learning experiences that shape self-efficacy and outcome expectations” (p. 113), in addition to proposing testing individual hypotheses of the theory related to the conceptual models and

constructs. Lent, et al. (2002) further indicated that the performance model in SCCT has been tested “in both educational and occupational settings” (p. 281), the outcome of which reveals “consistent correlations between self-efficacy and performance” (p. 281).

Chronister and McWhirter (2006) provided additional information on ways in which social cognitive career theory can be tested, conducting an experimental study of SCCT-based career interventions on battered women. In this study, SCCT was used as the foundation for two career interventions which were applied and tested within a community setting for female survivors of domestic violence. The study revealed success in using SCCT constructs and models in the intervention (Chronister & McWhirter, 2006).

Theory integration. Social cognitive career theory is a highly integrative theory that attempts to blend past and current theoretical constructs in a comprehensive manner, striving “to complement existing theories and to build connecting bridges to other theories of career development” (Zunker, 2002, p. 88). Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2002) suggest that theory development, with the goal of integration, should focus on connecting related concepts, providing fuller explanations of outcomes common to related theories, and addressing the relationship between theory constructs that appear diverse in nature. More specifically, Lent, et al. (2002) designed SCCT to accomplish these goals as well as emphasize “certain experiential and learning or cognitive processes that can help to account for important...phenomena in other career theories, such as how types develop in Holland’s scheme” (p. 257). Lent et. al (2002) emphasized that SCCT “is intended to offer a potentially unifying framework” (p. 258). Social cognitive career theory builds on Albert

Bandura's general social cognitive theory, specifically trying "to adapt, elaborate, and extend those aspects of Bandura's theory that seemed most relevant to the process of interest formation, career selection, and performance" (Lent, et al., 2002, p. 258). The theory authors link SCCT with John Krumboltz's social learning theory, sharing the focus on learning experiences (Krumboltz, Mitchell, & Jones, 1976). As mentioned previously, SCCT's authors indicate that it complements John Holland's career theory while also being unique from it and extending some of Holland's constructs. Specifically, they state that SCCT, like John Holland's career theory, "assumes that under optimal conditions people tend to select career options that are congruent with their interests" (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 2002, p. 273). SCCT expands that construct conceptualization, emphasizing "personal goals as forming an important intermediate link between interests and actions; it also identifies self-efficacy and outcome expectations as shapers of interest patterns and as co-determinants of choice" (Lent, et al., 2002, p. 274). This demonstrates how SCCT integrates the common constructs of interest and career choice from Holland's theory within its own theoretical framework while also building on the concept. SCCT also integrates constructs from other career theories into its models including the concepts of values, self-efficacy, satisfaction, and abilities (Lent, et al., 2002; Zunker, 2002). The degree to which SCCT integrates constructs from existing theories and expands them into interrelated and straightforward conceptual models while considering new influences results in a theory that is practical for building interventions for career development needs of populations as well as useful for understanding the journeys of individuals to a particular career path.

Generalizability and multicultural considerations. Social cognitive career theory considers the influence of contextual and person variables on the key constructs of self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals. Due to the consideration of contextual and person variables, SCCT is generalizable across cultural groups: “SCCT was designed to aid understanding of the career development of a wide range of students and workers, including persons who are diverse with respect to race-ethnicity, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, age, and disability status” (Lent, et al., 2002, p. 282). Several research studies have been conducted using SCCT models and constructs to examine and understand the career journeys of diverse populations. Hackett and Byars (1996) examined African American women’s career development through the lens of SCCT, specifically considering the construct of self-efficacy, as well as vicarious learning and performance concepts from social cognitive career theory. Fouad and Smith (1996) tested several of the hypotheses and propositions from SCCT on middle school students using a sample of 750 students that was significantly ethnically diverse: “58% were Hispanic, 17% were African American, 17% were White, 3% were Asian (primarily southeast Asian), 3% were American Indian, and 2% indicated other race or ethnicity” (p. 340). Their results indicated that there were significant effects of person variables on the construct of outcome expectations (Fouad & Smith, 1996). Furthermore, Tang, Fouad, and Smith (1999) examined factors influencing Asian Americans college students’ career choices, testing social cognitive career theory models. Fabian (2000) studied how career interventions based in SCCT were applicable for individuals with mental health disorders, examining specifically the constructs of self-efficacy and outcome

expectations. Morrow, Gore, and Campbell (1996) also considered the usefulness of SCCT for diverse populations, applying SCCT principles to the career journeys of lesbian women and gay men in an attempt to understand the impact of “societal influences... environmental and contextual influences shape academic and career-related interests through their impact on self-efficacy beliefs and outcome expectations” (p. 136). Lent, Brown, and Hackett (2002) also reported that research has been conducted considering the application of SCCT for individuals with disabilities. Chronister and McWhirter (2006) applied SCCT principles to career interventions for battered women. These studies demonstrated the generalizability of SCCT constructs and variables to diverse populations, with diversity including ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, mental health status, and disability status. This, in turn, demonstrated that SCCT is applicable to understanding the career development and career-related issues of diverse individuals that may comprise counselor training programs.

Literature Review

The most relevant articles currently available from a literature review have been critiqued for strengths and weaknesses, and to provide information for the current study. The content of the articles focused on two topic areas: self-efficacy and professional identity. Of the self-efficacy articles, two considered self-efficacy and counselor development, and a third examined the influencing components of self-efficacy in counseling students. Of the professional identity articles, two reviewed from the literature directly studied the professional identity development of counselors in training, one addressed significant events during the training program for counselors in training, and a final article addressed the

professional identity of counselor educators with the assumption that counselor educators directly influence the professional identity development and perceptions on professional identity of counselors in training.

Self-Efficacy

Testing models of counselor development with a measure of counseling self-efficacy. Melchert, Hays, Wiljanen, and Kolocek (1996) provided a brief overview of studies that have applied self-efficacy and self-efficacy theory to counselor development. The authors created an instrument to measure self-efficacy and studied whether self-efficacy of counselors was related to clinical experience. This article was selected because it examined self-efficacy of counselors in training, which is the population of interest for the study outlined in this manuscript.

The participant pool for the study by Melchert, et al. (1996) consisted of 138 counseling psychology students or licensed professional psychologists. Seventy-four percent of the participants were women and 26% were males. Of the 138 participants, 34% were students in their first year of their master's program while 22% were in the second year of their master's program; 38% of the participant pool consisted of students in a doctoral program and the remaining 5% were professionals. Experience levels of the participants ranged from having no clinical experience at all to having over 15 years of experience. The authors report a 92% response rate on the survey, a very strong response rate.

The authors created the Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSES) to assess "knowledge and skill competencies related to the practice of individual and group counseling and

therapy” (Melchert, et al., 1996, p. 641). They stated that the instrument items were based on literature review and agreed upon by all study authors in order to be included. The CSES used a 5-point Likert-type scale to gather information from participants regarding “confidence in their counseling abilities” (Melchert, et al., 1996, p. 641). The authors used the Self-Efficacy Inventory, which “measures the same construct as the CSES...to examine the convergent construct-related validity of the CSES” (Melchert, et al., 1996, p. 641).

Multiple regression analysis was used and the results reported that the level of training and amount of clinical experience of participants “accounted for a large proportion of the variance in CSES scores” and that “level of training accounted for slightly more of the variance” (Melchert, et al., 1996, p. 642). This indicates that counselor training has a high impact on the self-efficacy of counselors and counseling students and has slightly more of an impact on this self-efficacy than does the amount of clinical experience. Additional analysis using an analysis of variance revealed four levels of training groups as well as different groups based on clinical experience. The significance of these results is that the identification of separate training groups supports the idea and findings that self-efficacy changes over time in the training program because otherwise there would not be distinct groups identified by the results of self-efficacy measures.

The authors identified several limitations to this study. The participants for this study were counseling psychology students and professionals, and as stated by the authors, did not include students from other mental health training programs or professionals from other mental health specialties. Are the counseling behaviors examined in this study similar

enough to students in counselor training programs and licensed professional counselors that the results could be generalized? An additional limitation identified by the author is that the study examines just one aspect of counselor development (self-efficacy). A third limitation, not identified by the authors of the study, but that provides an opportunity for future research is the fact that all participants were affiliated with the same university. What differences might exist between self-efficacy levels at training programs of different sizes, with access to differing resources, and with different accreditation credentials? Would these factors influence self-efficacy significantly, if at all? Conducting self-efficacy studies among students and professionals affiliated with other types of training programs would strengthen the results.

Factors that influence self-efficacy of counseling students: An exploratory study.

Tang, Addison, LaSure-Bryant, Norman, O'Connell, and Stewart-Sicking (2004) explored various factors that have an impact on the self-efficacy of students in counselor training programs. This article was selected because it addressed the factor of self-efficacy and also examined the population of interest of the current manuscript – counselors in training. The study conducted by Tang et al. (2004) was informed by findings from previous studies, specifically that “counseling course work and related work experience accounted for 43% of the variance in counselor self-efficacy [and] [i]nternship experience was found to have a positive impact on a student’s self-efficacy” (p. 71). Based on these findings, the authors designed a study to “investigate counseling self-efficacy of graduate students in counselor education programs to determine whether Bandura’s (1986) self-efficacy theory applies”.

Participants were 116 counselors in training at three training programs which were CACREP accredited and three training programs which were not CACREP accredited, with 43% of participants being enrolled in CACREP accredited programs. Women comprised 83% of the participant pool and 27% were men. The participants included individuals who identified as Caucasian (83%), African American (13%), and other races/ethnic groups (4%). The average age of participants was reported as 32.17 years and the average years of prior work experience reported was just over two years for students in CACREP accredited programs and almost 3 ½ years for students in non-CACREP accredited programs.

Instrumentation included a questionnaire to capture demographic information of participants. Among demographic questions, the authors asked about the number of courses students had completed in the areas of study set forth by CACREP standards. Participants were also asked to complete the Self-Efficacy Inventory, a 20-item questionnaire that asked “respondents to rate their confidence in their ability to perform tasks in five domains of counseling: academics, assessment, individual counseling, group and family intervention, and case management” (Tang, Addison, LaSure-Bryant, Norman, O’Connell, & Stewart-Sicking, 2004, p. 74).

Counselor training programs were recruited until three CACREP accredited programs and three non-CACREP programs agreed to participate. The demographic questionnaire and Self-Efficacy Inventory were administered to participants during classes. Classes targeted were ones in which students nearing the completion of core courses were enrolled as well as those in which students starting or finishing field placement were enrolled. Participation in

the study was anonymous. Data were analyzed using “a two-group multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)” as well as a “multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA)...to determine whether the differences (if found) between the two groups would remain when all the above variables were controlled” (Tang, Addison, LaSure-Bryant, Norman, O’Connell, & Stewart-Sicking, 2004, p. 75). The noteworthy result from the study reported by the authors is that there was “no significant difference between the two groups on total counseling self-efficacy” (Tang et al., 2004, p. 75) with the two groups referring to students in CACREP programs and those in non-CACREP programs. Also worth noting was the finding that “self-efficacy was most strongly linked with course work...internship hours..., and clinical instruction” (Tang et al., 2004, p. 76). These results support social cognitive theory principles, affirming that self-efficacy is increased when individuals have successful experiences. That means that when counselors in training have successful experiences in their training programs, self-efficacy for those experiences and similar future experiences, increases.

A major limitation of this study, as background for the current manuscript, is that the authors sought to compare CACREP and non-CACREP program students on the basis of self-efficacy to see if accreditation status impacted students’ self-efficacy. The authors drew conclusions that accredited programs could possibly require more of the clinical experiences that seem to have a significant impact on self-efficacy. This conclusion was not entirely accurate since some programs without CACREP accreditation require clinical hours equivalent to CACREP standards. The findings do, however, inform the current study by

indicating that counselor training programs impact one level of counselor development (self-efficacy).

Self-efficacy and counselor development: Testing the Integrated Developmental Model. Leach (1997) examined the Integrated Developmental Model (IDM) of supervision and counselor development in regards to self-efficacy and the development of counselors in training. This article was selected because it addressed the construct of self-efficacy as well as the population of interest for the current manuscript – counselors in training. It was also selected for review because the Integrated Developmental Model (IDM) considers counselor development with a focus on counselor identity struggles throughout development (Leach, 1997). Could IDM provide a framework for considering how self-efficacy and counselor identity are related?

Participants included 142 students enrolled in master's and doctoral level counselor training programs. The authors intentionally sought out participants from programs that represented geographic diversity. This will assist in making the results generalizable to various types and sizes of counselor training programs. The authors indicated that 54 participants were enrolled in master's programs, 30 enrolled in doctoral programs, and 58 enrolled in doctor of psychology programs. The reported composition of participants was unclear and confusing. If part of the participant pool consisted of students in doctor of psychology programs, what types of programs are the other participants enrolled in – counselor education, counseling psychology, other?

The instrument used in the study was the Counseling Self-Efficacy Inventory, a 37-

item questionnaire that measured “counselor beliefs in working with clients” (Leach, 1997, Instruments Section, ¶ 1). The authors indicated that higher scores on this scale indicated higher levels of counselor self-efficacy. Participants were also asked to complete the Supervisee Levels Questionnaire-Revised, a 30-item instrument which describes the constructs of the Integrated Developmental Model. Additionally, participants completed demographic questions about sex, age, and number of practicum semesters completed.

Using a “three-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA)” considering the factors of developmental level, client type (depressed or sexually abused), and amount of experience (based on number of clients seen). Overall results indicated that “Level 2 trainees reported greater self-efficacy overall on the five COSE factors than did Level 1 trainees” (Leach, 1997, Results Section, ¶ 3). This means that as counselors in training advance to higher levels of development based on the Integrated Developmental Model, their self-efficacy increases. As indicated previously by Leach, professional identity is also an increasingly significant factor as counselors in training advance to higher levels of development. This indicates that there could perhaps be some correlation between self-efficacy and perceptions of professional identity.

One limitation to this study is that it examined the self-efficacy of counselors in training with regard to working with clients who were depressed or had been sexually abused (Leach, 1997). Furthermore, the conclusions drawn in the discussion section of the article addressed self-efficacy related to students’ work with diverse clients rather than looking at self-efficacy more holistically. However, by examining self-efficacy related to work in

specific settings or with specific client populations, researchers could understand more about how self-efficacy and professional identity are related because professional identity could be more articulated in instances where students are specializing in their practice and training.

Professional Identity

Identity development in counselors-in-training. Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003) used a grounded theory approach to understanding how master's level counseling students developed professional identity, conducting interviews and focus groups. This article was selected because the writers attempted to understand the context of development and how experiences influence this development of identity, thereby falling into the career construction framework of understanding professional choice and development. In critiquing this study, research design, participant sample, and procedures were considered and overall strengths of the article examined.

As is recommended for qualitative research, the authors explained the underlying philosophical perspective of their research and approach (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008). After a brief discussion of the background of grounded theory, the authors shared that their perspective is a constructivist approach (Auxier, et al., 2003). They further shared that the assumptions underlying their research included the premises that reality is based on participants' experiences and created within social contexts, there is a connection between researchers and participants and this connection itself can create meaning for understanding the events being studied, and that understanding is increased as the interactions between researchers and participants continues over time (Auxier, et al., 2003). Providing these

underlying assumptions and the framework for their research allowed readers to understand the research and results within context.

Auxier, et al. (2003) use “typical case sampling” (p. 27) for their study. This is a form of purposive sampling, which is common to qualitative research. Qualitative researchers strive to find a sample of participants that share a common experience which the researchers wish to consider in the study, searching for individuals from that group who are willing to share their experiences and who can convey those experiences and the meanings they have gleaned from them (Heppner, et al., 2008; Nicholls, 2009, a & b). Therefore, the authors’ use of this form of purposive sampling was appropriate for the research they conducted and fit well with their grounded theory approach.

The sample of participants included eight master’s level counseling students who were full time in their program. They were all in the second year of their training program. Participants included four women and four men with an overall median age of 30.5 years old. Seventy-five percent of the participants were in the mental health counseling program and only 25% percent were enrolled in the school counseling program. Results were not separated based on program selected, but the ratio of program selection could impact the experiences of identity development based on different courses taken through electives or internship placement and experiential learning situations that differ between programs. A more equitable distribution (50%-50%) would have strengthened the sample.

The researchers used both individual interviews and a focus group to gather data for this study. Individual interviews were conducted in two rounds. A strength of the study is

that the original interview questions were created based on the authors' review of themes found from current literature in counselor development, as well as based on the authors' observations of counselors in training programs. There were three open-ended questions used in the initial interviews and following interviews, transcripts of the recorded interviews were analyzed to identify themes. Using the themes identified, Auxier, et al. (2003) then created questions for use in second round interviews to clarify interview questions and concepts in the questions that may not have been clear initially, and then used them to collect additional data. This is in keeping with the recommendation that themes should be used to shape additional and continued collection of data throughout the study (Heppner, et al., 2008).

The authors provided the questions used in both the initial round of interviews as well as during second-round interviews, allowing readers to see how data collection helped them further clarify their process and additional data collection. For example, an initial question was "What experiences have been most important to you in your development as a counselor?" (Auxier, et al., 2003, p. 28) and a second-round question that was asked after data analysis was "What has been the role of course work and readings in your learning to be a counselor?" (Auxier, et al., 2003, p. 28). Additionally, the researchers moved from initial question concepts such as personal characteristics and self-concept through data analysis to more specific and clarified questions regarding how students processed feedback and how attitudes about learning have changed or developed throughout their program. By doing this, they used their data to continue to drive their research, an important aspect of qualitative

research, and more specifically, grounded theory research.

The researchers carried this concept a step further by analyzing data gathered from second round interviews and creating a visual representation of the theory that was emerging from the themes and relationships identified. In order to clarify and make sure that the theory they found to be emerging from the data was a true representation of the participants' experiences, they used the diagram during the focus group. These steps strengthen the both the process of the research as well as the results gathered.

The authors identified the biases and underlying assumptions that existed for them as researchers. They outlined these assumptions in the article so that readers would be aware of any ways that these might have impacted the research and analysis but also to help guide them in approaching the data during analysis in a less-biased way. In addition to bracketing their assumptions and biases, and continually discussing them throughout the research and analysis, the authors also identified triangulation procedures used that would increase the reliability of their findings. Auxier, et al. (2003) mentioned that one triangulation procedure used was multiple research methods, which included the individual interviews as well as focus groups, but also included observations and interactions with the students through supervision. Data from the observations and interactions, however, was not shared in the study, which could be considered a weakness despite the strength of using triangulation procedures.

The authors provided the results of their work as a “recycling identity formation process” (Auxier, et al., 2003, p. 32). Since the theory emerged from the experiences of the

participants, it is key to use descriptions from the data gathered to explain the findings. The authors did this. As they explained the concepts of the theory and identity formation process, they provided examples of what students said in the interviews as support for these constructs. As an example, when describing the construct of students processing evaluation and feedback received from others, they shared several participants' comments "I usually think about it some more on my own. I try to get feedback from outside, but also keep processing on my own.' 'Now I might ask, 'Does that really reflect who I am or what I want?' I do choose to look at it more critically.'" (Auxier, et al., p. 33). In keeping with qualitative research principles of providing descriptions from participants, the authors clearly provided solid descriptions from the data gathered as examples to support their understanding of the phenomenon studied and constructs of the emerging grounded theory. Furthermore, they sought confirmation from the participants that their understanding of the phenomenon and experiences of the students' was emerging accurately as the theory developed.

As mentioned by the authors, the fact that the sample of participants were all European Americans makes it difficult to generalize these findings and the theory that emerged to more diverse populations of counseling students (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003). Despite this limitation, however, the procedures followed were strong and the authors took precautions to make the findings of their study usable by future counselor educators and supervisors when working with students throughout their training process as they develop professional identities.

The authors stated that their research adds to current research on development of

counselors and that counselor educators can test whether it is relevant to their own settings. Due to the strong procedures and methods used, and the alignment with qualitative principles, specifically that they let the data and themes drive additional data collection and clarification, the findings could be more useful than the authors believe. These results could add to supervision theory and research as well and could be used to assist supervisors by providing them a foundation for further understanding their supervisees' process of development as well as providing prompts for exploration questions and discussion in supervision.

Professional counselor identity development: A qualitative study of Hispanic student interns. Nelson and Jackson (2003) used semi-structured interviews and a qualitative analysis to examine how master's level counseling students develop a professional counselor identity. The article was selected due to its focus in the interview questions on social cognitive influences such as experience, knowledge, and relationships. It also provided a multicultural perspective on the issue of professional identity development; the participant pool consisted completely of Hispanic students due to a lack of literature found by the authors that addressed the lived experiences of this population of counseling students.

The research method used by the authors was a qualitative phenomenological method with the intent of describing the experiences of Hispanic counseling student professional identity development according to Hispanic counseling students. The authors stated a lack of expectations for what the research will reveal and therefore did not provide any bracketed

biases or assumptions. They did not state out right whether their approach was one of descriptive, critical, or interpretive phenomenology, but, based on the information provided in the results section of the article, it was assumed that they used a descriptive phenomenological approach. They do use language late in the article that encouraged readers not to make interpretations and that the study was “exploratory” (Nelson & Jackson, 2003, p. 12), all indicating that they took a descriptive approach to the phenomenological methods used. While it is not required, it is certainly emphasized that researchers using this approach “not conduct a detailed literature review prior to initiating the study” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 727). It is evident from the literature referenced and the structure of the introduction of the article, that the authors were very much in the current literature, citing several previous studies that informed their use of particular interview questions and their focus on Hispanic students. Bracketing is also encouraged when using a descriptive phenomenological approach (Lopez & Willis, 2004), however, the authors did not mention using this method of keeping biases from influencing the study. The authors did not demonstrate strong adherence to many common phenomenological approaches; therefore, the results could have been weakened. Lopez and Willis (2004) stated that it is common that phenomenological researchers do not discuss, in written reports, their research methods in regards to the approach and underpinnings of the approach. It could be, therefore, that they were limited to a particular amount of space when submitting their manuscript and were also following typical behavior of phenomenological researchers, and opted to provide greater detail in their results section rather than in the methods section.

Eight Hispanic students in a counseling training program who were in the practicum or internship phase of the program participated in the study. The median age reported was 42 years but the age ranges are not provided; therefore, readers do not know if all participants were close to this median or spread out, offering a variety of life backgrounds based on age. The sample included identical numbers of students in practicum and internship; 75% were female and 25% male. All but one student in the sample was in a community/mental health counseling program, with the remaining student enrolled in a school counseling program. Similar to the Auxier, et al. (2003) article, results are not separated or analyzed based on program track but with such high numbers of students enrolled in the community counseling program, readers may wonder what impact program has on identity development.

Although not explicitly stated, criterion-based sampling was used. The researchers were interested in the experiences of Hispanic students, and they targeted for their study the identified 40% of the total practicum/internship students who were Hispanic. Once students who met the criteria under study were identified, the final sample was determined based on a combination of students volunteering after being contacted by the researchers about the study and compatibility of potential participant and researcher schedules for interviews. There were four students who met the criteria but who declined to participate and their age range was identified as “20’s” (Nelson & Jackson, 2003, p. 5); what impact might their participation, being younger than the reported median age of the sample used, had on the results?

A semi-structured interview was used that consisted of eight open-ended questions.

The authors provided the questions used in the interviews, which were based on questions used in a previous study of family therapists by separate researchers. There was no information provided regarding why the authors selected these questions, the study they came from as the basis for their research, or how they believed these questions to be the best to gather the information they were seeking in their study. The primary researchers did not conduct the interviews. Rather, researcher assistants were used to interview participants. The assistants also made observations about the participants and transcribed the tapes; all data was then turned over to the primary researchers (Nelson & Jackson, 2003).

The authors provide very limited information about the data analysis process, and simply state the use of “the grounded theory approach” (Nelson & Jackson, 2003, p. 6). They vaguely mention coding and searching for themes and meanings, as well as developing interpretations. The results that are provided would be more useful, and more reliable, had the authors provided more detail about the specifics of their analysis process. The authors reference Strauss and Corbin as they mention their use of grounded theory approach for data analysis and later mention the task of “constantly comparing data” (Nelson & Jackson, 2003, p. 6), which is a technique developed by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (Heppner, Wampold, Kivlighan, 2008). It appeared that the authors used a variety of methods without articulating them well or providing criteria for why they used the techniques they used. This weakened the results that the authors purport from their study.

As already mentioned, the authors focused a great deal of their manuscript on the results of their study, perhaps due to journal restrictions for submissions rather than a weak

research design. The authors identified seven themes from the data, three themes that they found were consistent with current and prior literature on professional identity development, and four that they found to be unique to Hispanic counseling students and their professional identity development. For each theme, with the exception of the Accomplishment and Relationship themes, the authors provided quotations from the participants' interviews as descriptions. For example, for the theme of experiential learning, the authors share that their supporting data from a participant interview stated "'Classes helped, but experience made all the difference' [and] 'Internship reinforced that I am on the right track, going where I need to go, doing what I need to do'" (Nelson & Jackson, 2003, p. 8). Although the authors provided data from the interview transcripts to support the theme identification, a key component of qualitative research is the idea of thick, rich descriptions of the data (Martin, P., 2009). As the authors identified themes from the data in their research, they do not provide such descriptions for most of the themes. One exception is for the personal growth theme, where they report from their data:

I've seen that it doesn't matter what techniques you use. Clients use them in their own and best way to reach their goals. There are times you don't know what it was you said or what you did that helped them, and then you know they have been using your techniques in their own and best way. (Nelson & Jackson, 2003, p. 7).

Had the authors provided rich descriptions such as this one for all of the themes identified, the results would be strengthened.

As mentioned, there were two themes for which the authors did not provide

descriptions from the participants' interview data as support. These two themes, Accomplishment and Relationships, were two of the four themes identified as being unique to Hispanic counseling students. It would be valuable if the authors had provided examples from the interview transcripts of data that support the development or identification of these themes, especially since they were unique to the target population of this study. Doing so not only would have added to what can be said about the professional identity development of Hispanic counseling students, but it also would have strengthened the current literature available in general about counseling students' development of professional identity.

Critical incidents in student counselor development. Furr and Carroll (2003) examined what critical incidents master's level counseling students identified as having a significant impact on their development as counselors. The research attempts to examine "external events that trigger counseling student development" (Furr & Carroll, 2003, p. 483), therefore focusing on aspects of context. An open-ended questionnaire was used to gather information from students, and coding was used to identify themes among critical incidents. This article was selected because the investigation also attempted to understand influences on counselor development and included cognitive aspects of this developmental process. The critique included an examination of the research design, participant sample, instructions and the research variable, including how it was defined, and analysis procedures.

The authors used a phenomenological approach for their study; they attempted to understand the experiences of the counseling students related to perceived significant events that impacted their development as counselors. Furr and Carroll (2003) explained that the

interest was “in learning about the impact of [critical incident] experiences on the participants’ development as counselors” (p. 485). The authors asked student participants to “respond to an open-ended question regarding the nature of critical incidents in their graduate education or outside of graduate education that had influenced their development as counselors” (Furr & Carroll, 2003, p. 485), seeking information from the lived experiences of the students in an attempt to understand how students perceived their experiences and development.

Eighty-four participants were a part of this study. In addition to 55 students currently in their practicum or internship coursework in their master’s counseling program, 29 students completing the first semester of their counseling programs participated. The majority of the participants were women, which is representative of the composition of many counseling programs. The age range of the sample was 23 to 51 years, providing diverse life experience to the interpretations and understandings of identified critical incidences (as opposed to a smaller age range that would not provide as much diversity in maturity and life experience). The larger percentage of the sample, as in previous articles critiqued, were enrolled in a community/mental health counseling while the fewer number of students were enrolled in the school counseling program. (Furr & Carroll, 2003.)

The key variable for this study was that of the critical incident. The authors clearly and precisely defined the variable as “a positive or negative experience recognized by the counseling student as significant” (Furr & Carroll, 2003, p. 485). Furthermore, they provided the same clear and precise definition of the variable to the participants in the study. The

study instrument consisted of demographic information regarding the “number of hours completed in the counseling program, the number of hours in which they were currently enrolled, and enrollment status in Practicum, Internship I, or Internship II” (Furr & Carroll, 2003, p. 485). The instrument also included an open-ended question section that asked students to identify critical incidences in their program as well as why and how the event was significant to them (Furr & Carroll, 2003). The simplicity of the instrument allowed for maximum time spent by participants on answering the question and less energy and focus spent trying to understand what the instrument is asking.

The researchers began their analysis by reading all the responses given by participants (Furr & Carroll, 2003). Furr and Carroll reported 236 responses for the 84 participants, which averages to 2.8 responses per student (2003). One critique was that students were given only 30 minutes to respond to the demographic and open-ended question on the instrument (Furr & Carroll, 2003). Participants could have approached the task by writing about critical incidences that were the most significant and impactful since they were limited in the amount of time they had to write, or they could have approached the question in such a way as to write about critical incidents in the order that they occurred in the students’ program. The time limit could be a factor that influenced the outcome of the results and what was discussed by the participants based on how they approached the task. Additional responses that could have strengthened or expanded the findings of the study might have been identified if the time limit was extended.

The authors provided a clear and straightforward explanation of their analysis

process, which would allow for future researchers to easily model additional studies after their work. The analysis included coding the data from the participants' responses, grouping response information into meaning units, "the events participants described as critical incidents that had influenced them during the time they were enrolled in the Master's in Counseling Program" (Furr & Carroll, 2003, p. 485). From there, Furr and Carroll categorized the meaning units and coded them into larger concept ideas. They identified nine categories of "(a) existential issues/value conflicts, (b) cognitive development, (c) perceptions of competency, (d) professional development, (e) perceived support from others, (f) perceived obstacles, (g) personal growth (within the counseling program), (h) personal growth (outside the counseling program), and (i) skill development" (Furr & Carroll, 2003, p. 485). From there, the researchers grouped codes into larger clusters based on the Beck model of cognitive development (Furr & Carroll, 2003).

Throughout the article, as Furr and Carroll (2003) reported their findings, descriptions were provided from the participants' responses to illustrate how the researchers assigned meaning units, codes, and clusters. When identifying meaning units, Furr and Carroll (2003) drew attention to language from participants such as "The stress of learning to be a counselor has affected my relationship with my husband' [and] 'My internship experiences have given me the opportunity to grow and learn more about myself than I would have ever thought'" (p. 485). These descriptions of the participants' experiences and perceptions strengthens the research findings. Furthermore, to strengthen the results produced from their analysis, Furr and Carroll randomly selected meaning units and codes to compare. They

reported 85% agreement among interpretations of meaning units and codes by the two researchers (Furr & Carroll, 2003).

As mentioned by Furr and Carroll, this study captured data from participants at one moment in time for them in their counseling program rather than following one group of students over the duration of their entire training program (2003). Using the results from this study as a starting point, additional research could examine the critical incidents reported by the same group of participants at multiple points in their program, which could reveal if the same events were significant throughout the program. Overall, this research provides a foundation for understanding professional identity development of counselors by identifying areas of importance to students and counselors in training that could be explored further in future studies.

The professional identity of counselor educators. Calley and Hawley (2008) examined the professional identity of counselor educators, rather than counseling practitioners or students in counseling training programs, assuming that counselor educators will transmit or teach their students about counseling professional identity based on their own (the counselor educators') identity as a counselor, as well as through modeling. The authors used "descriptive statistics, including frequencies and cross tabulations" (Calley & Hawley, 2008, p. 7) when analyzing their data quantitatively. This study can be identified as a quantitative descriptive design employing a survey as the method of data collection. It was selected, as the authors state, "because counselor educators are largely responsible for transmitting various aspects of professional identity to developing counselors, the

professional identity of the counselor educator is of critical importance” (Calley & Hawley, 2008, p. 6). Critique of this article included examination of the participant sample, survey design, and results reported, as well as an overall critique of the article.

The researchers identified 188 counseling training programs that were “full accredited” (Calley & Hawley, 2008, p. 7) by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). From the population of 188 programs, a random sample was identified of 40 programs. The researchers identified the sample as random stating that each of the 188 CACREP programs had a chance of being selected for the participant sample (Calley & Hawley, 2008). Having selected the sample of programs, the researchers identified the faculty members that taught in the program, verifying the faculty roster and contact information with the departments. Two hundred five counselor educators (faculty members in the counseling programs identified) received, by mail, the researchers’ informed consent and survey, the Counselor Educators: Professional Identity & Current Trends Survey (Calley & Hawley, 2008). The return rate was 34%, which is considered acceptable by some researchers, while others promote a 50% return rate or even an 80-90% return rate (Heppner, et al., 2008). The gender distribution among the 70 final participants in the study was almost equal and the age ranges identified included faculty who were ages 25 to over 65 years old in varying percentages, with the majority of faculty identifying as 46-55 years of age (Calley & Hawley, 2008).

The information provided on the sample included “time spent at current employment” (Calley & Hawley, 2008, p. 8) but did not provide clarification in the manuscript if that

meant time spent as a counselor educator (rather than as a counselor or some other field of employment) or if it referred to time spent at the current program or college/university.

While academic rank was reported, and non-tenure status was a selection option, there was no indication that adjunct faculty members were included in the study. Since individuals can select to be an adjunct for a variety of reasons, including holding a primary role as a practitioner, this faculty status could impact the overall professional identity information and would be worth adding to the literature.

While a 34% return rate may not lead to a high level of generalizability of results to the entire population (Heppner, et al., 2008), the participant pool of 70 counselor educators does provide a substantial first look at the professional identity information for this group of individuals.

Heppner, et al. (2008) discussed survey research designs and identified several steps in this method; the third step being “developing and/or selecting the survey inventories” (p. 228). The researchers in this article created their own survey and indicated that questions were developed “based on the current professional identity development literature...[with questions focusing] on tasks, academic training, current scholarship, research, and teaching endeavors of counselor educators described in the literature” (Calley & Hawley, 2008, p. 8). Before conducting the study, the survey was field-tested and clarified, which is recommended (Heppner, et al., 2008). Calley and Hawley used “24 forced choice items and 6 closed-question items” (2008, p. 9) based on their literature review and identification of themes from the literature related to professional identity. “The basic aim of survey research

is to document the nature or frequency of a particular variable...within a certain population” (Heppner, et al. 2008, p. 226) and this study captures that essence successfully to describe the nature of counselor professional identity, based on identified themes from current literature, within the population of counselor educators.

The researchers identified eight areas or themes that surfaced from the literature and guided the questions asked in the survey. When reporting the results of the information, the researchers did not provide data for each of the areas identified. Training and credentials, professional affiliations, and scope of professional activities were discussed in the results section, assuming that information provided regarding participants’ leadership in professional associations indicates their scope of professional activities. Information about participants’ theoretical orientation and pedagogical tools were also provided in the results section, however, information about participants’ focus of scholarship, service, and self-proclaimed identity were not included in the results section of this report. Had the researchers provided data for these additional areas, a richer and stronger foundation of professional identity for counselor educators could have emerged.

Data were given in the article regarding the training and degree composition of the department but sensitivity should be used in considering the picture this paints of counseling departments given that the reports may not be accurate. Participants were given choices as ranges of percentages (for example, 80-90% and 60-79% were possible range choices) by which to identify the academic composition of their department, that is, the academic training of colleagues (Calley & Hawley, 2008). They may not have provided accurate percentages

or even been confident of accurate percentages (especially if they were new or adjunct faculty members), therefore, data provided on the overall departmental training was weak.

Results included information regarding the counselor educators' behaviors in the classroom, specifically asking "how often they have invited a professional counselor as a speak in the classroom over the past year...how often the explicitly discuss the professional identity development of counseling students, [and] the types of texts and other educational materials used" (Calley & Hawley, 2008, p. 10). One critique of this information, relating to transmitting and modeling professional identity, is that the researchers did not ask participants how often they discussed their own scholarship and service, membership and leadership in professional associations, and attendance at professional association conferences in their classrooms or with student advisees. These activities would also indicate that faculty were modeling and transmitting professional counselor identity, perhaps more strongly than based on which text books were used or how often they were involved in student counseling associations in the program.

Although the authors did indicate that the theme of self-proclaimed identity guided the question development of the survey (Calley & Hawley, 2008), the results and discussions did not point to information from the data that related to this concept. Since one of the goals of this study was to "begin to explore the professional identity of current counselor educators" (Calley & Hawley, 2008, p. 4), data on self-proclaimed professional identity would have allowed the researchers to more effectively meet their study goals.

Furthermore, the survey question regarding "how often they explicitly discuss the

professional identity of counseling students” (Calley & Hawley, 2008, p. 4) provided an unclear variable in the research. Given that the question falls in the transmitting and modeling professional identity area of the survey (Calley & Hawley, 2008), the question implies that this discussion of student professional identity takes place in the classroom with the students. It further implies that it would be a variable related to teaching behaviors and pedagogy (similar to the way that licensed counselors are asked to speak to classes and counseling texts are used in the course). However, the data provided on the participants’ responses indicated that 79% of the participants discuss student professional identity with other faculty (Calley & Hawley, 2008). Therefore, this variable and the question on the survey related to it is unclear and does not seem to fit into the identified category of modeling professional identity that the authors suggest.

Overall, this research provided a significant foundation for understanding counselor professional identity through the role of counselor educators, but needed to be strengthened and developed further to be an even more useful addition to the current literature.

Synthesis and Future Directions

Identity development and cognitive development approaches and theory drove the research studies conducted by Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003), Furr and Carroll (2003), and Nelson and Jackson (2003). Social cognitive career theory added an additional dynamic by considering influences on counselors-in-training such as self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and contextual factors. SCCT “deals primarily with developmental tasks that occur prior to, during, and just after career entry” (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994, p. 117).

Due to the short-term nature of counseling training programs (48-60 credit hours), counselors-in-training are an ideal group to study – they have recently chosen counseling as a career field, entered a training program, and quickly approach the completion of core experiences (such as practicum and internship) before moving into the profession. SCCT provides a theoretical framework that is ideal for considering this population, and the referenced studies outline research designs that can assist in developing an understanding of professional identity development from the experiences and view points of the students (participants).

Considering all three articles related to self-efficacy collectively, researchers began to identify important considerations for counselor training programs. The Melchert, et al. (1996) study indicated that the amount or level of training has a significant influence on increased self-efficacy of counselors and counselors in training. The authors indicated that the results suggest “that the extended graduate training of doctoral programs...provides increases in professional self-efficacy and competence” (p. 642). This finding, set beside what other authors examining professional identity have found, implies that there may be some correlation between self-efficacy and professional identity development if self-efficacy increases over the period of training and counselor training programs are significant periods of time for the development of counselor professional identity. As stated previously, one component of social cognitive theory and an influencing factor of self-efficacy is vicarious learning. Tang et. al (2004) identified the internship clinical experience as an expression of that vicarious learning. Therefore, clinical experiences such as practicums and internships

stand to have a significant influence on the self-efficacy of counselors in training.

Furthermore, these studies explore the impact or influence of self-efficacy on counselor performance and counselor skills rather than the correlation between self-efficacy and professional identity. Does self-efficacy influence a counselor in training's professional identity as a counselor? Does the professional identity a counselor in training has or perceives influence his or her self-efficacy?

What was learned from the Calley and Hawley (2008) study was that there are potentially significant impacts that counselor educators have on counseling students and the development of their professional identity. Future research could compare the professional identity of counselor educators in specific programs with the perceived professional identity that students in their respective programs have of them as faculty as well as the level of professional identity the students have of themselves in the respective programs. Research could examine how well, if at all, professional identity information is being modeled and transmitted from counselor educators to students as well as consider ways counselor educators can encourage professional identity development of their students.

The sample used by Auxier, et al. (2003) represented a younger group of counseling students than the Hispanic sample used by Nelson and Jackson (2003) (a median age of 30.5 years compared to a median age of 42 years). Using the information gathered from both studies, a more generalizable understanding of counselor education students' experiences occurred and therefore provided a more complete picture. Adding the information from the Furr and Carroll (2003) study also provided a more comprehensive picture of counselor

student development; the age range of participants in that study is 23 to 51 years. What can be learned from all three studies combined can be a more powerful and a more illustrative picture of counselor identity development than any of the studies individually.

Each of the three studies that specifically focused on the professional identity development of counseling students (Auxier, et al., 2003; Furr & Carroll, 2003; and Nelson & Jackson, 2003) examined a slightly different aspect of counselor identity development. Furr and Carroll, 2003, used an open-ended prompt and allowed students to identify the events in their program that had been significant. The Auxier, et al. (2003) study added a bit more focus to the questions while still keeping them broad, asking students to identify significant events that addressed their development. Nelson and Jackson (2003) added an additional layer of focus through their questions by specifically asking about practicum and internship experiences and how others viewed the profession. Combining the questions asked in each of these studies could create a powerful approach to a deeper understanding of counselor identity development from the perspective of counselors-in-training.

Furr and Carroll (2003) provided a model study for capturing a larger amount of data from a greater number of students and considered the experiences of both practicum/internship students as well as those new to the counseling program. Future research based on this study could continue to gather data in this way and from students at both entry and exit points of the training program, but could benefit from more directed or focused questions related to professional identity development based on other literature and research available. Both the Auxier, et al. (2003) and Nelson and Jackson (2003) had small

participant samples but a more in-depth focus on understanding the experiences and perceptions of the participants. Future research based on these studies could utilize the same or similar questions asked during the interviews and focus groups while expanding the participant pool so that more generalized understandings of students' professional identity development could be made. The focus of Nelson and Jackson (2003) on the experiences and development of Hispanic students is critical, and future research should continue to examine the experiences of different ethnic and cultural groups in similar ways. Social cognitive career theory as a framework could aid this approach because it considers contextual influences such as ethnicity and cultural influences.

Auxier, et al. (2003), Calley and Hawley (2008), Furr and Carroll (2003), and Nelson and Jackson (2003) all examined professional identity development within the context of CACREP accredited programs. Future research could examine the professional identity development of students and counselor educators in non-CACREP programs and then compare how accredited and non-accredited programs (in regards to CACREP) promote or facilitate professional identity development in similar or different ways. Furthermore, Auxier, et al. (2003), Furr and Carroll (2003), and Nelson and Jackson (2003) used samples comprised of both school and community/mental health counseling students. In each study, the samples consisted of greater numbers of community/mental health program students. Future research could examine the differences, if any, that exist in the overall professional identity development of counselors based on which program was selected and what course work is different. Researchers could consider whether professional identity development,

when impacted by in-program learning experiences and knowledge development, occurs during core courses shared by students in all programs or occurs during program-specific courses when students are learning about being an counselor in particular settings. In addition, each of these three studies considers counselors-in-training. Future research is needed to examine how professional identity is developed after students are in their chosen profession and in their specific settings; in other words, how does professional identity continue to develop beyond the master's training program?

The development of a professional identity as a counselor is a lifelong process. This process begins with contextual influences, career choices, and beliefs about pursuing counseling as a profession, and is shaped by experiences in and outside one's training program in counseling. It is further influenced by role models and personal development experiences, and the process continues as the individual enters the profession. Researchers have begun to explore the middle of the process that occurs during training programs and provide guideposts for future research in the area that will allow for deeper understanding of professional identity development, from the perspective and understanding of the participants – the counselors-in-training. Future research will strengthen what is currently known about how counselors develop a professional identity during their master's programs, expand the knowledge on differences between cultural groups in regards to professional identity development, and provide critical information to assist counselor educators in facilitating professional identity development for students in their programs.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the design of the current study and outlines participant demographics. It also discusses the procedures used to conduct the research in two phases, which included a pilot study. Questionnaire construction and content, based on available literature and previous studies, adjustments to the questionnaire and procedures based on pilot study results, and methods used to recruit participants and deploy the questionnaire will be outlined. Participant demographics, characteristics of counselor training programs, and data analysis procedures for both phases of the research are also addressed.

Research Design

The overall study took a qualitative phenomenological approach to understanding the ways that counselors in training perceive professional identity of counselors. Specifically, this study took an interpretive phenomenological approach. The following assumptions underlie this approach:

1. It “goes beyond mere description of core concepts and essences to look for meanings embedded in common life practices. These meanings are not always apparent to the participants but can be gleaned from the narratives produced by them.” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 728).
2. The focus is on what individuals experience.
3. The reality that individuals experience is influenced by the world in which they live.
4. “Presuppositions or expert knowledge on the part of the researcher are valuable

guides to inquiry and, in fact, make the inquiry a meaningful undertaking” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729).

For this study, the reality and experience considered by the researcher was that of perceived professional identity as a counselor and the individuals of interest were counselors in training. Further, the researcher attempted to draw meaning from the responses given by participants. The researcher paid attention to the context of the experiences of participants as it relates to training programs. Throughout, the study focused on understanding what the participants experienced in their training programs and prior to their training programs rather than being focused solely on what the participants consciously know (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Lastly, it was the researcher’s journey of identifying as a professional counselor and being involved in a profession and a member of a professional association that is currently working to identify a common identity for the counseling profession that informed the interest in this topic. This interest led to the literature review and an understanding of what is missing from the literature that guided this study. While these experiences have guided the study, the researcher set aside assumptions about what the data would reveal about the perceptions that counselors in training have regarding professional counselor identity. This was done by journaling the researcher’s biases about professional identity of counselors and how counselors in training perceive professional identity. The researcher’s electronic journal entries, and results of the data analysis, were submitted for review by the researcher’s dissertation committee chairperson. The biases about counselor professional identity that CQR team members held that could have influenced data analysis were also journaled, with

this material being submitted for review by the researcher's dissertation committee chairperson as well. In an attempt to be transparent, and following the recommendations of the dissertation committee, I want to identify the following biases in regards to professional identity based on my own experiences, readings, and beliefs. I believe that having a mentor who identifies as a professional counselor impacts the mentee's perception of what it means to be a professional counselor. Furthermore, I believe that despite completing a training program in counseling and being in the process of completing licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), the way colleagues perceive an individual and his or her specific role at an institution, and whether colleagues perceive the individual as a professional counselor *can* impact or cause an individual to question his or her professional identity, or cause the individual to experience frustration related to his or her professional identity as well as job dissatisfaction. I also believe that a strong identity as a professional counselor can be maintained even in a work/career position that does not include "counselor" as part of the job title and which is traditionally not viewed as being a career/work role that other counselors would pursue or hold. Additionally, I believe that being a member of professional counseling associations, especially as a student, contributes positively to perceptions of being a professional counselor, and that an individual can identify as a professional counselor while still in his or her master's training program and even before completion of licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), realizing, however, that he or she cannot practice in a private practice without a license. I believe that faculty members play an important role in helping students develop an identify as a professional

counselor , or at least influence this development, by talking about their own professional identity as a counselor, by talking about their research in counseling and inviting students to participate in their research. I also believe faculty members play an important role in the way students perceive professional identity by talking about attendance at counseling association conferences and workshops, including their own presentations at such, and by encouraging students to become members of associations, attend conferences and workshops, and present at conferences and workshops alongside of or independently of faculty. My assumptions about counselor professional identity also include the belief that faculty members play an important role in helping students develop an identity as a professional counselor, or at least influence this development, by talking about licensure (their own and that of the student) and that training programs influence the development of professional identity in students by providing opportunities to network with professional counselors (i.e., professionals who identify as counselors) through formal and informal events and activities including, but not limited to, interviews of professionals, networking and career events, and student chapters of Chi Sigma Iota. I also believe that students in later stages of their training program can influence their own identity as a professional counselor, as well as that of newer students in the program, by being a mentor.

During the first meeting of the analysis team, the researcher recorded team member's biases. These included the assumptions that "professional identity for graduate students is linked to practicum/internship experiences", "graduate students have limited or dated information or 3rd party assumptions about professionalism in a setting", "supervisors at

practicum/internship sites shelter students from the realities of profession to keep them excited about the profession *[and this could limit their expectations or their perceptions of professional identity]*”, and “supervisors do not always give them real life experiences *[and this could limit their expectations or their perceptions of professional identity]*”. Team members further identified the following biases in regards to the topic of counselor professional identity: “students came to be in counseling because they had experiences as a camp counselor or were told they were a good listener *[and this could limit their expectations or their perceptions of professional identity]*”, “students had been in counseling so they thought it might be the career for them but did not realize there was “more to it” *[and this could limit their expectations or their perceptions of professional identity]*”, “reality does not match students’ perceptions so they potentially enter the profession dissatisfied *[and this could limit their expectations or their perceptions of professional identity]*”, and regarding question # 20 on the questionnaire, “one cannot get a job as a counselor without a degree so they may be limited or have a lowered scaling”. In regards to the analysis team member’s comment made about question # 20, the researcher disagrees, and this has been noted in journaling as a personal bias and assumption, as noted above.

Lopez and Willis (2004) emphasize that a common question within an interpretive phenomenological study is “How does the lifeworld inhabited by any particular individual in this group of participants contribute to the commonalities in and differences between their subjective experiences?” (p. 729). Therefore, this research study, in keeping with the assumptions of the interpretive phenomenological approach, also attempted to draw

conclusions about what is common among the perceptions of many participants that can illuminate an understanding of the professional identity of counselors. For this reason, an interpretive approach seemed more appropriate than a descriptive approach. Further, the interpretive approach was selected rather than the descriptive approach because of the focus on going beyond descriptions of perceptions and experiences to search for and draw out meaning from responses gathered from participants (Lopez & Willis, 2004).

Participants

A pilot study was conducted to elicit feedback on the questions included on the questionnaire developed. Five individuals were identified who were either currently enrolled in one of the 15 master's level counselor training programs in North Carolina or who graduated from one of the 15 master's level counselor training programs in North Carolina within the last 18 months and were asked to serve as an expert panel by completing the pilot study and providing feedback to strengthen the questionnaire. The pilot study participant pool included recent graduates from counselor training programs because they have the advantage of having completed their training program and are able to reflect back on their program and experiences. This allowed them to provide an additional perspective that could benefit the process of developing a quality questionnaire. Of the five pilot study participants that originally agreed to participate, only four returned completed materials resulting in a total pilot study participant pool of four individuals.

Participants for the second phase of the study were recruited from the pool of students who were currently enrolled in one of the 15 master's level counselor training programs in

North Carolina. The researcher did not have access to individual student contact information at the 15 North Carolina training programs, but was able to develop a list of training program coordinators and department chairpersons with contact information using the training program websites. Participants were recruited through the program coordinators and department chairpersons.

Instrumentation

The researcher created a questionnaire to be used in the pilot study and phase two of the research, and used the pilot study to guide the question content, wording, and order for phase two. Minor changes to the survey were made based on pilot study feedback and will be discussed in detail in the procedure section of this paper. Questions for the survey were written based on previous similar studies and literature reviews. Following an informed consent document (Appendix A), two opened ended questions were posed to participants: *1. What does it mean to you to be a professional counselor?* and *2. What or who contributes to an individual developing an identity as a professional counselor?* (Appendix B). Section 2 of the questionnaire (Appendix B) included 22 questions that collected demographic information about the participants and their counselor training programs, as well as more about the participants' perceptions of counselor identity. Of these 22 questions, 19 of the questions provided choices for participants to select from, one question had participants scale, and the final two questions offered choices for participants to select but also provided opportunities for them to elaborate in an open-ended way if they chose.

Question Development

The following sections will outline the questions included on the survey. Explanations for why questions were included are provided, pointing to available literature and previous studies conducted.

Section I: Question 1 asked *What does it mean to you to be a professional counselor?* (Appendix B) and attempted to blend the heart of several questions from previous studies. Nelson and Jackson (2003) asked participants the following questions “What does the process of becoming a counselor mean to you?”, “What would it take for you to feel that you had achieved a sense of identity as a counselor?”, and “What is your sense of how professionals outside the field of counseling view the field of counseling?” (pp. 5-6) in their study of Hispanic graduate students in counselor training programs. Question 1 allowed participants of the current study an opportunity to discuss the process of becoming a counselor that Nelson and Jackson alluded to, factors that contributed to one feeling as though they had achieved a sense of identity, and any perceived ideas that non-counselors have about the identity of the profession, while also giving participants a chance to discuss anything else that they believed to be important to the meaning of being a professional counselor. The question wording allowed them to talk about personal experiences and beliefs as well as those of others within or outside the profession that perhaps shaped their own thoughts and perceptions without binding students to one approach or the other for answering the question.

Section I: Question 2 *What or who contributes to an individual developing an identity as a professional counselor?*(Appendix B). Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003) asked participants questions about experiences, readings, and courses that were important in their development as counselor: “What experiences have been most important to you in your development as a counselor?”, “How have your experiences as a counselor, group member, or supervisee influenced your becoming a counselor?”, and “What has been the role of course work and readings in your learning to be a counselor?” (pp. 28-29). Nelson and Jackson (2003) also asked about the influence of coursework on students’ journey and their perceptions of the profession of counseling, as well as about significant events that had been influential to their development: “How has your graduate school coursework influenced the way you think about your role in the field of counseling?” and “What milestones or significant events, if any, have been most meaningful throughout your journey in this program?” (p. 5). Question 2 captured the essence of the questions used in previous studies and offered a broad question that intentionally attempted not to lead students to answer in a particular way about specific influences he or she may have believed the researcher wanted to hear.

Social cognitive career theory influence on these two open-ended questions is represented by the attempt to describe or understand the contextual variables that may have influenced participants’ ideas on professional identity. Do students report that their self-efficacy as a counselor or the outcomes they expect by becoming a counselor have influenced their professional identity or perceive that these factors influence the professional identity of

others? From SCCT we understand that person and contextual variables can influence learning experiences and thereby impact the career choices individuals make, as well as the way they perceive careers. Thus, these could also influence the perceptions participants have regarding professional identity. Since the two open-ended questions identified for this survey are both based in theory and based on previous studies, they are strong approaches to developing an understanding of the lived experiences of participants in regards to beliefs regarding counselor professional identity.

Section II questions, as previously mentioned, asked about participant demographics as well as their training programs (Appendix B). Participant demographic questions asked for information about their age, gender, ethnicity, counselor training program track, and number of credit hours completed in the program so far, as well as gathered data on participants' counselor training program experiences. These questions also asked whether or not the training program is accredited by CACREP.

Questions about counselor training programs and faculty included *Do the faculty in your program talk in class about joining professional associations?*, *Do faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars?*, *Do the faculty in your program talk in class about their research?*, and *Do the faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors?* The results of a study by Calley and Hawley (2008) which examined the professional identity of counselor educators helped to inform these questions. Because counselor educators are critical components of counselor training programs, behaviors identified by Calley and

Hawley (2008) as contributing to educators' professional identity could potentially provide information about the thoughts and perceptions students in the training programs have about professional identity based on educators' behaviors. Questions from section 2 that were informed by Calley and Hawley (2008) include 10, 12, and 14 (Appendix B). Brott and Myers (1999) and Dollarhide, Campen, Gibson, McCallum, and Camp (unpublished) discuss the importance of socialization into the profession as a key component of professional identity development. Additional questions included in the survey attempted to understand how students may perceive being socialized into the counseling profession during their training programs. Specifically, questions 7, 11, and 13 (Appendix B) addressed socialization into the profession. Questions 18 and 19 (Appendix B) used the information from previous questions and asked students to think about how various factors relate to self-efficacy (an SCCT construct) and professional development.

The final 3 questions on the survey are: (20) *On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents not at all and 10 represents very much so, to what degree do you identify as a professional counselor?* (with a statement that encourages participants to elaborate as they desire), (21) *Is counseling a first career for you or a career change?* (with a clarifying question of *What initiated the career change?* if participants indicate that counseling is a career change), and (22) *Do you have a mentor(s)?* (with a statement following to encourage participants to elaborate as they desire). Question 20 (Appendix B) is a scaling question, which is another type of qualitative assessment method (Barnes, 2004, p. 65), and as indicated above, asked participants to specifically consider their own perceived degree of identity as a counselor.

Questions 21 and 22 attempted to understand more about the social cognitive factors involved in participants' perceived professional identity and also addressed socialization (Brott and Myers (1999); Dollarhide, Campen, Gibson, McCallum, and Camp (unpublished)) through possible mentoring. Further, these questions (numbers 21 and 22, Appendix B) represent conceptualizations of the core constructs of SCCT by providing opportunities for students to elaborate on how, why, or what led to a career change or in what ways a mentor influences or has influenced their professional identity.

Questions 4-17 also reflect the interpretive phenomenological approach, specifically the attempt to answer this approach's question of "how does the lifeworld inhabited by any particular individual in this group of participants contribute to the commonalities in and differences between their subjective experiences?" (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). These questions help define or understand the lifeworld (counselor training program) of participants. Table 1 provides an overview of questions used and the source or sources of literature that contributed to each question.

Table 1: Question Development

Question	Influences on Development
Section I: Question I <i>What does it mean to be a professional counselor?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nelson & Jackson (2003) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the process of becoming a counselor mean to you? • What would it take for you to feel that you had achieved a sense of identity as a counselor? • What is your sense of how professionals outside the field of counseling view the field of counseling?

Table 1: Continued

<p>Section I: Question 2 <i>What or who contributes to an individual developing an identity as a professional counselor?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auxier, Hughes, & Kline (2003) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What experiences have been most important to you in your development as a counselor? • How have your experiences as a counselor, group member, or supervisee influenced your becoming a counselor? • What has been the role of course work and readings in your learning to be a counselor? • Nelson & Jackson (2003) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has your graduate school coursework influenced the way you think about your role in the field of counseling? • What milestones or significant events, if any, have been most meaningful throughout your journey in this program?
<p>Section II Questions 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calley & Hawley (2008) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Themes identified and used to guide their questions included training and credentials, professional affiliations, professional activities • Asked counselor educators questions related to how they modeled professional identity
<p>Section II Questions 7, 9, 11, 13</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brott & Myers (1999); Dollarhide, Campen, Gibson, McCallum, and Camp (unpublished) → socialization into the profession
<p>Section II Questions 18, 19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use information from previous questions to ask students how, if at all, these items influence self-efficacy or professional identity
<p>Section II Questions 21, 22</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Cognitive Career Theory influence (what contextual and person variables might have influenced)
<p>Section II Question 20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaling question; used as another type of qualitative assessment method (Barnes, 2004)
<p>Section II Questions 4-17</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How does the lifeworld inhabited by any particular individual in this group of participants contribute to the commonalities in and differences between their subjective experiences?” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729)

Procedure

Related studies have used various procedures for collecting data which have informed this study. Furr and Carroll (2003) used a one question open-ended survey that also included demographic information and were able to collect data from a large participant pool while others (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; Nelson & Jackson, 2003) used multiple open-ended questions in interview and focus group settings to collect more thorough responses from fewer numbers of participants. The procedures used in this study attempted to blend these methods in order to capture rich data from a significant sized participant pool in order to be able to generalize and apply results. Approval to conduct the pilot study was obtained by the researcher's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Data Collection: Phase One - Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to inform the final survey used. The researcher recruited five individuals who agreed to participate in the pilot study survey and provide feedback on the overall structure of the survey, individual question wording, and the order of the questions. The researcher used a convenience sample by asking current students and recent graduates from the 15 counselor training programs in NC, whom the researcher knew directly. Once the expert panel was recruited, the researcher emailed each participant an informed consent document (Appendix A) and the survey (Appendix B), both of which were in either a Rich Text Format (rtf) format. Four pilot study participants emailed the completed documents back including feedback on the overall experience, survey, and individual questions. Participation in the pilot study was not anonymous so that the researcher could

contact participants for clarification on feedback. As mentioned, a convenience sample was used. In order to insure that participants did not feel undue pressure to participate or respond to questions in any particular way because of their relationship with the researcher (participants were former colleagues, students, and supervisees of the researcher), the researcher reminded participants that their participation is voluntary and in no way should be influenced by their relationship with the researcher, previous or current, and that honest responses are critical for accurately conducting the research and reporting overall findings of the study. Additionally, all pilot study participants were aware of ethics in research based on completing coursework in their training programs regarding research ethics.

Participant feedback. Feedback from pilot study participants was used to strengthen the survey before deploying it to a larger participant pool. Specifically, participant feedback indicated that the questions were easy to understand as worded (100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed), the order of questions made sense/was logical (100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed), the questions seemed to fit together in a cohesive way for the topic being studied (100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed), and the questionnaire took a reasonable amount of time to complete (100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed). Additional feedback received from pilot study participants led to two specific changes in the questionnaire. Question #6 in the pilot study read “Clinical Mental Health Counseling” and was changed to read “Community Counseling/Clinical Mental Health Counseling”. Questions # 18 and 19 were altered to clarify the difference in their content and what they were asking participants to consider. Specifically, for question # 18, the

following phrase was put in all capital letters as follows: “YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT YOUR ABILITY TO BE AN EFFECTIVE COUNSELOR” and for question # 19, the following phrase was put in all capital letters as follows “THE WAY YOU PERCEIVE WHAT IT MEANS TO IDENTIFY AS A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR”. The paper and pencil/pen version of the pilot study, once the above changes were completed, was converted to an online survey before being deployed for Phase 2. Responses and feedback were sent to the researcher’s dissertation committee chairperson to review prior to moving forward with changes to the questionnaire. IRB approval was received for the changes outlined above.

Data Collection: Phase Two

Using feedback collected from pilot study participants as outlined above, the survey was finalized. An addendum to the originally approved IRB application was submitted and approved by IRB in order to proceed with phase two. The informed consent document (Appendix C) and final survey questions (Appendix D) were input into electronic format using Survey Monkey (Appendix E). The researcher emailed the survey link to the program coordinators and/or department chairpersons at all 15 counselor training programs in NC and asked that program coordinators distribute the information to their students using mass emailing distributions or program listservs. In order to insure that potential participants did not experience undue pressure to participate by receiving the request from their department chair or program coordinator, the researcher specifically asked program coordinators and department chairpersons to emphasize to students that participation in this study is voluntary, that they not make participation in this study a requirement for any course students are

enrolled in, and that they not offer extra credit to students for participating. An email was also sent to the Counselor Education and Supervision Network (CESNET) listserv to the attention of faculty in NC training programs, requesting that they consider sharing the request with any students currently enrolled in their courses. The same request was made of faculty members to attempt to keep students from experiencing undue pressure to participate. Following the initial request for participants, 22 individuals complete the online questionnaire. With the two pilot study participants' data, 24 participants' responses were recorded. A second request was sent out to program coordinators, department chairpersons, and faculty on CESNET. Following this second request for participation, an additional five participants' responses were usable (one participant's responses were not used because the participant indicated being a counselor educator rather than a counselor-in-training), for the total of 27 participants. All data were collected using the Survey Monkey system features and downloaded into an Excel document that has been saved on the researcher's personal computer and backed up on a removable storage device.

Data Analysis: Pilot Study

As previously mentioned, information gathered from the pilot study feedback form was reviewed by the researcher and based on these feedback forms, changes were made to the questionnaire before sending it out to potential participants for phase two. There were four pilot study participants; two were students currently enrolled in a counselor training program. The data collected from these two participants were manually entered into the spreadsheet downloaded from Survey Monkey and thereby added to the overall pool of data.

This was done to maintain the composition of the study participant pool as students currently enrolled in counselor training programs. Descriptive statistics were used to report the percentage of pilot study participants representing the various age ranges, ethnicities, gender, hours completed in their training programs, program track, counseling association activity, and accreditation status of their training program.

Data Analysis: Phase Two

Results collected from the Section II questions were analyzed by the researcher using descriptive statistics to portray the composition of the participant pool and the types of training programs represented. Specifically, participants' age ranges, gender, ethnicities, credit hours completed in their training program, program track, accreditation status of the training program, counseling association activity, and current enrollment in internship were reported as percentages of the total number of participants.

Responses gathered from the two main open-ended questions as well as the last three questions on the survey in section 2 were analyzed using the Consensual Qualitative Research (CQR) method. That is, CQR was used to analyze the narrative responses from participants to understand the perceptions and experiences of participants in regards to professional identity as counselors. According to the creators (Hill, Thompson, & Williams, 1997) of the CQR method, it is a qualitative method that "is clearly articulated so that other researchers can easily learn it and use" (p. 519). Hill et al. (1997) stress that CQR aligns with the fundamental tenants of qualitative research; CQR seeks to describe and uses the participants' experiences to provide understanding of the phenomena researched, as well as

allows researchers to go about “drawing conclusions from the data” (p. 520). They further report that when using the CQR method, data collection is done all at once rather than alternatively with analysis and a team is used for analysis until consensus is reached and an auditor checks the team’s work. Further, researchers move from identifying specific topic areas (domains) into core ideas, which the authors refer to as the “essence of what the person said” (p. 521). CQR is also unique in that it reports findings in a fluid and non-linear or non-sequential way. Hill, et al. (1997) share that CQR fits well with phenomenological approach to research, recognizing the importance that context plays and seeking to derive meaning from the participants’ words (p. 522).

Key components of the CQR method are identified as having “data gathered using open-ended questions”, using words to describe the phenomena of how counselors in training view professional identity, and using the context of the entire case to understand the smaller parts of the participants’ experiences (Hill, et al., 1997, p. 522). Hill, Thompson, and Williams explain that the CQR approach to data analysis involves a research team of three to five researchers to analyze the data using the consensus method and a primary researcher to serve as an auditor to check the work of the team (1997). Conclusions are then drawn from the data using the consensual method. Once data is gathered, analysis follows the three step process outlined by Hill, et al. (1997) and will divide responses from the open-ended questions into domains, pull out core ideas from this information for each response/case, and then create categories that pull together similar core ideas from across cases.

For these reasons, CQR was an ideal method for the analysis team to use. The

analysis team consisted of three doctoral students who had all completed a course in qualitative research methodology as part of their program. One team member had conducted qualitative research analysis previously using CQR, and the two other team members had not had any additional experience conducting qualitative research analysis or using the CQR method. The nature of CQR is that it can be quickly learned which is conducive for individuals who may not be experienced in qualitative analysis or who have had limited previous experience with qualitative analysis. Team members were given the Hill, et al. (1997) article so that they could become familiar with the CQR process. During the first team meeting, the steps of CQR were reviewed and questions discussed to ensure that all team members felt comfortable proceeding with analysis. During analysis team meetings, individual team members' biases were discussed and recorded and initial domains were identified by the team to use in individual coding. Initial domains were identified consensually based on discussion of the questionnaire items and purpose of the study. Team members then individually coded data using domains and when team members reconvened to discuss coding, one domain was added to the original list based on their coding of responses.

In a fluid and non-linear process, true to the CQR approach, team members identified core ideas and categories from their reading and analysis of participants' responses through individual work and team work, using the consensual approach to decision making regarding what the data said. Following the CQR process proposed by Hill, et al. (1997), core ideas were developed from considering the individual participants' responses, and categories were

identified based on the team's consideration of core ideas and all participants' responses collectively. The process followed the fluid and non-linear path that Hill, et al. (1997) discuss as the team members came to understand what the data meant as they moved from domains to core ideas to categories as well as in considering domains from the category level as well. Hill, et al. (1997) suggested checking categories for "representativeness to the sample" (p. 550-551). This step was not undertaken in the current data analysis due to the fact that this was the first CQR analysis conducted by two-thirds of the research analysis team. Hill, et al. (1997) did not indicate that this step was required for all studies using the CQR process, and in the provided flow chart of the CQR process (p. 526-527), this step is not included.

As Hill, et al. (1997) stated, an auditor reviewed the work of the analysis team. The researcher (principal investigator and dissertation author) served as auditor and did not participate in the process of analyzing responses, but did attend team meetings to take notes and answer questions, as well as to experience the team's process in order to better understand the results. By doing this, the researcher attempted to prevent any personal biases from influencing the analysis of the responses. Furthermore, by attending the team meetings, the researcher as auditor attempted to ensure that the conclusions drawn reflected a process of respect for team members, opportunities for all members to contribute, and reflected the data from the participants' responses (Hill, et al., 1997). The auditor also checked the conclusions drawn by the team to make sure they accurately reflected the meaning described by the participants in their responses to the open-ended questions. In reviewing the

conclusions drawn by the analysis team for this study, the auditor added a domain of “family and friends” within the core idea of awareness for both the Personal and Social category and Career category. Furthermore, the auditor noted that the core idea of “credibility bias” appeared more related to the academic category and core idea of training as an additional domain for understanding participants’ responses. The auditor presented the summary of the team’s conclusions with these additions and changes to the members of the analysis team; the team responded individually with their thoughts on the summary, the auditor made any adjustments suggested and then sent the information back out to the team again. Once all team members agreed that the auditor’s summary was an accurate understanding of the conclusions drawn, and therefore an accurate understanding of participants’ responses and perceptions of counselor professional identity from the perspective of counselors in training, the auditor (researcher and dissertation author) sent these conclusions, the summary of the team’s work and meetings, and the researcher’s electronic journal data from the experience, to the second level auditor for review to further bracket biases held by the researcher. As previously stated, the second level auditor was the dissertation committee chairperson.

Detailed results from the data analysis are reported in Chapter 4 of this manuscript and include domains, core ideas, and categories, as well as descriptions of the training programs and training program faculty as reported by participants.

Participant Incentive Procedures

The opportunity to participate in an incentive drawing to win a \$25 gift card was offered to participants. All pilot study participants were entered into the drawing unless they

requested not to be. No pilot study participants requested not to participate. At the conclusion of the electronic survey used in Phase 2, participants were given the link to a second survey (Appendix F) that they could complete if they wanted to be entered into the incentive drawing. After data collection and analysis, the researcher downloaded the names and email addresses of participants who had completed the second survey, added the names and email addresses of pilot study participants, and randomly drew one name from a hat as the winner of the gift card incentive. The winner was contacted via the email address provided and the gift card was mailed to the address indicated at that time by the recipient. Participants who entered the drawing but did not win were contacted using a blind copy email (so that participant privacy was maintained) to let them know that the winner had been drawn and to thank them for participating.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter will outline the results of the study, including the composition of the participant pool, a snapshot of the training programs participants were enrolled in at the time of the study, and some perceptions of participants in terms of professional identity of counselors. These results will be reported using descriptive statistics. Additionally, the results of the qualitative analysis will be reported and will describe the professional identity of counselors according to the experiences and beliefs of counselors in training.

Participant Characteristics

Results are initially reported for the pilot study participants in terms of demographics. Following those demographics, results represent the final participant pool from Phase 2 of the study (which includes two pilot study participants described below).

Pilot Study Participants

The pilot study pool represented a convenience sample of individuals in the researcher's primary contacts. Pilot study participants represented programs that are both accredited by CACREP as well as those that are not currently accredited by CACREP and provided feedback on the overall survey as well as individual questions. Pilot study participants were all Caucasian females; two were current students and two were recent graduates. One current student and one recent graduate represented a CACREP accredited training program, and one current student and one recent graduate represented a program not currently accredited by CACREP. Half of the pilot study participants were in the 26-29 year old age range, one indicated being 22-25 years old, and one was 35-39 years old. Pilot study

participants represented school counseling (1), community counseling (2), and college counseling (1) program tracks in their training programs. Membership in counseling related professional associations varied; 1 pilot study participant did not indicate being a member of any professional associations, 1 indicated being a member of the American Counseling Association (ACA), 1 indicated being a member of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and Chi Sigma Iota (CSI), and 1 indicated being a member of ACA and its divisions, the NC Counseling Association (NCCA), and the Licensed Professional Counselor Association of NC (LPCANC). Counseling was reported as a first career for 75% of pilot study participants, and the fourth participant indicated it was a career change but that “I always knew that I wanted to work with people in a human service field yet wasn’t sure exactly what area”. Participants were asked if they had mentors, and 75% of pilot study participants reported “yes”. Of the four pilot study participants, two were currently enrolled students; therefore, their results were added to those gathered in phase two and analyzed as part of the final participant pool.

Overall Participants

The final participant pool consisted of 27 individuals; 96.3% female and 3.7% male. The majority of the participants were 22 to 25 years old (55.6%); 22.2% were ages 26-29 years, 14.8% were 30-34 years old, and 7.4% were 50-54 years old. Caucasians represented 74.1% of the participants while the remaining participants represented African American (7.4%), Latino American (7.4%), Native American (3.7%), and multi-racial (3.7%; specifically Caucasian and Middle Eastern) ethnicities. One participant reported being an

international student.

Participants reported having completed a varied number of credit hours prior to the semester they completed the questionnaire. Specifically, one participant reported having completed 0-12 credit hours and the largest portion of participants (29.6%) reported having completed 49-60 credit hours, with others having reported hours completed between those two ranges and one participant having reported completing 61+ credit hours. Participants overwhelmingly reported being in their practicum or internship portion of their training program (74.1%). Given recent CACREP standard updates requiring increased hours for degrees, alongside North Carolina counseling licensure law updates that also require increased graduate credit hours to be licensed in the state, as well as differences in training program requirements (such as offering dual program tracks in school and community counseling), participants could be in the practicum and/or internship portion of their training programs and have completed varying numbers of credit hours from their counterparts at other programs across the state. Program tracks represented by study participants included Community/Clinical Mental Health Counseling (59.3%), School Counseling (25.9%), College Counseling (3.7%), and 11.1% other program tracks (specifically, Rehabilitation Counseling and Substance Abuse Counseling).

Professional association membership was reported by participants and Table 2 illustrates membership results.

Table 2: Participants' Membership in Professional Associations

Name of Professional Association	Number of Participants Indicating Membership
American Counseling Association (ACA)	18
One or more ACA Divisions	5
American School Counselor Association (ASCA)	2
American Mental Health Counselor Association (AMHCA)	1
NC Counseling Association (NCCA)	5
One or more NCCA Divisions	3
Licensed Professional Counselor Association (LPCANC)	5
NC School Counselor Association (NCSCA)	2
Chi Sigma Iota (CSI, Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society International)	15

When asked if counseling was a first career choice or a career change, 66.7% of participants indicated it was a first career, while 33.3% indicated it was a career change. Additionally, 66.7% of participants indicated that they have a mentor or mentors, while 33.3% indicated they did not have a mentor. Participants were also asked to what degree they identified as a professional counselor, using a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents not at all and 10 represents very much so. The average was a 7.44, with the mode being 7. One respondent did not scale the degree to which he or she perceived identifying as a professional counselor, and instead wrote “we cannot identify as professional counselors until we are licensed LPC post-graduation”. The participant went on to also write, “at that time, I think

I'll identify as an 8 because I will just be getting started in the career". The researcher examined the reported degree of identifying as a professional counselor comparatively, and looked at participants who reported counseling as a first career compared to participants who reported counseling as a career change. For the eight individuals who indicated counseling as a career change and also provide a numerical scaled response to the question, the average was 7.81, with a mode of 8. For the 18 individuals who reported counseling as a first career, the average was 7.83, with a mode of 7.

Counselor Training Program and Faculty Characteristics

Programs represented by participants were both CACREP accredited (92.6%) and programs not accredited by CACREP (7.4%). Training programs represented by participants in this study are led by faculty with various degrees. Participants were asked if faculty in their program hold degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education and Supervision; 37% indicated "all of them" do and 40.7% indicated that "most of them" do. One individual was not sure about the degrees held by faculty in that training program and 18.5% of participants indicated that "some of them" have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education and Supervision while "some have other types of degrees (such as, but not limited to, Clinical Psychology, Counseling Psychology, Marriage and Family Therapy, Social Work)".

Participants were asked about the licenses and/or certifications that faculty in their training programs held. Specifically, they were asked if faculty in their training programs were Licensed Professional Counselors and National Certified Counselors. The majority of participants (77.7%) indicated about their faculty that "all of them" or "most of them" are

Licensed Professional Counselors and a similar majority of participants (70.3%) indicated about their faculty that “all of them” or “most of them” are National Certified Counselors.

As the study by Calley & Hawley (2008) indicates, counselor educators are responsible for preparing counselors-in-training, and the behaviors they display in and out of class assist in transmitting perceptions and ideas of professional identity to students and future counselors. There are faculty behaviors that could potentially influence the professional identity of students in the programs where these faculty teach. Calley and Hawley used the foundation of faculty activities of “teaching, scholarship, and service” (p. 6) as a foundation for the behaviors they studied. Using and expanding on behaviors identified in the study by Calley & Hawley (2008), the current research asked student participants about behaviors they witnessed in their training programs.

When asked if faculty in their training programs talked about joining professional associations related to counseling, 100% of participants reported that “yes” their faculty did. Further, 92.6% reported that faculty in their programs talk in class about their (the faculty member’s) attendance at professional workshops, conferences, and seminars related to counseling, and 92.6% of participants reported that faculty also talk in class about and/or encourage students to attend counseling focused workshops, conferences, and seminars. The majority of participants (77.8%) also indicated that faculty talk in class about their research while only 48.1% offer or talk about opportunities for students to join them in their research. Participants were also asked specifically if faculty in their training programs talk about professional identity either in or out of class, and 96.3% of participants reported that “yes”

their faculty talk about professional identity of counselors.

Participants' Perceptions of Effectiveness as Counselors

One of the key constructs of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) is self-efficacy, particularly as it relates to an individual's selection of a particular career field. Using this as a backdrop, and attempting to understand more about how participants might perceive or identify as a counselor, participants were asked "do any of the following factors influence *your beliefs about your ability to be an effective counselor?*". The factors listed below in the table, as well as on the survey, were the previous survey questions answered by students.

Table 3: Factors Influencing Beliefs about Ability to Be an Effective Counselor

Factor (from previous survey questions)	Number of Participants Selecting Factor as Influential	Percentage of Participants Selecting Factor as Influential
Being a student member of counseling associations.	9	33.3%
Completing more courses in your training program.	20	74.1%
Having completed all of the content courses in your training program (that is, non-practicum or internship courses).	19	70.4%
Having participated in or completed practicum or internship.	25	92.6%
Being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program.	20	74.1%
Having faculty in your program that talk about joining or being a member of counseling associations.	11	40.7%
Having faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.	12	44.4%

Table 3: Continued

Having faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.	17	63%
Having faculty in your program talk in class about their research.	10	37%
Having faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research.	8	29.6%
Having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors.	20	74.1%
Having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education.	18	66.7%
Having faculty in your program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC.	19	70.4%

Participants' Perceptions of Identifying as a Counselor

Participants had already been asked if they experienced certain characteristics and/or faculty behaviors in their training programs. In an attempt to understand more about how participants perceived counselor professional identity, participants were asked “do any of the following factors influence *what it means for someone to self-identify as a professional counselor?*”. The factors listed below in the table, as well as on the survey, represent previous survey questions answered by students.

Table 4: Factors Influencing Self-Identifying as a Professional Counselor

Factor (from previous survey questions)	Number of Participants Selecting Factor as Influential	Percentage of Participants Selecting Factor as Influential
Being a student member of counseling associations.	16	59.3%
Completing more courses in your training program.	12	44.4%
Having completed all of the content courses in your training program (that is, non-practicum or internship courses).	13	48.1%
Having participated in or completed practicum or internship.	16	59.3%
Being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program.	18	66.7%
Having faculty in your program that talk about joining or being a member of counseling associations.	12	44.4%
Having faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.	13	48.1%
Having faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.	15	55.6%
Having faculty in your program talk in class about their research.	10	37%
Having faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research.	9	33.3%
Having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors.	16	59.3%
Having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education.	16	59.3%
Having faculty in your program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC.	15	55.6%

Qualitative Results

The CQR team consensually identified initial domains to use during individual coding of data. The initial domains were education, experience, professional development, respondents' own personal counseling experience, intent to pursue counseling licensure, intent to pursue counseling certifications, professors' background & job experiences related to counseling setting, professors' background & job experiences related to counseling in general, developmental level/age of respondent, CACREP accreditation, mentoring/supervision, and demographics of participants. Following individual coding, the team consensually agreed to add a domain of social justice, and removed the initial domain of "demographics of participants". The originally identified domain of developmental level/age was later changed by the team to developmental level, and was ascertained based on language used in participants' responses. The demographic information of participants was not given to analysis team members but responses revealed perceived developmental level. For example, participants wrote "I have limited experience", "As I am a student I do not yet see myself as a professional counselor", "Returning to a career required new training", and "I still feel very much like a student". Analysis team members determined that different developmental levels existed among participants based on statements such as these and that they influenced overall professional identity in some way. Table 5 outlines the categories, core ideas, and domains identified by the CQR team as they drew meaning from the responses.

Table 5: Categories, Core Ideas, and Domains

Category	Core Ideas	Domains
Personal and Social Realm of Counselor Professional Identity	Advocacy	Social Justice
	Personal and Social Awareness	Respondents' own personal counseling experience
		Family & friend influence
	Collaboration	Mentoring
		Collaboration
		Supervision
	Developmental level	First career
		Career Change
		Perceived Status
	Academic Realm of Counselor Professional Identity	Training
Mentoring		
		Professional Development
		Intent to Pursue Counseling Licensure
		CACREP accreditation
		Credibility Bias
		Intent to pursue counseling certifications (specialization)

Table 5: Continued

Career Realm of Counselor Professional Identity	Training	Mentoring
		Counseling-related Experience and Credentials
	Advocacy	Social Justice
		Career/profession Advocacy
	Awareness	Respondents' own personal counseling experience (experience with a counselor)
		Family & friend influence
		Influence of others

Based on the analysis of participants' responses to the survey questions, the analysis team concluded that counselor professional identity consists of three categories: (1) a personal and social realm or component of professional identity, (2) an academic realm or component of professional identity, and (3) a career realm or component of professional identity.

Personal and Social Realm of Counselor Professional Identity

As mentioned previously, counselor professional identity can be understood from the results of the current study to consist of three categories, of which the first is a personal and social realm or component of professional identity. The personal and social category of professional identity can be further understood from the core ideas of advocacy, awareness, collaboration, and developmental level.

Awareness. Within the personal and social realm, awareness describes the level of understanding a professional has of self and others and how this has influenced or played some role in the pursuit of becoming a counselor. This was indicated by comments about respondents' own personal counseling experience (as a client) as well as an understanding of influencing factors in their journey (such as the influence of family and friends). Participants wrote "I have always been a good listener...becoming a counselor felt natural", that they "have a genuine and sincere wish to help hurting people", and that being a professional counselors means "being honest about my own journey". Another participant wrote "I am also influenced by my passion for my fellow human being and how we all affect each other in some way". Additional responses illustrate the core idea of awareness: "the individual's background, education, life experiences, socialization"; "their own counseling process with a professional counselor...life circumstances"; "most importantly experiences from the individuals own life"; "everyone that interacts with that person throughout their lives molds their identity as a professional counselor"; "there is a lot of personal exploration required to develop an identity as a professional counselor". In regards to participants' indication that an awareness of the role or influence of family and friends, responses included "I believe my parents influenced my identity as a professional counselor because I witnessed my Dad in ministry and part of what he did was care for people at the point of their need, comfort during grief and support during loss" and "There are people in my life who have shaped my path as well as given me support and encouragement. While I don't think any of these people have played a large enough role to be considered a mentor, I don't want to discount their

contributions to my journey”. Another example from responses of how participants’ understood family and friends to influence professional identity states “I believe the professional counselors family and friends in their early life help them develop the traits found in a professional counselor (empathy, compassion)”.

Collaboration. The core idea of collaboration refers to experiences of mentoring and supervision that respondents discussed as being a component of their own professional identity, indicating that some aspect of professional identity is created, discovered, and/or understood through collaboration with others (mentors, supervisors, fellow students, other professionals). When answering the question “what or who contributes to an individual developing an identity as a professional counselor?”, one participant wrote “in terms of ‘who’, the people who have made the most impact on a counselor’s life shape their identity such as...mentors...” and another stated “everyone that interacts with that person throughout their lives molds their identity as a professional counselor”. Table 6 outlines additional responses made by participants that reflect the idea that collaboration is an instrumental component of counselor professional identity.

Table 6: Examples of Collaboration

Example from Participants’ Responses	Domain(s)
“Professors, professional and student organizations”	Mentoring
“My father is a mentor as he is a therapist”	Mentoring
“I have two mentors in my counseling program and they have helped me get involved in research, which I thoroughly enjoy, and they have encouraged me to continue onto a doctoral program.”	Mentoring

Table 6: Continued

“I believe that graduate school professors contribute greatly to developing an identity as a professional counselor.”	Mentoring
“Out of all the things that have helped me develop my identity as a professional counselor I would have to say that my experience as a hospital chaplain along with my supervision in that experience and my supervision in my internship experience in my clinical setting have given me the most insight into my identity as a professional counselor...”	Supervision
“My university practicum supervisor was a strong mentor for me and my site supervisors”.	Supervision
“I appreciate everything my supervisors give me in feedback and take it to heart...”	Supervision
“Meeting inspirational people, especially professional counselors.”	Collaboration with others
“I do have a mentor in the form of other older students in my cohort who have provided much experience and wisdom to me and who have advised me on many personal issues; thus, I definitely consider the people in my cohort I’m close to who are much older than me, my own personal mentors.”	Mentoring
“The professors that they [professional counselors] learn from and the mentors that guide them I believe are a huge part of developing a person’s identity as a professional counselor.”	Mentoring
“my practicum supervisors, both professor for the course and my actual on-site supervisor have been 2 of my greatest mentors”	Supervision; Mentoring
“at first our cohort, and then after graduation colleagues and supervisors/bosses.”	Collaboration with others; Supervision
“If I could wave a magic wand I would have counselors, psychologists, social works, and mft’s all working together in a cohesive profession.”	Collaboration with others

Developmental level. As a core idea within the personal and social realm of counselor professional identity, developmental level refers to whether counseling was a first

career choice or a career change, but also incorporates respondents' expressions of perceiving themselves as a student or professional, novice or experienced (that is, perceived status). Participants responded that "as I am a student, I do not yet see myself as a professional counselor", "I still feel very much like a student", and "we cannot identify as professional counselors until we are licensed LPC post-graduation"; these comments illustrate how one's perceived status, as a student, influences his or her understanding of professional identity. The impact or role of choosing counseling as a first career or as a career change also influences students' perceptions of counselor identity development.

The domain "career change" can be seen in participants' responses such as "I was in teaching prior to studying counseling. I was unhappy...I wanted to work with individuals and families in a more direct way in terms of their mental and emotional health", "I was working as a university adjunct instructor and decided I didn't want to pursue a PhD. I realized that I loved teaching...counseling allowed me to bring in education and to work more directly with individuals and group to help people meet their goals", "dissatisfied with job opportunities in my field", "I needed to be a part of a career that I felt make a difference and helped other people. I was working in retail before and I was not satisfied with my work", and "It has been a number of years since I was a teacher. I have been interested in counseling for about eighteen years, since I volunteered on a Crisis Line as a listener...Returning to a career required new training, so I went after my dream".

As previously stated, the majority of participants indicated counseling as a first career choice. Even when pursuing counseling as a first career, participants who indicated

counseling as a first career revealed a counseling professional identity: “I feel that I very much identify as a counselor even though I am still in school due to my desire to be in this field for such a long time”, “9. The only thing keeping me from being a 10 is that I am not yet licensed. I currently feel as though I am a professional counselor from the work I have done, the feedback I have received, and the connections I have experienced with my clients. I also feel this way from being energized by attending the ACA conference and discussing counseling outside of class”, and “10, I am proud to be a professional counselor”.

Advocacy. The final core idea within a personal and social realm of counselor professional identity is advocacy. Advocacy includes the domain of social justice, but also refers to a professional’s overall advocacy orientation in regards to self and others (such as clients or those in the community in which the professional lives). In discussing why they chose counseling or what types of events, beliefs, or values influenced counselor identity development, participants consistently indicated advocacy as a central idea. Responses that represent advocacy included that participants “wanted to help people and serve my community”, chose counseling as a career field because of “anger at injustices in the world”, and pursued counseling because of “wanting to become a helper to promote change on an individual and community level” and “providing clients with additional resources and assistance that give them the opportunity to change and improve their daily life”. One participant also indicated personal and social advocacy through the statement that “a professional counselor also advocates for the needs of their clients and for their profession”.

Academic Realm of Counselor Professional Identity

The academic realm of professional identity can be further understood through the core idea of training. Domains that comprise this core idea include credibility bias (of professors/faculty), education (and educational experiences), experience (such as internship), mentoring, professional development, intent to pursue counseling licensure and/or certification, and CACREP accreditation of the training program. Training is the core idea that captures the essence of participants' expressions about the importance of or influence of their educational experiences, any mentoring that they did or did not receive, professional development activities, their goals for obtaining licensure or other certifications, and whether or not their training program was CACREP accredited. Credibility bias refers to the idea that participants did or did not see an instructor, mentor, supervisor, or other influential person as having credibility in the field. The analysis team specifically identified it as having valid, up-to-date experience in the field in which one teaches. Table 7 provides examples from participants' responses that illustrate the various domains within the core idea of training and overarching academic realm of counselor professional identity.

Table 7: Examples of Training

Example from Participants' Responses	Domain(s)
To be a professional counselor means "to have gone through an accredited master's education program, to have received national certification and state licensure..."	CACREP accreditation; Intent to pursue counseling licensure; Intent to pursue counseling certifications (specializations)

Table 7: Continued

To be a professional counselor means "...to understand what the profession is, what sets us apart...attends conferences regularly, networks with other counselors..."	Professional Development
"I will have recognition at the regional, state, and national level that I have at least a minimum level of professional competency and ability."	Education; Intent to pursue counseling licensure; Intent to pursue counseling certifications (specialization)
"Your counseling program, what graduate school you go to, the professors who teach you, the network you have in the counseling world, what areas of counseling you prefer to study, your cohort".	Education; Professional Development; Credibility Bias
"I also feel that I need to continue my education through conferences and reading research".	Professional Development
"I don't have the credential that I can say I'm a professional counselor so that holds me back".	Intent to pursue counseling licensure; Intent to pursue counseling certification (specialization)
"To have a master's degree from an accredited school. To have a license approved by a state board."	CACREP accreditation; Intent to pursue counseling licensure
"It means that I am trained and credentialed in counseling theory and practice."	Education; Intent to pursue counseling licensure; Intent to pursue counseling credential (specialization)
"Finally to be training to provide empathetic and skilled psychotherapy to individuals within need of services."	Education
"I believe that the professional counselor develops their identity specifically around being a professional counselor during their academic career".	Education
"Now that I am in specific training to be a counselor, I really do feel like a professional counselor."	Education
"Being a professional counselor means using skills learned from education and personal artistry to offer help and assistance to clients who are requesting help."	Education
"To be a professional counselor, for me, means to be an extensively trained clinician who can effectively and humanely listen, help and shape the lives of the people who seek our services".	Education

Table 7: Continued

“Being a professional counselor means acquiring a licensure from an accredited graduate program and completing all the educational requirements to complete the license”.	Education; Intent to pursue counseling licensure
“Counselors develop their professional identity through exploration within their program. Given the opportunity to try out different counseling styles through role plays, counselors begin to figure out what style works best for them. Once a style is established, counselors use their styles within their graduate internship to develop their professional identity”.	Education
“Training, education, employment and professional affiliations”.	Education; professional development
“I feel when I am finished with my program, I will feel more like a professional counselor”.	Education
“Definitely the counseling program. I had no sense of professional identity or what kind of difference there might be in the identity of a social worker versus the identity of a counselor prior to my program...I saw other departments that did not have a strong identity as professional counselors and thus the identity of the students was much more ambiguous”.	Education
“9. The only thing keeping me from being a 10 is that I am not yet licensed”.	Intent to pursue counseling licensure.

Career Realm of Counselor Professional Identity

The career realm of professional identity illustrates the influence, for participants, of work-related or profession-related training, advocacy for and in the profession, and awareness of self as a professional and awareness about the profession in developing an identity as a professional counselor. Several previously mentioned domains that were foundational components of the other realms of counselor professional identity were also contributing influences in understanding the career realm of professional identity. These similar domains are viewed through a career lens. Participant responses reflected that intent to pursue counseling licensure or certification was important, as was social justice, an

individual's counseling-related experience and credentials, an individual's own personal counseling experience, the influence of family and friends related to career, and mentoring were key domains that serve as influential factors in understanding counselor professional identity.

Training. The core idea of training, within the career realm of counselor professional identity, can be understood through participant responses that focus on mentoring and counseling-related experience and credentials. Participants wrote "I also believe that one's experiences with counseling (i.e. through a practicum or internship) help shape one's counseling identity", "I feel like I am learning through practical experience the tools that I will need" and "I would say I am about a 7. I feel this will continue to develop during my internship and once I get a job." Another participant expressed the idea that counselor professional identity has a component beyond academic experiences or understanding: "Being a true counselor is about being open, honest, genuine, and present with someone; no book can teach you that."

Participants also indicated that additional experience and/or credentials are needed in order to develop, create, and/or understand counselor professional identity. They stated "With the work I am already engaged in, I feel like I am already using many counseling skills...I don't feel qualified at this point to call myself a counselor without having completed school and officially received the credentials of a counselor", "We cannot identify as professional counselors until we are licensed LPC post-graduation. At that time, I think I'll identify as an 8 because I will just be getting started in the career", and "I have limited experience through

my two internships, and I believe that is my greatest need – to simply practice and hone my counseling skills.”

Advocacy. Both the career realm and the personal and social realm of counselor professional identity contained a component of advocacy. This core idea incorporated advocacy for clients through social justice as well as advocacy for one’s career and the profession. As they discussed counselor professional identity, participants wrote “It means meeting people where they are and working along side them as they journey to what is hopefully a better life” and “It also means that I look at clients through a wellness based model rather than the medical model. Each client makes sense within their context and has the power to create positive change and they are not limited by their history, circumstances, or symptoms”. Participants also stated that being a professional counselor or having a professional identity as a counselor means “To provide a safe space for clients to share their stories, examine themselves, and grow as individuals and members of a larger community”, “Having a voice in legislation that affects the profession”, and “it means you are fully committed and dedicated to helping your clients achieve their personal/vocational goals”. Another counselor-in-training wrote “A professional counselor also advocates for the needs of their clients and for their profession”.

Awareness. Just as awareness was a facet of understanding counselor professional identity in a personal and social realm, awareness is a component of the career realm of counselor professional identity. Table 8 provides examples from participants’ responses that illustrate the core ideas of awareness and advocacy that comprise the career realm of

counselor professional identity.

Table 8: Examples of Awareness from Career Realm of Counselor Professional Identity

Participants' Response	Domain(s)
“Meeting inspirational people, especially professional counselors.”	Family and friend influence; Influence of others
“I have a parent in the counseling field who serves as a mentor for me.”	Family and friend influence; Mentoring
“I believe the professional counselors family and friends in their early life help them develop the traits found in a professional counselor (empathy, compassion).”	Family and friend influence
“Family, teachers, colleagues, supervisors, clients, clergy.”	Family and friend influence; Influence of others
“Colleagues, supervisors, professors, spouses, children, friends, family...anyone with an impact on the life of the professional counselor contributes to the development of counselor identity.”	Family and friend influence; Influence of others
“I think I am also influenced by my passion for my fellow human being and how we all affect each other in some way.”	Influence of others
“Their own counseling process with a professional counselor...working with diverse client's.”	Respondents' own personal counseling experience (experience with a counselor)

Summary of Qualitative Results

From these results, counselor professional identity can be understood to be multi-faceted and multi-dimensional. Professional identity is not just about the training one receives in his/her academic program and is not merely influenced by personal factors. Further, the various realms of professional identity are inter-related and that identified factors and experiences impact professional identity in more than one realm. Professional identity of

counselors is complex, and not just a one dimensional or flat understanding of self as a professional. These results will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 will also explore the implications of these results, limitations of the current study, and areas for future research that can expand on the conclusions drawn from these data.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

As previously stated, the purpose of the current study was to expand the knowledge available regarding counselor professional identity; the study used a phenomenological approach to understanding the ways that counselors in training perceive professional identity of counselors. There were no preconceived research hypotheses because a phenomenological approach was used. Instead, this study attempted to draw meaning from the responses given by participants (master's level counselors-in-training) with an overall focus on what the participants experience in the context of their counselor training programs and to describe the perspectives of graduate students in counseling training programs in regards to their professional identity (how they see themselves as professional counselors) as well as to describe the experiences of graduate students in counseling training programs in regards to what or who has influenced their professional identity as a counselor. Further, as stated earlier, this study attempted to address professional identity of counseling students from a career perspective; more specifically, focusing on counselor professional identity from a framework of social cognitive career theory. Lastly, in keeping with the assumptions of the interpretive phenomenological approach, this study attempted to draw conclusions about what is common among the perceptions of many participants that can illuminate an understanding of the professional identity of counselors from the perspective of counselors in training. This was done using the consensual qualitative research (CQR) method of data analysis, whereby the meaning or essence of participants' perceptions are described using core ideas and categories as mentioned in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will discuss in detail

the results of the present study in regards to these purposes as well as address limitations of the current study and opportunities for future research as an extension of this study.

Discussion of Results

Tables 2 and 3 will be discussed in detail in this section, and will refer to items and percentages found in the tables located in Chapter Four. When asked *do any of the following factors influence your beliefs about your ability to be an effective counselor*, the overwhelming response was *having participated in or completed practicum or internship*, with 92.6% of participants indicating it was an influential factor. In response to this same question, there were seven additional responses that participants indicated were important based on the percentage of responses (more than 60% of respondents chose these factors as influential). These were (1) *completing more courses in your training program* (74.1%), (2) *being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program* (74.1%), (3) *having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors* (74.1%), (4) *having completed all of the content courses in your training program* (70.4%), (5) *having faculty in your program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC* (70.4%), (6) *having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education* (66.7%), and (7) *having faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars* (63%).

Counselors in training were also asked *do any of the following factors influence what it means for someone to self-identify as a professional counselor?*. Seven responses were chosen by over half of the participants: (1) *being a student member of counseling*

associations (59.3%), (2) having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education (59.3%), (3) having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors (59.3%), (4) being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program (59.3%), (5) having participated in or completed practicum or internship (59.3%), (6) having faculty in your program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC (55.6%), and (7) having faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars (55.6%). These results identify several key areas of focus when considering professional identity in counselors-in-training, which will be discussed. Where applicable, qualitative results will be discussed alongside quantitative findings.

Importance of Coursework and Experiences

Such an overwhelming response to both questions that practicum and internship are influential factors in the way one believes oneself to be an effective counselor and in the way participants perceive someone to self-identify as a counselor reveals that applied experience in the area of career interest is important. Qualitative results also indicate that graduate coursework and experience are influential factors in this regard. For example, participants responded that the degree to which they identify as a professional counselor is “8. This number will be higher as I gain experience in the field”, “7. I am still a counselor-in-training and have another year left in my program including internship”, “ I would say I am about a 7. I feel this will continue to develop during my internship”, and “8-i have more to learn. i feel when i am finished with my program, i will feel more like a professional counselor”. Similar

to the responses indicated in the quantitative portion of the survey, these responses express the participants' belief that they will experience a higher degree of identity as a professional counselor when they have completed their training program (classes) and internship, and when they have gained additional counseling experience.

Further, these illustrate the performance model of Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). Individuals pursue performance goals, such as a counselor training program or completion of a counselor internship, because of their interest in the career field or profession. The cyclic nature of this model further explains that success in obtaining pursued goals related to one's interests continues to increase self-efficacy in the selected profession of interest as well as future goal attainment, meaning that individuals will continue to pursue goals such as obtaining counseling licensure when they have successful experiences in their internship programs. It also reveals that these practical experiences "doing" counseling are important to the development of a professional identity as a counselor in the same way – they continue to contribute to one's expectations of him or herself as a professional in the career field as well as perceived success. Responses to the survey questions indicating additional influencing factors include *completing more courses in[the] training program* and *having completed all of the content courses in [the] program*; this also supports the SCCT perspective to understanding counselor professional identity in that these are examples of the background influences (specifically, opportunities to develop career-related skills) that are critical to the choice model of the theory. Because the models within SCCT are interwoven, these factors are also important within the performance model as well, as they influence

goals and self-efficacy because students gain more knowledge and perceive themselves as more prepared and able to be successful in reaching their career related goals.

Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Professional Identity

Examining questions 18 and 19, and their responses, side-by-side, it is apparent that six of the top responses for each question are the same. Specifically, participants indicate that practicum and internship experiences, CACREP accreditation, faculty in the program that discuss professional identity, faculty that encourage student participation in counseling related professional development activities outside of class, faculty with counseling or counselor education degrees and with credentials such as LPC and NCC are influential components for both identifying as a professional counselor and for being an effective counselor. The fact that these six influences are common to each construct (professional identity and perceived counselor effectiveness) indicates that there is a potential relationship between self-efficacy and professional identity for counselors and counselors in training.

Results from the open-ended qualitative questions support this potential relationship as well. The SCCT model emphasizes that self-efficacy can be increased through experience and goal attainment (performance model), which means that as individuals gain experience and have successful experiences that match with their outcome expectations for the experience, their self-efficacy will increase. Participants in the current study indicated the importance of experience in their responses to a variety of questions, particularly the scaling question that asked *On a scale of 1 to 10...to what degree do you identify as a professional counselor?*. Responses related to gaining additional experience, because of the relationship

with developing self-efficacy through experiences, when asked about identity further indicates that there is a potential relationship between self-efficacy and professional identity for counselors in training.

Examples of responses from participants that illustrate this potential relationship between self-efficacy and professional identity include statements that “I would say I am about a 7. I feel this will continue to develop during my internship and once I get a job.”, “the 7 rating comes more from my feeling of being ‘in training’”, “8-i feel I am just in the beginning of my career and i have more to learn. i feel when i am finished with my program, i will feel more like a professional counselor”, “7.5 - I still have some confidence building to do”, and “8-I have not yet completed my chosen course of study...I have limited experience through my two internships”. The numbers in these examples represent the participant’s perceived degree of professional identity and the comments reflect reasons for the value they assigned, pointing to experience as a key factor and implying that self-efficacy is a part, related to either a lack of experience or the desire to gain more experience. These findings support findings of earlier studies indicating that counselor training has a significant impact on counselors’ and counseling students’ self-efficacy (Melchert, Hays, Wiljanen, & Kolocek, 1996) and that self-efficacy had a strong connection with course work and internship hours (Tang, Addison, LaSure-Bryant, Norman, O’Connell, & Stewart-Sicking, 2004). They also extend earlier studies by suggesting a potential connection between self-efficacy and professional identity.

Role of Faculty

The responses to questions 18 and 19 on the survey (which ask *Do any of the following factors influence your beliefs about your ability to be an effective counselor?* and *Do any of the following factors influence the way you perceive what it means to identify as a professional counselor?*) further indicate that faculty have a critical role in the training programs beyond simply teaching classes. Participants reported that “having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors”, “having faculty in your training program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC”, and “having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education” are influential in the way they (participants) believe themselves to be an effective counselor. This indicates that students perceive that their ability to be an effective counselor is influenced by faculty who identify in some way as professional counselors (indicated by degrees in counseling or counseling credentials and licenses) and/or talk about professional counselor identity to or with students.

Results also indicate that students perceive faculty members’ discussion of professional identity in or out of class, as well as faculty members’ degrees and counseling credentials as influential in what it means for someone to self-identify as a professional counselors. Faculty members’ discussions of their own training and licenses, as well as the students’ awareness of the background, training, and identity of faculty assist counselors-in-training in developing an understanding of professional identity for counselors, as does faculty conversations about professional identity specifically. This is further supported by

the findings from open-ended qualitative questions. Fifteen of the twenty-seven participants indicated that “professors”, “counselor educators”, and/or “teachers” were influential in developing a professional identity as a counselor in their responses. Specifically, participants responded that “I believe that graduate school professors contribute greatly to developing an identity as a professional counselor”, “part of who contributes to development as a professional counselor is the training and the professors in a counseling program. The professors I have worked with have greatly influenced that way I look at my future career as a counselor”, “I believe that many different aspects are included in developing an identity as a professional counselor, such as the professors”, and “my professors have been instrumental”. Teaching counseling theories, techniques, and skills, as well as supervising role plays, and experiences from practicum and internship are major tasks for counselor educators, and are likely components of the ways in which participants indicate that “professors” influence professional identity. The fact that participants indicated that the degree held by faculty and the counseling-related licenses held by faculty influence what it means for someone to self-identify as a professional counselor, and that it is an influence that faculty talk in or out of class about professional identity indicates that faculty members play an important role beyond just teaching. Counselor educators model various aspects of professional identity through the degrees and licenses held, as they discuss professional activities and research, and as they engage students in discussions about what it means to be a counselor (that is, professional identity).

Participants also reported behaviors and activities of their faculty, as described in

Chapter Four. When asked *Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about joining professional associations?*, 100% of participants reported “yes” they do. When viewed alongside the fact that participants also indicated *being a student member of counseling associations* as an influential factor in what it means for someone to identify as a professional counselor, this faculty behavior can be seen as an important role for counselor educators as well. This means that it is a key task for faculty to encourage student participation in counseling-related professional associations as well as talk about how this can influence professional identity. An overwhelming percentage of participants (92.6%) also reported that faculty in their training programs *talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars*. When asked which factors were influential, 63% of participants indicated that this behavior influences beliefs about being an effective counselor, and 55.6% of participants indicated that it influences what it means for someone to identify as a professional counselor. This means that counselor educators can have a positive influence over the development of professional identity in counselors-in-training by discussing the importance of and encouraging participation in professional development activities. Counselor educators can directly discuss and encourage students’ reflection on counselor professional identity as well as talk about more indirect behaviors and aspects of counselor professional identity, and have an influence over the ways that students perceive, understand, and/or develop their own professional identity as a counselor.

Multi-Dimensional Professional Identity

Several of the conclusions drawn from the present study from both quantitative,

close-ended questions and open-ended, qualitative questions have been discussed as they are intertwined. For example, qualitative results indicate that academic training, including CACREP accreditation and professional development, as well as career training, inclusive of counseling-related experience, are essential dimensions of professional identity, and support the conclusions drawn from participants' responses to the close-ended questions in the survey. Additional conclusions, drawn specifically from the open-ended questions and CQR analysis process, provide deeper insight into the ways that counselors in training perceive, understand, or develop professional identity as counselors. These additional conclusions are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Professional identity is described by participants in a way that reflects a multi-dimensional nature. Specifically, professional identity consists of a personal and social realm, academic realm, and career realm. An individual does not experience, come to understand, or develop a professional identity as a counselor without being influenced by personal and social, career, and academic factors. Furthermore, professional identity for counselors cannot be understood by examining in isolation the personal and social realm, career realm, or academic realm. Rather, counselor professional identity must be understood through simultaneous examination of all realms of identity, including each realm's facets and influences. Professional identity is like a shared box of crayons. Each crayon, alone, has a great deal to say about the box as a whole, and is important in and of itself. A red crayon is useful for coloring apples, stop signs, and the upper arch of a rainbow, while blue is useful for coloring skies, water, and the fifth arch of a rainbow. However, even though they each

have something unique to offer the box of crayons, alone they do not represent the box of crayons. Even more, each crayon is shaped and impacted by the one who uses it and is left, changed, by that influence. Just as the box of crayons cannot fulfill its purpose by use of the blue crayon alone, professional identity cannot be understood solely as an academic realm of a counselor, solely as a career dimension of a counselor, or solely as a personal and social facet of a counselor, yet each realm adds to the understanding of the whole – professional identity of a counselor. A counselor’s professional identity is understood by examining all of these facets together. Furthermore, the depth of each realm adds to the overall understanding of professional identity. The unique experiences and ever changing contexts of the individual in his or her training program (being mentored by a faculty member, completing an internship in domestic violence), in his or her life (divorce of parents, experiencing a devastating natural disaster that resulted in the loss of one’s house, having positive experiences in one’s own personal counseling process), and in his or her career (advocating for the profession, gaining state counseling licensure) shape and change the individual’s professional identity and influence the professional identity of counselors as a profession. Participants indicated this in their responses: “everyone that interacts with that person throughout their lives molds their identity as a professional counselor” (life context), “my professors have been instrumental as they have given me educational tools and information that I carry with me each day I work with clients” (training program context), “the professors I have worked with have greatly influenced that way I look at my future career as a counselor” (training program context), “having the necessary credentials” (career context),

“I think I am also influenced by my passion for my fellow human being and how we all affect each other in some way” (life context), and “to me, being a professional counselor means...being honest about my own journey” (life context). Another participant response that illustrates this concept is the comment that “one’s past experiences throughout their life certainly shape a counselor’s personal identity. One’s relationship with a variety of areas is crucial to professional identity such as religion and spirituality, relationships with family, childhood experiences, experience with death and grieving, abuse history, views and philosophy on life in general” (life context). In addition to these unique influences, there are also commonalities that can describe the professional identity of counselors overall.

Interconnected Professional Identity

There is not just one dimension that describes professional identity for counselors, but rather several components. Yet, within the multiple dimensions of professional identity, there are common concepts that provide cohesiveness to the identity and so it must be understood as connected parts of a whole with both the whole and the parts enriching the meaning. For example, mentoring is a key component for each of the realms of professional identity, as illustrated in Table 4 from Chapter Four. Participants indicated that mentoring and collaboration were influential personally and socially as evident from comments such as “my father is a mentor as he is a therapist” and “I believe that an individual’s identity is shaped by many different individuals...even by other helping professionals (social workers, psychologists)”. Participants also indicated mentoring as a key component of professional identity from an academic and training perspective. Specifically,

participants wrote, “my university practicum supervisor was a strong mentor for me” and “my practicum supervisors, both professor for the course and my actual on-site supervisor have been 2 of my greatest mentors”. Within a career component of professional identity, mentoring was also important, evident by comments such as “meeting inspirational people, especially professional counselors” and “...then after graduation colleagues...”. The importance of mentoring across professional identity realms for counselors in training provides an interconnected way for counselors to view their identity as professionals.

Unified Profession

Information that was “left out” of the results is the mention of the importance of counseling specialty, program track, or counseling setting as a key or influential component of counselor professional identity. One research analysis team member commented on this, surprised that there was nothing in the participants’ responses that indicated counseling specialty, program track, or counseling setting was significant. Responses did indicate that counseling skills and knowledge common to all specialties or program tracks were important. For example, participants wrote “being a professional counselor means being knowledgeable and competent to provide counseling services to clients”, “being a professional counselor means using skills learned from education and personal artistry to offer help and assistance to clients”, “to be a professional counselor, to me, means to be an extensively trained clinician who can effectively and humanely listen, help and shape the lives of the people who seek our services”, and “a person must use their learned skills to reflect, reframe, and help individuals cope and solve their own problems”.

An additional participant responded that to be a professional counselor “means to be a trained, licensed individual, working in the mental health field, in any aspect”. This illustrates that counselors in training view counseling professional identity as unified across counseling specialty and that being in a specific program track (such as clinical mental health, school, career, marriage and family, or college) plays a lesser, if any, role in influencing what it means to be a professional counselor or what it means for someone to self-identify as a professional counselor. For the profession, this means that interest in specialty training or counseling setting does not necessarily divide or weaken the profession and that a strong, common counselor professional identity can exist and be experienced by substance abuse counselors, school counselors, career counselors, and agency counselors despite specialized training and varied settings for practice.

Limitations

The use of the terms “professional counselor identity” and “professional counselor” were intentionally not defined for participants in this study because the aim was to come to an expanded understanding of how counselors in training perceive or understand professional identity of counselors in the context of their training programs and career journeys. Given that the counseling license in North Carolina is Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC), the language used in the present study serves as a limitation in that participants may have interchanged the two ideas – that of being a Licensed Professional Counselor, legally able to independently practice counseling in North Carolina, and that of identifying, professionally, as a counselor. This is evident in the response from one participant that “I don’t really

understand questions 19 and 20 because we cannot identify as professional counselors until we are licensed LPC post-graduation”. Because one aim of the study was to understand participants’ perceptions and experiences, providing a definition or differentiating between the two concepts could bias the responses. Therefore, “counselor professional identity” or “the/a professional identity as a counselor” could have served as less confusing terms and allowed participants to more openly reflect on the idea of what it means to have a professional identity as a counselor or what they perceive a professional identity as a counselor to be or involve. Providing a general definition of professional identity (but not specific to counseling) could have also helped the researcher to avoid confusion in the study.

The current study focused on counselor training programs in North Carolina. This could limit the applicability of the results as different states may have fewer or more counselor training programs that are CACREP accredited than North Carolina does. Further, in North Carolina, 33% of the counselor training programs are not CACREP accredited. The present study consisted of participants of which only 7.4% represented non-CACREP accredited programs, a percentage that falls far below the actual statewide composition. An increased participation from students in non-CACREP accredited programs may have influenced the study outcomes, including the emphasis placed on CACREP accreditation in the results. In addition, several programs in North Carolina are at various points of seeking accreditation for the counselor training program, and it was not assessed in this study the impact of this. Because CACREP accreditation standards emphasize professional identity as a component for counselor training programs, it stands that accreditation and/or seeking

accreditation could impact the way participants respond to questions about professional identity as programs strive to meet the CACREP standards.

Another potential limitation of this study is the sample size. The study attempted to blend qualitative approaches to gathering rich, descriptive data from participants with the quantitative type approach of using a survey. Qualitative sample sizes are typically smaller; for example, both the Auxier, Hughes, and Kline (2003) and Nelson and Jackson (2003) studies use a sample size of eight participants but involve those eight in in-depth interviews and focus groups. In contrast, Furr and Carroll (2003) use a sample size of 84 participants; the structure of their study was more similar to a quantitative survey. While the current study did collect responses from more participants than previous qualitative studies, the sample size was still relatively small. Along with this limitation is the potential limitation of research design. The survey used for the current study was created by the researcher and was not a previously validated or standardized instrument. While the researcher did use relevant literature and questions used in previous studies to create the survey, the lack of a standardized instrument could be a limitation. The survey for the present study was structured to resemble an interview but also allow for data collection from a larger participant pool than interviews typically provide.

An additional limitation related to the design of the study is that the internet was used to collect responses electronically in an effort to expand the quantity of responses and therefore come to an expanded understanding of professional identity for counselors that was highly generalizable. The survey, however, was designed using interview-type questions. If

the study had been designed to use face-to-face interviews, the researcher could have clarified participant responses to various questions, and perhaps could have collected even richer and more descriptive responses to the questions than were collected using the electronic version of the survey. As an example, when a participant responded about who or what contributes to an individual developing an identity as a professional counselor with “professors, professional and student organizations”, the researcher, using the electronic survey, could not ask for clarification. Had the study been designed to involve interviews, the researcher could have asked for clarification on what the participant meant or in what ways professors and organizations contribute to the development of professional identity.

Implications

These results suggest that counseling training programs and counselor educators can take steps to more fully understand and positively strengthen the development of professional identity in counselors in training. Understanding how professional identity is influenced prior to entering one’s training program, and intentional focus on professional identity of counselors in training at both an individual class or counselor educator level and the program level will be discussed as implications.

Development of Professional Identity Prior to Training

Counselors in training begin to develop a sense of professional identity as a counselor prior to their training. This is evident in the conclusions drawn from the qualitative analysis process as participants’ responses reveal that family, friends, childhood experiences and values are all influential factors in developing professional identity as a counselor.

Specifically, in response to *what or who contributes to an individual developing an identity as a professional counselor?* participants stated, “clients, supervisors, professors, life and work experience, parents, classes. Everything really. Counseling is about life” and “Also, one’s values, culture, personal characteristics, talents, struggles and accomplishments”.

What this means for counselor training programs is that some of the professional identity that students develop as they strive to become counselors is developed outside of the training program. Further, this means that training programs may face the challenge of overcoming stereotypes and unrealistic expectations of what it means to be a counselor or identify as a counselor based on how these pre-training program experiences have shaped students. It also means that the overall professional identity of counselors as a profession is shaped by experiences, individuals, and expectations that exist before individuals ever learn about counseling theories, techniques, skills, advocacy, licensure, client populations, and counseling settings or specialties. Part of who we are as a profession is shaped by a plethora of experiences and influences that may have commonalities but may also be as varied and different as imaginable. Therefore, while there will be some aspects of counselor professional identity that are common among professionals and across settings and specialties, there will always remain some facets that are not common and it will speak to the strength of the profession to embrace that diversity as part of what contributes to an overall professional identity.

Counselor Educators’ Intentional Focus on Professional Identity in Training Programs

Results of the close-ended survey questions indicate that having faculty in the

program who talk about professional identity is an important component to developing a professional identity as a counselor. Participant responses to the open-ended questions support this conclusion as respondents stated “I believe that graduate school professors contribute greatly to developing an identity as a professional counselor”, “I believe that many different aspects are included in developing an identity as a professional counselor, such as the professors and their teaching methods”, “my professors have been instrumental as they have given me educational tools and information that I carry with me each day I work with clients”, and “I have been extremely influenced by a current professor, who has changed my entire method of counseling”. This suggests that counselor educators will need to be intentional about incorporating counselor professional identity into courses as well as out-of-class conversation and activities. The 2009 CACREP Standards direct programs to incorporate eight core areas into coursework, and the first is professional orientation, which includes discussing the history of the counseling profession, professional roles, counseling license and credentials, professional advocacy, and ethics. Results of the current study suggest that counselor educators should also discuss and model active involvement in counseling related associations, mentoring, and collaboration. It is also suggested that counselor educators intentionally discuss their own training and experience, including pursuit of counseling licenses and credentials and find ways to expose students to other professionals. Counselor educators can go beyond mere mention of counseling associations available for students to join, and invite students to serve on committees or other leadership teams within associations in which they (educators) are active, as well as invite students to

submit proposals for presentations or even incorporate a conference proposal as a course assignment (Grimmett, M., 2007). Results of the current study indicate that being a member of counseling associations is an influencing factor in identifying as a professional counselor and this is something that counselor educators can model for students. Active involvement in student associations that are a part of the counselor training program, such as a university chapter of Chi Sigma Iota, Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society International, models for students ways to immerse themselves in the profession.

Program-level Intentional Focus on Professional Identity in Training Programs

Focus on counselor professional identity can be intentional at the program level as well. In addition to or as part of required coursework in theories, techniques, group work, career counseling, human development, and multiculturalism, programs can assist students in developing a counselor professional identity portfolio. This can be a program-wide, cross-curriculum project that, among many things, incorporates personal journaling about the reasons why a student has chosen counseling as a profession and what has influenced their journey thus far, projects and papers completed for classes that express a student's knowledge learned and reflections on that knowledge, feedback from instructors and peers as well as student reflections on the feedback, and current events in the counseling profession such as updates on ACA's Vision 20/20 or local and national legislation impacting the profession. Portfolios would have similar components including courses completed along with course descriptions from the student's program, but would also be unique to each student as they reflected on significant turning points in his or her program. Faculty and

advisors would provide guidance and answer questions as students explored ways to develop their portfolios, and the goal of the project would be that students, at the end of their training program, would be able to (1) articulate their own counseling professional identity and what has influenced its development, (2) articulate an understanding of how the counseling profession as a whole expresses its identity and how that impacts students in their own settings and specialties, and (3) prepare them for continued professional advocacy at job-site, state, and national levels around the idea of professional identity (what makes counselors unique and what unites us as a profession).

Intentional focus on professional identity by counselor educators at the individual class level, as well as at the program level in projects such as a counselor professional identity portfolio, responds to the conclusion of the current study that students find it important in influencing identifying as a professional counselor.

Areas for Future Research

The results and implications of the current study identified areas of focus for future research. These include examining the role of CACREP accreditation in influencing professional identity, further exploration of the relationship between counselor self-efficacy and professional identity, and digging deeper in to what about a particular influential factor makes it influential. Further, future research should focus on the unique characteristics of the counseling profession and how the perceptions of counselors in training are met or not met years into the field.

The Role of CACREP Accreditation

In response to the questions where participants were asked if any of the following factors influence (1) beliefs about their ability to be effective counselors and (2) what it means for someone to self-identify as a professional counselor, the response *being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program* was a top response. Responses to open-ended qualitative questions also revealed participants' perceptions that CACREP accreditation is an important factor, in some way, to understanding and/or developing professional identity as a counselor. For example, participants wrote that being a professional counselor means "to have gone through an accredited master's education program", "to have a master's degree from an accredited school", and "acquiring a licensure from an accredited graduate program". The current study did not explore participants' views on why or how CACREP accreditation is influential or in what ways being or not being in a CACREP accredited program has influenced their experiences with counselor effectiveness and counselor identity. Future studies could address this issue further and even use the eight core areas required of CACREP accredited programs as points of question or reflection for participants to respond to in order to understand more about the role of CACREP accreditation in counselor professional identity and counselor perceived efficacy.

Relationship Between Self-Efficacy and Professional Identity

The present study asked participants *On a scale of 1 to 10...to what degree do you identify as a professional counselor?* and also asked *Do any of the following factors influence your beliefs about your ability to be an effective counselor? and Do any of the following*

factors influence the way you perceive what it means to identify as a professional counselor?.

As mentioned previously, results allude to a possible correlation between self-efficacy and counselor professional identity. Future research should attempt to explore this further and seek to better understand any potential relationships between self-efficacy and perceived professional identity. The Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (CSEC; Johnson, Baker, Kopala, Kiselica, & Thompson, 1989) could be used to determine the level of self-efficacy of the counselor-in-training and then be compared to the degree or level of professional identity as given by the participants in a scaling-type question. Additional questions to participants regarding their perceptions of a potential relationship between self-efficacy and professional identity could further help the profession understand if there is a connection between the two constructs, and how they might be connected, as well as ways that training programs can support and strengthen both self-efficacy in counselors-in-training as well as perceived professional identity as a counselor.

Additional Areas for Future Research

The present study successfully identified several components of professional identity, as well as influential factors, from the perspective of master's level counselors in training. Future research is needed to expand on the conclusions drawn from this study in order to develop an even richer understanding of counselor professional identity. For example, the present study found that family and friends, mentors, and one's own personal counseling were influential factors in the development of professional identity. Future research should seek to understand what it is about each of these influential factors that shapes or helps one

develop a professional identity as a counselor. More specifically, what is it about having a mentor that shapes the development of a counseling professional identity? Is it simply having a mentor or does it matter who one's mentor is? What is it about advocacy that is a part of professional identity? Is it simply that one advocates for clients or the profession, or is each individual advocacy experience important?

The current study asked participants about professional identity of counselors in a general manner, with questions being broad in focus. Future research could expand on results and conclusions of this study by asking specific questions about what sets counseling apart, as a profession, from other helping professions such as social work and marriage and family therapy. Further insight into counselor professional identity could be gained from focusing on unique characteristics of the profession and its members.

Several participants' responses suggest that students view themselves, by nature of still being in their training programs, as having a limited or not fully developed professional identity. Therefore, future research could survey individuals who are and have been practicing as counselors in different settings for varying numbers of years. Specifically, future work could compare responses from groups of professionals who have been practicing in the counseling field less than five years, between 5 and 10 years, between 10 and 15 years, and for more than 15 years and then examine common elements of professional identity across the career-span. These populations were beyond the scope of the current study, but could provide additional information about professional identity as well as identify what behaviors, events, or factors are important in assisting professionals with moving from the

degree of professional identity they indicate as students to a higher degree of professional identity. It could also provide an opportunity to explore the responses students gave in the present study indicating that having limited experience or needing more knowledge and practice and compare them with reactions to actually gaining that experience post-graduation and how, if at all, that influences professional identity.

Conclusion

A participant wrote, “to be a professional counselor means my main professional identity is within the counseling profession.” The current study sought to explore counselor professional identity from the perspective of counselors in training, and attempted to provide a deeper understanding of what professional identity is or means for counselors. The results revealed a multi-dimensional and interconnected way of understanding counselor professional identity and identified key factors that influence what it means for one to self-identify as a professional counselor. Counselor professional identity can be understood as consisting of a personal and social realm of identity, an academic realm, and a career realm of identity. It can be understood by common themes, such as mentoring, that are important across all realms of identity. From participant responses, it was concluded that experiences such as practicum and internship, being involved in counseling associations, CACREP accreditation of training programs, and faculty training (specifically their degree earned), counseling related licenses and credentials, and behaviors (specifically talking about professional identity in and out of class) are all perceived as significant in the development of counselor professional identity by counselors in training. Furthermore, participant responses

indicate that the development of counselor professional identity begins before entering the training program, and transcends the classroom and training program itself. As a profession, counseling focuses on the whole person as counselors work with clients. The present study revealed that counselor professional identity also reflects a holistic nature and that the essence of identifying as a counselor is shaped by the diversity of professionals in the field yet still unifies that diversity into a professional whole.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: PILOT STUDY INFORMED CONSENT FORM

PILOT STUDY INFORMED CONSENT FORM

This consent form is valid February 14, 2011 through February 14, 2012

I, _____, agree to participate in the research project entitled, Exploring Professional Identity of Counselors in Training: A Phenomenological Study being conducted by Angela S. Shores, Principal Investigator (PI), and understand that this research is a pilot study that is part of a dissertation at the North Carolina State University. I understand that my participation in this research project is voluntary. I understand that for the purposes of the pilot study in which I am agreeing to participate, my comments will not be anonymous so that the Principal Investigator may contact me for clarification. I understand that my feedback about the survey used in the pilot study will be used to revise the survey for the remaining steps of the study research, if warranted, and that any of my comments given in the pilot study may be used in the write up of the dissertation, specifically for, but not limited to, the procedures, instrumentation, and results sections, but that my name and other identifying information will not be associated with my specific responses to the questions. I further understand that I may withdraw from participating in this research project without any penalty to myself. There are no anticipated physical, psychological, or legal risks associated with this study. Other people that may have access to the research data include the Principal Investigator's dissertation committee and research assistants.

I understand that as an incentive for participating, I will have the opportunity to have my name entered into a random drawing for a \$25 Target gift card. Chances for winning the gift card will depend on the total number of participants from the pilot study and phase two research but will be no less than a 1 in 30 chance to win with the possibility of a greater chance to win if there are fewer participants. Participants who choose to enter the drawing will have their name and email address entered into a database used for selection of the winner. Participants can opt out of the incentive drawing by letting the Principal Investigator know of this choice.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Angela S. Shores, LPC, NCC, ACS at 4350 Acorn Trace, Morganton, NC 28655, or 828-448-5333.

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

"I have read and understand the above information, and I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled."

Signature of the Participant and Date

Signature of the Investigator and Date

APPENDIX B: PILOT STUDY SURVEY AND FEEDBACK FORM

Exploring Professional Identity of Counselors in Training: A Phenomenological Study

Purpose of the Study

Thank you for your time completing the following study. It is anticipated that your participation in this study will help increase the understanding of the professional identity of counselors by increasing the understanding of the way counselors-in-training view their professional identity. There are two sections in this study. The first is an open-ended response section with two questions. Section II asks some demographic information that will be used to compare results. Be complete both sections as thoroughly as possible.

Section I

Instructions: *In the space provided, please answer the following questions related to the study.*

1. What does it mean to you to be a professional counselor?

2. What or who contributes to an individual developing an identity as a professional counselor?

Section II: Demographic Information

Instructions: Please complete the following demographic questions by selecting the appropriate response(s) to each question or by providing information in the space provided.

1. Age
 - 22-25 years old
 - 26 – 29 years old
 - 30-34 years old
 - 35-39 years old
 - 40-44 years old
 - 45-49 years old
 - 50-54 years old
 - 55-59 years old
 - 60-64 years old
 - 65-69 years old
 - 70-74 years old
 - 75-79 years old
 - 80+ years old

2. Ethnicity
 - African American
 - Latino American
 - Asian American
 - Pacific Islander
 - Caucasian
 - International Student
 - Other: _____

3. Gender
 - Female
 - Male

4. How many semester hours/credits you have completed in your training program to date (do not include hours you are currently registered for/are taking this semester)?
 - 0-12 semester hours
 - 13-24 semester hours
 - 25-36 semester hours
 - 37-48 semester hours
 - 49-60 semester hours
 - 61+ semester hours

5. Are you currently in your practicum or internship portion of your training program?
 - Yes
 - No

6. Please indicate the program track in which you are currently enrolled.
- School Counseling
 - Career Counseling
 - Clinical Mental Health Counseling
 - Marriage and Family
 - Christian Counseling
 - Other (please specific): _____
7. Are you a student member of any of the following counseling associations?
- American Counseling Association (ACA)
 - One or more ACA Divisions
 - NC Counseling Association (NCCA)
 - One or more NCCA divisions
 - Chi Sigma Iota (CSI)
 - Licensed Professional Counselor Association of NC (LPCANC)
 - Other (please specify): _____
8. Is your counselor training program CACREP accredited (that is, accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs)?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
9. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about joining professional associations?
- Yes
 - No
10. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars?
- Yes
 - No

11. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars?
- Yes
 - No
12. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about their research?
- Yes
 - No
13. Do any of the faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research?
- Yes
 - No
14. Do any of the faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors?
- Yes
 - No
15. Do the faculty in your program have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education & Supervision?
- Yes, all of them
 - Yes, most of them
 - Some of them do and some have other types of degrees (such as, but not limited to, Clinical Psychology, Counseling Psychology, Marriage and Family Therapy, Social Work)
 - No, none of them do
 - I am not sure
16. Are the faculty in your program Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC)?
- Yes, all of them
 - Yes, most of them
 - Some of them
 - No, none of them
 - I am not sure

17. Are the faculty in your program National Certified Counselors (NCC)?
- Yes, all of them
 - Yes, most of them
 - Some of them
 - No, none of them
 - I am not sure
18. Do any of the following factors influence your beliefs about your ability to be an effective counselor? (Select all that apply; you may choose not to select any.)
- Being a student member of counseling associations.
 - Completing more courses in your training program.
 - Having completed all of the content courses in your training program (that is, non-practicum or internship courses).
 - Having participated in or completed practicum or internship.
 - Being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program.
 - Having faculty in your program that talk about joining or being a member of counseling associations.
 - Having faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
 - Having faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
 - Having faculty in your program talk in class about their research.
 - Having faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research.
 - Having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors.
 - Having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education.
 - Having faculty in your program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC.
19. Do any of the following factors influence the way you perceive what it means to identify as a professional counselor? (Select all that apply; you may choose not to select any.)
- Being a student member of counseling associations.
 - Completing more courses in your training program.
 - Having completed all of the content courses in your training program (that is, non-practicum or internship courses).
 - Having participated in or completed practicum or internship.
 - Being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program.

- Having faculty in your program that talk about joining or being a member of counseling associations.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about their research.
- Having faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research.
- Having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors.
- Having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education.
- Having faculty in your program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC.

20. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents not at all and 10 represents very much so, to what degree do you identify as a professional counselor? Please feel free, in the space provided, to elaborate on your answer.

21. Is counseling a first career for you or a career change?

- First Career
- Career Change
 - What initiated the career change?

22. Do you have a mentor(s)? Please feel free to elaborate on your answer in the space provided.

- Yes
- No

Pilot Study Participant Feedback

On a scale of 1 to 4, with 1 being strongly disagree (SD), 2 being disagree (D), 3 being agree (A), and 4 being strongly agree (SA), rate your level of agreement with the following statements:

- | | SD | D | A | SA |
|---|----|---|---|----|
| 1. The questions were easy to understand as worded.
<i>Please indicate the question numbers that were not, if applicable:</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. The order of questions made sense/was logical.
<i>Please indicate where question order seemed to interrupt the logic of the survey:</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. The questions seemed to fit together in a cohesive way for the topic being studied.
<i>Please indicate questions that did not seem to fit the topic under study.</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. The questionnaire took a reasonable amount of time to complete.
<i>Not including the amount of time it took to answer this feedback form, please indicate how much time you spent completing the questionnaire.</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Please provide any additional comments, suggestions, or feedback on this questionnaire and return all documents to Angela S. Shores, LPC, NCC, ACS, Principal Investigator, at 4350 Acorn Trace, Morganton, NC 28655 OR by email at angela.s.shores@gmail.com.

APPENDIX C: PHASE TWO INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, _____, agree to participate in the research project entitled, Exploring Professional Identity of Counselors in Training: A Phenomenological Study being conducted by Angela S. Shores, Principal Investigator (PI), and understand that this research is part of a dissertation at the North Carolina State University. I understand that my participation in this research project is voluntary. I understand that my comments will be anonymous and that any of the comments given in response to the survey questions may be used in the write up of the dissertation, specifically for, but not limited to, the procedures, instrumentation, and results sections. I further understand that I may withdraw from participating in this research project without any penalty to myself. There are no anticipated physical, psychological, or legal risks associated with this study. Other people that may have access to the research data include the Principal Investigator's dissertation committee and research assistants.

I further understand that as an incentive for participating, I will have the opportunity to have my name entered into a random drawing for a \$25 Target gift card. Chances for winning the gift card will depend on the total number of participants from the pilot study and phase two research but will be no less than a 1 in 30 chance to win with the possibility of a greater chance to win if there are fewer participants. Participants who choose to enter the drawing will have their name and email address entered into a database used for selection of the winner. Names and email addresses of those participants who wish to have a chance to win the giftcard will be stored separately from their responses to the study question in order to maintain participants' anonymity. Participants can opt out of the incentive drawing by letting the Principal Investigator know of this choice.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Angela S. Shores, LPC, NCC, ACS at 4350 Acorn Trace, Morganton, NC 28655, or 828-448-5333. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

I have read and understand the above information. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

By clicking the "NEXT" button below, you indicate your agreement with the above statement and acknowledge your informed consent to participate.

APPENDIX D: PHASE TWO SURVEY QUESTIONS

Exploring Professional Identity of Counselors in Training: A Phenomenological Study

Purpose of the Study

Thank you for your time completing the following study. It is anticipated that your participation in this study will help increase the understanding of the professional identity of counselors by increasing the understanding of the way counselors-in-training view their professional identity. There are two sections in this study. The first is an open-ended response section with two questions. Section II asks some demographic information that will be used to compare results. Be complete both sections as thoroughly as possible. As a participant in the pilot study, there is also a feedback form following the study questions. Please provide any information or feedback you have on this form.

Section I

Instructions: *In the space provided, please answer the following questions related to the study.*

1. What does it mean to you to be a professional counselor?

2. What or who contributes to an individual developing an identity as a professional counselor?

Section II: Demographic Information

Instructions: Please complete the following demographic questions by selecting the appropriate response(s) to each question or by providing information in the space provided.

1. Age

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> 22-25 years old | <input type="radio"/> 45-49 years old | <input type="radio"/> 70-74 years old |
| <input type="radio"/> 26 – 29 years old | <input type="radio"/> 50-54 years old | <input type="radio"/> 75-79 years old |
| <input type="radio"/> 30-34 years old | <input type="radio"/> 55-59 years old | <input type="radio"/> 80+ years old |
| <input type="radio"/> 35-39 years old | <input type="radio"/> 60-64 years old | |
| <input type="radio"/> 40-44 years old | <input type="radio"/> 65-69 years old | |

2. Ethnicity

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> African American | <input type="radio"/> Caucasian |
| <input type="radio"/> Latino American | <input type="radio"/> International Student |
| <input type="radio"/> Asian American | <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Pacific Islander | |

3. Gender

- Female
- Male

4. How many semester hours/credits you have completed in your training program to date (do not include hours you are currently registered for/are taking this semester)?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> 0-12 semester hours | <input type="radio"/> 37-48 semester hours |
| <input type="radio"/> 13-24 semester hours | <input type="radio"/> 49-60 semester hours |
| <input type="radio"/> 25-36 semester hours | <input type="radio"/> 61+ semester hours |

5. Are you currently in your practicum or internship portion of your training program?

- Yes
- No

6. Please indicate the program track in which you are currently enrolled.
- School Counseling
 - Career Counseling
 - Community Counseling/Clinical Mental Health Counseling
 - Marriage and Family
 - Christian Counseling
 - College Counseling
 - Other (please specify): _____
7. Are you a student member of any of the following counseling associations?
- American Counseling Association (ACA)
 - One or more ACA Divisions
 - NC Counseling Association (NCCA)
 - One or more NCCA divisions
 - Chi Sigma Iota (CSI)
 - Licensed Professional Counselor Association of NC (LPCANC)
 - Other (please specify): _____
8. Is your counselor training program CACREP accredited (that is, accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs)?
- Yes
 - No
 - Not sure
9. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about joining professional associations?
- Yes
 - No
10. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars?
- Yes
 - No

11. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars?
- Yes
 - No
12. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about their research?
- Yes
 - No
13. Do any of the faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research?
- Yes
 - No
14. Do any of the faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors?
- Yes
 - No
15. Do the faculty in your program have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education & Supervision?
- Yes, all of them
 - Yes, most of them
 - Some of them do and some have other types of degrees (such as, but not limited to, Clinical Psychology, Counseling Psychology, Marriage and Family Therapy, Social Work)
 - No, none of them do
 - I am not sure
16. Are the faculty in your program Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC)?
- Yes, all of them
 - Yes, most of them
 - Some of them
 - No, none of them
 - I am not sure

17. Are the faculty in your program National Certified Counselors (NCC)?
- Yes, all of them
 - Yes, most of them
 - Some of them
 - No, none of them
 - I am not sure
18. Do any of the following factors influence YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT YOUR ABILITY TO BE AN EFFECTIVE COUNSELOR? (Select all that apply; you may choose not to select any.)
- Being a student member of counseling associations.
 - Completing more courses in your training program.
 - Having completed all of the content courses in your training program (that is, non-practicum or internship courses).
 - Having participated in or completed practicum or internship.
 - Being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program.
 - Having faculty in your program that talk about joining or being a member of counseling associations.
 - Having faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
 - Having faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
 - Having faculty in your program talk in class about their research.
 - Having faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research.
 - Having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors.
 - Having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education.
 - Having faculty in your program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC.
19. Do any of the following factors influence WHAT IT MEANS FOR SOMEONE TO SELF-IDENTIFY AS A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR? (Select all that apply; you may choose not to select any.)
- Being a student member of counseling associations.
 - Completing more courses in your training program.

- Having completed all of the content courses in your training program (that is, non-practicum or internship courses).
- Having participated in or completed practicum or internship.
- Being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program.
- Having faculty in your program that talk about joining or being a member of counseling associations.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about their research.
- Having faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research.
- Having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors.
- Having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education.
- Having faculty in your program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC.

20. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents not at all and 10 represents very much so, to what degree do you identify as a professional counselor? Please feel free, in the space provided, to elaborate on your answer.

21. Is counseling a first career for you or a career change?

- First Career
- Career Change
 - What initiated the career change?

22. Do you have a mentor(s)? Please feel free to elaborate on your answer in the space provided.

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX E: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL SENT TO COUNSELOR TRAINING PROGRAM COORDINATORS

Dear Program Coordinator:

I would appreciate your assistance in sharing the following information related to my dissertation study with current students enrolled in your master's degree program in counseling. Appropriate methods of sharing this information with your students include forwarding the portion of this email below the asterisk line to students via email, posting the information below on program bulletin boards, or handing out a printed copy of the information below to advisees or students in your classes. Please emphasize to students that participation in this study is voluntary. I also ask that you not make participation in this study a requirement for any course students are enrolled in and that you not offer extra credit to students for participating.

Thank you for your assistance and your time.

Sincerely,

Angela

* * * * *

I am currently seeking participants for my dissertation research, titled *Exploring Professional Identity of Counselors in Training: A Phenomenological Study*, under the direction of Dr. Sylvia Nassar-McMillan, in partial completion of the requirements for my Ph.D. at NC State University. IRB Approval # is 1935.

The following is the link to the informed consent and research questions, available online (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PJGGJ69>). Participation in the research is voluntary and anonymous. There are no anticipated risks to participants and participants are able to withdraw from the study at any time during the process. As an incentive, a \$25 Target Gift Card will be raffled once the study data have been collected.

Participant information for those interested in entering the drawing will be collected separately from their answer to research questions so that participants' responses to the research questions will remain anonymous. The goal is to receive responses from 30 participants; therefore, chances for winning the gift card are approximately 1 in 30 (and possibly higher if there are fewer participants).

Any questions regarding the research can be directed to Angela S. Shores, LPC, NCC, ACS at angela.s.shores@gmail.com or 828-448-5333. Questions about the IRB approval of this study can be directed to Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Institutional Review Board, NC State University at Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

APPENDIX F: RECRUITMENT EMAIL TO CESNET LISTSERV

Dear CESNETers:

If you are a counselor educator in a **master's level counselor training program in North Carolina**, I would appreciate your assistance in sharing the following information related to my dissertation study with your students. Appropriate methods of sharing this information with your students include forwarding the portion of this email below the asterisk line to students via email, posting the information below on program bulletin boards, or handing out a printed copy of the information below to advisees or students in your classes. Please emphasize to students that participation in this study is voluntary. I also ask that you not make participation in this study a requirement for any course students are enrolled in and that you not offer extra credit to students for participating.

Thank you for your assistance and your time.

Sincerely,

Angela

I am currently seeking participants for my dissertation research, titled *Exploring Professional Identity of Counselors in Training: A Phenomenological Study*, under the direction of Dr. Sylvia Nassar-McMillan, in partial completion of the requirements for my Ph.D. at NC State University. IRB Approval # is 1935.

The following is the link to the informed consent and research questions, available online (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PJGGJ69>). Participation in the research is voluntary and anonymous. There are no anticipated risks to participants and participants are able to withdraw from the study at any time during the process.

As an incentive, a \$25 Target Gift Card will be raffled once the study data have been collected. Participant information for those interested in entering the drawing will be collected separately from their answer to research questions so that participants' responses to the research questions will remain anonymous. The goal is to receive responses from 30 participants; therefore, chances for winning the gift card are approximately 1 in 30 (and possibly higher if there are fewer participants).

Any questions regarding the research can be directed to Angela S. Shores, LPC, NCC, ACS at angela.s.shores@gmail.com or 828-448-5333. Questions about the IRB approval of this study can be directed to Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Institutional Review Board, NC State University at Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

APPENDIX G: PHASE TWO INFORMED CONSENT AND SURVEY IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT ON SURVEY MONKEY

SurveyMonkey - Question Builder

http://www.surveymonkey.com/MySurvey_EditorFull.aspx?sm=rbYrw...

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[+ Create](#)

Counselor Professional Identity Edit

Edit Survey

[Preview Survey](#) [Send Survey »](#)

To change the look of your survey, select a theme below.

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[+ Add Page](#)

PAGE 1 [Edit Page Options ▼](#) [Add Page Logic](#) [Move](#) [Copy](#) [Delete](#)

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1. Informed Consent

I agree to participate in the research project entitled, Exploring Professional Identity of Counselors in Training: A Phenomenological Study being conducted by Angela S. Shores, Principal Investigator (PI), and understand that this research is part of a dissertation at the North Carolina State University. I understand that my participation in this research project is voluntary. I understand that my comments will be anonymous and that any of the comments given in response to the survey questions may be used in the write up of the dissertation, specifically for, but not limited to, the procedures, instrumentation, and results sections. I further understand that I may withdraw from participating in this research project without any penalty to myself. There are no anticipated physical, psychological, or legal risks associated with this study. Other people that may have access to the research data include the Principal Investigator's dissertation committee and research assistants.

I further understand that as an incentive for participating, I will have the opportunity to have my name entered into a random drawing for a \$25 Target gift card. Chances for winning the gift card will depend on the total number of participants from the pilot study and phase two research but will be no less than a 1 in 30 chance to win with the possibility of a greater chance to win if there are fewer participants. Participants who choose to enter the drawing will have their name and email address entered into a database used for selection of the winner. Names and email addresses of those participants who wish to have a chance to win the giftcard will be stored separately from their responses to the study question in order to maintain participants' anonymity. Participants can opt out of the incentive drawing by letting the Principal Investigator know of this choice.

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Angela S. Shores, LPC, NCC, ACS at 4350 Acorn Trace, Morganton, NC 28655, or 828-448-5333. If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

I have read and understand the above information. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

By clicking the "NEXT" button below, you indicate your agreement with the above statement and acknowledge your informed consent to participate.

[+ Add Question ▼](#)

[+ Add Page](#)

PAGE 2 [Edit Page Options ▼](#) [Add Page Logic](#) [Move](#) [Copy](#) [Delete](#)

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2. Title and Purpose of the Study

Title of the Study

Exploring Professional Identity of Counselors in Training: A Phenomenological Study

Purpose of the Study

Thank you for your time completing the following study. It is anticipated that your participation in this study will help increase the understanding of the professional identity of counselors by increasing the understanding of the way counselors-in-training view their professional identity. There are two sections in this study. The first is an open-ended response section with two questions. Section II asks some demographic information that will be used to compare results. Be sure to complete both sections as thoroughly as possible.

+ Add Question ▼

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PAGE 3 Edit Page Options ▼ Add Page Logic Move Copy Delete

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3. Section I

In the space provided, please answer the following question related to the study.

+ Add Question ▼

Q1 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

***1. What does it mean to you to be a professional counselor?**

+ Add Question ▼

+ Add Page

PAGE 4 Edit Page Options ▼ Add Page Logic Move Copy Delete

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4. Section I

In the space provided, please answer the following question related to the study.

+ Add Question ▼

Q2 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

*1. What or who contributes to an individual developing an identity as a professional counselor?

+ Add Question ▼

+ Add Page

PAGE 5 Edit Page Options ▼ Add Page Logic Move Copy Delete

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5. Section II: Demographic Information

Please complete the following demographic questions by selecting the appropriate response(s) to each question or by providing information in the space provided.

+ Add Question ▼

Q3 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

*1. Age

22-25 years old

45-49 years old

70-74 years old

26 - 29 years old

50-54 years old

75-79 years old

30-34 years old

55-59 years old

80+ years old

35-39 years old

60-64 years old

40-44 years old

65-69 years old

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q4 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

*2. Ethnicity

African American

Pacific Islander

Latino American Caucasian
Asian American International Student
Other (please specify)

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q5 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

***3. Gender**

Female
Male

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q6 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

***4. How many semester hours/credits you have completed in your training program to date (do not include hours you are currently registered for/are taking this semester)?**

0-12 semester hours 37-48 semester hours
13-24 semester hours 49-60 semester hours
25-36 semester hours 61+ semester hours

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q7 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

***5. Are you currently in your practicum or internship portion of your training program?**

Yes
No

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q8 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

***6. Please indicate the program track in which you are currently enrolled.**

- School Counseling
 - Career Counseling
 - Community Counseling/Clinical Mental Health Counseling
 - Marriage and Family
 - Christian Counseling
 - College Counseling
 - Other (please specify)
-

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q9 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

7. Are you a student member of any of the following counseling associations? (Select all that apply; you may choose not to select any.)

- American Counseling Association (ACA)
 - One or more ACA Divisions
 - NC Counseling Association (NCCA)
 - One or more NCCA divisions
 - Chi Sigma Iota (CSI)
 - Licensed Professional Counselor Association of NC (LPCANC)
 - Other (please specify)
-

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q10 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

***8. Is your counselor training program CACREP accredited (that is, accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs)?**

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q11 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

***9. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about joining professional associations?**

Yes

No

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q12 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

***10. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars?**

Yes

No

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q13 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

***11. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars?**

Yes

No

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q14 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

***12. Do any of the faculty in your program talk in class about their research?**

Yes

No

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q15 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

* 13. Do any of the faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research?

Yes

No

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q16 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

* 14. Do any of the faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors?

Yes

No

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q17 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

* 15. Do the faculty in your program have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education & Supervision?

Yes, all of them

Yes, most of them

Some of them do and some have other types of degrees (such as, but not limited to, Clinical Psychology, Counseling Psychology, Marriage and Family Therapy, Social Work)

No, none of them do

I am not sure

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q18 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

* 16. Are the faculty in your program Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC)?

Yes, all of them

Yes, most of them

- Some of them
- No, none of them
- I am not sure

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q19 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

*** 17. Are the faculty in your program National Certified Counselors (NCC)?**

- Yes, all of them
- Yes, most of them
- Some of them
- No, none of them
- I am not sure

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q20 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

18. Do any of the following factors influence YOUR BELIEFS ABOUT YOUR ABILITY TO BE AN EFFECTIVE COUNSELOR? (Select all that apply; you may choose not to select any.)

- Being a student member of counseling associations.
- Completing more courses in your training program.
- Having completed all of the content courses in your training program (that is, non-practicum or internship courses).
- Having participated in or completed practicum or internship.
- Being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program.
- Having faculty in your program that talk about joining or being a member of counseling associations.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about their research.
- Having faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research.
- Having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors.
- Having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education.
- Having faculty in your program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC.

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Q21 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

19. Do any of the following factors influence WHAT IT MEANS FOR SOMEONE TO SELF-IDENTIFY AS A PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR? (Select all that apply; you may choose not to select any.)

- Being a student member of counseling associations.
- Completing more courses in your training program.
- Having completed all of the content courses in your training program (that is, non-practicum or internship courses).
- Having participated in or completed practicum or internship.
- Being enrolled in a CACREP accredited counselor training program.
- Having faculty in your program that talk about joining or being a member of counseling associations.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about their attendance at professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about or encourage students to attend professional workshops, conferences, or seminars.
- Having faculty in your program talk in class about their research.
- Having faculty in your program offer or talk about opportunities to join them in their research.
- Having faculty in your program talk, in or out of class, about the professional identity of counselors.
- Having faculty in your program who have degrees in Counseling or Counselor Education.
- Having faculty in your program with counseling credentials such as LPC or NCC.

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Q22 Edit Question ▼ Move Copy Delete

*** 20. On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents not at all and 10 represents very much so, to what degree do you identify as a professional counselor? Please feel free, in the space provided, to elaborate on your answer.**

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Q23 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

*** 21. Is counseling a first career for you or a career change?**

First Career

Career Change

What initiated the career change?

+ Add Question ▼ Split Page Here

Q24 Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

***22. Do you have a mentor(s)?**

Yes

No

Please feel free to elaborate on your answer in the space provided.

+ Add Question ▼

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6. Thank You!

Thank you for your time and input on this survey. If you wish to be entered into the drawing for the \$25 Target Gift Card, copy and paste the link below into your web browser address bar. The drawing will take place after all data is collected. Again, thank you for completing this survey.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/QVRTKL8>

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APPENDIX H: GIFT CARD PARTICIPATION SURVEY IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT ON SURVEY MONKEY

SurveyMonkey - Question Builder

http://www.surveymonkey.com/MySurvey_EditorFull.aspx?sm=8B5..

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Gift Card Give-Away Edit

Edit Survey

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1. Gift Card Give-Away Information

I understand that by proceeding to the next page, I am consenting to have my name and email address entered into a random drawing for a \$25 Target gift card. Chances for winning the gift card will depend on the total number of participants from the pilot study and phase two research but will be no less than a 1 in 30 chance to win with the possibility of a greater chance to win if there are fewer participants. The winner will be notified at the end of the research collection phase of the study.

[+ Add Question ▼](#)

[+ Add Page](#)

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2.

[+ Add Question ▼](#)

Q1 [Edit Question ▼](#) [Move](#) [Copy](#) [Delete](#)

1. If you wish to be entered into the drawing for the \$25 Target Gift Card, please enter your first and last name and email address here:

[+ Add Question ▼](#)