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ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF SCHOOL COUNSELOR PROFESSIONAL

IDENTITY: A DELPHI STUDY

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
Old Dominion University in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for the Degree of

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OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

August 2012

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ABSTRACT

Amy Wasserman Upton
Old Dominion University, 2012
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There are multiple perspectives among school counselors and their stakeholders regarding the professional identity of school counselors. The confusion and disagreement about school counselor professional identity appears to have a negative impact on school counselors' well-being and job performance. Given these varied perspectives on this important topic, a three iteration Delphi study was conducted utilizing a panel of school counseling experts to construct a list of components of school counselor professional identity. A final list of 51 essential components of school counselor professional identity resulted from this study.

Key Words: School Counselor; Professional Identity, Delphi, Advocate for the Profession,

For Robert, Kyle, Natalie, Alexis, and Robbie

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Research Problem

The profession of school counseling currently faces many challenges. School counselors are tasked with establishing and running comprehensive school counseling programs. This includes addressing the academic, career, and social needs of all students as well as functioning as consultants and collaborators with parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders (ASCA, 2005; Baker & Gerler, 2008; Dahir & Stone, 2007; Education Trust, 1997; Herr & Erford, 2011; Johnson, 2000). In addition, school counselors face the effects of current societal concerns such as increased rates of homelessness and growing mental health concerns in the students and families they serve. Issues such as suicide, school violence, eating disorders, and substance abuse are among the concerns school counselors encounter as they work with students and stakeholders (Baker & Gerler, 2008; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Lockhart & Keys, 1998; Paisley, Ziomek-Daigle, Getch, & Bailey, 2007). With the complexity of the demands facing the profession, school counselors need a frame of reference from which to make decisions and understand their roles. This can be provided by a strong professional identity (Brott, 2006).

Professional identity may be defined as an overarching belief about oneself and one's chosen profession which helps a person to understand who they are and what they do as a professional while also providing a framework for practice and decision making. School counselors' professional identity is impacted by individual values, beliefs, and perceptions (Brott & Myers, 1999; Emerson, 2010; Moss, 2011). It is suggested that

included in this understanding of the profession is knowledge of the history and development of the profession, the purpose of the profession, professional orientation, populations served, the settings within which they will work, and the appropriate roles of the profession (CACREP, 2009; Calley & Hawley, 2008; Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011; Milsom & Akos, 2005; Webber & Mascari, 2006). The professional identity that is derived through this understanding can provide such a frame of reference, guiding a professional in decision-making as well as in practice (Brott, 2006; Pistole & Roberts, 2002; Webber & Mascari, 2006). Currently within school counseling there are myriad perceptions regarding school counselor professional identity (Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010; Fitch, Newby, Ballestro, & Marshall, 2001; Johnson, 2000). If professional identity provides frame of reference for professional practice and there are currently multiple perceptions of school counselor professional identity, the practice of school counseling could vary greatly. Presently there is an increased demand for accountability within the schools and this demand for accountability is also placed upon school counselors. If there is confusion regarding the professional practice and professional identity of school counselors, accountability may be difficult to demonstrate (Brott, 2006; Dahir & Stone, 2007; Johnson, 2000; Sink, 2009).

The lean economic times are also impacting school division budgets which affect staffing decisions. With many stakeholders (e.g., national and state legislatures, local school boards, and principals) making decisions about allocating the reduced school division funding, it becomes more important for school counselors that these decision makers understand and value how a school counseling program adds to the educational enterprise (Fitch et al., 2001; Leuwerke, Walker, & Shi, 2009; Paisley et al., 2007).

Without an understanding of the benefits that a school counseling program can provide to the school and its student population, the school counselor and the school counseling program may be viewed as expendable by the school division. In an attempt to minimize costs, these decision makers may decide that the school counseling program and school counselors within that program should be eliminated or that the school counselors can be utilized within the school for other non-school counseling related responsibilities (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Cavanaugh, 2011; Dahir et al., 2010; Griffin & Farris, 2010).

Unfortunately, these powerful stakeholders' perceptions about school counseling are often incongruent with the various visions of school counseling being promulgated by the leading school counseling associations (Dodson, 2009; Fitch et al., 2001; Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Reiner, Colbert, & Perusse, 2009). As a profession situated within both the counseling and educational fields, and school counselors often belong to professional counseling associations and/or professional educational associations. These associations' mission statements and visions differ as a result of their professional orientation (e.g., counseling or education), as do their perceptions of the profession of school counseling and school counseling professional identity.

The various professional counseling associations (e.g., the American Counseling Association [ACA], the American School Counseling Association [ASCA], the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision [ACES], and their various state and regional affiliates lack agreement as to the professional identity of school counselors (Henderson, Cook, Libby, & Zambrano, 2007; Paisley et al., 2007). The educational associations (e.g., Education Trust [Ed Trust], the National Education Association

[NEA], and the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy [NOSCA]) also vary in their perspectives about school counseling (Ed Trust, 1997; NEA, 2011, College Board, 2011). As a result of these differing perspectives, school counselors may be viewed as counselors, teachers, quasi-administrators, or as a blend of counselor and educator, each of which suggests a different identity (ACA, ASCA, & NEA, 2008; ASCA, 2009; Ed Trust, 1997; Johnson, 2000; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011; NEA, 2011; Schneider, 2009; Webber & Mascari, 2006).

Without a consensus on the professional identity of school counselors, school counselors risk negative personal and professional consequences such as continued role ambiguity (Dahir & Stone, 2007; Paisley & Borders, 1995) and a lack of distinction from other educators and helping professionals. This lack of distinction may enhance the possibility that school counselors could be replaced in the workplace by teachers, school psychologists, school social workers, or outside mental health workers (ASCA, 2012; Kraus, Kleist, & Cashwell, 2009; Webber & Mascara, 2006). In addition, the absence of a clear and congruent professional identity may increase the risk of stress and burnout for practicing school counselors (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005) as well as fostering school counselors' failure to develop the skills and competencies necessary to meet students' needs (Brott & Myers, 1999; Henderson et al., 2007; Johnson 2000). Lastly, without a consensus on professional identity, professional advocacy efforts may be limited (Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011; Myers, Sweeney, & White, 2002).

In order to convince key decision makers of the legitimacy and importance of the school counseling profession, school counselors need to be able to clearly articulate what school counselors are trained to do, how the work of school counselors impacts students,

and how they are different than other professionals in counseling and in education.

Before school counselors can clearly articulate the importance of the profession, they first need to agree as professionals on what they do, who they are as professionals, and why the profession is important. Presently there is not agreement amongst the school counselors concerning their professional identity (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Webber, 2004; Webber & Mascari, 2006).

It appears as though the development of a clear professional identity could be of considerable value to both school counselors and their constituents (Dodson, 2009; Milsom & Akos, 2005; Webber & Mascari, 2006). The Delphi study conducted here attempts to assist in this arena via developing a consensus of experts from the school counseling field regarding the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity.

Brief Summary of the Literature

A review of the literature appears to indicate that professional identity is a pressing issue within the counseling field, especially for school counselors (Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010; Mellin et al., 2011; Myers et al., 2002). Professional identity itself is a challenging construct (Hansen, 2010; Lewis & Hatch, 2008; Milsom & Akos, 2005), partially because it is viewed in the literature as a process that involves the integration of interpersonal as well as intrapersonal aspects (Moss, 2010). The intrapersonal aspects refer to the impact of the individuals' beliefs, values, and assumptions on professional identity development. The interpersonal aspects refer to the influence that interactions within the professional community, the views of others, and an individual's experiences have on professional identity development

(Gibson et al., 2010). Additionally, various perspectives exist on the nature of professional identity, specifically whether professional identity is individually constructed or socially constructed (Hansen, 2010). Individually constructed identities would suggest that professional identity is fluid and ever changing from individual to individual whereas a socially constructed identity would suggest that there is one identity for the profession that the individuals within that profession may personalize. These multiple influences and perspectives create questions around the construct of professional identity. Does professional identity refer to that of the individual professional, the profession as a whole, or a combination of both individual and whole profession identities? Is there one professional identity or are there many constructed identities that are fluid and change over time? These questions about professional identity make it challenging to begin to clarify this construct, however, the development of a professional identity is viewed as necessary in the process of solidifying oneself as a professional, (Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). Although arguments can be made for all perspectives about professional identity, a combination of individual and whole profession identity appears to most closely mirror the interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of professional identity (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss, 2011).

While school counselor professional identity concerns have been addressed in the literature for the past fifty years, the prevalence of studies and articles over the past fifteen years has increased substantially (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson et al, 2010; Granello & Young, 2012; Grimmitt & Paisley, 2008; Henderson et al., 2007; Johnson, 2000; Milsom & Akos, 2005; Paisley et al., 2007; Ponton & Duba, 2009). Many of the articles have looked at counselor professional identity development, current challenges,

and measurement (Auxier et al., 2003; Emerson, 2010; Gale & Austin, 2003; Gibson et al., 2010; Hanna & Bemak, 1997). School counseling is often considered a subspecialty group of counseling profession and therefore included in the literature on counselor professional identity. The existence of a subspecialty groups within the counseling profession has been cited as one of the main factors hindering the development of a unified counselor professional identity and weakening the counseling profession (Emerson, 2010; Kraus et al., 2009; Mellin et al., 2011).

One example of the growing concern about the need for a consensus about the professional identity of the counseling profession is reflected in the 20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling initiative co-sponsored by ACA and the American Association of State Counseling Boards (ACA, 2009). The organizations participating in this initiative consisted of both co-sponsoring groups, 19 of ACA's specialty divisions, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC), and Chi Sigma Iota. Extensive discussions led to a consensus definition for counseling as well as identification of seven principles for unifying and strengthening the profession (ACA, 2009; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). This initiative can be viewed as significant in the profession of counseling as it attempts to create one vision for the profession of counseling. Supporters of the 20/20 initiative hope that this initiative can solidify the professional identity of counselors, improve public perception, assist in creating licensure portability, and contribute to more effective advocacy to legislatures and stakeholders (ACA, 2010; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011; Kraus et al., 2009). Yet, due to concerns over unaddressed questions and issues, ASCA's Governing Board chose not to endorse the seven 20/20

principles at this point (ASCA, 2009; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). The disagreement between ACA and ASCA regarding this initiative remains unresolved.

ACA, ASCA, and the NEA, the main national professional associations that seek to serve, represent, and support school counselors also disagree about the identity of a school counselor (ACA, 2009; ASCA, 2009; Mellin et al., 2011; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). ACA holds the position that school counselors are counselors who provide services in a school setting. The basic professional identity of school counselors is viewed by ACA as the same as counselors working in other settings (Kraus et al., 2009). It acknowledges school counseling as part of the profession of counseling, not a separate profession. ASCA defines school counselors in its School Counselor Role Statement as educators who are trained in school counseling to meet the developmental needs of students in the academic, career, and social domains (ASCA, 2009b; Schneider, 2009; Webber & Mascari, 2006). NEA does not define school counselors specifically but refers to them as support professionals within the school (NEA, 2011). They do appear to often defer to ASCA's positions when discussing issues regarding school counselors. Although, these organizations support the role of school counselors and agree on many of the roles that school counselors perform, the organizations' perspectives on professional orientation as a counselor or an educator differ (Schneider, 2009). This counselor and/or educator debate appears to be an ongoing issue and remains one of the struggles that school counselors face in claiming a unified professional identity (Paisley et al., 2007; Webber & Mascari, 2006).

In addition, the components of school counselor professional identity emphasized by various key constituents (e.g., graduate school professors and school counseling

training programs, individual state requirements for a school counseling license or certification, and school division personnel who assign or influence school counselor job responsibilities) also have a significant impact on the shaping of school counselors' sense of professional identity (Brott, 2006, Brott & Myers, 1999; Moss, 2011; Fitch et al., 2001; Myers et al., 2002). The differences amongst these groups' perspectives can create conflict and confusion within the profession as well as with those stakeholders and constituents who influence the jobs of school counselors (Schneider, 2009). Polling individuals identified as school counseling experts that represent school counselors, school counselor educators, and individuals who promote the profession through research, article and book publication, national conference presentations, and service as officers and committee chairs for professional school counseling associations could provide a breadth of perspective on what components constitute school counselor professional identity. Furthermore, an attempt to gain a consensus amongst these experts regarding the essential components of school counselor professional identity could lessen this confusion and serve as a step to unify the school counseling profession.

Rationale for the Study

The literature has suggested an increased desire within the profession for a unified professional identity for school counselors; however, there have been limited studies exploring what constitutes that identity. Many of the articles on this topic have been conceptual in nature or have explored the process of professional identity development (Brott & Myers, 1999; Henderson et al., 2007; Johnson, 2000; Paisley et al., 2007). Additionally, the challenges created from the differences in the perspectives of the key constituents and stakeholders (i.e., those with an interest in or an influence over the

profession of school counseling) have been explored (Dodson, 2009; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Reiner et al., 2009; Zalaquett, 2005). What appears lacking in the literature is an examination of the agreement amongst the various school counseling professionals regarding the essential components of school counselor professional identity.

This study aimed to offer the opportunity for leaders representing the varying perspectives within the school counseling profession to identify and examine the similarities and discrepancies amongst these perspectives and come to a consensus on the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity. The results of this study may serve as a step toward creating a unified professional identity for school counselors.

A unified professional identity has been linked to positive professional performance, counselor development and wellness, and more effective professional advocacy (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999; Culbreth et al., 2005; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Myers et al., 2002). Professional identity is viewed as a necessary component of professional advocacy as an individual needs to be able to clearly articulate what one does as a professional, the purpose of the profession, and how it is different than other professions (Myers et al., 2002). Professional advocacy for one's profession is a multistep process that includes identification of a problem, the assessment of available resources, creating a plan and taking action in an effort to argue for one's profession to multiple stakeholders (Myers et al., 2002). An understanding of the essential components of school counselor professional identity that this study aims to

develop may enhance school counselors understanding of their identity and support advocacy efforts.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to establish a consensus amongst experts in the field of school counseling about the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity.

The research question was:

What are the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity?

Definition of Terms

- ACA - American Counseling Association. A national professional association whose focus is on the supporting and promoting the counseling profession through leadership, education and training, and advocacy for counselors (ACA, 2011). It has 19 divisions or sub-specialty groups under its umbrella. It provides a code of ethics for the profession, professional journals, professional development opportunities, as well as support for the profession and its future.
- ACES -Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. A national division of ACA whose goal is to advance and support the training and supervision of counselors in all settings by providing leadership, professional and ethical standards, training and advocacy for counselor educators and supervisors (ACES, 2010).
- ASCA - American School Counseling Association – A national professional association for school counselors whose goal is to support school counselors and

their efforts to help students to be successful academically and personally (ASCA, 2011). ASCA provides leadership, professional development and training, professional standards, ethical standards, and advocacy for school counselors as well as guidelines and standards for school counseling programs.

- *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counselor Programs.* A publication of ASCA that provides a framework for defining and developing a comprehensive school counseling program. It is divided into four components, foundation, systems delivery, management systems, and accountability. Interwoven into each of these components are the themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. This framework provides school counseling programs the ability to link the services they provide to the mission of the school and provides a means of accountability for these programs (ASCA, 2012).
- CACREP - Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. CACREP is an independent agency that accredits master's level counseling and doctoral level counselor education programs. It provides standards for counseling and related educational programs in an effort to promote professional competence of practitioners needed to meet the needs of a diverse society (CACREP, 2009).
- Practicing school counselor - A school employee who is certified by their state to practice school counseling and is working as a school counselor in a school setting. This person's primary responsibilities are to address the academic, career and personal/social needs of students (ASCA, 2012).

- Professional identity- An overarching belief about oneself and one's chosen profession which helps a person to understand who they are and what they do as a professional while also providing a framework for practice and decision making (Brott & Myers, 1999; Emerson, 2010; Moss, 2011). Initiated in graduate school (Brott & Myers, 1999) this developmental process is impacted by a combination of training, experience, and interactions with others as well as individual values, beliefs and perceptions (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson et al., 2010; Moss, 2011, Weinrich, Thomas, & Chan, 2001).
- Professional Orientation – A general understanding of a profession, its history, its philosophy, and the context within which professionals perform their work. This understanding that is established early in graduate studies serves as a foundation for the profession, but does not define the professional within that profession (Granello & Young, 2012; Remley & Herlihy, 2007).
- Professional Roles – The function of an individual in a specific position within a particular organization. These include the expectations held by the individual as well as others regarding the duties and functions an individual or group of individuals perform (Culbreth et al., 2005, Merriam –Webster, 2012).
- School Counseling Expert – A positional or referent leader in the field of school counseling who is viewed as having a substantial impact on the field through practice, scholarship, teaching, or service.
- Stakeholder – A person or group who holds a vested interest in the training or practice of school counselors or the outcomes of school counselors' work. Also included are those who impact the roles, responsibilities, and functions of school

counselors. These stakeholders may be counseling or non-counseling stakeholders. These may include counselor educators, association leaders and members, school board members, administrators, national, state and local legislators, teachers, parents/guardians, students and other interested parties.

Overview of Methodology

The Delphi method is a communication framework that utilizes experts in a field to attempt to gain consensus on a topic (Dimmitt, Carey, McGannon & Henningson, 2005; Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010; Hasson & McKenna, 2000; Linstone & Turoff, 1975; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Norcross, Hedges & Prochaska, 2002; Skulmoski, Hartman, & Krahn, 2007). As there is a current lack of agreement regarding the professional identity of school counselors, consulting experts in an attempt to have them reach some consensus on the essential components of school counselor professional identity may create a foundation for a unified school counselor identity. The purpose of this study was to attempt to gain such consensus.

Expert panel selection for this study consisted of identifying and recruiting individuals utilizing purposeful sampling. In an effort to initially identify potential experts, I conducted a thorough review of the school counseling literature, noting authors who have published on school counselor professional identity. Additionally, I reviewed recent national conference programs, noting presenters on school counselor professional identity or related topics. I also identified individuals who have served as officers or committee chairs of state or national school counseling associations by reviewing the various associations' websites. Additionally, the review of these association websites led to the identification of national school counselor award recipients and school counselor

educator award recipients. Two states were chosen from which school counseling district supervisors were identified. Lastly, RAMP designated schools' websites were reviewed to identify school counselors working within these programs. Snowball techniques were conducted by asking potential participants for assistance in identifying additional individuals who met the expert criteria. For inclusion as an expert, participants met at least two of the following criteria:

- Had worked as a school counselor for at least three years
- Had earned either NCSC or NBPTS school counseling certification
- Had worked as a school counseling district supervisor
- Have received a state or national school counselor or school counselor educator award or had worked as a school counselor in a school that has earned the ASCA RAMP designation
- Had taught at least two master's or doctoral level school counseling specific classes at a university
- Had published in a peer referred journal or presented at a national conference on the topic of school counselor professional identity.
- Had served as state or national school counseling association officer or committee chair.

Research Team

In addition to the recruitment of an expert panel, a research team consisting of two additional researchers was recruited from Old Dominion University's doctoral programs. One member was a recent graduate from the Counselor Education program whose professional background was in mental health counseling along with testing and

assessment. The second member was a current Old Dominion University doctoral student in the Counselor Education and Supervision doctoral program that works full time as a school counselor in a local district. The research team met prior to initiating data analysis. During this initial meeting the purpose of the study was discussed and an overview of the Delphi methodology was provided. Additionally, a discussion of individual bias concerning this topic was addressed and each research team member was encouraged to identify personal bias on the topic of school counselor professional identity initially and throughout the process. Lastly, the research team was provided step-by-step training in the chosen data analysis and coding process implemented for this study.

This study utilized three rounds of data collection. The expert panel was recruited and an email invitation to participate in this study was sent to the potential experts. The initial invitation included an explanation of the study, the criteria for inclusion on the expert panel, and a link to the survey. The round one survey instrument included an informed consent, which once accepted, directed them to the demographic form and the open ended protocol which instructed them to list words or phrases that they believe constitute the components of school counselor professional identity (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009; Milsom & Dietz, 2009).

Once the round one responses were collected, the research team was provided with the expert panel members' responses in a password protected file. No identifying information was provided for each set of responses. The researcher and the research team individually analyzed the responses following a data analysis process adapted from Creswell (2009) and Hays & Singh (2012). Following a thorough initial reading and review of the responses, each member of the research team wrote memos or notes

regarding their thoughts about the responses. Each research team member then returned to the data to code, or chunk and label the expert panelists' responses, combining similar codes as they moved through the process. After each individual team member completed the data coding, they developed an individual codebook based upon their findings and began to develop possible operational definitions for each code. Once each research team member had completed the coding process and developed an individual codebook, all three codebooks were presented to the research team members and a meeting was held for the purpose of consensus coding. During this meeting the research team reviewed each team member's list of codes, combined similar codes, and, as a team, establish an agreed upon list of codes or components. The research team also discussed the individually derived definitions for each code or component and agreed upon operational definitions as they worked to establish a consensus regarding the codes. A consensus codebook was created by listing all of the codes or components agreed upon by the research team. This aggregate list of components was used to develop the items in the Likert scale instruments that were distributed to the experts in the second and third iterations of the study (Creswell, 2009).

Lastly, the operational definitions derived from the consensus coding meeting were added to the consensus codebook. A final meeting was conducted allowing the research team members to review and discuss the substance and wording of each operational definition until there was agreement amongst the research team as to final list of operational definitions for each code. This process is referred to as consensus coding and the product of this process was a codebook that includes a list of components of

school counselor professional identity as identified by the experts (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

An invitation to participate in the round two Likert scale survey was sent to each of the expert panel members from round one. This invitation included instructions for completing the round two instrument and a link to the round two survey. The panel of experts was asked to rate the items on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) – 6 (strongly agree) indicating their belief about whether the item was an essential component of school counselor professional identity. The expert panel's responses were collected, and descriptive statistics were run on the round two responses. The means and standard deviations were identified for each item (Green & Dye, 2002; Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010) and these results were imbedded into each item of the Likert scale for distribution during round three of data collection. The third round of data collection consisted of sending out an email invitation to all of the expert panel members with an explanation of the embedded results and instructions for reviewing these results and completing of the final instrument. Again, a link to the final survey was included in this email invitation. The final survey instrument that was sent to the panel of experts contained all of the items from the round two Likert scale along with the means and standard deviations for each item from round two (Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009; Norcross et al., 2002). The panel of experts was asked to review the results from round two, reevaluate their original responses, and re-rate each item (Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010; Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Theislen & Leahy, 2001). Once the round three data collection was complete, descriptive statistics were run on the round three responses and any items that met the criteria for consensus of a mean rating of 4.8 (agree) or higher and a standard deviation of

.85 or less (Neuer, 2011) were placed in the final list of components of school counselor professional identity (Hsu & Sanford, 2007).

Summary

School counseling is a profession that faces many challenges as a result of the current societal issues impacting students such as homelessness, substance abuse, rising mental health concerns and family's financial struggles (Adelman, 2002; Baker & Gerler, 2008; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Lockhart & Keys, 1998). The profession is also impacted by the economic challenges that impact school division funding. The lack of agreement amongst school counselors and the various school counseling stakeholders regarding the professional identity of school counselors and the subsequent impact of this lack of agreement on school counselor roles further adds to these challenges (Fitch et al., 2001; Kaplan, 1995; Schneider, 2009). As professional identity has been linked to positive performance, counselor development and wellness, and to improving professional advocacy efforts, this study that attempted to gain consensus amongst identified school counseling experts regarding the essential components of school counselor professional identity could benefit the profession.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Professional identity is viewed as an overarching belief about oneself and one's chosen profession which helps a person to understand who they are and what they do as a professional while also providing a framework for practice and decision making (Emerson; 2010; Moss, 2011). This belief can be viewed as evolving for the professional. This identity is seen as a process that begins in graduate school, develops over time, and is impacted by educational and professional experiences (Brott & Myers, 1999). In addition, this developing identity is also influenced by one's personal values, attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs (Brott, 2006; Gazzolla & Smith, 2007; Gibson et al., 2010; Moss, 2011; Studer, 2007; Weinrach et al., 2001).

The establishment of a unified professional identity is not an isolated concern as many of the helping and education professions, such as social workers, school psychologists, counselors, and educators have faced struggles in defining and establishing a strong professional identity (Ball, Kratochwill, Johnston, & Fruehling, 2009; Gale & Austin, 2003; Goodyear, Murdock, Lichtenberg, McPherson, Koetting, & Petren, 2008; Hage, 2003; Hanna & Bemak, 1997; Hiebert, Simpson & Uhlemann, 1992; Nastasi, 2000; Romano & Kachgal, 2004). Without a strong sense of professional identity, these helping professionals risk experiencing burnout, beginning to look like other professionals in their work place, and being replaced by other practitioners (ASCA, 2012; Brown & Trusty, 2005; Culbreth et al., 2005; Webber, 2004; Webber & Mascari, 2006).

School counseling is a profession that is positioned in both the counseling and education fields (Paisley & McMahon, 2001; ASCA, 2009). Both fields influence the

development of school counselor's professional identity. These multiple influences may contribute to the challenges involved in establishing a distinct professional identity. The impact of these multiple influences and other challenges on school counselors' professional identity will be examined in this chapter. In addition, the history, importance, and influence of professional identity will be explored.

Importance of Professional Identity

Over the past 25 years, there has been a growing presence of articles regarding counselor professional identity within the professional literature. The need for a strong professional identity has been reiterated and the benefits to the individual counselors as well as the profession as a whole have been delineated (Auxier et al., 2003; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Gibson et al., 2010; Grimmer & Paisley, 2008). The benefits of a strong professional identity to the individual school counselor include strengthened job performance, increased counselor wellness through reduced stress and burnout, and increased knowledge and awareness of one's appropriate roles and functions (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson et al., 2010; Granello & Young, 2012; Grimmer & Paisley, 2008; Henderson et al., 2007; Ponton & Duba, 2009). Furthermore, a strong professional identity enhances professional advocacy efforts as well as impacts how school counselors are trained (Milsom & Akos, 2005; Myers et al., 2002; Trusty & Brown, 2005).

At the most basic level, a strong professional identity provides benefits for school counselor educators (Auxier et al., 2003; Hanna & Bemak, 1997; Johnson, 2000; Moss, 2011; Paisley et al., 2007; Spruill & Benshoff, 1996). As professional identity development is viewed as an ongoing process that begins in graduate school (Brott & Myers, 1999), those training new professionals need a foundation from which to facilitate

this process (Brott, 2006; Gibson et al., 2010). Achieving consensus on components that constitute school counselor professional identity could assist counselor educators in the process of facilitating new school counselors' professional identity development.

As the school counselor moves from graduate school into the workplace, having a strong professional identity assists one in understanding who one is as a professional, what one's roles are as a school counselor, and how one can be more effective (Emerson, 2010; Gibson et al., 2010; Johnson, 2000). This understanding is important because some school counselors are the only one in their particular school (Page, Pietrzak, & Sutton, 2001; Wilkerson, 2006). The principal is often the school counselor's direct supervisor and may have misconceptions on the roles and functions of school counselors (Baker & Gerler, 2008; Fitch et al., 2001; Paisley & Borders, 1995). Without a strong foundation of professional identity and no model or reference point, a school counselor may fall subject to role confusion and inappropriate duties. The school counselor may either be unaware that particular roles are inappropriate or realize that these roles are inappropriate but lack the ability to explain why they are inappropriate (Johnson, 2000; Myers et al., 2002; Webber & Mascari, 2006).

As professional identity involves having a sense of what one does as a professional, a clear concept of school counselor roles appears important to an understanding of professional identity (Culbreth et al., 2005; Dahir & Stone, 2007; Mellin et al., 2011). Roles reflect both an individual's expectations as well as the expectations of others about what a person does in a certain setting. As a person's concept of their professional identity can influence their expectations, this concept may influence what roles they perform (Culbreth et al., 2005). School counselor roles and

professional identity may be interrelated, with each one potentially impacting the other. Although roles and professional identity may be interrelated they are not the same. Roles represent what school counselors do or are expected to do. Professional identity is more representative of how school counselors view themselves as professionals. Numerous empirical and conceptual articles about school counselor roles have been in the professional literature and concerns about appropriate and inappropriate roles have been thoroughly discussed (Brott & Myers, 1999; Culbreth et al., 2005). In contrast, although conceptual articles suggesting increasing interest in school counselor professional identity there appears to be a dearth of literature regarding how school counselors conceptualize themselves as professionals, what components constitute their professional identity, how this identity is related to the roles that school counselors perform, and how school counselors make decisions about their work. This study may begin to address this gap in the literature as it aims to develop a list of essential components of school counselor professional identity. The resulting list of essential components could serve as the basis for the development of an instrument to measure school counselor professional identity as well as the relationship of this professional identity to roles, decision making

Practicing school counselors are required to make decisions about the roles that they perform and how they will function within their program. In addition, they are also faced with making ethical decisions in their work with students (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Granello & Young, 2012; Linde, 2010). Along with the guidance offered by professional codes of ethics, a strong professional identity assists practitioners by providing them with a sense of who they are as a professional and serves to clarify what they should and should not do in various situations (ACA, 2005; ASCA, 2010; Gibson et

al., 2010; Ponton & Duba, 2009). Presently both ASCA and ACA have ethical codes that school counselors are expected to adhere to.

Huey and Gray (2010) provide an overview of the evolution of the ethical codes that impact school counselors. ACA's code of ethics was established in 1961 prior to ACA changing its name from the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA). The National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA) (changing its name to ASCA in 1983) adopted these standards. In 1972, NVGA originally adopted their own ethical standards to more clearly reflect the work of counselors in the schools, while still deferring to the APGA/ACA standards. Following a brief return to the APGA ethical codes from 1979 to 1984, the ASCA ethical standards for school counselors were created. These standards laid the foundations for future revisions. Interestingly, all references to ACA's Code of ethics were dropped in the third revision of the ASCA Ethical Standards in 1998 and the subsequent revisions in 2004 and 2010.

As society has evolved, the ethical standards have evolved to provide guideline for school counselors regarding conduct and decisions in situations specific to a school setting. Although ASCA's Ethical Standards for School Counselors no longer defer to ACA's ethical code, there are differing perspectives within the literature regarding which ethical standards school counselors should utilize. Stone (2009) at one point in her text recommends that school counselors follow ASCA's Ethical Standards for School Counselors but later suggests that school counselors should apply the ASCA and ACA Ethical Codes along with applicable laws in step two of Solutions to Ethical Problems in Schools (S.T.E.P.S), her ethical decision making model specific to counselors working in the schools. There is further support in the literature that school counselors should review

both codes of ethics when making ethical decisions (Linde, 2011; Hermann, Remley, & Huey, 2010). The decision to adhere to ASCA's Ethical Standards for School Counselors and/or ACA's code of ethics, or adhere to some other ethical code may be influenced by a school counselor's professional identity. Likewise, a strong professional identity can assist a school counselor in deciding which code(s) of ethics they will follow to guide practice. Knowing what guidelines to follow when making decisions about ethical situations may help the school counselor manage the ambiguity and stress that can accompany such decisions (Stone, 2009).

School counselors encounter numerous other potentially stressful situations. A strong professional identity can minimize the stress and burnout that school counselors may face (Culbreth et al., 2005; Granello & Young, 2012). Many school counselors entering the field face incongruence between the reality of the job and the ideal that they held in graduate school (Baker & Gerler, 2008; Dahir & Stone, 2007). One such incongruence is seen between the suggested maximum ratio of counselor to student of 1:250 and the reality that many practicing school counselors have caseloads two to three times larger than this suggested ratio (Adelman, 2002; ASCA, 2009; Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). These large caseloads and the characteristics and needs of students on those caseloads can make it more challenging to carry out the myriad roles school counselors may perform in a school and may increase stress and burnout for school counselors (McCarthy, Van Horn, Kerne, Calfa, Lambert, & Guzman, 2010).

School counselors may experience stress as a result of the multiple demands placed upon them and the diverse roles with which they are tasked (Culbreth et al., 2005).

School counselors are expected to be leaders within the schools, advocates for students and the school counseling profession, collaborators with stakeholders within and outside of the school, and to act as systemic change agents (ASCA, 2009; Brown & Trusty, 2005; Ed Trust, 1997). To support these roles school counselors are expected to embrace accountability while also working to remove institutional and societal barriers negatively impacting student achievement (Brott, 2006; Grimmer & Paisley, 2008; Sink, 2009). In addition, the issues that impact students are numerous and complex (e.g., homelessness, substance abuse, and rising incidence of mental health concerns). School counselors need to address the impact of these issues on students in order to help students to be successful (Adelman, 2002; Akos & Galassi, 2004; Baker & Gerler, 2008; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Kaffenberger & Seligman, 2010; Lockhart & Keys, 1998; Whiting, Parr, & Bradley, 2010). In sum, school counselors face a multitude of issues and expectations. Having a strong professional identity may not only help school counselors to advocate for appropriate duties and needed resources, it could also influence how a school counselor manages these demands (Myers & Sweeney, 2002; Johnson, 2000). Additionally, a clear sense of professional identity can lead a school counselor to seek relevant training and education, which in turn can enhance the skills and competencies a school counselor needs to address these issues and to effectively perform their jobs (Brott & Myers, 1999; Moss, 2011; Studer, 2007). Yet the impact of the aforementioned concerns on school counseling is not new. A review of the profession's history suggests societal issues have been a driving force since school counseling began.

The History of School Counseling Professional Identity

School counseling has evolved over time in an effort to address the social issues that were impacting our country. Each shift in focus that occurred could be linked to the pressing societal needs of the times (Herr & Erford, 2011; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Paisley & Borders, 1995). Grounded in the fields of education and counseling, school counseling philosophy, roles and functions have evolved over the past 100 years (Baker & Gerler, 2008).

Foundations

In the early 1900's, Jesse B. Davis created a vocational component as an add-on to curricular instruction for English teachers (Baker & Gerler, 2008; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Schmidt, 2003). This role expanded over the next three decades to include assessment, record keeping, counseling and follow-up (Herr & Erford, 2011). Individual and group counseling were added components in response to the shift toward a more holistic approach to counseling that Carl Rogers introduced (Baker & Gerler, 2008; Schmidt, 2003). Although school counseling was no longer an add-on responsibility of a teacher, there was still no standardization of training or implementation (Baker & Gerler, 2008). The movement toward school counseling being a separate profession, something different than teaching, brought with it the beginnings of a unique professional identity.

In the 1950's and 1960's, school counseling made strides to expand and legitimize the profession. The American School Counseling Association became a division of the American Personnel & Guidance Association (APGA, currently the American Counseling Association) in 1953 (Herr & Erford, 2011; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). These associations provided a research base, ethical standards, professional

development opportunities, and advocacy for the profession (Baker & Gerler, 2008; Herr & Erford, 2011).

The launching of Sputnik in 1957 spurred the passage of the *National Defense Act of 1958*. This provided for hiring more school counselors in the secondary schools to test and identify students with strengths in math and science (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Schmidt, 2003). This legislation's effects included an increase in the number of school counselors on the secondary level, the addition of school counselors on the elementary school level, and the introduction of new roles and functions for the school counselor which tied them to the missions of the schools (Herr & Erford, 2011). The new roles included dropout prevention, scheduling, educational and career guidance, and crisis intervention

The move toward aligning school counselor functions with schools' missions influenced the paradigm shift in school counseling that occurred in the 1970's, the 1980's, and part of the 1990's. Comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP) were developed and the focus of school counseling shifted from the individual counselor (position) to the school counseling program as a whole (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Herr & Erford, 2011). At the same time, declining enrollments and budgets in the schools created a need for the profession to justify its importance in the schools (Baker & Gerler, 2008). Taking on administrative duties was one way that this was accomplished. Thus another set of responsibilities was placed upon the school counselor without removing any of their earlier roles (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012). The addition of administrator duties further increased role ambiguity (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The increasing

ambiguity created a need for clearer articulation of roles, functions, and purposes of school counselors (Lieberman, 2004).

The New Vision

During the 1990's and early 2000's, there were initiatives designed to clearly articulate the purpose of school counseling profession and the roles and functions of school counselors. One such initiative was the Transforming School Counselor Initiative, a collaborative effort between the Dewitt-Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund and the Education Trust foundation, to develop school counseling training programs that would implement a new vision in preparing school counselors (Baker & Gerler, 2008; Dahir & Stone, 2007). This included identifying how school counselors could serve all students by helping them all to be successful academically (Education Trust, 1997). It called school counselors to become leaders in the schools along with advocates for access and equity for all students (Education Trust, 1997; Martin, 2002). These new vision roles called for training programs that prepared school counselors to be more responsive to students' needs, to utilize technology and data, and to be accountable for their outcomes (Dahir & Stone, 2007; Erford, House, & Martin, 2007; Sink, 2006).

The American School Counseling Association, ASCA, has made strides over the past nearly sixty years to support the profession of school counseling and clarify school counselors' professional identity (Dahir et al., 2009; Herr & Erford, 2011). The development of the ASCA statement delineating the role of school counselors (ASCA, 1983, 1990, 2009) is one example. Additionally in 1990, ASCA's Governing Board unanimously voted to use the title school counselor instead of guidance counselor,

reflecting the shift that was occurring within the profession at that time (ASCA, 2012; Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

Then in 1997, the ASCA National Standards for School Counseling Programs were published. These professional standards attempted to provide school counselors with the specific content and knowledge, attitudes, and competencies that all students should attain through the school counseling program (ASCA, 2004). The standards are further delineated under the academic, personal/social, and career developmental domains identified by ASCA. Additionally, ASCA holds ethical standards for school counselors to guide practice (ASCA, 2010). ASCA's ethical standards deferred to the ACA ethical standards until the 1998 revision. From this point on, the ASCA standards no longer made reference to the ACA standards (Huey & Gray, 2010). These ethical standards shifted to provide guidance to school counselors regarding ethical practice in working specifically with students. The role statement, professional standards, and ethical standards were all attempts to support school counselors and the school counseling profession by providing clarification on what school counselors do as well as guidelines for professional practice. These ASCA publications aim to assist a school counselor with developing professional identity in line with the new vision for school counseling.

The early efforts on the part of ASCA to support the new vision for school counseling were not in isolation. In 2003, the National Center for Transforming School Counseling was created via collaboration between the Education Trust and MetLife Foundation. The National Center for Transforming School Counseling was created in an attempt to ensure that this new vision of school counseling was supported in training programs and that practicing school counselors would be poised to help every student

achieve at a high level (Education Trust, 2007). This new focus viewed school counselors as educational leaders, advocates, and collaborators whose programs and practices are aimed at helping all students achieve. Although the Education Trust emphasized the educational identity of school counselors, many of the proposed new roles envisioned were also endorsed by ASCA (ASCA, 2012; Dahir & Stone, 2007; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012).

The efforts of both the Transforming School Initiative and ASCA serve to provide clarification regarding the profession of school counseling and provide guidelines for the practice of school counseling. In 2003, the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation (CSCORE) was created as a collaborative development between the Transforming School Counseling Initiative and the school of Education at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst in an effort establish research based best practices for school counseling (CSCORE, 2012). The center's efforts attempt to identify empirically based interventions and practices as well as to provide tools for school counselors to evaluate their programs. The focus is to identify which practices and interventions are effective and provide a vehicle for showing stakeholders how students are different as a result of the school counseling program. These research based efforts attempt to determine best practices for school counseling and empirical support for the school counseling program outcomes can serve to further support the profession's legitimacy, provide a clearer understanding of appropriate roles and tasks for school counselors, as well as to understand the purpose of the profession and how best to accomplish that purpose. As ambiguity exists regarding the purpose of profession of school counseling, the appropriate roles and practices of school counselors, and how their

programs and practices impact students, research on best practices can provide twofold benefits. First, it can provide school counselors with data supported practices that have demonstrated their effectiveness to enhance their school counseling programs and support their accountability efforts. As the operational definition for professional identity for this study encompasses an understanding of who one is as a professional and what one does as a professional, research on best practices may provide clarity about what one does as a school counselor. Additionally, research based practices can provide clarification for the various school counseling constituents as to why school counseling programs are important to the educational setting, what school counselors do and how these practices support students. Research based best practices may provide school counselors and their constituents with a clearer understanding of what school counselors should be doing and provide the data to support that those practices are making a difference. If school counselors and their constituents begin to agree on school counseling practices, this action may potentially influence the divergent perspectives on school counselors' professional identity.

Beginning in 2001, ASCA ventured forward by taking their National Standards and the themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change promoted by the Transforming School Counseling Initiative to create and publish the ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2003, 2005, 2012). The National Model (2012) provides the framework for school counselors to be able to design, develop and implement a comprehensive school counseling program. The model further defines the roles of the school counselor as well as school counseling programs. The model serves as a guide not only for school counselors, but also for outside

stakeholders such as administrators and school boards (McGlothlin & Miller, 2008) to understand what a school counseling program is, how it will be implemented, when, why, and on what authority it will be implemented, and to answer the question “how are students different as a result of the program” (ASCA, 2012, p 99). In an effort to demonstrate that a comprehensive school counseling program is aligned with the ASCA standards and to provide evidence of the positive impact of these programs on students and stakeholders, ASCA began to recognize school counseling programs through the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) process (ASCA, 2008a). School counseling programs interested in becoming RAMP designated go through an extensive one-year application process during which they collect data and provide evidence that their program is fully implementing the ASCA National Model. RAMP designation is ASCA’s vehicle for identifying what they believe to be exemplary school counseling programs.

ASCA, through its development of the ASCA National Model (2012), an ASCA specific code of ethics (2010), a school counselor role statement (ASCA, 2009), the ASCA National Standards (2004), school counselor competencies (2008b), the RAMP designation, and various position statements have attempted to address and clarify school counselor roles and responsibilities, appropriate duties for school counselors, and requirements of training programs. Overall, these efforts have attempted standardize the practice of school counselors and to provide a basis for professional identity (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012). The opening paragraph of the forward to the second edition of the ASCA National Model clearly identifies the necessity of standardization and goes on to say; “the profession has suffered from a lack of consistent identity, lack of basic philosophy and, consequently a lack of legitimization” (ASCA, 2005, p 1). The ASCA

National model is an attempt to address these concerns. Although many school counseling programs and school counselors attempt to follow and implement the ASCA National Model, not all school counselors and school counseling stakeholders agree with the position that ASCA has taken.

Current Challenges

School counselor professional identity is impacted by the development of the profession throughout history and by recent initiatives like the Transforming School Counselor Initiative and the efforts of ASCA- including the creation of the ASCA National Model, school counselor roles statements, school counselor competencies, and school counselor position statements (ASCA, 2012; ASCA, 2008b; ASCA, 2009; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). These developments have contributed to the clarification of the roles and functions of school counselors as well as the design and function of comprehensive school counseling programs (Culbreth et al., 2005; Dahir et al., 2009; Dahir & Stone, 2007; Grimmitt & Paisley, 2008). Despite these initiatives, school counselor professional identity remains a challenging concept (Henderson et al., 2007; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). In an effort to understand some of these challenges a brief examination of the current status of training and accreditation, licensure and certification, and stakeholder views appears warranted.

Training/Accreditation

School counselor training can be broad and diverse depending on multiple factors. There are graduate training programs ranging from certification programs to educational master degrees with school counseling concentrations to school counseling master's degree programs (ASCA, n.d.c). The number of courses needed to complete the program

varies, as does the content of these courses. A closer look at the structure of these programs also reveals differences in the number of school counseling classes a student must complete. These requirements fall somewhere along a continuum from one course specific to school counseling to a program consisting of all required courses for a master's degree being school counseling courses (Education Trust, 2009; ASCA, 2011). This range of requirements suggest the possibility of differing program identities that in turn could impact the school counselor-in-trainings' professional identity development. Program identity, structure, and course requirements are influenced by their program accreditation. Currently there are two main organizations that accredit school counseling programs, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2010).

CACREP began accrediting specific program specialty areas in counselor education programs in 1981 and has since attempted to provide leadership and standards for training programs to promote excellence in counseling preparation programs (CACREP, 2009). As of the 2009 CACREP standards, there are seven program areas that CACREP accredits. Addictions counseling, career counseling, clinical mental health counseling, marriage, couple and family counseling, school counseling, and student affairs and college counseling are the six master's level program areas. Counselor education and supervision is the only doctoral level program they currently accredit. CACREP accredits more school counselor programs than any of the other six program areas (Milsom & Akos, 2005). A comparison of the compilation of school counseling programs listed on the ASCA website and the list of CACREP accredited school

counseling programs found 481 master's level school counseling programs nationally with 216 of these currently being CACREP accredited (ASCA, 2011; CACREP, 2012).

CACREP (2009) outlines core curricular requirements that are to be included in all of its accredited programs, regardless of program area. Professional orientation and the professional identity of counselors is the first shared core curricular area of study. The topics that are to be covered within this core area include: history and philosophy of the counseling profession, professional roles of counselors, professional organizations, licensure and/or certification, the need for accreditation standards, the responsibilities of the counselor in advocating for the profession and for addressing societal and intuitional barriers, and ethical standards for the training of counselors and for the practice of counseling. These standards are intended for all counselors, however, CACREP also includes additional school counseling specific standards.

Within the school counseling program area standards, CACREP (2009) further specifies the knowledge and skills of the core areas as they apply to the counselor working in a school setting and adds the specific knowledge and skills needed to successfully work while integrating the four themes of the ASCA National Model of leadership, collaboration and consultation, advocacy, and systemic change (Paisley et al., 2007). These standards call for both knowledge in these areas and the ability to apply this knowledge within a school setting as part of developing a comprehensive school counseling program (CACREP, 2009). Although these CACREP standards mandate that counselor education programs prepare school counselors according to these standards, not all programs are CACREP accredited.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, NCATE, accredits colleges of education, not specific programs within those colleges (NCATE, 2010). The mission of NCATE is to provide national standards for schools of education and their associated programs in an attempt to provide high quality preparation programs for teachers, administrators and specialists. The NCATE standards (2008) include: candidate knowledge, skills and professional dispositions; assessment system and unit evaluation; field experiences and clinical practice; diversity; faculty qualifications, performance, and development; and unit governance and resources. Its focus is on preparing highly qualified educators, including school counselors, to work with students in a K-12 setting. Some CACREP accredited programs as well as a number of the remaining school counseling degree programs and certification programs are housed in programs of education that are accredited by NCATE (Paisley & Borders, 1995; NCATE, 2010). In addition, some school counseling preparation programs are housed in other colleges, e.g., Regent University's School Counseling program is housed in the School of Psychology and Counseling (Regent University, 2010).

CACREP and NCATE accreditations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. CACREP originates from a counseling organization and its focus is on accrediting counseling programs regardless of what college or school houses these programs (CACREP, 2009). It has developed established standards for the counseling program itself. NCATE originates from an educational organization and develops standards for schools or colleges of education. It does not specifically accredit the programs within those schools of education. NCATE does look for evidence regarding the quality of the programs within a school of education when making accreditation decisions (NCATE,

2010). If a counseling program is accredited by CACREP, NCATE accepts this accreditation as evidence that the program is of high quality and therefore NCATE needs no other form of evidence regarding this program. NCATE and CACREP can harmoniously coexist with CACREP accredited programs falling within NCATE accredited schools of education.

The research on professional identity development stresses the importance of graduate training on professional identity development (Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999). As school counseling programs may be CACREP accredited, located in schools of education accredited by NCATE, both CACREP accredited and residing in schools of education accredited by NCATE, or not accredited by either, the training that school counselors receive may vary greatly. The associated professional identity development for school counselors is not necessarily uniform.

State Certification and Licensure

In addition to a lack of consistency in training, state certification requirements for school counselors vary throughout the United States. ACA and ASCA's websites provide a breakdown of training, experience and testing requirements for certification in each of the states in the nation (ACA, 2011; ASCA, n.d.b). Of the fifty states listed, 7 states have educational requirements less than a master's degree, 17 states require a master's degree in school counseling as the required educational component, and the remaining 26 states require at least a master's degree in some field and a prescribed number of graduate courses in school counseling.

Although many states used to require teaching experience in order to obtain your school counseling certification, presently only five still require prior teaching experience

(ASCA, n.d.b). The remaining states may have experience requirements that range from no prior experience to practicum and/or internship experience as a school counselor to related human service experience (ACA, 2011; ASCA, n.d.b). As professional experience can impact professional identity development; the varied teaching, counseling, or human service experience requirements have potential to impact the professional identity of the school counselor (Auxier et al., 2003; Gale & Austin, 2003; Mellin et al., 2011).

National Certification

Certification is another vehicle that can be used to demonstrate identity. Presently there are two separate national certifications that school counselors can obtain. The National Board of Certified Counselors has offered the National Certified School Counselors (NCSC) certification since 1991. In order to achieve this certification, the school counselor must hold a master's degree in counseling with advanced course work in school counseling or a master's degree in school counseling. They must also have three academic years of supervised school counseling practice, and must pass both the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification (NCE) and the National Certified School Counselor Examination (NCSCE) (NBCC, 2011).

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) also offers national certification for school counselors. This specialty certification began in 2002 and the requirements to earn this certification are three years' experience as a school counselor, a bachelor's degree and valid state certification, a four-part portfolio and a 6-part assessment (Milsom & Akos, 2007; NBPTS, 2012). NBPTS also offers 24 other national teaching certifications by subject area and developmental level for areas.

Both the NCSC and NBTPS certifications have extensive requirements and costs associated. There is some overlap in areas covered in the assessments; however the NBPTS portfolio requirement is focused on classroom teaching, academic interventions, and impact on student learning through interactions with stakeholders outside of the school (NBPTS, 2012). NBCC (2011) developed the NCSC certification collaboratively with ACA and ASCA in 1991 as a counseling specialty certification. Prior to or concurrent to earning the NCSC certification, an applicant must earn certification as a National Certified Counselor. The NCSC examination contains both a multiple choice general counseling knowledge section and simulated school counseling cases designed to assess the examinee's knowledge of school counseling and application of this knowledge.

It appears that even the titles of the certifications differentiate the corresponding professional identities. Making a choice to pursue one of these certifications over the other may impact a school counselor's professional identity as well as influencing the perspectives of the school counseling stakeholders with whom they work.

Professional Associations

Professional association membership is often viewed as important to professional identity (CACREP, 2009; Paisley & Borders, 1995). As mentioned previously, the American Counseling Association (ACA) is a national professional association for counselors with 19 specialty divisions. Its mission is "to enhance the quality of life in society by promoting the development of professional counselors, advancing the counseling profession, and using the profession and practice of counseling to promote respect for human dignity and diversity" (ACA, 2012). Both ACA the American School

Counseling Association (ASCA) advocate for school counseling, provide professional development opportunities to school counselors, and also support and provide guidance to school counselors. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) is both a division of ACA as well as an independent professional association for school counselors whose mission is “to represent professional school counselors and to promote professionalism and ethical practices” (ASCA, 2012). The National Education Association (NEA) serves as the primary national association for educators. Its overarching mission is to support and advocate for educational professionals in an attempt to provide all students an public educational experience that prepares them for success (NEA, 2011). There are also state, regional and local affiliates of each of these three organizations that school counselors may join.

A study conducted in 2005 looked at school counselor association membership in Arizona and found that 52.4% of the school counselors in the study belonged to a counseling association at the state or national level, 42.8% belonged to a teaching organization on the local, state or national level, and 27 % did not belong to any professional associations or organizations (Bauman, 2008). Although some counselors belonged to counseling associations and teaching organizations, 47.6% did not belong to a school counseling association, and 14.8% of the school counselors in the study belonged to only the teaching organizations (Bauman, 2008). The choice of professional association membership would appear to reflect a school counselor’s professional identity and the results of Bauman’s study may point to a lack of a cohesive identity for school counselors. Further understanding what components are essential to school counselor

professional identity could help school counselors to evaluate whether a professional association is positioned to properly represent them as professionals.

Various counseling and educational associations view the professional identity of school counselors somewhat differently. ACA and ACES both indicate support of the counselor identity for all counselors, including school counselors (ACA, 2010). Although the settings, populations served, and associated tasks may vary, the overarching identity is that of a counselor. In its role statement, ASCA (2009) identifies school counselors as educators trained in master's level school counseling programs, which suggests a different identity. NEA acknowledges the importance of school counselors but within its website only identifies them as educational professionals who provide support in the school (NEA, 2011). The divergent viewpoints of the various professional associations for school counselors further demonstrate the difficulty in establishing a unified identity for school counselors. In response to this concern, both ASCA and ACA have expressed their desires for a unified professional identity.

The recent initiative, *ACA 20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling* is a recent example of an attempt to address lack of unity within the counseling profession. In an effort to address the divisions within the counseling profession and to establish where the profession would be in the year 2020, ACA and the American Association of State Counseling Boards brought together delegates from 30 professional counseling organizations. This collaboration began in 2005 and included representation from the American Counseling Association and all of its divisions, the National Board for Certified Counselors, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, the Council on Rehabilitation Education, the Commission on

Rehabilitation Counselor Certification and Chi Sigma Iota. The task was to decide where they collectively wanted the profession to be by 2020 and to determine how they might assist in moving the profession to that place (ACA, 2010). In 2008, the *Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession* was approved (ACA, 2009). Of these seven principles, the first three are representative of their concerns regarding counselor professional identity:

1. *Sharing a common professional identity is critical for counselors.*
2. *Presenting ourselves as a unified profession has multiple benefits*
3. *Working together to improve public perception of counseling and to advocate for professional issues will strengthen the profession.*

Furthermore, in 2010 this initiative led to an agreement amongst these delegates regarding a definition of counseling. These developments may be viewed within the counseling profession as a significant step forward toward the creation of a unified professional identity. ASCA, the primary professional association for school counselors, was not part of the development of this definition of counseling as they chose not to endorse the principles in 2008 due to concerns that they held regarding the process (ACA, 2010). The 20/20 panel had chosen to exclude ASCA as a voting member in future deliberations in 2008.

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) has demonstrated its desire for a unified professional identity for school counselors specifically through its motto "One Vision, One Voice", through the creation of a role statement and multiple position statements for school counselors, and with the ASCA National Model, (ASCA, 2012). Additionally, although the RAMP designation does not apply to the individual

counselors within a program, it does provide a fairly clear identity for the school counseling program within which those counselors work (ASCA, 2008a). RAMP designation and its associated program identity may be related to school counselor professional identity as the choice to apply for RAMP designation may reflect the professional identities of those counselors in the applying school counseling program.

Both of these associations emphasize the need and desire for a strong professional identity, however, they currently do not agree on what that identity is or on the components that constitute that identity. With school counselors aligning with one, both, or neither of these associations, the differences in identity as promulgated by these associations may influence how school counselors view themselves. If school counselors cannot agree on their identity, it is understandable that the views of stakeholders would vary.

Stakeholder views

Stakeholders outside the field of school counseling are often influential in determining the actual job that school counselors perform (Leuwerke et al., 2009; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Perusse et al., 2004). School Boards and building administrators' views about the identity of school counselors may have a strong impact on the expected roles and function of school counselors within their division or building (Fitch et al., 2001). As primary leaders in the schools, principals assign tasks and duties to school counselors and the personal views and perceptions on the part of the principal could lead to a school counselor's job description being misaligned with a school counselor's training and skills (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Zalaquett, 2005). Unfortunately, the educational leadership literature and the training most administrators receive in graduate

school provide very little information to help them to understand what school counselors are trained to do (Dodson, 2009; Fitch et al., 2001). Many administrators still believe that scheduling, testing, discipline, and clerical duties are appropriate functions for school counselors (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Leukwerke et al., 2009; Reiner et al., 2009). The experiences they had with their school counselors when they were in school often impact their perception of the roles the counselors in their building play (Coy, 1999). This lack of understanding can create conflict between administrators and school counselors as well as potentially impact the professional identity that a school counselor develops (Kaplan, 1995).

It is not only administrators and school board members that hold differing perceptions about school counselors, but parents, teachers, and outside community members are often unsure of the role, function, and identity of the school counselor (Fitch et al., 2001; Reiner et al., 2009). Although these stakeholders may not be able to directly impact school counselors' jobs in the way administrators and school boards do, they do have indirect influence and therefore their perceptions are important (Fitch et al., 2001; Granello & Young, 2012; Kaplan, 1995). With a clearer sense of professional identity, school counselors can be positioned to clarify these differences and advocate for themselves (ASCA, 2012; Dollarhide et al, 2007; Johnson, 2000).

The necessity of advocating for the profession is stressed in the CACREP standards (2009) as well as within the school counselor standards and both ACA and ASCA's ethical codes (ACA, 2005; ASCA, 2010). School counselors are challenged to advocate for their profession to the stakeholders that determine the day-to-day functions of their jobs, yet many school counselors struggle with their own professional identity

(Amatea & Clark, 2005; Zalaquett, 2005). If school counselors are not able to clearly state who they are and what they do, their identity will not be clear to the others they work with and therefore their jobs may not reflect appropriate duties, roles and functions as delineated by the leading proponents of the new vision of school counseling (Baker, 1996; Fitch et al., 2001; Ponec & Brock, 2000). Agreement on the essential components of school counselor professional identity could assist with this advocacy for school counselors and school counseling by creating consistency within the profession. Yet it is not solely school counselor's responsibility to advocate for the profession. Professional associations also engage in advocacy.

Both ACA and ASCA have expressed the desire for unified professional identity for school counselors yet there is still no agreement of the essential components that make up this identity. A review of the professional literature suggests that school counselor professional identity is presently a relevant topic; however there also appears to be no clear consensus in the professional literature with regards to what constitutes that identity.

Research and Conceptual Articles

An examination of the professional literature over the past 25 years shows an increasing number of articles regarding overall counselor professional identity. Although many of these articles are conceptual in nature, there are a number of qualitative and quantitative studies that have been conducted regarding overall counselors' professional identity as well as the professional identity of specific counselor groups. Auxier, Hughes, & Kline (2003) and Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss (2010) both conducted qualitative grounded theory studies with counselors-in-training in an attempt to identify the stages of

counselor professional identity development. Skovholt & Ronnestad (1992) conducted a qualitative longitudinal study with counselors at different periods in their careers from graduate school up through 40 years as a practicing counselor in a similar effort to identify the stages of counselor professional identity. Similarly, qualitative and quantitative professional identity studies have been conducted with other counseling groups including doctoral graduates working in private practice (Swikert, 1997), Hispanic interns (Nelson & Jackson, 2003), and counselor educators (Calley & Hawley, 2008). Most recently, a Delphi study was conducted by Herlihy and Dufrene (2011) that sought to gain a consensus of the most important current and emerging ethical issues in the field of counseling. Although the focus of this study was on ethical issues, professional identity emerged as the second most important current ethical issue and as the third most important issue in counselor preparation.

In addition to counselor professional identity development studies and those examining specific counselor groups' professional identity, there have also been several studies conducted over the past twenty years that attempted to create measures of counselor professional identity. Unfortunately, a lack of agreement on the components that constitute this identity has impacted these researchers' findings (Auxier et al., 2003; Emerson, 2010; Gibson et al., 2010; Puglia, 2008; Remley & Herlihy, 2007). Publications and studies that have specifically identified components of counselor professional identity have been limited and a comparison of the various lists of components developed by these sources suggests that the lists are not only different but also that no single component was included in all lists.

In their book on ethical and legal issues in counseling, Remley and Herlihy (2007) listed the components they believe constitute counselor professional identity. The components identified within this book are: counseling philosophy, counselor preparation, professional association membership, credentialing and licensure, professional ethics, history of the profession, roles and functions, and professional pride. This publication was selected for review based upon its emphasis on professional identity within the counseling field. Additionally, CACREP (2009) identified the components of counselor professional identity in its standards. The CACREP Standards (2009) identified: history of the profession; counselor roles; professional ethics; professional credentialing, licensure, and accreditation; association membership; professional and client advocacy; self-care; and professional pride as components of counselor professional identity. The CACREP standards appear to be significant due to its influence on curriculum content within many counselor education programs.

Three recent studies that have attempted to measure counselor professional identity have been selected for review and discussion because they are fairly recent studies and each included a list of components of counselor professional identity (Emerson, 2010; Gray & Remley, 2000; Puglia, 2008). Gray and Remley (2000) developed the Counseling Profession Scale (CPI) to measure counselors' beliefs regarding their professional identity. The components of professional identity measured by the scale are: professional membership, professional identification as a counselor, licensure, graduating from a CACREP accredited program, participation in counseling professional development, NBCC certification, counselor identity over specialty identity, advocacy, professional pride, and professional philosophy. The CPI measures counselors'

beliefs regarding the importance of professional identity, not to examine the construct of professional identity, what constitutes that identity, or how a specialty identity may influence their beliefs or perceptions.

Additionally, Puglia (2008) developed the Professional Identity and Engagement Survey and the Beliefs About Counseling Scale to be administered along with Gray & Remley's (2000) Counseling Profession Scale in an attempt to measure how professional identity is related to philosophy of the profession, beliefs about the counseling profession, and professional engagement for counselors-in-training. Her primary focus appeared to be whether the graduate programs were providing the necessary guidance in the development of the students' professional identity. As counselor educators are tasked with the initial professional identity development of counselors-in-training, it is important that they guide this development. She initially identified three components of counselor professional identity: agreement with the counseling philosophy (e.g., development, wellness, prevention, and empowerment), knowledge of licensure and credentialing; and professional engagement. The findings of her study supported knowledge of philosophy and professional engagement as two broad components of counselor professional identity, but the findings also suggested that more components may exist and an agreement on what these components are has yet to be established. Additionally, Puglia did not attempt to identify the components of identity, instead she attempted to measure counselors-in-training' awareness and perceptions regarding these three areas that had appeared to be components of professional identity. Additionally her study did not examine post-graduate professionals, nor did it look at school counselors specifically. Puglia suggested that future research on the construct of professional identity is needed

and that the development of instrumentation to identify the components of professional identity would be beneficial

Most recently, Emerson (2010) conducted a study attempting create an instrument, the Counseling Professional Identity Measure, to measure overall counselor identity using what she believed to be a more comprehensive definition comprised of components drawn from the previous definitions in the literature. The subscales included in her instrument were aligned with the components she chose for her definition: history of the profession, philosophy, roles and functions, professional pride, professional engagement, and ethics. After determining the definition and subscales she would use for her study, she created items drawn from existing definitions of the components, interviews with counseling professionals, and a thorough review of the research and literature. Expert review of the items and the use of a pilot study were conducted to explore the reliability and validity of her instrument as well as to identify problems with her procedures and to identify any needed revisions to her instrument. A total of 430 participants, who were members of either ACA and/or ASCA, ultimately completed the revised instrument and a factor analysis of the responses to each subscale was conducted.

The findings from Emerson's study suggested that each subscale was more complex than she had anticipated and that ultimately these six subscales did not provide a valid and reliable measure of professional identity. She concluded that due to the differences found between groups, further studies looking at individual specialty groups might provide more reliable results. Furthermore, she found that the components used for her study may be incomplete and suggested that further studies to identify the components of counselor professional identity as viewed by practitioners may be

beneficial. She also suggested studies specifically looking within groups of specialty counselors at how the definition and measure fit for each of these groups may be provide useful information. Lastly, she suggested that a Delphi study could be conducted in an effort to gain consensus on the counselor professional identity scale that she developed and the items within that scale. These findings offer support for the proposed Delphi study to establish a consensus on the essential components that constitute professional identity.

School counselors are one specialty group whose professional identity has appeared to be emerging as a topic of interest in the literature. Over the past twenty years there have been conceptual articles and a few studies conducted specifically on school counselor professional identity in the literature (Brott & Myers, 1999; Henderson et al., 2007; Johnson, 2000; Paisley et al., 2007). There is disagreement within the professional literature, with proponents of the school counselor-as-educator identity being represented as well as proponents of the school counselor-as-counselor identity being represented. The demands placed on school counselors to be educational leaders and to develop programs that are tied to the academic mission of the schools have been emphasized to support the identity of school counselors as educators (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Education Trust, 1999; Johnson, 2000; Martin, 2002).

Others argue that school counselors need a counselor identity due to the increasing number of students who are facing mental health concerns such as depression, eating disorders, and anxiety disorders. It is argued that school counselors may be the only mental health worker that students ever see and need to be prepared to function in this capacity (Herlihy, Gray, & McCollum, 2002; Kaffenberger & Seligman, 2007;

Lockhart & Keys, 1998; Page et al., 2001). Additionally, there have been articles written where the authors have attempted to justify that school counselors' identity is both as counselor and as educator (Henderson et al, 2007; Paisley et al., 2007; Schneider, 2009; Webber & Mascari, 2006). All of this has fueled an ongoing debate over whether school counselors are counselor or educators or both.

Johnson (2000) proposed a three-phase initiative to promote the professional identity of the school counseling program. In her article, she acknowledged the struggles that school counselors have faced with their identity and argued that a paradigm shift is needed to align school counselor's identity with the new vision of school counseling that was evolving at the beginning of the twenty-first century. She stressed the importance of implementing and facilitating comprehensive school counseling programs that are tied to the academic mission of the school by addressing the academic, social and emotional and career needs of the students. She did not dismiss the school counselor's need to provide mental health support to students. This falls within the social emotional component of the comprehensive school counseling program and ultimately supports learning for students. The first stage of her initiative involved school counselors gaining consensus regarding function and vision. She suggested that this consensus building involves several components. First, a collaborative discussion must occur between school counselors and their various stakeholders to gain consensus on the design and focus of a comprehensive school counseling program. Second, she emphasized the need for continued professional development for school counselors to stay abreast of issues within the field. Included in this need for ongoing professional development is the need for school counselors to actively participate in their professional associations. Along with these suggestions she

stressed the need for the development of a formal job description for school counselors, the use of unified and consistent language about school counseling and the school counseling program, and the necessity of strong school counseling leadership at the division level to support these efforts. Once a consensus is established, phase two would consist of creating a plan of action utilizing input from the various stakeholders and conducting informal or formal needs assessments for the program. Once the data is collected, a formal plan of action for design and implementation of the school counseling program can occur. Once this second phase is complete, the final phase involved professional advocacy to inform the various publics of the professional identity of school counselors and the school counseling program. This three-phase initiative promulgated by Johnson is one example of the literature supporting the need for a unified professional identity for school counselors. Over a decade later, the call for consensus still appears to be relevant.

Paisley et al., (2007) supported the identity of school counselors as both counselors and educators. They acknowledged the present lack of consensus regarding school counselor professional identity and attempt to demonstrate how these multiple identities could in fact be unified and why such unification is justified. The authors of this article provided support for the counselor aspect of school counselor identity by pointing out the rise in pathology within the schools and the increase in risk factors for children. They also stressed the role of counseling in the preventative efforts of school counselors who assist students with the challenges that students face in normal developmental processes. Lastly, they argued that school counselors are often the only mental health professional in the schools as well as the only mental health professionals many students

will ever see, regardless of the referral process. It is their belief that this necessitates that school counselors are trained with appropriate skills to function in the role of counselor within the schools.

In turn, they also provided support for the educator identity as outlined in the recent initiatives by the Education Trust and the ASCA National Model. Their belief was that school counselors are uniquely positioned to assist students with their academic, personal/social and career growth. School counseling curriculum can be designed to demonstrate how academic success and career planning are relevant to the future. Additionally, school counselors as educators can work to advocate for students who may otherwise be underserved. The authors argued that school counselors are called within their daily work to function as both a counselor and an educator and therefore their identity should reflect both of these influences. This dual identity will then be reflected in the design of school counseling programs that will address both functions.

Although the authors did not conduct either a qualitative or quantitative study, they have examined how they, as faculty members employed by the Board of Regents (BOR) of the University of Georgia, have integrated the BOR principles and the CACREP standards into a preparation program that “encourages the development of a professional identity that embraces both counselor and educator roles” (p. 144). The authors provided a case example of how they have integrated the nine competency standards derived from the BOR principles for the promotion of the educator role and the CACREP core and school counseling competencies (CACREP, 2001) for the promotion of the counselor role. Finally, they discussed the assessments of competence that their

program conducts with their students which assess both counselor and educator competencies.

Adding to the recent literature on counselor professional identity are a limited number of empirical studies specific to school counselor professional identity (Brott & Myers, 1999; Henderson et al., 2007; Moss, 2011). The focus of these studies has mostly been regarding the professional identity process. Brott and Myers (1999) conducted a grounded theory study on school counselor professional identity development with practicing elementary and middle school counselors. The study's data was collected through qualitative interviews and observations of 10 elementary and middle school counselors in an effort to develop a theory regarding the process of professional identity development. The findings of this study suggested that school counselors develop their professional identity, or self-conceptualization of themselves as professionals, as they move through four phases. The first is the structuring phase where their perceptions and decisions are based upon their graduate training. The second, the interacting phase, begins as school counselors gain more experience interacting with the multiple publics that influence their roles and perspectives and they learn to manage these multiple influences. From this stage, they move into the distinguishing phase where they begin to make decisions about the 'what and how' of being a school counselor based upon the interactions between their self-perceptions and the multiple influences inherent in their jobs. Finally, they enter the evolving phase where they learn to integrate the external and internal influences and develop their own self-conceptualization based upon this interplay. The findings also suggested that this is a fluid process and that experiences of these school counselors and the needs of the students they serve can impact the

internalization of this self-concept and impact the services that are provided to the students. This study examined the developmental process and the stages that a school counselor encountered as they gained experience and their professional identity developed. It did not look at what specifically comprised this identity. Additionally, this study was conducted with a small group of elementary and middle school counselors and did not include the perspectives of school counselor educators or leaders within organizations that support and advocate for the school counseling profession. The focus of this study was to gain an understanding of the developmental process of professional identity, not to determine what components comprise professional identity.

Moss' (2011) grounded theory study further explored school counselor identity development over the career lifespan. Moss' study attempted to examine the professional identity development of practicing counselors at three separate points in the lifespan. Additionally, she compared the development of community counselors and school counselors to gain an understanding of the similarities and differences for these two groups. Six themes emerged from her data including Adjustment to Expectations, Confidence and Freedom, Separation versus Integration, Experienced Guide, Continuous Learning, and Work with Clients. She identified three transformational tasks, Idealism toward Realism, Burnout toward Rejuvenation, and Compartmentalization toward Congruency that counselors must work to accomplish at the different stages of their careers. Overall, as the counselors gained experience, their confidence grew, their feelings of freedom grew, and they were better able to integrate their personal and profession selves into a congruent view of self as professional. At each stage of

development, they accomplished these tasks through continued learning, relationships with an experienced guide, and their work with clients.

Her findings also suggested that there is little difference between community counselors and school counselors regarding their professional identity development. The process of professional identity development was similar for both groups as they experienced similar struggles for each theme at each stage in their careers. Additionally, both groups were unable to define their professional identity. Instead of defining their identity, many school counselors in this study listed their professional roles. Although both groups expressed dissatisfaction with the systems in which they worked, their specific struggles were different. Community based counselors identified bureaucracy, licensure policies, and insurance companies as influencing their roles and how they were able to help clients. School counselors identified school districts, administrators as impacting the roles they played both via the perceptions others held about school counselors and through the assignment of school counselor roles and duties. These outside perceptions may have increased the role confusion that the school counselors experienced. The school counselors discussed the challenges of role confusion within their job, especially the impact that the educator and counselor roles have on their professional identity development. Challenges with defining their professional identity were expressed as resulting from this role confusion.

In light of her results, Moss suggested implications for counselor educators regarding the initial development of counselors' professional identity. Preparing counselors for the realities of the work appeared to be her primary suggestion for counselor educators. In an effort to assist counselors-in-training to develop more

congruent expectations about the work, she suggested that counselor educators have students interview or shadow practitioners, invite practitioners into class as guest speakers, and work to ensure that practicum and internship experiences provide realistic learning opportunities. Moss also suggested that counselor educators understand the professional identity development process and the transformational tasks that occur with each stages of development to better prepare counseling students. Additionally, Moss suggested that the results of this study could normalize the professional identity process for practicing counselors by creating an awareness of the transformational tasks for each stage. The results of this study further supported the benefits of supervision for practicing counselors. Lastly, she found strong similarities between the professional identity development process for community based counselors and school counselors and therefore suggested that the professional associations provide learning opportunities for all counselors as her results support an overall counselor professional identity.

The suggestions for future research that Moss made included further exploration of the professional identity development for counselors-in-training, for counselor educators, and for counselors in other specialty areas. Specific to school counselors she suggested additional research on the impact that level (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school) has on school counselors' professional identity as well as the impact that the educator identity has on school counselors' professional identity development.

Moss' study examined the developmental process of professional identity for counselors over the lifespan. Although her participants were comprised of school counselors and community counselors, her study attempted to develop a grounded theory of overall counselor professional identity, not the associated professional identities of

specialty groups. Additionally, the intent of her study was to examine the process of development, not the composition of professional identity. Although her study appeared to add to the literature on counselor professional identity and offers suggestions at future research about school counselors professional identity, it does not appear to address the gap in the literature regarding what comprises school counselor professional identity.

Henderson et al. (2007) conducted a small qualitative study on school counselors' professional identity development. In their study, they suggested the nature of the identity they were exploring, although only as an overview. The focus of this small heuristic study was to explore the four researchers own professional identity development. These researchers participated in eight group dialogues as well as individually reflecting upon their development and wrote autobiographies about their individual experiences. In the group dialogues, they shared their stories and the other members coded this data, identified common themes, and conducted member checking to come up with dimensions of professional identity. They found four themes or dimensions of their school counselor identity: commitment to the services they provide, understanding of the role of the school counselors, the competencies needed for that role, and membership in a professional community. They also provided a narrative of identity development based on their findings and identified how each of the four dimensions evolved through the stages of development. Lastly, they provided a checklist of activities for each dimension to assist the school counselor in moving toward a strong professional identity. Some of the key activities listed were: to know the ASCA and ACA codes of ethics; to embrace opportunities to advocate for the role of school counselors; to know and apply the CACREP standards, the ASCA National Model, the state and local standards, policies

and laws, as well as the standards of the professional associations; to belong to your professional associations; to participate in counseling supervision; and to participate in professional development opportunities by attending and presenting at workshops.

Although this study was small and based upon the experiences of only the four researcher-participants, efforts at rigor were attempted. The study was conducted using the five stages identified by Moustakis for the process of heuristic inquiry: immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (Patton, 2002).

Transferability of the results is limited, however. What is significant about the choice of this methodology by these researchers is the significance they placed on professional identity development as a phenomenon and the rich descriptions they were able to provide through the use of this method. They also provided some examples of important aspects or components within school counselor professional identity. However the components are not necessarily the components that other school counseling professionals would identify as essential to school counselor professional identity. The suggested Delphi study could expand on this study by establishing a consensus on the essential components of school counselor professional identity.

Although the topic of school counselor professional identity continues to appear in the literature, the research specific to school counselors is limited and has been mostly qualitative in nature. Most of the professional identity studies for school counselors have been in an attempt to understand the professional identity development process. There appears to be gap in the literature regarding which components constitute school counselor professional identity.

Although there have been no published studies specific to the components of school counseling professional identity, a review of the literature on school counselor professional identity does suggest potential aspects that influence this identity. This literature review encompasses empirical and conceptual articles regarding school counselor professional identity as well as several publications that serve to guide the training programs and professional practice of school counseling. The guiding publications chosen include the ASCA National Model (2012), The ASCA School Counselor Role Statement (2009), the CACREP Standards for School Counselors (2009), the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2010), the Education Trust's New Vision for School Counselors (2009), the National Center for Transforming School Counseling's Ten Essential Elements for Change in School Counseling Preparation Programs (n.d.), and the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy's School Counselor Literature Review: The State of School Counseling in America (2011) provides additional sources to draw from. As the school counseling profession underwent a paradigm shift beginning in the late 1990's toward a new vision of school counseling, literature and school counseling publications that address or discuss the professional identity of school counselors over the past fifteen years has been selected for inclusion in Table 2-1 (Appendix E) and Table 2-2 (Appendix F). As this chapter has suggested that there are multiple perspectives amongst the various constituents (e.g., ACA, ASCA, the Education Trust, CACREP, NOSCA) regarding the identity of school counselors, representation of publications from these constituents have been selected. A review of each of these publications was conducted and key words related to school

counselor professional identity were identified as potential aspects of school counselor professional identity for inclusion in Table 2-1 and Table 2-2 (Appendix E and F).

The generic coding process I utilized to identify these potential aspects consisted of an initial reading the articles and documents to acquire a sense of the overall purpose and meaning of each. A second reading was conducted and words or phrases that appeared to relate to school counselor professional identity were marked within the text. These marked words or phrases were then compiled into a list for each article and document. Within each individual list, words and phrases that appeared to represent the same concept were merged into one category. All lists were merged into one inclusive list and once again similar items were merged into one factor. The final list was used to develop the templates for construction of each table. A column representing each article reviewed was created. Final potential aspects present within each article were marked within the table. The same process was used in Table 2-2 for the documents reviewed. The potential aspects identified from this review of the literature will be compared to the final list of components generated by this study and discussed in chapter five.

Summary

The ongoing debate as to whether school counselors are counselors or educators or both is an example of the lack of consensus that exists within the field regarding school counselor professional identity. As a product of two professions (Baker & Gerler, 2008), school counseling does not have a unified school counselor professional identity nor does a consensus list of essential components that constitute this identity exist (Emerson, 2010). The benefits of a strong professional identity to training programs, professional practice, and school counselor development have been suggested in the

literature (Auxier et al., 2003; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Gibson et al., 2010; Grimmer & Paisley, 2008). While there have been studies conducted and articles written addressing aspects of the professional identity development process, the multiple factors that impact professional identity, and on the lack of consensus of a definition of professional identity (Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999; Lockhart & Keys, 1998; Studer, 2007; Webber & Mascari, 2006), there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding the essential components of school counselor professional identity. A consensus on the essential components that constitute school counselor identity could be a useful step in developing a unified professional identity. A suggested methodology for attempting to establish consensus amongst a diverse group of school counseling experts is the Delphi method (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010; Hasson et al., 2000; Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Norcross et al., 2002; Skulmoski et al., 2007).

The Delphi technique is often used when there are multiple perspectives regarding an issue and the individuals or groups that hold these perspectives cannot be brought together. Utilizing this method to assist school counseling experts to identify the essential components of school counselor professional identity could assist in unifying the profession regarding what the components of school counselor identity. The following chapter will address the rationale for the method, further explanation of the criteria for selection of the panel, the procedures for data collection and data analysis that followed, as well as the strategies that were implemented to enhance trustworthiness.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

School counselor professional identity has been a topic that has received a substantial amount of attention in the literature over the course of the profession's history. Multiple authors have espoused the benefits of a strong professional identity, for the individual professional, the education of students, as well as for research efforts and advocacy for the profession of school counseling (Auxier et. al., 2003; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Gibson et al., 2010; Grimmit & Paisley, 2008). Some have even gone so far as to state that a strong unified professional identity is integral to the survival of the profession, stating that this lack of a strong professional identity creates confusion about what counselors do and hinders differentiation from other professionals (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Emerson, 2010). This confusion could diminish key stakeholders' and constituents' perspectives of the importance and legitimacy of school counselors (Culbreth, 2005, 2005; Moss, 2011, Ponec & Brock, 2000). Furthermore, not only does it weaken school counselors' current status, it also hinders the growth of the profession (Johnson, 2000).

As stated in the previous chapter, professional identity is defined as an overarching belief about oneself and one's chosen profession which helps a person to understand who they are and what they do as a professional while also providing a framework for practice and decision making (Emerson; 2010; Moss, 2011). This view suggests that what the school counselor does (roles) and how they view themselves (professional orientation) may be interrelated with a school counselor's professional identity- although without agreement regarding roles, orientation, or professional identity,

it is difficult to determine their exact relationship to one another. A review of the literature suggests that there is a lack of agreement within the profession regarding school counselors roles, school counselor professional orientation, and overall school counselor professional identity (Bauman, 2008; Culbreth et al., 2005; McGlothlin & Miller, 2008; Webber & Mascari, 2006; Zalaquett, 2005).

There is also a lack of consensus on the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity. The development of a strong unified professional identity is hindered when there is a lack of agreement on what comprises professional identity (Emerson, 2010; Johnson, 2000; Lockhart & Keys, 1998; Perusse et al., 2004). Depending on whom you ask, school counselors may be identified as mental health counselors in the schools, educators who are trained with counseling skills, a combination of these two roles, as well as teachers or support personnel whose function is to primarily to support instructional staff (ACA, n.d. a; ASCA, 2009; NCATE, 2010; NEA, 2011; Paisley et al., 2007; Webber & Mascari, 2006). Ultimately, the associated professional identity based upon any of these perspectives could influence the work that school counselors do in the schools and therefore impact students (Granello & Young, 2012; Henderson et al., 2007; Mellin et al., 2011). In light of the diverse perspectives concerning the professional identity of school counselors, establishing a consensus of the essential components of that professional identity could help create unity within the profession regarding the professional identity of school counselors.

The goal of this study was to develop a consensual list of the essential components of school counselor professional identity. As school counselors, school counselor educators, and leaders in organizations that support and advocate for school

counselors may hold a differing perspectives regarding school counselor professional identity, efforts were made to include a sample that represents these perspectives. This chapter will establish a rationale for the use of the Delphi method used to conduct this investigation as well as a description of how this study was conducted. Details regarding participant selection, data collection and instrumentation, and procedures for data analysis will be discussed. Finally, the strategies implemented for rigor, credibility and trustworthiness will be discussed.

Rationale for Using the Methodology

The Delphi method was originally developed in the 1950's by the Rand Corporation to gain expert opinion on the use of technology in warfare (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010; Norcross et al., 2002). Linstone and Turoff (2002) described the Delphi method as "a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem" (p. 3). In the past six decades, Delphi studies have been utilized in a broad array of fields for program planning, policy determination, forecasting future events, goal setting, and attempting to reach consensus amongst a group of experts about a particular topic under dispute (Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010; Hasson et al., 2000; Hsu & Sanford, 2007; Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009; Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Norcross et al., 2002). Delphi technique is viewed as an effective means for establishing a consensus or convergence of opinion among groups of individuals with knowledge about a particular subject area (Hsu & Sanford, 2007; Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009; Norcross et al., 2002). The technique's structured, efficient, and cost-effective approach is beneficial when bringing together groups of individuals who may be geographically dispersed or have

hostile or adversarial opinions (Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009). The structured nature of the Delphi method gives voice to all participants and mitigates the influence of dominant members, issues of group conformity, and the lack of focus on the problem that face-to-face interaction can sometime facilitate (Delbecq, Van der Ven, & Gustafson, 1975; Hasson et al., 2000; Hsu & Sanford, 2007).

Multiple authors have discussed the Delphi method but Linstone and Turoff (2002) are the most frequently cited with regards to the process. Variations do exist concerning the: purpose of the study; numbers of participants; number of iterations; researcher choice of methodology (e.g., using quantitative, qualitative or both quantitative and qualitative data collection); and analysis methods. In reviewing the literature on conducting a Delphi study it appears that the most commonly agreed upon components of the Delphi method include:

- The selection and recruitment of a panel of experts (Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009; Hallöwell & Gambatese, 2010).
- The utilization of either mailed or electronic communication to allow for participants from diverse geographical locations to participate as well as to maintain anonymity of the participants and reduce the influence of dominant members and group conformity (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Green & Dye, 2002; Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009).
- Inclusion of a demographic form, a cover letter explaining the purpose of the study, a description of the procedure including the estimated time involved, the risks involved, how the information will be used, as well an informed consent form (Delbecq et al., 1975; Hasson et al., 2000). As there are multiple

iterations within the Delphi methodology, each iteration of the process should include a cover letter and specific instructions.

- Using multiple iterations of qualitative instruments, quantitative instruments, or a combination of both (Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009; Milsom & Dietz, 2009). Although there must be a minimum of two iterations, there is no set limit beyond two iterations.
- Panelists are provided with the results of the prior round to review before completing the new instrument (Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010; Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009; Milsom & Dietz, 2009; Stone Fish & Busby, 2005).

This iterative process may be continued through more than two rounds as a means to achieve a higher degree of consensus. It is suggested that each round increases the level of consensus. Further iterations may be needed if the level of disagreement is high.

However, an increased risk of attrition also accompanies subsequent rounds (Green & Dye, 2002; Hasson et al., 2000; Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Witkin & Altschuld, 1995).

Research suggests that three iterations are often sufficient (Delbecq et al.; 1975; Hsu & Sanford, 2007; Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010).

This study utilized three rounds of data collection and analysis. The initial round consisted of a qualitative data collection of responses to the following open-ended request: "Professional identity may be defined as an overarching belief about oneself and one's chosen profession which helps a person to understand who they are and what they do as a professional while also providing a framework for practice and decision making. Please list all of the words or phrases that describe or represent components of school counselor professional identity. Please share as many as you can generate". Additionally

an optional prompt was included asking for responses why certain words or phrases were listed, or additional thoughts and feelings regarding school counselor professional identity.

The responses from this data collection were analyzed and synthesized using the process described below. The resulting list of school counselor professional identity components were used for developing a Likert scale instrument for data collection in the subsequent rounds. These final two rounds of inquiry featured quantitative data and analysis. The Delphi methodology utilized in this study is similar to a sequential exploratory strategy in mixed methods research in that it consisted of an initial qualitative data collection and analysis phase followed by one or more quantitative data collection and analysis phases that built upon the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2009). As often with sequential exploratory design, the results of the qualitative phase were used to develop an instrument that was used in the quantitative data collection phase. The purpose of this study drove the choice of methodology, the data collection process, and the data analysis procedures that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to establish a consensus amongst experts in the field of school counseling about the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity.

The research question was:

What are the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity?

Role of the Researcher

As the researcher in this study, I functioned as both facilitator and instrument. In both qualitative and quantitative research, the thoughts, views, biases, experiences, and values of the researcher can impact the research study and therefore need to be acknowledged before and during the research process (Hays & Singh, 2012). The first round of this study utilized qualitative methodology. In an effort to minimize the impact of researcher bias and enhance the rigor, trustworthiness, and credibility of this study, I attempted to make my bias explicit and remain reflexive, or conscious, of my biases throughout this study (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). Additional procedures were implemented to mitigate the impact my bias may have had on the results of this study. These procedures included the use of a research team for all qualitative coding as well as the development of a consensus codebook following consensus coding. In addition, a review of the consensus codebook and the Likert scale instrument developed from this codebook was completed by the research team, the dissertation chair, and a review of all documents, notes, codebooks, and research protocols by an external auditor in an effort to limit the effect of any biases in the research process.

I have been a practicing school counselor for 14 years and graduated from a CACREP accredited master degree program in school counseling. The curriculum of this program was identical for school counselors and mental health counselors except for one school counseling course, (which covered counseling children), a 100-hour school based practicum experience, and a 600-hour school based internship experience. I entered the counseling field without teaching experience or formal education training. My early professional identity was that of a counselor who worked in a school setting.

Over the course of the past 14 years working as a school counselor, the realities of the job have made me aware of my roles as an educator as well as being a counselor. I have acquired education related professional development training from my school division as well as seeking professional development in this arena by choice. After 10 years of practice, I entered a doctoral program that was primarily focused on educational leadership. Within the first two semesters it became obvious that, although this was a portion of my identity, it excluded the counselor identity completely. I chose to exit that program. I am currently completing my PhD in counselor education from a CACREP accredited university doctoral program. Through my professional experiences and post master's degree training, my professional identity has evolved to encompass both a counselor identity and educator identity. I presently consider myself to have a strong professional identity as a school counselor who is committed to the success of her students.

My personal bias was that school counselors were both counselors and educators and that both components were necessary in order to perform effectively as a school counselor. I saw school counselors as responsible for assisting students in working through whatever challenges- personal or institutional- were hindering their growth, their academic and personal success, and their overall wellbeing. In addition, I believed that school counselors were integral members of the school leadership team. School counselors were also accountable to demonstrate how the students are different as a result of what the school counselors do. It was my personal belief that this hybrid identity differentiated school counselors from other helping or educational professionals.

Lastly, I believe that membership and participation in professional associations is important for the profession. I belong to multiple local, state, and national professional associations that support school counselors including ACA, ASCA, Virginia Counselor Association (VCA), Virginia School Counselor Association (VSCA), Hampton Roads Counselor Association, ACES, Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (SACES) and Virginia Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (VACES). I have attended and/or presented at multiple professional association conferences since I started to work as a school counselor.

Research Team

In an effort to enhance the rigor of the study, I utilized a research team for the qualitative data analysis phase of this study (Hays & Singh, 2012). The use of additional researchers was implemented for the round one data analysis in this study to minimize the impact of researcher bias. Research teams are sometimes used in qualitative data analysis as a means of investigator triangulation and additionally serve to cross check the resulting codes that have been derived from the data (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). The research team was recruited prior to data analysis. The recruitment efforts were purposeful, with attempts made to recruit research team members with diverse professional backgrounds related to school counseling. The research team members for this study were recruited from Old Dominion University's College of Education's Counselor Education and Educational Leadership doctoral programs. Although a researcher with a school counseling background and a researcher with a mental health counseling background were secured, the attempts to recruit a researcher from the educational leadership doctoral program were unsuccessful. The final research team consisted of a female, Caucasian,

counselor education doctoral student who has worked for the past 14 years as a school counselor, a female, African American, part time counselor education doctoral student in her mid-20's who works full time as a school counselor; and a female, Caucasian, recent counselor education doctoral graduate in her late 40's whose background and current employment is mental health counseling, testing, and assessment. Table 3-1 provides the demographic information for the research team that analyzed the qualitative data in round one, including each research team member's gender, age, ethnicity, years of experience working as a counselor, and whether their counseling background is mental health or school related.

Table 3-1

Research Team

	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Experience	Background
Primary Researcher	F	36-45	Caucasian	14 years	School Counseling
Research Team Member 1	F	46-55	Caucasian	25 years	Mental Health Counseling
Research Team Member 2	F	26-35	African American	5 years	School Counseling

In addition to the research team members who analyzed the data, an external auditor reviewed the work of this research team. The external auditor was a female, Caucasian, recent counselor education doctoral graduate in her late forties presently

employed as a counselor educator at a local university with a background in mental health counseling.

Once research team members were recruited, an initial meeting of the research team was held. During this meeting, the researcher informed the team members of the purpose of the study, the methodology chosen along with an explanation of this choice, the general expectations of the research team members- including detailed data analysis procedures and the time frame estimated to complete this analysis. Specifically, the research team members were trained in a data analysis procedure that was adapted for this study from Creswell's (2009) and Hays and Singh's (2012) generic processes. A step-by-step data analysis sheet was provided to each research team member for later review (Appendix G). The topic of researcher bias was discussed. Each team member was asked to share any biases they may have regarding school counselors and school counselor professional identity during this meeting. Additionally, each research team member was asked to maintain a reflexive journal during the data collection and analysis to document their feelings, thoughts, and reactions throughout this process. Team members were encouraged to challenge one another if it appeared that a team member's bias was impacting the study. A subsequent team meeting was scheduled at this time. Prior to concluding the initial meeting, each research team member was encouraged to contact the other research team members should questions or concerns arise during the individual data analysis phase.

Participant Selection

There is no consensus for determining the optimal number of experts to have on a Delphi panel (Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Iqbal & Papon-Young, 2009). Although the range

in the literature spans from as few as eight to hundreds of participants, it appears that the selection of 10 to 50 participants is most common (Delbecq et al., 1975; Green & Dey, 2002; Hasson et al., 2000; Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Witkin & Altschuld, 1995). Delbecq et al., (1975) suggest that the more heterogeneous the participants, the more participants are to be included in the panel, yet for a more homogenous population 10 – 15 participants may be sufficient (Skulmoski et al., 2007). As attrition can be an issue, an appropriate number of participants were chosen to ensure an adequate sample after the final round of the Delphi. The target response rate is 70% initially (Hasson et al., 2000; Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009; Sumsion, 1998; Ulschak, 1983) and attrition as a result of multiple iterations is expected (Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010). According to Jenkins & Smith (1996) only between 53% and 87% of the participants that initially begin the study complete all iterations.

As a heterogeneous expert panel was sought for this study. I initially identified 150 potential experts to comprise my expert panel hoping that 80 experts would agree to participate in the study. Due to a limited response rate, a second phase of recruitment was conducted by randomly selecting another 100 potential participants from the RAMP school and district supervisor database and posting an invitation to participate on CESNET, a counselor education list serve. After adding in individuals who had responded to the CESNET invitation by providing their email and adjusting for duplicates from list one, invalid emails, and individuals who had opted out of Survey Monkey, an additional 108 potential expert panel members were invited to participate. The two-phase recruitment for the expert panel consisted of 258 identified individuals.

The selection of the participants is one of the most critical steps in the Delphi process (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). Unfortunately, there is no consensus in the Delphi literature as to how to determine participant selection. Hasson et al. (2000) point out that there is no agreed upon definition of "expert" and the use of this term is heavily debated. Regardless, it is suggested that the researcher first determine what makes up an expert in his or her study (Dalkey, Rourke, Lewis & Snyder, 1972; Delbecq et al., 1975; Hsu & Sandford, 2007; Iqbal & Papon-Young, 2009). The criteria for expert status for this study were developed in an effort to reach a broad range of participants with school counseling expertise.

A panel of experts in the field of school counseling with specialized knowledge and/or skills related to school counseling and/or school counselor training or development was sought for this study (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010). The experts invited to join the panel included award winning school counseling practitioners, counselor educators, leaders within professional school counseling associations, leaders within organizations that accredit the training programs for school counselors, leaders within the organizations that offer national certification of school counselors, and referent leaders in the field (defined as those who have published and/or presented at peer reviewed conferences). Although the final expert panel did not contain individuals from all of these groups, the majority of these groups were represented and will be discussed in the demographic section of chapter four. This study aimed to allow their voices to be heard as they moved toward a consensus list of essential components of school counselor professional identity.

The Delphi method utilizes a panel of experts as its participants and therefore strategies were implemented to identify and recruit experts to establish the panel for this study. In order for them to be qualified as an expert they were required to meet the predetermined criteria. Since the qualifications of the panel members was specific, purposeful sampling, or intentional selection of individuals, was utilized for recruitment of prospective panelists (Creswell, 2008; Skulmoski et al., 2007). Additionally, random selection procedures were conducted in an attempt to balance representation amongst groups. Snowball sampling techniques, where others are asked for suggestions of additional qualified individuals, were also utilized (Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009; Lakeman, 2010). For the purpose of this study, all potential participants were identified as an expert within the field of school counseling by virtue of having met at least two of the following seven criteria selected for inclusion:

Potential expert panel members were those who:

- Had worked as a school counselor for at least three years
- Had earned either NCSC or NBPTS certification
- Had worked as a school counseling district supervisor
- Had worked as a school counselor in a school that has earned the ASCA RAMP designation *or* have received a state or national school counselor or school counselor educator award
- Had taught at least two university based master's or doctoral level s classes which specifically were focused upon school counseling
- Had published in a peer referred journal or presented at a national conference on the topic of school counselor professional identity

- Had served as state or national school counseling association officer or committee chair

As the intent of this study was to bring together individuals who represented varying perspectives regarding school counseling to achieve a consensus on essential components of school counselor professional identity, attempts were made to include a broad array of participants. The number of RAMP designated schools was over 400 and many of these had multiple school counselors working within these programs, therefore two lists or databases of potential participants was created from which potential expert panel members were recruited. The first list encompassed individuals who met two of the criteria related to teaching, presenting, publishing, or serving in leadership capacities within organizations and the second list consisted of a database of school counselors who worked in RAMP designated programs and district supervisors working within one of two selected states. The first list was comprised of 90 individuals who were identified through the following efforts:

- An extensive review of the literature was conducted and authors who had published articles in peer-referred journals related to school counselor professional identity were identified.
- A review of recent national conference presentation programs from the leading professional associations that support school counselors (e.g., ASCA, ACA, ACES, SACES, College Board) was conducted and professionals who had presented on school counselor professional identity, school counselor development, or a related topic on school counselors/school counseling were identified.

- A review of the state and national school counseling association websites was conducted and officers as well as chairs of professional development, legislature and public policy, or graduate training committees over the past five years were identified.

All 90 individuals identified through these efforts were placed in the phase one list of potential panelists that were invited to participate in the study and represented 60% of the initial list of 150 invited participants.

In an attempt to include the often-overlooked voices of practicing school counselors in a meaningful fashion, 40% of the participants that were initially recruited were derived from a second database compiled by reviewing the websites of schools that had received ASCA's RAMP designation. Counselors in each of these schools were identified and, where available, email addresses were obtained from the school's website or the school district's website for each counselor. This database was further disaggregated by school level creating an elementary school sub-list containing 203 elementary counselors, a middle school sub-list containing 167 middle school counselors, and a high school sub-list containing 245 high school counselors.

The two states from which the school counseling division supervisors were selected were chosen based upon the state's limited representation of ASCA RAMP designated school as well as the accessibility of the information regarding division supervisors. State departments of education websites for states with fewer RAMP designated schools were reviewed in an effort to identify the school counseling division supervisors within that state. Additionally, the websites of the specific school divisions within a state were reviewed if the information was not centrally accessible.

Massachusetts and Texas were chosen from which to build the district supervisor database as these states had limited representation within the ASCA RAMP database and the information on school division's school counseling supervisors was available. A list of 221 division supervisors from these two states along with email addresses for each supervisor was developed. This list was added as a fourth sub-list to this second database. Once all four sub-lists were created each list was alphabetized by counselor name. Once the lists were alphabetized, 15 potential panel members were randomly selected from each list to comprise the 60 individuals initially recruited from this second database. These 60 potential panelists and the 90 potential panelists from the first list were uploaded into survey monkey and all were given invitations to participate in the study.

As response rates for this first round of data collection were fairly low, a second phase of recruitment was conducted in an effort to increase the number of respondents. At this point an additional 100 individuals were identified by randomly selecting 25 individuals from the remaining individuals from each sub-list in the second database. Additionally, an invitation to participate in the study was distributed on CESNET, and interested individuals were asked to send an email to me if they were interested and willing to participate. An additional 16 potential panel members were identified through the CESNET posting. Of the new list of 116 individuals, eight were either duplicates from list one, invalid email addresses, or had opted out of survey monkey. The second phase of recruitment yielded an additional 108 possible participants. All were given invitations to participate through survey monkey.

Each potential participant received an email invitation to participate in the study. The email invitation included an introductory note introducing myself and sharing a

description of the nature of the study. Additionally, the criteria used for selection of participants, a description of the methodology used, information about how the results from this study will be handled (see Appendix A), and an electronic link to the round one survey was provided.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

As the Delphi method suggests, a multiple iteration data collection process was undertaken to attempt to move toward a consensus regarding the essential components of school counselor professional identity. Although it is suggested that higher levels of consensus are achieved with each iteration (Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010), there is also an increased risk of attrition of participants with each subsequent round (Hasson et al., 2000; Iqbal & Papon-Young, 2009). In an effort to balance efforts to establish consensus via multiple iterations and this risk of attrition, three rounds of data collection were conducted in this study.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

The first round consisted of qualitative data collection and analysis. A qualitative protocol consisting of the following open-ended inquiry (Appendix C) was presented to the expert panel members during this first round of data collection:

“Professional identity may be defined as an overarching belief about oneself and one’s chosen profession which helps a person to understand who they are and what they do as a professional while also providing a framework for practice and decision making. Please list words or phrases that describe or represent school counselor professional identity or its components. Please share as many as you can generate.”

Additionally, a prompt was included that solicited an optional response from the expert panel members reasons for their choices of words or phrases or any additional information they would like to provide.

The round one qualitative protocol was placed on survey monkey, an online survey service. The electronic link provided in the letter of introduction directed them to an informed consent document that included an explanation of the risks inherent in the study and informed the potential expert panel members that by choosing to continue with the study they were providing their informed consent to participate (see Appendix B). Any individual who answered no to the question regarding informed consent was redirected out of the survey. A response of yes regarding informed consent led the potential panel member to the demographic questionnaire (Appendix D). This questionnaire asked them to identify which criteria for inclusion as an expert that they met as well as gender, ethnicity, age, highest degree obtained, certifications, and professional association memberships. Following the demographic questionnaire, the participants were asked to respond with their list of school counselor professional identity components, any reasons for their choices, along with any additional information they wished to share. They were asked to respond within 10 days. Email reminders were sent out five and eight days after the initial contact reminding participants to complete the survey. The second phase of data collection for this round followed the same protocol.

Qualitative research consists of simultaneous data collection and analysis (Hays & Singh, 2012). Additionally, following both the sequential exploratory design and the Delphi technique, analysis of the data must occur before proceeding to second data collection process (Creswell 2009; Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2005). The results of the round

one data collection and analysis were used to develop the quantitative instrument for use in subsequent data collection. It is strongly suggested that the process of qualitative data analysis be driven by research tradition and the specific research methodology chosen for a study (Patton, 2002). However, when both qualitative and quantitative data collection are conducted, following the data analysis procedures of a specific qualitative methodology is not always appropriate. Creswell (2009) and Hays and Singh (2012) both identified generic data analysis procedures that appeared better aligned with the pragmatic tradition and purpose of this study.

Specifically, the generic data analysis procedure for this study was made up of three primary stages. The first stage included preparation and organization of the materials that were analyzed. The expert panelists' responses to the round one protocol and any additional information that the panelists provided in response to the optional prompt constituted the materials to be analyzed. All expert panelists' responses were given different numbers to protect the anonymity of the participants and saved electronically in a password-protected file and also printed. The printed copies and the electronic file were provided to the research team for analysis. Once all research team members had received the materials for analysis, they proceeded to the second stage of data analysis. This second stage consisted of thoroughly reading through the materials and gaining an overall sense of the responses. During this stage research team members also wrote memos or jotted down notes regarding their thoughts about the data. Once this review was complete, each team member began the coding process, or labeling and organizing the data. As the expert panelists listed words that they identified as components of school counselor professional identity in response to the qualitative

prompt, these words became emic codes, or codes derived by the participants. As some responses were also in a phrase format, a more in depth process of coding was needed for the research team to develop etic codes, or codes derived by the researcher from the responses of the participants. Additionally, the optional responses were reviewed throughout the individual coding process. The research team members noted key words and themes within the optional responses. These optional responses were referenced for clarification of a participant's list of words and phrases that described or represented school counselor professional identity to assist with the coding of the initial data.

The emic codes that were identified in the first review of the data provided the research team with an initial list of codes for comparison purposes as the analysis of the responses was conducted. As additional codes emerged, these codes were compared to the initial list, and similarities and differences were noted. Similar codes were combined or clustered into groups and unique codes were added to the ongoing list. This process, known as constant comparison, continued until all responses were initially analyzed and coded. Once all of the responses were initially coded, the research team members organized the codes, combined similar codes, and created sub-codes where appropriate. The research team identified emerging categories for the codes as the data was analyzed and organized the individual codebook by category. Additionally, throughout the analysis process, the research team wrote down notes and thoughts on definitions or meanings of the codes that were identified. Finally, they each developed a list of codes and definitions that they derived from the data. This individual coding process took two weeks.

Upon completion of the individual coding process, the research team met to consensus code. This process entailed discussing the codes that each research team

member had identified. Similarities and differences were examined and similar codes were merged. This process was continued until a consensus was reached regarding the codes that represented components of school counselor professional identity.

Furthermore, the research team members discussed the individual definitions established for each code or component and established an agreed upon operational definition for each. The creation of agreed upon operational definitions served to minimize misunderstandings and to ensure that the research team understood and agreed upon the components generated in this round of data collection. The final list of agreed upon components and operational definitions comprised the final codebook developed by the research team. The inclusion of the established operational definitions in the final codebook served as further evidence of the research team's process. A final research team meeting was held to review the final codebook with operational definitions and any adjustments needed in the wording of the operational definitions were made. The dissertation committee chair, the research team members, and the external auditor reviewed the final codebook to confirm that the aggregate list of components was representative of the participants' responses. The round one results were used to develop a Likert scale instrument that was grounded in the views of the expert panel members.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

Once the final component list was reviewed and approved by the dissertation chair, the researcher developed a Likert scale instrument for distribution to the participants in round two and of this Delphi study. The Likert scale developed for this study included 6 possible responses, with 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = somewhat agree, 5 = agree, and 6 = strongly agree. A six point

Likert scale was chosen for multiple reasons. Having an even number of responses forced panelists to select an answer that indicated either agreement or disagreement to some degree. Elimination of a midpoint also minimized the risk of social desirability bias, or having panelists respond in a manner that will not displease the researcher (Garland, 1991). The inclusion of three levels of agreement and three levels of disagreement was decided in an attempt to identify components that are viewed as essential. Each item represented a component of school counselor professional identity and the expert panel was instructed to indicate their level of agreement (scored for a 1 – 6 as indicated above) that each component was an essential component of school counselor professional identity. The instructions they received in the round two survey were:

Please rate each item below in terms of your agreement/disagreement whether you consider the item an essential component of school counselor professional identity. The items appear to describe a wide range of possible components; (e.g., some may seem to describe school counselor roles or tasks while others refer to knowledge needed or characteristics). At the completion of the survey there is an optional prompt asking for feedback and clarification. Your comments and questions are welcome.”

Prior to distribution of the round two survey invitations, each of the items on the Likert scale instrument was reviewed by the researcher’s dissertation committee chair and the research team members to determine that the items accurately represented the aggregate list of components developed from round one. Additionally, the research team and the dissertation chair reviewed the instrument in its entirety for readability. The code book, Likert scale instrument, and all supporting documentation of this qualitative data

collection and analysis were sent to an external auditor for review. This auditor reviewed the qualitative data collection and analysis processes- including the letter sent, the qualitative prompt, the raw responses of the expert panel members, the initial code books of each member of the research team, the final consensus code book with operational definitions, the reflexive journals of the research team, and the Likert Scale instrument developed from the final codebook. She determined that this phase our data collection and analysis was conducted with purpose and rigor, and the Likert scale items were representative of the expert panel members' responses. Once this review was concluded, the round two Likert scale and instructions for completion of the instrument were placed on survey monkey for round two of data collection.

Round two of this Delphi study was initiated through an email sent out to the 36 expert panel members that completed round one. This email thanked them for their participation in round one of the study, explained that the items in the survey to follow were derived from their responses in round one, and provided them with a link to survey monkey and the round two Likert scale survey. Instructions for completion of the survey as well as the time frame for completion were included in the instrument. The participants were initially given eleven days to complete the round two survey and email reminders were sent out five and eight days after the initial contact to remind participants to complete the survey. As this round of data collection fell over a holiday and the response rate was fairly low, an additional reminder was sent out on day 14 and the survey was closed on day 15.

Upon conclusion of the data collection when 23 expert panelists completed the round two survey, the responses from the round two instrument were uploaded into SPSS,

descriptive statistics were computed, and measures of central tendencies and levels of dispersion were examined. Although the median is reported in the literature as the favored measure of central tendency for ordinal scales (Field, 2009; Hill & Fowles, 1975; Meyers, Gamst, & Guarino, 2006), means and standard deviations are widely acceptable measures of central tendency for Likert Scales, which sometimes treated as interval/ratio scales, even though they do not fully meet criteria for this designation (Creswell, 2008). The means and standard deviations for each item on the Likert scale were compiled for distribution to the expert panel, along with the round three Likert scale.

A Likert scale instrument containing all of the items from round two along with the mean and standard deviation results embedded in each item constituted the scale used for round three. This revised Likert scale instrument was made accessible through survey monkey for round three of data collection. All 36 expert panel members that participated in round one were invited to participate in round three regardless of their participation in round two. The 23 experts who completed round two received an email invitation thanking them for their participation in round two, inviting them to participate in round three, and explaining the inclusion of the item mean and standard deviations results with the items on the round three Likert scale (Appendix J). The 13 experts who had not completed round two received a similar email that thanked them for their participation in round one, however their email additionally provided an explanation regarding the item development from their round one responses (Appendix K). An explanation regarding the inclusion of the mean and standard deviation results derived from the round two data analysis was provided in both of the email invitations along with instructions for completing the survey, and an electronic link to the round three Likert scale instrument.

The participants were asked to review the results for each item and then once again rank the items on the Likert scale in light of this information. The participants had 10 days to complete the round three survey. Email reminders were sent out five and eight days after the initial contact to remind participants to complete the survey.

Prior to any data collection, thresholds were established to determine which items would ultimately meet the criteria for inclusion in the final consensual list of essential components of school counselor professional identity. Although the literature does not provide specific criteria for determining these thresholds (Moorehouse, 2008), Keeney et al. (2006) emphasized the need to set consensus levels prior to data collection. The research supports the setting of consensus thresholds based on percentiles of agreement as well as through pre-established means or medians, and standard deviations or inter-quartile ranges (Green & Dye, 2002; Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010; Hasson et al., 2000). Means and standard deviations thresholds were set for this study to represent consensus and to indicate both an average response for each item as well as the level of variance of these responses. In an effort to maintain rigor in this study, the mean threshold of a 4.8 or higher was set for inclusion on the final list. While choice of this number was arbitrary and cannot be interpreted exactly, it was believed that it represented a relatively high level of agreement among expert panelists. This mean of 4.8 represented 80% of the highest possible score (a unanimous rating of 6.0). The threshold for the standard deviation was set after conducting a review of recent Delphi studies in counselor education and determination of an approximate average of the standard deviations utilized by these recent studies was established (Dimmitt et al, 2005; Dressel et al., 2007, Herlihy & Defrene, 2012; Moorhouse, 2009; Neuer, 2011; Norcross, et al, 2002). This

review yielded a mean similar to the Neuer's (2011) study, which set a threshold of a standard deviation of 0.85 or less to indicate a reasonable degree of consensus in the range of responses to each item chosen for inclusion in the final consensus list. As there was no agreed upon method for establishing threshold for consensus within the literature, this standard deviation was selected to provide rigor yet not limit items from inclusion in the final list of essential components.

Standard deviation indicated the variance in the scores and the smaller the standard deviation, the less the variance. A smaller standard deviation suggested that the responses to the item cluster more closely around the mean, and suggested a higher level of consensus. Once the round three surveys were completed, the responses were entered into SPSS and once again descriptive statistics were run for this data. The means and standard deviations were computed for each item. Any item after round three that had a mean value of 4.8 or higher and a standard deviation of .85 or less was considered as having met the criteria for inclusion on the consensus list of essential components of school counselor professional identity.

Trustworthiness

This study employed the Delphi method and included collection and analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Hasson et al. (2000) suggested that due to the lack of evidence to support the reliability of the Delphi method, establishing truthfulness or trustworthiness as presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985) may be a more appropriate means of addressing rigor of the study. The setting of criteria for panel members based upon extensive knowledge in the topic of school counseling and school counselor professional identity served to enhance the trustworthiness of the study as well as to

increase content validity of the items (Goodman, 1987). The multiple iterations conducted through the three rounds were implemented to enhance concurrent validity (Hasson et al.). Other strategies for establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research that were conducted included: current data was collected from a heterogeneous participant sample in an effort to triangulate the data sources; additional researchers were enlisted on a research team for qualitative data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007); and the dissertation committee chair, research team members, and the external auditor were consulted throughout the study. These additional parties reviewed the research design, the data collection and data analysis processes, and provided guidance and support to the researcher.

Physical evidence was collected to enhance the trustworthiness of this study. The primary researcher and the research team kept reflexive journals throughout the qualitative data collection and analysis process. These journals included their thoughts, biases, reactions, and perceptions as they reviewed and coded the data and throughout the qualitative data analysis process (Patton, 2002). Additionally, an audit trail was kept to document the entire data collection and data analysis processes and an outside auditor, who was otherwise not associated with this project, was utilized to objectively review the entire research process (Creswell, 2009). According to Hays & Singh (2012), an audit trail is a necessary component of qualitative research. A binder was kept that included supporting evidence such as participant contacts, copies of surveys or protocols, demographic sheets, a copy of the informed consent form, copies of notes from research team meetings, all drafts of code books, copies of all researchers' reflexive journals, and

copies of data collections and their results to provide physical evidence of the procedures followed during this study.

The external auditor reviewed the audit trail and all of its supporting documents during the qualitative data collection and analysis as well as at completion of the study. Her conclusion was that the research was conducted using systematic research techniques and efforts to minimize bias and to provide rigor to the study had been implemented. Additionally she found that the final list of codes that was used to develop the items in the Likert scale were representative of the responses of the expert panel.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of the Delphi methodology as a framework to establish consensus amongst a panel of experts regarding the essential components that constitute the professional identity of school counselors. I attempted to recruit expert panelists that represented the field of school counseling to include: school counselors, counselor educators, professional association leaders, accreditation and certification body leaders, and referent leaders from the school counseling research and publication arena.

The expert panel that participated in this study represented most of these groups, but not all. The Delphi method literature suggests a general range of 10 – 50 participants (Linstone & Turoff, 2002), and although a panel of 80 participants that met the pre-established criteria was initially sought to participate in this study, the recruitment efforts yielded a 36 member expert panel that completed round one and was invited to participate in both round two and round three of this study. The final expert panel in round three consisted of 21 participants.

Using a mixed method three iteration process, this study attempted to achieve a consensus amongst the selected expert panelists regarding the essential components of school counselor professional identity. The first round consisted of a qualitative questionnaire that asked expert panelists to create a list of items that they viewed as components of school counselor professional identity. The research team coded the responses from the round one survey, met to establish consensus on individual codes and their definitions, and developed a final codebook. The final list of components derived by the research team from the participant responses was used to develop items for the quantitative Likert scale that served as the instrument in the round two survey. The round two survey was sent to the expert panelists, their responses were analyzed and means and standard deviations were determined for each item. The same items with the means and standard deviation results from round two embedded in each item were included in the Likert scale instrument sent out for round three. Instructions for reexamining and ranking the remaining items after consideration of the round two results was included in the round three invitation and as an introduction to this survey.

The responses from round three were analyzed and all items whose mean response was a 4.8 or higher and whose standard deviation was 0.85 or less were considered to have met the thresholds for consensus that they were essential components of school counselor professional identity. All items and these items were placed in the final list. This use of a multiple iteration process utilizing a panel of experts that meet specific criteria was an additional means chosen in an effort to enhance the dependability and credibility of this study.

Further strategies to establish credibility and dependability were implemented. The primary researcher and research team members attempted to acknowledge their biases both prior to the beginning of the study and throughout the coding process using reflective journaling. This allowed each research team member to acknowledge her thoughts, feelings, and reactions to the data analysis process. Additionally, the dissertation committee chair along with the research team members and the external auditor reviewed the qualitative codebooks and final component list derived from the round one data collection and analysis as well as the Likert scale instrument developed from this final component list. An audit trail was kept for this study to provide physical evidence of the procedures followed in this study and an outside auditor was utilized to this research study, data collection, and data analysis processes. This chapter explained how the study was conducted and how the data was collected and analyzed. The next chapter will provide the results of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

As controversy exists regarding the professional identity of school counselors both within the profession and amongst its various constituents, establishing a consensus list of the essential components that constitute this identity could benefit the profession. The purpose of this study was to establish a consensus amongst experts in the field of school counseling about the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity. Specifically the research question was

What are the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity?

The Delphi methodology was chosen for this study as it is viewed within the literature as an effective means for establishing a consensus amongst participants who are geographically diverse or who hold differing perspectives on a topic. This study was conducted using three rounds of data collection and analysis. Round one was a qualitative prompt that resulted in a list of 79 components derived from the responses of the expert panel. The resulting 79 components were placed into the round two Likert scale as items that the expert panel rated according to their level of agreement that each item was an essential component of school counselor professional identity. The responses from round two were uploaded into SPSS. The mean and standard deviations were calculated. The mean and standard deviations were embedded into the items within the Likert scale before it was sent to the experts to re-rate the items in hopes that the round three responses would converge toward a consensus regarding which items are essential components of school counselor professional identity.

The remainder of this chapter will present the results of this study. Included in these results will be the composition of the expert panel, the expert panel members' demographic information, the results of each round of data collection and analysis, and the final results of this study.

Expert Panel

As the literature on Delphi methodology has suggested, selection of the expert panel is one of the critical steps. A panel of experts in the field of school counseling with specialized knowledge and/or skills related to school counseling, school counselor training or development, or professional identity was sought for this study (Dimmitt et al., 2005; Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010). Prior to collecting any data, the researcher and the three members of the dissertation committee established the criteria for inclusion on the expert panel. Efforts were made to recruit expert panel members who represented practicing school counselors as well as counselor educators and professionals whose position or practice impacts the field. Initially, 150 individuals were initially invited to participate in this study. Sixty of these individuals (40%) were randomly selected from a database developed by the researcher that included counselors in schools that had earned the RAMP designation and school district supervisors from two states. The remaining 90 of these individuals (60%) were identified as possibly meeting one of the criteria related to teaching, publishing, presenting, or holding leadership positions in associations.

The first round of data collection solicited from this initial email yielded 25 total responses, of which only 21 were completed. This represented a 14% response rate from the initial sample. In an effort to increase the number of respondents, a second pool of potential participants was selected and invited to participate. For this second group, 100

individuals were randomly selected from the RAMP and district supervisor database. Additionally, an invitation was posted on CESNET that yielded 16 more potential panelists to invite. Of these 116 invitations, eight were excluded due to being duplicates from the first pool of potential panelists and having received an invitation previously. Of the remaining 108 potential panelists identified in this pool, three had opted out of survey monkey and two of the emails were invalid. From this second round of 103 invitations to participate in the survey, 18 potential experts responded with only 15 (13.9%) fully completing the survey, therefore being added to the expert panel.

Although the 36 expert panel members that fully completed the round one survey were invited to participate in each round of data collection only 23 expert panel members completed round the round two survey and only 21 expert panel members, representing 58.3% of the original expert panel from round one, responded to the round three survey. A total of 20 expert panel members completed all three rounds of the study. One participant completed rounds one and three and was included in this final total. Overall, this represents 7.9% of the 253 participants originally invited that completed all three rounds of the study. Of the 36 who completed round one, this 58.3% retention rate is in line with Jenkins & Smith's (1996) assertion that between 53% and 87% of participants that begin a Delphi study will complete the process.

Table 4-1 provides a breakdown of the criteria that the expert panel members met in order to be included in this study as well as the frequency count for each of these criteria. Each participant was asked to indicate all of the criteria that they met, a minimum of two criteria were needed for inclusion on the expert panel.

Table 4-1

Expert Criteria

Criterion	Round 1 (N= 36)		Round 2 (N = 23)		Round 3 (N = 21)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
School counselor 3 or more years	32	88.9	18	82.6	18	85.7
NCC/NBPTS Certification	8	22.2	6	26.1	6	28.6
School Counseling District Supervisor	8	22.2	7	30.4	7	33.3
RAMP school or earned national award	15	41.7	7	30.4	6	28.6
Taught 2+ school counseling classes	17	47.2	15	65.2	13	61.9
Published or presented at a National Conference on Professional Identity	19	52.8	14	60.9	11	52.4
School Counseling Association officer or committee chair	23	63.9	15	65.2	15	71.4

The composition of the expert panel remained fairly stable between the three rounds for Experience as a School Counselor for Three or More Years (88.9% for round one and 85.7% for round three). Although there was attrition of participants between round one and round three, the demographic results above indicate that the largest shifts occurred in the percentage of panel members who 'Had Worked in a RAMP Designated School'. Those meeting this criteria decreased from 41.7% of the participants to only 28.6% by the third round. In addition, there was an increase in the percentage of panel members who 'Had Taught Two or More Master's or Doctoral Level School Counseling Classes at a University' from 47.2% in round one to 61.9% of the total panel for round three.

As recruitment efforts had been made to represent the various groups within the school counseling profession, the representation of school counselors as well as counselor educators was viewed as important. Table 4-2 below represents the reported current position of the panel member members and the composition of the panels that responded to each round. Although initially currently practicing school counselors represented 47.2% of the round one panel, by round three currently practicing school counselors only represented 28.6% of the panel composition.

Table 4-2

Current Position

	<u>Round 1 (N = 36)</u>		<u>Round 2 (N = 23)</u>		<u>Round 3 (N = 21)</u>	
	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>School Counselor</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>47.2</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>30.4</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>28.6</u>
<u>Counselor Educator</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>38.9</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>56.5</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>57.1</u>
<u>District Supervisor</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2.8</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4.3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4.8</u>
<u>Other</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>11.2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>8.7</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>9.5</u>

A closer look at the specific breakdown within the current position categories provides additional information. In the school counselor category, the original panel of expert contained three experts that stated they were elementary counselors, three experts that stated they were middle school counselors, three experts that stated they were high school counselors, and eight experts that were categorized as "other school counseling" as they either did not state the level of practice or they stated that they worked in a setting that encompassed more than one level. The final expert panel contained only one elementary school counselor, no middle school counselors, two high school counselors, and three who identified as multilevel. Those experts in the original panel that reported positions that were categorized as "Other" (e.g., not school counselors, counselor educators, or district supervisors) included one "Director" for a school counseling related organization, one "Director of Displaced Homemakers", one "Assistant Vice President",

and one “Consultant”. The final expert panel included only the “Assistant Vice President” and the “Consultant”.

Expert Panel Demographics

Each of the expert panel members was asked to complete a demographic survey providing information about gender, ethnicity, age, education, certifications, and professional association memberships. Table 4-3 below provides the breakdown of these demographic characteristics for the expert panel members that completed each round of data collection.

Table 4-3

Demographic Information

Characteristic	Round 1 (N= 36)		Round 2 (N = 23)		Round 3 (N = 21)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Gender -Male	13	36.1	9	39.1	8	38.1
Gender –Female	23	63.9	14	60.9	13	61.9
Gender – Transgender	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ethnicity-African American	5	13.8	4	17.4	4	19
Ethnicity – Caucasian	29	80.5	18	78.3	16	76.2
Ethnicity – Multiethnic	2	5.5	1	4.3	1	4.8
Age – 26 – 35	5	13.9	3	13.0	2	9.5
Age – 36 – 45	8	22.9	5	21.7	4	19.0
Age – 46 – 55	11	30.6	6	26.1	6	28.6
Age – 54 – 65	7	19.4	6	26.1	6	28.6

Table 4-3 CONTINUED

Characteristic	Round 1 (N= 36)		Round 2 (N = 23)		Round 3 (N = 21)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Age – 65 or above	5	13.9	3	13.0	3	14.3
Highest Degree – MS	13	36.1	7	30.4	6	28.6
Highest Degree – MA	1	2.7	1	4.3	1	4.8
Highest Degree – Ed.S.	3	8.3	1	4.3	1	4.8
Highest Degree – Ed.D.	8	22.2	6	26.1	5	23.8
Highest Degree – Ph.D.	11	30.5	8	34.8	8	28.1
Certification –NCC/NCSC	14	38.8	11	47.8	11	52.4
Certification -NBPTS	3	8.3	1	2.5	1	4.8
Certification -LPC	14	38.8	9	39.1	9	42.9
Certification -NONE	12	33.3	11	47.8	9	42.9
National Counseling						
Association Membership	19	52.7	15	65.2	14	66.7
State/Local Counseling						
Association Membership	21	58.3	17	73.9	16	76.2
National School Counseling						
Association Membership	27	75	17	73.9	16	76.2
State/Local School						
Counseling Association	29	80.5	19	82.6	18	85.7
Membership						

Table 4-3 CONTINUED

Characteristic	Round 1 (N= 36)		Round 2 (N = 23)		Round 3 (N = 21)	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
National Education						
Association Membership	8	22.2	6	26.1	6	28.6
State/Local Education						
Association Membership	10	27.7	6	26.1	6	28.6
Other Association	2	5.5	2	8.7	2	9.5
Membership						

The demographic results of round three indicate that the final expert panel was primarily comprised of females and Caucasians. No expert panel members self-reported as Hispanic, Latino/Latina, Asian/Pacific Islander, or Native American. The majority of the participants were between 46 and 65 years of age, had a doctoral degree, and had earned NCC/NCSC certification.

Delphi Poll Results

The first round of data collection in this study collected qualitative data from the expert panel. They were asked to list words or phrases that described or represented school counselor professional identity or its components. They were additionally provided with an optional prompt that asked them to indicate any reasons for their choices of components as well as any thoughts or feelings they believed were important relevant. The 36 expert panel responded with a cumulative total of 445 words, phrases, or

a combination of words and phrases. Individual expert panel member's responses ranged from one phrase to 30 words and phrases. Additionally, half of the expert panel members ($N = 18$) provided responses to the optional prompt to either clarify or support their original responses or to more fully explain their beliefs. The optional responses provided the research team with clarification or support of an individual participant's responses to the round one question. This clarification assisted with the development of a list of codes that represented the meanings of the participants' responses.

Each expert panel member was assigned a number. A word document with responses identified by the assigned number was provided to the research team member in password-protected files. The research team members individually coded the responses following a generic coding process adapted from Creswell's (2009) generic coding procedures and the generic coding process outlined by Hays and Singh (2012).

The individual coding process resulted in a combined list of 321 raw codes (words or phrases developed by the research team to represent the individual responses of the participants). The individual research team members each collapsed similar codes and categorized these in preparation for the consensus coding meeting. The entire research team met via a three-way conference call and discussed the codes that each of us had derived from the data, further condensing the codes and gaining a consensus on the final codes which represented the components of professional identity that would be included in the final codebook. Research team derived operational definitions were discussed and consensus was obtained prior to placing a component in the final codebook.

The final codebook contained 79 components that had been derived from the responses of the expert panel in round one data collection. Operational definitions for

each component were added into the final codebook and an additional research team meeting was held to review the wording of each definition and to establish consensus agreement on the final codebook with definitions (Appendix H). The codebook and the Likert scale survey were reviewed by the research team members, the dissertation committee chairperson, and the external auditor to confirm that the items in the survey were representative of the responses of the expert panel in round one.

The components from the final codebook were used to develop items in a Likert Scale survey for round two of data collection. The Likert scale consisted of the 79 items agreed upon by the research team. The expert panel members were asked to rate each of these items on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) indicating their level of agreement that each item was an essential component of school counselor professional identity. An additional optional prompt was included at the end of this survey that asked the expert panel members to add comments or questions regarding any of the items in the survey or regarding their responses to these items. They were also invited to use this as an opportunity to clarify any of their responses.

Once the Likert scale survey was approved and loaded into Survey Monkey, emails were sent to the 36 expert panel members from round one inviting them to participate in rating the items during round two (Appendix I). Data collection for round two lasted 15 days. Reminders were sent to the expert panel members on day five, day 8, and again on day 14. The round two survey was completed by 23 of the 36 expert panel members (63.9%) and their responses were uploaded into SPSS and descriptive statistics were calculated resulting in means and standard deviations for each item. The mean and

standard deviation results were imbedded into each item on the Likert scale to provide the expert panel members with this data for consideration during round three.

The optional prompt from round two was reviewed for clarification purposes as well for additional information regarding items and responses. There were six experts that included an optional response. Two optional responses commented on the number, clarity, or distinction of items. One participant commented about the number or clarity of the items with "Too many items - not always distinctive. SC role is quite encompassing and many terms would be appropriate. Perhaps a focus on the "critical" elements of the role or those that make it a distinctive position". Of the remaining four responses, two experts commented regarding the meaning of the term "Clinically Trained". Both of these participants questioned the meaning and stated that so long as clinically trained referred to pre-service training in a school setting, then they agreed this was an essential component. If this term was referencing pre-service training in mental health counseling than they would disagree with it being an essential component of school counselor professional identity. The final two optional responses suggested that level of practice (i.e., elementary, middle, or high school) may impact whether certain items would be essential to the professional identity of a school counselor on that level. The optional responses from round two served to assist in understanding the results, but did not influence the items distributed in the round three survey. The round two optional responses are listed in Appendix N.

The final round of data collection was initiated by email invitations being sent to the 36 expert panel members from round one. As there was a 58.9% decrease in the number of currently practicing school counselors between round one ($N = 17$) and round

two ($N = 7$), it was decided that all of the 36 original expert panel members would receive an invitation to participate in an effort to obtain the voices of the school counselors. Round three yielded an expert panel comprised of 21 of the original experts (58.3%). There was attrition of one school counselor on the expert panel for round three with only six (28.6%) of the 21 experts identifying themselves as currently a practicing school counselor.

The mean and standard deviation results from round two for each item were embedded into the round three survey. The 21 experts reviewed and re-rated the items from round two. Data collection lasted 10 days, with reminders being sent on day five and day eight. The responses were then uploaded into SPSS and descriptive statistics were run on these responses. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each item and any item meeting the pre-established thresholds for consensus were placed into the final list of essential components of school counselor professional identity.

The optional prompt following the round three survey was completed by four experts. These comments provided information regarding clarification of items as well as personal thoughts regarding the items in the survey and the professional identity of school counselors. One expert commented that there were items in the survey that they felt contained different items, such as publishing and presenting, that made it difficult to respond. One expert again commented on the meaning of clinical skills and that this meaning could impact their response. The remaining two experts that responded to the optional prompt commented on their thoughts about whether or not characteristics should be included in the components of professional identity. One expert stated

The thing that was most difficult about this survey for me for reading through the items that I agree school counselors need to have be effective (I'm thinking mostly of personal characteristics here, such as flexibility and creativity), but I don't know how I feel about them being part of our identity. In fact, if I had to do this survey again, I might well rate some of those items lower - depending on how I am framing the question in my mind. Is it important? And if so, does being important equate being part of an identity, which can be restrictive? (i.e., are less creative people less of professional counselors?)

The second expert commenting on characteristics similarly added "I believe that is essential to note the differences between "ideal" characteristics of Professional School Counselor versus the components that are integral to professional identity for the PSC in the 21st century." The round three optional responses are listed in Appendix O. Although the optional responses did not impact the items that were distributed for rating they assisted in the analysis of the results of this study. In attempting to understand the results, expert panel member's optional responses were reviewed for answers or suggestions regarding the results of particular items.

The final results of this three round Delphi study reflect the acceptance of 51 of the original 79 components meeting or exceeding the threshold for consensus as determined by a mean of 4.8 or higher and a standard deviation of .85 or lower. Table 4-4 presents all 79 items listed by final descending means. Items included in the final list of essential components of school counselor professional identity are noted in bold. Final means and standard deviations are included in this table along with the number of responses to each item. Seven of the final exert panel members did not respond to every

item. Two experts did not rate one item each (98.7% complete), three experts did not rate two items each (97.5% complete), one expert did not rate four items (94.9% complete), and one expert did not rate nine items (92.4% complete). In total there were 16 items in the list that were skipped once and an additional two items that were not rated twice.

These expert panel members' responses were included for analysis as each of the expert panel members completed over 90% of the survey. There is no indication in the optional prompts at the conclusion of the survey as to why these items were not rated.

Additionally, there was not any opportunity on an item-by-item basis for the expert panel to provide qualitative feedback. Item-by-item open responses may have allowed the experts to explain why they chose to skip a certain item. Table 4-4 below presents each item from the Likert scale along with the number of experts that responded to this item in round three, the round three mean for each item, and the round three standard deviation for each item.

Table 4-4

Essential Components of School Counselor Professional Identity

Component	N	M	SD
Ethical	21	6.00	0.00
Student Advocacy	21	5.95	0.22
Awareness of Ethical and Legal Standards	21	5.95	0.22
Equity and Access for All Students	21	5.95	0.22
Advocate	20	5.95	0.22

Table 4-4 – CONTINUED

Component	N	M	SD
Collaboration	21	5.86	0.36
Collaborator	21	5.86	0.36
Counselor	21	5.86	0.36
Multi-culturally Competent	21	5.76	0.54
Reliable	20	5.75	0.55
Change Agent	20	5.75	0.44
Empathetic	21	5.71	0.56
Personal Development	21	5.71	0.56
Pursuing Ongoing Professional Development	19	5.68	0.48
Awareness of Community Resources	21	5.67	0.48
Leadership	20	5.65	0.49
Trustworthy/Safe	20	5.65	0.75
Mentoring/Sharing expertise	21	5.62	0.50
Providing Program Accountability	21	5.62	0.59
Implementing Data Driven Programmatic Decisions	21	5.62	0.50
Self-Aware	21	5.62	0.74
Postsecondary Career Readiness	21	5.62	0.67
Social Development	21	5.57	0.60
Reflective	21	5.57	0.75

Table 4-4 CONTINUED

Component	N	M	SD
Flexible	21	5.57	0.81
Learner	21	5.57	0.60
Coordination	19	5.53	0.77
Leader	21	5.52	0.60
Results Oriented	21	5.52	0.75
Committed	21	5.52	0.81
Supportive	21	5.48	0.81
Positive	21	5.48	0.75
Enthusiastic	21	5.48	0.75
Data Driven Decisions	21	5.48	0.75
Passionate	21	5.48	0.75
Engaging in Professional Advocacy	21	5.43	0.60
Insightful	21	5.43	0.87*
Compassionate	21	5.43	0.87*
Prevention Specialist	21	5.43	0.68
Consultant	20	5.40	0.68
Nonjudgmental	20	5.40	0.94*
Self-Starter	21	5.38	0.80
Emotional Development	21	5.38	0.86*
Comprehensive Programming	21	5.38	0.80

Table 4-4 CONTINUED

Component	N	M	SD
Career Development	21	5.38	0.74
Organized	21	5.38	0.86*
Multi-tasker	21	5.38	0.92*
Participating in Supervision	20	5.35	0.75
Maintaining Membership in School Counseling Associations	21	5.33	1.02*
Mediator	21	5.29	0.72
Developmental Specialist	20	5.25	0.72
Intelligent	21	5.24	0.83
Leading Professional Development Workshops	20	5.15	0.59
Technological Proficiency	21	5.14	0.79
Problem Solver	21	5.14	1.11*
Crisis Manager	21	5.14	0.79
Academic Achievement	20	5.10	0.79
Family Liaison	20	5.00	0.65
Career Advisor	21	5.00	0.77
Creative	21	5.00	0.95*
Community Liaison	21	4.90	0.89*
Supporter	20	4.90	1.02*

Table 4-4 CONTINUED

Component	N	M	SD
Clinically Trained	21	4.86	1.15*
Educator	21	4.86	1.35*
Data Collector	21	4.81	1.21*
Program Coordinator	21	4.76	1.14
College Advisor	21	4.76	1.00
Education Specialist	20	4.75	0.64
Presenting or Publishing on School Counseling	21	4.71	0.78
Topics			
Tolerant of Ambiguity	21	4.67	1.35
Advisor	20	4.65	0.99
Referral Specialist	20	4.60	1.14
Teacher	21	4.43	1.25
Bold	20	4.35	0.93
Maintaining Membership in Educational	21	4.19	1.12
Associations			
Expert Researcher	21	4.05	0.80
Therapist	21	3.38	1.07
Scheduler	21	2.76	1.00

The items considered essential components of school counselor professional identity as a result of this study are in **BOLD**.

* SD excludes this item from inclusion in the final list although the mean threshold for this item has been met.

The list of 51 essential components of school counselor professional identity contains three items whose mean and standard deviation did not change from round two to round three; Ethical, Collaborator, and Learner. Of the remaining 48 items, only seven items had an increase in mean and a decrease in standard deviation. These items included Awareness of Community Resources, Change Agent, Equity and Access for All Students, Leading Professional Development, Mentoring/ Sharing Expertise, Participating in Supervision, and Personal Development. Two additional items, Results Oriented and Technological Proficiency, had a mean increase paired with an increase in standard deviation, yet still met the standard deviation threshold. Another three items, Career Advisor, Family Liaison, and Implementing Data Driven Programmatic Decisions that met the threshold had a decrease in the mean with a corresponding decrease in standard deviation. One item, Participating in Supervision, did not meet the threshold for standard deviation after round two but did meet this threshold after round three. There were 12 items that met the mean and standard deviation thresholds after round two that no longer met those thresholds after round three due to the standard deviations exceeding the threshold. There were an additional four items that met the threshold for consensus in round two but were excluded after round three due to neither the mean nor the standard deviation meeting the thresholds for consensus. These 16 items were not included in the final list of essential components of school counselor professional identity. A comparison of the round two and round three means and standard deviations for each items is presented in Table 4-5 (Appendix L). A summary of the resulting essential components of school counselor professional identity and the changes in means and standard deviations from round two to round three is provided in table 4.6 below.

Table 4-6

Changes in Mean and Standard Deviations

Component	<i>M</i> Δ	<i>SD</i> Δ
Ethical	0.00	0.00
Awareness of Ethical and Legal Standards	0.00	0.00
Equity and Access for All Students	+0.04	-0.07
Student Advocacy	0.00	+0.01
Advocate	-0.05	+0.22
Collaboration	-0.06	+0.07
Collaborator	-0.01	+0.01
Counselor	-0.06	+0.07
Multi-culturally Competent	-0.06	+0.15
Reliable	-0.08	+0.16
Change Agent	+0.10	-0.20
Empathetic	-0.07	+0.14
Personal Development	+0.06	-0.01
Pursuing Ongoing Professional Development	-0.14	+0.09
Awareness of Community Resources	+0.10	-0.11
Trustworthy Safe	-0.31	+0.54
Leadership	-0.13	+0.07
Self Aware	-0.34	+0.53
Providing Program Accountability	-0.08	+0.03
Postsecondary Career Readiness	+0.05	+0.08

Table 4-6 CONTINUED

Component	<i>M</i> Δ	<i>SD</i> Δ
Implementing Data Driven Programmatic Decisions	-0.03	-0.08
Mentoring Sharing expertise	+0.10	-0.10
Flexible	-0.12	+0.34
Reflective	-0.12	+0.19
Learner	+0.01	+0.01
Social Development	-0.17	+0.06
Prevention Specialist	-0.05	+0.08
Engaging in Professional Advocacy	-0.14	+0.01
Consultant	-0.17	+0.02
Comprehensive Programming	-0.53	+0.51
Self Starter	-0.36	+0.36
Career Development	-0.27	+0.17
Participating in Supervision	+0.13	-0.38
Mediator	-0.19	+0.05
Developmental Specialist	-0.05	+0.01
Intelligent	-0.24	+0.04
Academic Achievement	-0.51	+0.21
Leading Professional Development Workshops	+0.15	-0.21
Crisis Manager	-0.42	+0.20
Technological Proficiency	+0.27	+0.10

Table 4-6 CONTINUED

Component	<i>M</i> Δ	<i>SD</i> Δ
Academic Achievement	-0.51	+0.21
Career Advisor	-0.13	-0.04
Family Liaison	-0.13	-0.32

Summary

This Delphi study resulted in the development of a list of 51 essential components of school counselor professional identity derived from a panel of experts from the field of school counseling. This represents 64.6% of the original 79 items that were derived from the responses to the round one survey qualitative survey. The expert panel that participated in round three represented 58.3% of the expert panel that began this study in round one. In reviewing the demographic data of the experts who comprised each round's participating panel, although the percentage of participants with three or more years of school counseling experience remained stable, currently practicing school counselors represented the group with the largest attrition between rounds. This decrease in school counselors impacted the composition of the panel, allowing counselor educators who had a smaller attrition rate to represent a larger percentage of the expert panel by round three.

This chapter has presented the results of this study after three iterations of data collection and analysis. The following chapter will discuss these results as well as make suggestions regarding the implications of this study for school counselors, counselor

educators, and other professionals impacting the field. Additionally, limitations of this study will be identified and recommendations for future research will be made.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this Delphi study was to establish a consensus amongst experts in the field of school counseling about the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity. The research suggests that professional identity is linked to benefits for school counselors including: strengthened job performance, increased counselor wellness through reduced stress and burnout, and increased knowledge and awareness of one's appropriate roles and functions (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson et al., 2010; Granello & Young, 2012; Grimmitt & Paisley, 2008; Henderson et al., 2007; Ponton & Duba, 2009). Yet there appears to be a lack of agreement both within the school counseling profession and amongst those constituents that influence the practice of school counseling concerning the professional identity of school counselors. As a result of this study, a list of 51 essential components of school counselor professional identity was developed. This list represents consensus among an expert panel of school counseling professionals regarding essential components of school counselor professional identity.

This chapter will discuss the results of this study, including comparisons to the literature on school counselor professional identity. Additionally, the limitations of this study will be discussed and implications for school counselors and counselor educators will be proposed. Finally, suggestions for future research will be presented.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this Delphi study was to establish a consensus amongst experts in the field of school counseling about the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity. The specific research question was:

What are the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity?

The Delphi technique is viewed as an effective means for establishing a consensus or convergence of opinion among groups of individuals with knowledge about a particular subject area (Hsu & Sanford, 2007; Iqbal & Pison-Young, 2009; Norcross et al., 2002). The 36 experts who met pre-established criteria and responded to the round one qualitative survey were invited to serve as the expert panel for the three rounds of this study. The experts initially responded to the following prompt:

Professional identity may be defined as an overarching belief about oneself and one's chosen profession which helps a person to understand who they are and what they do as a professional while also providing a framework for practice and decision making. Please list words or phrases that describe or represent school counselor professional identity or its components. Please share as many as you can generate.

A research team consensus coded the qualitative data and developed a list of components of school counselor professional identity from the round one responses of the participants. The resulting list of 79 components was made into a survey with a six point Likert scale. The experts were then invited to rate each item indicating their level agreement that the component was essential to school counselor professional identity.

The mean and standard deviation for the responses to each item was calculated and embedded into each item before sending the survey out to be rated again in round three by the expert panel.

The 36 member panel that participated in round one data collection was predominately Caucasian (80.5%), female (63.9%), and held doctoral degrees (52.7%). They listed their current positions as School Counselors (47.2%), Counselor Educators (38.9%), School District Counseling Supervisors (2.8%), and Other (11.2%). The attrition between rounds one and three slightly impacted the demographic composition of the final expert panel. Demographically, it was still predominately a Caucasian (61.9%), female (76.2%), group who held doctoral degrees (51.9%). The impact of attrition was seen more in the composition by current position, with school counselors representing only 28.6% of the panel, counselor educators representing 57.1% of the panel, school district counseling supervisors representing 4.8% of the panel, and those identified as other representing 9.5% of the panel. The impact of this attrition of school counselors had on the final results is unknown, however, the list of essential components of school counselor professional identity may have been different had the panel maintained its original composition.

The 79 items from round one represented the 36 member expert panel's derived components of school counselor professional identity in response to the round one prompt. In coding the round one data, the research team created categories of items that emerged during the coding process and these categories were used for discussion of the codes or components and in an effort to organize the consensus codebook (Appendix H). As these categories were an additional layer of research team interpretation, they were

not shared with the expert panel and the participants were only given the individual components derived from the coding process for rating. The categories used by the research team included personal characteristics, professional roles, professional tasks/functions, professional focus, professional growth, and professional knowledge. Means and standard deviations were calculated for each item following round two and round three of data collection. A final list of 51 essential components of school counselor professional identity was developed that included all items after round three that met the pre-established mean and standard deviation thresholds for consensus.

A review of the mean and standard deviations of the items included in the final list of essential component of school counselor professional identity provide interesting results. Of the 51 components that met the consensus thresholds of mean ($M \geq 4.8$) and standard deviation ($SD \leq .85$), only 15 items appeared to move toward consensus between round two and round three, as indicated by either having means and standard deviations remain the same or having increasing means and/or decreasing standard deviations. The remaining 36 items showed some increase in standard deviations suggesting a slight move away from consensus. One item, Participating in Supervision, is the only component in the final list that had not met the consensus thresholds in round two. In re-rating this item in round three, a move toward consensus occurred and this component did meet the thresholds for both mean and standard deviation. As participation in supervision is less common for school counselors than for mental health counselors (Moss, 2011), the acceptance of this item after round three is encouraging. The multiple iteration process and the time for reflection from round one to round three may have allowed the expert panel to reflect on the impact of supervision and adjust their

perspective regarding its importance. It may also be reflective of the increasing prominence of counselor educators on the final panel. It may be the case that this group values school counselor participation in supervision more highly than currently practicing school counselors might.

As mentioned above, in an effort to better understand the data generated from the expert panel responses in round one; the research team clustered the components into categories. These categories were used for organizing the consensus codebook and were not distributed with the items to the expert panel for rating. Viewing the results of this study in relation to the same categories used to organize the consensus codebook, it appears that the items that were impacted by the greatest increase in standard deviation from round two to round three were those items that could predominantly be classified as personal characteristics. Table 5-1 below presents the 51 essential components of school counselor professional identity that resulted from this study along with the categories that they had been classified under during round one data analysis.

Table 5-1

Categories of Essential Components

Essential Component	Category
Academic Achievement	Professional Focus
Advocate	Professional Roles
Awareness of Community Resources	Professional Knowledge
Awareness of Ethical and Legal Standards	Professional Knowledge
Career Advisor	Professional Roles
Career Development	Professional Focus
Change Agent	Professional Roles
Collaboration	Professional Tasks/Functions
Collaborator	Professional Roles
Committed	Personal Characteristics
Comprehensive Programming	Professional Focus
Consultant	Professional Roles

Table 5-1 CONTINUED

Essential Component	Category
Coordination	Professional Tasks/Functions
Counselor	Professional Roles
Crisis Manager	Professional Roles
Data Driven Decisions	Professional Knowledge
Developmental Specialist	Professional Roles
Empathetic	Personal Characteristics
Engaging in Professional Advocacy	Professional Commitment and Growth
Enthusiastic	Personal Characteristic
Equity and Access for All Students	Professional Focus
Ethical	Personal Characteristics
Family Liaison	Professional Roles
Flexible	Personal Characteristics
Implementing Data Driven Programmatic Decisions	Professional Tasks/Functions
Intelligent	Personal Characteristics
Leader	Professional Roles
Leadership	Professional Tasks/Functions
Leading Professional Development Workshops	Professional Commitment and Growth
Learner	Professional Roles
Mediator	Professional Roles
Mentoring/Sharing Expertise	Professional Commitment and Growth
Multi-culturally Competent	Personal Characteristics
Participating in Supervision	Professional Commitment and Growth
Passionate	Personal Characteristics
Personal Development	Professional Focus
Positive	Personal Characteristic
Postsecondary Career Readiness	Professional Focus
Prevention Specialist	Professional Roles
Providing Program Accountability	Professional Tasks/Functions
Pursuing Ongoing Professional Development	Professional Commitment and Growth
Reflective	Personal Characteristic
Reliable	Personal Characteristic
Results Oriented	Personal Characteristic
Self-Aware	Personal Characteristic
Self-Starter	Personal Characteristic
Social Development	Professional Focus
Student Advocacy	Professional Tasks and Functions
Supportive	Personal Characteristics
Technological Proficiency	Professional Knowledge
Trustworthy/Safe	Personal Characteristic

In attempting to understand why the majority of accepted items appeared to move in a direction away from consensus rather than toward consensus, the optional prompt responses from round three appear to shed some light on why this may have happened. Two of the four experts that responded to the round three optional prompt commented that they were struggling with the items that appeared to represent personal characteristics. Regarding these items, although they thought they that these characteristics were important or ideal for school counselor to possess, they were unsure that these characteristics should be considered part of the professional identity of school counselors. A closer look at the 19 items that had decreasing means and standard deviations that increased by .10 or more, suggests that 13 (68%) of these items could be classified as personal characteristics. Although the experts developed these items in round one, it is possible that after having ample time to consider professional identity, some of the experts began to question the relationship between characteristics and identity, scoring these items lower and thereby increasing the standard deviation for these items.

Connecting the Results to the Literature

A list of components of school counselor specific professional identity has not previously been identified in the literature. In response to this gap in the literature, prior to conducting this study an a priori literature review was conducted and a list of potential aspects of school counselor professional identity was developed (Appendices E. & F.). Table 5-2 presents the essential components of school counselor professional identity resulting from this study matched with the a priori potential aspects of school counselor professional identity

Table 5-2

Alignment of this study's Essential Components to Components in the Literature

Essential Component	Potential Aspects
Academic Achievement	Achievement/Student Focus
Advocate	Advocacy *
Awareness of Community Resources	
Awareness of Ethical and Legal Standards	Professional Ethics
Career Advisor	Career Focus *
Career Development	Career Focus
Change Agent	Roles *
Collaboration	Collaboration/Consultation
Collaborator	Collaboration/Consultation *
Committed	Commitment
Comprehensive Programming	
Consultant	Collaboration/Consultation *
Coordination	
Counselor	Counselor/Counseling *
Crisis Manager	Roles *
Data Driven Decisions	Accountability
Developmental Specialist	
Empathetic	
Engaging in Professional Advocacy	Advocacy
Enthusiastic	
Equity and Access for All Students	
Ethical	Professional Ethics
Family Liaison	Roles*
Flexible	
Implementing Data Driven Programmatic Decisions	Accountability
Intelligent	
Leader	Leadership *
Leadership	Leadership
Leading Professional Development Workshops	Professional Development/Leadership
Learner	Professional Development *
Mediator	Roles*
Mentoring/Sharing expertise	
Multi-culturally Competent	Multicultural/Diversity
Participating in Supervision	Supervision
Passionate	
Personal Development	
Positive	
Postsecondary Career Readiness	Career Focus
Prevention Specialist	Prevention *
Providing Program Accountability	Accountability

Table 5-2 CONTINUED

Essential Component	Potential Aspects
Pursuing Ongoing Professional Development	Professional Development
Reflective	Self-reflection
Reliable	
Results Oriented	Accountability
Self-Aware	Self-reflection
Self-Starter	
Social Development	Social/Emotional Focus
Student Advocacy	Advocacy
Supportive	
Technological Proficiency	Skills and Knowledge
Trustworthy/Safe	

*These items could possibly align with the potential aspect Roles however these specific roles may not be directly referenced in the literature. Some of these items may also align with other aspects and have been noted as such.

Although Comprehensive Programming, Coordination, Equity and Access for All Students, and Mentoring/Sharing Expertise do not appear to align with a priori potential aspects of school counselor professional identity, these components are espoused within the literature as important to comprehensive school counseling programs (ASCA, 2012; Education Trust, 2009; Johnson, 2000; Paisley et al., 2007). An additional nine essential components appear to represent personal characteristics and do not appear to match any of the potential aspects of school counselor from the literature review. The results of this study and the optional responses of the expert panel suggest that questions may remain regarding their connection to professional identity

There is disagreement regarding whether professional identity should fall under one unified counselor identity or separate specialty identities (e.g., school counselors, mental health counselor, college counselor, marriage and family counselor, etc.) or both

(Moss, 2011). Although there is a gap in the literature regarding components of school counselor identity, attempts have been made to identify components of an overall counselor professional identity. A comparison of the components derived from this study with previously espoused components of counselor identity seems warranted. Select counseling professional standards and the overarching counseling literature related to counselor professional identity were selected and reviewed by the primary researcher. Five publications were identified that identified components of professional identity for all counselors. This review resulted in an aggregate list of 17 components of professional counselor identity (CACREP, 2009; Emerson, 2010; Gray & Remley, 2000; Puglia, 2008; Remley & Herlihy, 2007). Of these 17 components, Professional and Client Advocacy, Professional Development, Professional Engagement, Professional Ethics, and Professional Roles, appear to be in alignment with the majority of components identified in the current study. The remainder of this section will examine these five previously espoused components of counselor identity along with the results of this study.

Professional and Student Advocacy

Advocacy for students as well as for the profession emerged from this study as essential with three items from the final consensus list, i.e., Advocate ($M = 5.95$, $SD = .22$), Student Advocacy ($M = 5.95$, $SD = .22$), and Engaging in Professional Advocacy ($M = 5.43$, $SD = .60$). The importance of professional and student advocacy to professional identity is supported in the literature by Henderson et al. (2007), Johnson (2000), Paisley et al. (2007), and Lambie and Williamson (2004). In addition, CACREP (2009) directly identifies Advocacy as component of professional identity, the ASCA National Model (2005) includes it as one of its four themes, and the College Boards' National Office of

School Counselor Advocacy (2011) and the Education Trust (2009) both espouse the importance of advocacy for school counselors. The current study finding three advocacy components of professional school counselor identity appears to be in agreement with extant literature.

Professional Development

The importance of professional development to school counselor identity is also prominent in the literature. (CACREP, 2009; Gray & Remley, 2000; Puglia, 2008; Remley & Herlihy, 2007). Of the list of 51 essential components of school counselor professional identity, Pursuing Ongoing Professional Development ($M = 5.68$, $SD = .48$) and Participating in Supervision ($M = 5.35$, $SD = .75$) appear to directly align with Professional Development.

Additional support for these components is found within the school counseling literature. Henderson et al. (2007), and Lambie and Williamson (2004) both referenced professional development and supervision as potential aspects that influenced school counselor professional identity. Additionally, the importance of professional development was espoused by Johnson (2000) in her initiative to promote the professional identity of school counselors. The identification of these as essential components of professional identity in this study along with the support from the literature suggests the importance of these two items to the professional identity of school counselors.

Professional Engagement

Emerson (2010) and Puglia (2008) both included Professional Engagement on their lists of components of counselor professional identity. Operationally defined, professional engagement is the set of professional behaviors that a counselor is expected

to engage in as part of their profession. Although professional development could be housed under the umbrella of Professional Engagement, for the purposes of this discussion, professional engagement refers to participation in the professional community instead of behaviors that impact only the individual counselor. Engaging in Professional Advocacy ($M = 5.43$, $SD = .60$), Leading Professional Development Workshops ($M = 5.15$, $SD = .59$), and Mentoring/Sharing Expertise ($M = 5.62$, $SD = .50$) are the three essential components derived from this study that appear to align with Professional Engagement. The agreement amongst the expert panel suggest the belief that participation and support of the professional community is important to school counselors' professional identity.

A review of the original 79 components that the expert panel developed and rated in this study reveals four items that would align with Professional Engagement but did not meet the threshold for consensus needed to be included in the final list of essential components. Maintaining Membership in Counseling Associations ($M = 4.95$; $SD = 1.28$), Maintaining Membership in Educational Associations ($M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.12$), Maintaining Membership in School Counseling Associations ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.02$), and Presenting or Publishing on School Counseling Topics ($M = 4.71$, $SD = .78$) would appear to represent behaviors identified by Emerson (2010) and Puglia (2008) under their component, professional engagement. Professional Association membership is supported within the school counseling literature (ASCA, 2010; CACREP, 2009, College Board, 2011; Henderson et al., 2007; Johnson, 2000; Gale & Austin, 2003; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Milsom & Akos, 2005). As prior studies and the literature suggest that professional association membership is related to professional identity, it is possible that

the three professional membership items failed to meet thresholds due to the separation of the items by specific type of association (i.e. counseling, education, and school counseling). If only one item, Maintaining Membership in Professional Associations had been rated, thresholds for consensus may have been met. Interestingly, of the 21 expert panel members who completed round three, all 21 indicated membership in some type of professional association, with 81% indicating membership in a counseling association ($N = 17$), 86% indicating membership in a school counseling association ($N = 18$), and 43% indicating membership in an education association ($N = 9$). This discrepancy between practice and the ratings of the items in the survey could lend further support to the assertion that by delineating type of association, disagreement regarding type may have impacted the results of the ratings. Of course it is also possible that membership in professional associations could be seen as important but not considered an essential component of professional identity.

Professional Ethics

Professional Ethics are one of the components of professional identity agreed upon in the literature (CACREP, 2009; Emerson, 2010; Remley & Herlihy, 2007). Of the 51 essential components, the item 'Ethical' was the only item in both round two and round three that yielded a mean of 6 (strongly agree) and standard deviation of 0.0. Awareness of Ethical Codes and Legal Statutes ($M = 5.95$, $SD = .22$) was also rated highly by the expert panel and was the second highest component in level of agreement by the expert panel. Likewise, the ASCA Role Statement for School Counselors (2009) and the CACREP Standards for School Counselors (2009) both denote the importance of ethical codes and professional ethics as integral to profession of school counseling. This

panel of experts has demonstrated their strong agreement through their ratings of the items related to ethics.

Professional Roles

Professional Roles, operationally defined for this study as the function of an individual in a specific position, along with the expectations held by the individual and by others of that person's, or a group of people's function, within a particular organization (see chapter one), have been suggested as one of the components of professional identity in publications and studies in the field of counseling and school counseling (CACREP, 2009; Emerson, 2010; Remley & Herlihy, 2007). Additionally, Henderson et al., (2007) identified roles as one of the four themes of school counselor identity that emerged from their study. Of the 51 essential components of school counselor professional identity that resulted from this study, 26% (N = 13) were components that appeared to represent roles. As presented in Table 5-1, the term 'roles' was included in the a priori list of potential aspects of school counselor professional identity.

The specific relationship of roles to identity is not clear but Moss (2011) reported that school counselors struggled when asked to define their professional identity in her study and chose to list roles instead. It can be argued that roles alone are not identity, however, the literature as well as the results of this study suggests that roles contribute to that identity or are considered a component of identity.

Counselor or Educator?

A common theme that in the school counseling professional identity literature is the debate regarding whether school counselors are counselors or whether school

counselors are educators, or whether they are both (Henderson et al., 2007; Paisley et al., 2007; Schneider, 2009; Webber & Mascari, 2006). Although the results of this study do not clearly provide an answer to this question, examining the resulting list of essential components of school counselor professional identity does provide some insight into the perspectives of this panel of experts regarding this issue. The original list of 79 components derived from the expert panel responses to the round one qualitative prompt included five components to that by virtue of their wording clearly represented either counselor or educator related identities. Of these five components, only one, Counselor ($M = 5.86$, $SD = .36$), met the thresholds for consensus and was retained in the final list of essential components of school counselor professional identity resulting from this study. The four remaining components Educator ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.15$), Education Specialist ($M = 4.75$, $SD = .63$), Teacher ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 1.25$), and Therapist ($M = 3.31$, $SD = 1.07$) failed to meet the thresholds for consensus. Although failing to meet consensus in this study, Educator and Education Specialist aligned with the a priori factor, Educator/Education derived from the literature in chapter two. Educator/Education was identified as a factor related to professional identity in Brott (2006), Henderson et al. (2007), Paisley et al. (2007), Gale and Austin (2003), as well as in the ASCA National Model (2005), the ASCA Roles Statement for School Counselors (2009), the CACREP Standards for School Counselors (2009), and The College Board NOSCA (2011).

Although on the surface these results would suggest support for the counselor identity over the educator identity with 43 items that could appearing related to the counselor identity, four of the remaining six essential components appear to reflect the educational component of a school counselor's professional identity. Academic

Achievement ($M = 5.1$, $SD = .79$), Comprehensive Programming ($M = 5.38$, $SD = .80$), Equity and Access for All Students ($M = 5.95$, $SD = .22$), and Providing Program Accountability ($M = 5.62$, $SD = .59$). This closer examination of the results suggests that school counselor professional identity may be comprised of both counselor and educator and possibly supports the arguments that a dichotomy between the two is not necessary.

Limitations

The setting of expert criteria in a Delphi study is viewed as one of the most critical steps yet there is no consensus within the literature as to what defines an expert or how to set the criteria for inclusion (Hasson et al., 2000; Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The expert criteria were established to represent experience in the field, contributions made to the profession, and allowing for a diverse sample to be obtained. If different criteria were set, the expert panel composition may be different and the resulting essential component list could vary greatly.

Both the initial and final expert panels were disproportionally represented by Caucasian females aged 46 – 65, with doctoral degrees. In addition, those who currently work as counselor educators were also disproportionally high. A more demographically diverse sample of experts could impact the findings in this study. Additionally, the final list of essential components of school counselor professional identity represents the perspective of the expert panel in this study and may not represent the perspectives of other school counseling professionals. Were the expert panel comprised of different experts the resulting list may have varied. Specifically, having only a few experts in round 3 who indicated that they are currently working as school counselors was a significant departure from the design of the study and may be considered a notable

limitation. Also of concern is the lack of any participants in the panel who identify as Latina/o, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American.

Selection bias is a limitation in this study. In an effort to develop expert criteria that would be inclusive of practicing school counselors, working in a school that had earned ASCA's RAMP designated status was identified as a criterion. Additionally, in an effort to recruit school counselors, 92 of the 253 email invitations to participate in this study were derived from a database of counselors working in schools that had earned the RAMP designation. This potentially creates an ASCA bias within this study. The level or impact of this bias is unknown. Future studies could aim to identify and recruit school counselors using criterion that was not specific to ASCA.

The timing of data collection impacted this study. The first round of data collection began on May 22nd and was extended until June 9th. Due to the extended round one data collection and the time needed for data analysis, the round two data collection did not begin until June 19th and the final round of data collection did not begin until July 8th. Due to the work schedules of school counselors and some counselor educators, the summer data collection may have negatively impacted response rates. If this study was conducted at a different time of year, the response rate may have been higher, especially for currently practicing school counselors.

The sample size is a limitation of this study. Although the final expert panel consisted of 21 of the original 36 experts, which is in line with the literature on Delphi expert panel sizes (Delbecq et al., 1975; Green & Dey, 2002; Hasson et al., 2000; Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Witkin & Altschuld, 1995), this number is much lower than had been sought for this study. Recruitment efforts were made and 253 invitations to

participate were sent in hopes of having a higher response rate. The initial expert panel represents a response rate of 14.2% and the final expert panel that responded to round three represents 8.3% of those invited to participate. A larger expert panel may have provided a stronger consensus regarding the essential components of school counselor professional identity that resulted from this study. In addition, having only approximately one-twelfth of those invited actually finishing the study raises questions about how representative the final participants were of the original sample that was invited to participate.

The individual survey items are a limitation in this study. In an effort to remain true to the responses of the expert panel and to have the Likert scale survey items represent the components derived by the experts, many items that seemed similar remained on the survey. This was a choice made by the research team to honor the voices of the participants and not overly interpret the expert panel members' meanings by combining items. This process resulted in 79 original items, some of which may have appeared redundant, and which may have resulted in too many items for the expert panel to rate. The possible redundancy and number of items could have impacted the responses and/or the response rates. The choice to not provide operational definitions along with the items on the Likert scale may have made items appear redundant when in fact they represented different roles or functions. In addition, five of the comments made by participants in the optional responses for rounds two and round three indicated a lack of clear understanding regarding at least one item. These responses also indicated that there was the possibility that their answers might be different if the survey was given for

each individual work level for school counselors (e.g., elementary, middle, and high school).

The research team and the round one data analysis are limitations to this study. Although efforts were made to recruit an educational leadership research team member, these efforts were unsuccessful. The addition of this member could have provided a broader perspective when coding the round one responses. Additionally, one of the research team members was currently enrolled in her doctoral level qualitative research class. Her experience with qualitative analysis was limited and may have impacted how she analyzed the data. Furthermore, there were multiple relationships amongst the research team members prior to participation on this research team. This may have created a slight power differential between the research team members that impacted the coding of the data for this study.

The choice of conducting only three iterations is a limitation of this study. This was done to balance the risk of attrition with the benefits of further rounds of data collection but concluding this study after three iterations produced questions as well as answers. Although 51 items met the thresholds for consensus, only 15 of these remained the same or made some movement toward consensus from round two to round three, as shown by an increase in the mean and/or a decrease in the standard deviation. The remaining 36 items that met the thresholds for consensus after round three moved farther away from consensus with decreasing means and/or increasing standard deviations. Were additional iterations conducted for this study and attrition could be minimized, stronger levels of consensus may have been met and the resulting essential component list may have contained different items.

Lastly, the setting of the mean threshold at 4.8 or higher and the standard deviation threshold at .85 or lower was a limitation. These thresholds were chosen by the researcher and the dissertation committee in an effort to represent a fairly high level of agreement that the item was essential. The Delphi research does not indicate how to set thresholds for consensus and if different thresholds were selected, the resulting list could have varied.

Implications and Suggestions

Implications for School Counselors

This study and the resulting list of essential components of school counselor professional identity appear to provide benefits for practicing school counselors. Although ASCA (2012) has attempted to clarify the role of school counselors and to provide a clear framework within which school counselors should work, there are still myriad perspectives amongst school counselors and related constituents as to who school counselors are and exactly what they do. This study utilized a panel of experts that represented various perspectives within the school counseling profession to develop a list of essential components of school counselor professional identity. The essential components in this list appear to represent roles, tasks, knowledge, and behaviors that this panel of experts identified as essential to school counselor professional identity. Given the multiple positions, roles, and perspectives within the school counseling profession that were represented on the panel that developed this list, an argument could be made that this list could be used to initiate a more unified perspective regarding school counselor professional identity. A unified perspective could benefit school counselors by reducing the ambiguity that exists regarding roles, functions, and purposes of the

profession and by providing a foundation from which to perform their jobs, advocate for their roles, and make decisions about their practice. Decreased ambiguity can assist school counselors in better understanding their appropriate roles and duties further reducing the stress and potential burnout associated with role confusion that they may experience. Additionally, if the multiple constituents who train school counselors and advocate for the profession support a more unified perspective, the messages regarding school counselors and the profession of school counseling may become more consistent, better preparing school counselors for the realities of these profession.

Implications for School Counselor Educators

Professional identity development begins in graduate school and school counselor educators are tasked with the facilitation of this initial development. This list of essential components of school counselor professional identity can provide school counselor educators with a framework for assisting school counselors in training with understanding what is essential in this identity. Agreement regarding the components of school counselor professional identity amongst counselor educators may additionally serve to establish more consistent training of school counselors across programs. Furthermore, as many school counseling graduate programs are combined with mental health and college counseling, this list can assist counselor educators in helping school counselors with understanding how their identity is interrelated to counselor professional identity as well as how their school counseling specialization may create differences in identity from other counseling professionals. Helping school counseling students to understand the nuances of the specialty identity potentially can better prepare these students for the realities of the work, minimizing the frustrations regarding expectations

often encountered when a school counselor first enters the field. This improved preparation may result in more effective practitioners.

Implications for the Profession

The school counseling literature has suggested potential benefits professional identity can provide to the profession. The resulting list of essential components of school counselor professional identity can benefit the profession by providing school counselors, counselor educators, and professional associations a common understanding about who school counselors are as professionals, what their purpose is, and what specifically they do. This common understanding can result in more consistency amongst school counseling training programs and more consistency amongst counseling programs across states, divisions, and schools. Additionally, a common understanding about components of school counselor professional identity can improve professional advocacy efforts by creating a consistent unified platform to present to stakeholders and legislatures. The increase in consistency may assist in providing a distinction for school counselors from other practitioners and support the efforts to demonstrate how students are different as a result of the school counseling program.

Professional associations can design training opportunities for school counselors in an effort to assist school counselor in not only understanding these components but also developing an identity that is comprised of these components. Additionally, professional associations can use the results of this study to support school counselors in advocating to their administrators and school districts for appropriate roles and functions, realistic caseloads, and to increase awareness of what school counselors are trained and prepared to do. As there are multiple professional associations that support school

counselors and these associations may have differing perspectives regarding the professional identity of school counselors, this list of essential components may offer a consistent foundation for these professional associations. Agreement regarding these components may serve as a initial step toward the associations aligning their advocacy efforts for school counselors and the school counseling profession.

Suggestions for Future Research

The current data collected for this study could be disaggregated in a follow up study by expert panel member's current position. This additional study would allow the researcher to examine each of the resulting lists of essential components of school counselor professional identity and compare these to the final consensus list already established. This study may identify similarities and differences between groups and may provide additional information as to the perspectives of these separate groups regarding professional identity

Additional studies utilizing different participants could be conducted to validate the components found in this study. Furthermore, categories for these components emerged during the qualitative coding process, specifically: personal characteristics, professional growth, professional knowledge and focus, professional roles, tasks, and functions. However, these categories were not presented to the panelists. A study that allows participants to review these components and sort them into categories may provide additional understanding as well as validation of the findings from this study.

Qualitative feedback from the panel of experts in this study suggested that there could be differences in the professional identity of school counselors based upon their level of practice (e.g., elementary, middle, & high). Additional qualitative and

quantitative studies exploring the professional identity of school counselors at different levels may provide insight into whether and how level of practice impacts school counselor professional identity.

Additionally, a study to develop a valid and reliable instrument to measure professional identity could benefit the profession. This study's resulting essential components could be used as scales and subscales to measure within this instrument. Once developed, this instrument could be used to measure how years of experience, professional background, or interventions such as supervision appear to influence professional identity. This instrument could be used to measure the relationship professional identity may have with school counselor performance, effective leadership, or school counselor self-efficacy.

Summary and Conclusions

This Delphi study allowed a panel of identified experts within the field of school counseling to establish a list of essential components of school counselor professional identity. The resulting 51 essential components appeared to represent personal characteristics, professional growth, professional knowledge and focus, professional roles, tasks, and functions of school counselors. It seems as though most of the components mirrored the potential aspects that have been presented in the professional literature. Through a comparison to an aggregate list of components of counselor identity, similarities as well as differences existed which, while supporting the argument for a counselor identity, suggests that there are nuances based on the school counseling specialization that potentially impact the school counselor's professional identity.

The purpose of this study was to develop a list of essential components of school counselor professional identity utilizing an expert panel representing multiple perspectives within the school counseling profession. This essential list may serve as an initial step toward a unified perspective of school counseling within the field. Benefits of this unified perspective may range from improved school counselor performance, reduced ambiguity regarding roles and functions, improved consistency amongst training programs, and enhanced advocacy efforts. Although the establishment of this list of essential components of school counselor professional identity does not define this identity, it does provide a consensus regarding those components that a group of experts agreed were essential to that identity.

This aggregate list of 51 essential components of school counselor professional identity may serve to enhance the profession by providing a framework for identifying who we are as school counselors and what we do within our profession. Although further validation and categorization of these components in this list would be wise, these components may serve as the basis for developing a definition of school counselor professional identity and for developing a measure of this identity.

CHAPTER SIX

MANUSCRIPT

Essential Components of School Counselor Professional Identity: A Delphi Study

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The profession of school counseling currently faces many challenges. School counselors are tasked with establishing and running comprehensive school counseling programs. This includes addressing the academic, career, and social needs of all students as well as functioning as consultants and collaborators with parents/guardians, teachers, administrators, and community stakeholders (ASCA, 2005; Baker & Gerler, 2008; Dahir & Stone, 2007; Education Trust, 1997; Herr & Erford, 2011; Johnson, 2000). In addition, school counselors face the effects of current societal concerns such as increased rates of homelessness and growing mental health concerns in the students and families they serve. Issues such as suicide, school violence, eating disorders, and substance abuse are among the concerns school counselors encounter as they work with students and stakeholders (Baker & Gerler, 2008; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2012; Lockhart & Keys, 1998; Paisley, Ziomek-Daigle, Getch, & Bailey, 2007). With the complexity of the demands facing the profession, school counselors need a frame of reference from which to make decisions and understand their roles. This can be provided by a strong professional identity (Brott, 2006).

Professional identity may be defined as an overarching belief about oneself and one's chosen profession which helps a person to understand who they are and what they do as a professional while also providing a framework for practice and decision making. School counselors' professional identity is impacted by individual values, beliefs, and perceptions (Brott & Myers, 1999; Emerson, 2010; Moss, 2011). It is suggested that included in this understanding of the profession is knowledge of the history and development of the profession, the purpose of the profession, professional orientation, populations served, the settings within which they will work, and the appropriate roles of

the profession (CACREP, 2009; Calley & Hawley, 2008; Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011; Milsom & Akos, 2005; Webber & Mascari, 2006). The professional identity that is derived through this understanding can provide such a frame of reference, guiding a professional in decision-making as well as in practice (Brott, 2006; Pistole & Roberts, 2002; Webber & Mascari, 2006). Currently within school counseling there are myriad perceptions regarding school counselor professional identity (Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010; Fitch, Newby, Ballestro, & Marshall, 2001; Johnson, 2000). If professional identity provides frame of reference for professional practice and there are currently multiple perceptions of school counselor professional identity, the practice of school counseling could vary greatly. Presently there is an increased demand for accountability within the schools and this demand for accountability is also placed upon school counselors. If there is confusion regarding the professional practice and professional identity of school counselors, accountability may be difficult to demonstrate (Brott, 2006; Dahir & Stone, 2007; Johnson, 2000; Sink, 2009).

The lean economic times are also impacting school division budgets that in turn affect staffing decisions. With many stakeholders (e.g., national and state legislatures, local school boards, and principals) making decisions about allocating the reduced school division funding, it becomes more important for school counselors that these decision makers understand and value how a school counseling program adds to the educational enterprise (Fitch et al., 2001; Leuwerke, Walker, & Shi, 2009; Paisley et al., 2007). Without an understanding of the benefits that a school counseling program can provide to the school and its student population, the school counselor and the school counseling program may be viewed as expendable by the school division. In an attempt to minimize

costs, these decision makers may decide that the school counseling program and school counselors within that program should be eliminated or that the school counselors can be utilized within the school for other non-school counseling related responsibilities (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Cavanaugh, 2011; Dahir et al., 2010; Griffin & Farris, 2010). Unfortunately, these powerful stakeholders' perceptions about school counseling are often incongruent with the various visions of school counseling being promulgated by the leading school counseling associations (Dodson, 2009; Fitch et al., 2001; Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Reiner, Colbert, & Perusse, 2009).

As the profession situated within the counseling and educational fields, the leading school counseling associations include professional counseling associations as well as educational associations. The American Counseling Association (ACA), The American School Counseling Association (ASCA), and the National Education Association (NEA), the main national professional associations that seek to serve, represent, and support school counselors, also disagree about the identity of a school counselor (ACA, 2009; ASCA, 2009; Mellin et al., 2011; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011). Although these organizations support the role of school counselors and agree on many of the roles that school counselors perform, the organizations' perspectives on professional orientation as a counselor or an educator differ (Schneider, 2009). This counselor and/or educator debate appears to be an ongoing issue and remains one of the struggles that school counselors face in claiming a unified professional identity (Paisley et al., 2007; Webber & Mascari, 2006).

In addition, the components of school counselor professional identity emphasized by various key constituents (e.g., graduate school professors and school counseling training programs, individual state requirements for a school counseling license or certification, and school division personnel who assign or influence school counselor job responsibilities) also have a significant impact on the shaping of school counselors' sense of professional identity (Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999; Moss, 2011; Fitch et al., 2001; Myers, Sweeney, & White, 2002).

Without a consensus on the professional identity of school counselors, school counselors risk negative personal and professional consequences such as continued role ambiguity (Dahir & Stone, 2007; Paisley & Borders, 1995) and a lack of distinction from other educators and helping professionals. This lack of distinction may enhance the possibility that school counselors could be replaced in the workplace by teachers, school psychologists, school social workers, or outside mental health workers (ASCA, 2012; Kraus, Kleist, & Cashwell, 2009; Webber & Mascara, 2006). The absence of a clear and congruent professional identity may increase the risk of stress and burnout for practicing school counselors (Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005) as well as fostering school counselors' failure to develop the skills and competencies necessary to meet students' needs (Brott & Myers, 1999; Henderson et al., 2007; Johnson 2000).

Lastly, without a consensus on professional identity, professional advocacy efforts may be limited (Mellin et al., 2011; Myers et al., 2002). In order to convince key decision makers of the legitimacy and importance of the school counseling profession, school counselors need to be able to clearly articulate what school counselors are trained to do, how the work of school counselors impacts students, and how they are different

than other professionals in counseling and in education. Before school counselors can clearly articulate the importance of the profession, they first need to agree as professionals on what they do, who they are as professionals, and why the profession is important. Presently there is not agreement amongst the school counselors concerning their professional identity (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Webber, 2004; Webber & Mascari, 2006). It appears as though the development of a clear professional identity could be of considerable value to both school counselors and their constituents (Dodson, 2009; Milsom & Akos, 2005; Webber & Mascari, 2006).

A review of the literature appears to indicate that professional identity is a pressing issue within the counseling field, especially for school counselors (Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010; Mellin et al., 2011; Myers et al., 2002). While school counselor professional identity concerns have been addressed in the literature for the past fifty years, the prevalence of studies and articles over the past fifteen years has increased substantially (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson et al., 2010; Granello & Young, 2012; Grimmitt & Paisley, 2008; Henderson et al., 2007; Johnson, 2000; Milsom & Akos, 2005; Paisley et al., 2007; Ponton & Duba, 2009). As school counseling is often considered a subspecialty group of counseling profession school counselor professional identity is also included in the literature on counselor professional identity. Many of the articles within the counseling literature have looked at counselor professional identity development, current challenges, and measurement (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; Emerson, 2010; Gale & Austin, 2003; Gibson et al., 2010; Hanna & Bemak, 1997). Several of the counseling publications and studies have specifically identified components of counselor professional identity. A comparison of the various

lists of components developed by these sources suggests that the lists are not only different but also that no single component listed was included in all lists. In their book on ethical and legal issues in counseling, Remley and Herlihy (2007) listed the components they believe constitute counselor professional identity. Additionally, The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) (2009) identified the components of counselor professional identity in its standards. Gray and Remley (2000) identified components of counselor professional identity for use with the Counseling Profession Scale (CPI) to measure counselors' beliefs regarding their professional identity. Puglia (2008) identified components in her study looking at whether graduate programs were providing the necessary guidance in the development of the students' professional identity. Lastly, Emerson (2010) identified components of counselor professional identity for use in developing the Counseling Professional Identity Measure. Combined, these publications and studies identified 17 possible components of counselor identity.

The school counseling literature has also suggested an increased desire within the profession for a unified professional identity for school counselors; however, there have been limited studies regarding what constitutes that specific identity. Many of the articles have been conceptual in nature or have explored the process of professional identity development (Brott & Myers, 1999; Henderson et al., 2007; Johnson, 2000; Paisley et al., 2007). Although empirically derived components of school counselor professional identity have not been listed within the school counseling literature, many of the article and publications have identified potential aspects of this identity. Prior to conducting this

study, an a priori literature review identified 35 potential aspects of professional identity from the school counseling publications and literature.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

What appears lacking in the literature is an examination of the agreement amongst the various school counseling professionals regarding the essential components of school counselor professional identity. This study aimed to offer the opportunity for experts representing the varying perspectives within the school counseling profession to come to a consensus on the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity. An understanding of the essential components of school counselor professional identity that this study aims to develop may enhance school counselors understanding of their identity and support advocacy efforts.

The purpose of this study was to establish a consensus amongst experts in the field of school counseling about the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity.

The research question was:

What are the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity?

The goal of this study was to develop a consensual list of the essential components of school counselor professional identity. As school counselors, school counselor educators, and leaders in organizations that support and advocate for school counselors may hold a differing perspectives regarding school counselor professional identity, efforts were made to include a sample that represents these perspectives.

Method

Linstone and Turoff (2002) described the Delphi method as “a method for structuring a group communication process so that the process is effective in allowing a group of individuals, as a whole, to deal with a complex problem” (p. 3). In the past six decades, Delphi studies have been utilized in a broad array of fields for program planning, policy determination, forecasting future events, goal setting, and attempting to reach consensus amongst a group of experts about a particular topic under dispute (Hallowell & Gambatese, 2010; Hasson et al., 2000; Hsu & Sanford, 2007; Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009; Linstone & Turoff, 2002; Norcross et al., 2002). Delphi technique is viewed as an effective means for establishing a consensus or convergence of opinion among groups of individuals with knowledge about a particular subject area (Hsu & Sanford, 2007; Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009; Norcross et al., 2002). The technique’s structured, efficient, and cost-effective approach is beneficial when bringing together groups of individuals who may be geographically dispersed or have hostile or adversarial opinions (Iqbal & Pipon-Young, 2009). The structured nature of the Delphi method gives voice to all participants and mitigates the influence of dominant members, issues of group conformity, and the lack of focus on the problem that face-to-face interaction can sometime facilitate (Delbecq, Van der Ven, & Gustafson, 1975; Hasson et al., 2000; Hsu & Sanford, 2007).

Participants

Invitations to participate were sent to 253 individuals who were identified through purposeful sampling based upon pre-establish criteria as potential expert panel

members. In order to qualify as an expert, potential panelists were required to meet at least two of the following seven criteria:

- Had worked as a school counselor for at least three years
- Had earned either NCSC or NBPTS certification
- Had worked as a school counseling district supervisor
- Had worked as a school counselor in a school that has earned the ASCA RAMP designation *or* have received a state or national school counselor or school counselor educator award
- Had taught at least two university based master's or doctoral level s classes which specifically were focused upon school counseling
- Had published in a peer referred journal or presented at a national conference on the topic of school counselor professional identity.
- Had served as state or national school counseling association officer or committee chair.

An original panel of 36 experts completed round one and were invited to participate in all three rounds of data collection. The final expert panel for round three consisted of 21 members, representing 58.3% of the original panel. Of these 21 final expert panel member 28.6% were school counselors, 57.1% were counselor educators, 4.8% were district supervisors, and 9.5% were categorized as "other". The panel was comprised of predominately Caucasian, females between the ages of 46 and 65 who held doctoral degrees.

Instruments and Procedures

This study utilized three rounds of data collection and analysis. The initial round consisted of a qualitative data collection of responses to the following open-ended request: "Professional identity may be defined as an overarching belief about oneself and one's chosen profession which helps a person to understand who they are and what they do as a professional while also providing a framework for practice and decision making. Please list all of the words or phrases that describe or represent components of school counselor professional identity. Please share as many as you can generate". Additionally an optional prompt was included asking for responses why certain words or phrases were listed, or additional thoughts and feelings regarding school counselor professional identity.

A research team comprised of two doctoral students and a doctoral graduate from Old Dominion University's Counselor Education program was utilized for analysis of the round one responses. In addition to being doctoral students or graduates, one member was a practicing school counselor with five years of experience, one was a practicing school counselor with fourteen years of experience, and one was a counselor whose background was in mental health counseling, testing, and assessment who has worked in the field for 25 years. A generic qualitative process adapted from Creswell (2009) and Hays and Singh (2012) was used in individually coding the data followed by consensus coding and development of a final round one codebook containing 79 components of school counselor professional identity along with operational definitions for each component. The resulting 79 components were developed into items on a Likert scale developed for use in round two and round three of data collection.

The second round of data collection consisted of the expert panel members as items that the expert panel rated according to their level of agreement that each item was an essential component of school counselor professional identity. After a 15 day data collection, the results were uploaded into SPSS and means and standard deviations were calculated. These means and standard deviations were then embedded into the items on the Likert scale for the round three data collection.

Round three consisted of the Likert scale from round two with the mean and standard deviation results for each item embedded into the survey. The expert panel reviewed the results for each item from round two and rerated each item based upon the results from round two. After 10 days these results were uploaded into SPSS and means and standard deviations were again computed for each item.

Results

The final results of this three round Delphi study reflect the acceptance of 51 of the original 79 components meeting or exceeding the threshold for consensus as determined by a mean of 4.8 or higher and a standard deviation of .85 or lower. Table 1 below presents the essential items and their mean and standard deviations after round three.

Table 1

Essential Components of School Counselor Professional Identity

Component	N	M	SD
Ethical	21	6.00	0.00
Student Advocacy	21	5.95	0.22
Awareness of Ethical and Legal Standards	21	5.95	0.22
Equity and Access for All Students	21	5.95	0.22
Advocate	20	5.95	0.22

Table 1 Continued

Component	N	M	SD
Collaboration	21	5.86	0.36
Collaborator	21	5.86	0.36
Counselor	21	5.86	0.36
Multi-culturally Competent	21	5.76	0.54
Reliable	20	5.75	0.55
Change Agent	20	5.75	0.44
Empathetic	21	5.71	0.56
Personal Development	21	5.71	0.56
Pursuing Ongoing Professional Development	19	5.68	0.48
Awareness of Community Resources	21	5.67	0.48
Leadership	20	5.65	0.49
Trustworthy/Safe	20	5.65	0.75
Mentoring/Sharing expertise	21	5.62	0.50
Providing Program Accountability	21	5.62	0.59
Implementing Data Driven Programmatic Decisions	21	5.62	0.50
Self-Aware	21	5.62	0.74
Post Secondary Career Readiness	21	5.62	0.67
Social Development	21	5.57	0.60
Reflective	21	5.57	0.75
Flexible	21	5.57	0.81
Learner	21	5.57	0.60
Coordination	19	5.53	0.77
Leader	21	5.52	0.60
Results Oriented	21	5.52	0.75
Committed	21	5.52	0.81
Supportive	21	5.48	0.81
Positive	21	5.48	0.75
Enthusiastic	21	5.48	0.75
Data Driven Decisions	21	5.48	0.75
Passionate	21	5.48	0.75
Engaging in Professional Advocacy	21	5.43	0.60
Prevention Specialist	21	5.43	0.68
Consultant	20	5.40	0.68
Self-Starter	21	5.38	0.80
Comprehensive Programming	21	5.38	0.80
Career Development	21	5.38	0.74
Participating in Supervision	20	5.35	0.75
Mediator	21	5.29	0.72
Developmental Specialist	20	5.25	0.72
Intelligent	21	5.24	0.83
Leading Professional Development Workshops	20	5.15	0.59

Table 1 Continued

Component	N	M	SD
Technological Proficiency	21	5.14	0.79
Crisis Manager	21	5.14	0.79
Academic Achievement	20	5.10	0.79
Family Liaison	20	5.00	0.65
Career Advisor	21	5.00	0.77

Discussion

A review of the mean and standard deviations of the items included in the final list of essential component of school counselor professional identity provide interesting results. Of the 51 components that met the consensus thresholds of mean ($M \geq 4.8$) and standard deviation ($SD \leq .85$), only 15 items appeared to move toward consensus between round two and round three, as indicated by either having means and standard deviations remain the same or having increasing means and/or decreasing standard deviations. The remaining 36 items showed some increase in standard deviations suggesting a slight move away from consensus. One item, Participating in Supervision, is the only component in the final list that had not met the consensus thresholds in round two. In re-rating this item in round three, a move toward consensus occurred and this component did meet the thresholds for both mean and standard deviation. As participation in supervision is less common for school counselors than for mental health counselors (Moss, 2011), the acceptance of this item after round three was encouraging. The multiple iteration process and the time for reflection from round one to round three may have allowed the expert panel to reflect on the impact of supervision and adjust their

perspective regarding its importance. It may also be reflective of the increasing prominence of counselor educators on the final panel. It may be the case that this group values school counselor participation in supervision more highly than currently practicing school counselors might.

In an effort to better understand the data generated from the expert panel responses in round one, the research team clustered the components into categories. These categories were used for organizing the consensus codebook and were not distributed with the items to the expert panel for rating. Viewing the results of this study in relation to the same categories used to organize the consensus codebook, it appears that the items that were impacted by the greatest increase in standard deviation from round two to round three were those items that could predominantly be classified as personal characteristics. In attempting to understand why the majority of accepted items appeared to move in a direction away from consensus rather than toward consensus, the optional prompt responses from round three appear to shed some light on why this may have happened.

Although the optional responses in this study only served to clarify responses to items in this study, a review of these responses does offer insight into understanding what these results may mean. The round three optional results suggest that there may be some questions about the items that appear to represent personal characteristics and their relation to professional identity. A comparison of these items that appear to represent personal characteristics the changes in means and standard deviation between rounds of data collection reflect that the majority of these items had an decrease in the mean score for the item and/or an increase in the standard deviation of the scores for the item. This

suggests that perhaps the expert panel was moving slightly away from consensus regarding these items, supporting the questions raised in the optional responses.

Table 2

Changes in Mean and Standard Deviations

Component	<i>M</i> Δ	<i>SD</i> Δ
Ethical	0.00	0.00
Awareness of Ethical and Legal Standards	0.00	0.00
Equity and Access for All Students	+0.04	-0.07
Student Advocacy	0.00	+0.01
Advocate	-0.05	+0.22
Collaboration	-0.06	+0.07
Collaborator	-0.01	+0.01
Counselor	-0.06	+0.07
Multiculturally Competent	-0.06	+0.15
Reliable	-0.08	+0.16
Change Agent	+0.10	-0.20
Empathetic	-0.07	+0.14
Personal Development	+0.06	-0.01
Pursuing Ongoing Professional Development	-0.14	+0.09
Awareness of Community Resources	+0.10	-0.11
Trustworthy Safe	-0.31	+0.54
Leadership	-0.13	+0.07
Self Aware	-0.34	+0.53
Providing Program Accountability	-0.08	+0.03
Postsecondary Career Readiness	+0.05	+0.08
Implementing Data Driven Programmatic Decisions	-0.03	-0.08
Mentoring Sharing expertise	+0.10	-0.10
Flexible	-0.12	+0.34
Reflective	-0.12	+0.19
Learner	+0.01	+0.01
Social Development	-0.17	+0.06
Prevention Specialist	-0.05	+0.08
Engaging in Professional Advocacy	-0.14	+0.01
Consultant	-0.17	+0.02
Comprehensive Programming	-0.53	+0.51
Self Starter	-0.36	+0.36
Career Development	-0.27	+0.17
Participating in Supervision	+0.13	-0.38
Mediator	-0.19	+0.05

Table 2 CONTINUED

Component	<i>M</i> Δ	<i>SD</i> Δ
Developmental Specialist	-0.05	+0.01
Intelligent	-0.24	+0.04
Leading Professional Development Workshops	+0.15	-0.21
Crisis Manager	-0.42	+0.20
Technological Proficiency	+0.27	+0.10
Academic Achievement	-0.51	+0.21
Career Advisor	-0.13	-0.04
Family Liaison	-0.13	-0.32

Within the literature there is disagreement regarding whether professional identity should fall under one unified counselor identity or separate specialty identities (e.g., school counselors, mental health counselor, college counselor, marriage and family counselor, etc.) or both (Moss, 2011). Although there is a gap in the literature regarding components of school counselor identity, attempts have been made to identify components of an overall counselor professional identity. A comparison of the components derived from this study with previously espoused components of counselor identity seems warranted.

The primary researcher undertook a review of select professional standards and literature addressing overall counselor identity. This review yielded an aggregate list of 17 components of professional counselor identity (CACREP, 2009; Emerson, 2010; Gray & Remley, 2000; Puglia, 2008; Remley & Herlihy, 2007). Of these 17 components, Professional and Client Advocacy, Professional Development, Professional Engagement, Professional Ethics, and Professional Roles, appear to be in alignment with the majority of components identified in the current study.

Limitations

There are multiple limitations to this study. The selection of expert criteria, the demographics of the expert panel, the methods of recruitment of experts, the sample size for the study, the choice of three rounds of data collection, the timing of data collection, and selection and use of a research team for round one data analysis were all limitations to this study. Had a different group of experts, both in size, criteria, and composition been chosen for this study the results could have varied widely. Additionally, if the design had included a different number of rounds of data collection or different time frames for data collection, the results could have varied. Lastly, the recruitment and use of a research team could have impacted the results in that a different group of researchers may have analyzed the data differently, identifying different items to be rated by the research team and therefore different results.

Although the demographics of school counselors in the field have been changing, historically the profession has been comprised of predominately white females, which is similar to the composition of the expert panel in this study. A more demographically diverse sample of experts could impact the findings in this study. Were the expert panel comprised of different experts the resulting list may have varied. Specifically, having only a few experts who indicated that they are currently working as school counselors was a significant departure from the design of the study and may be considered a notable limitation. Also of concern is the lack of any participants in the panel who identify as Latina/o, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American.

Implications

There are several possible implications for practicing school counselors, for school counselor educators, and for the profession of school counseling as a result of this

study. The final list of 51 essential components of school counselor professional identity that resulted from this study may serve to provide a foundation for a unified perspective regarding who school counselors are and what they do in their jobs. For school counselors a unified perspective may lessen the ambiguity that they face within their daily jobs regarding roles, tasks, functions, and purpose. Additionally, this unified perspective can provide counselor educators with a consistent framework for assisting school counselors-in training in the initial development of their professional identity as well as for preparing these trainees for the realities of the job. As it has been suggested within the literature, this confusion may impact school counselors' performance as well as impact the levels of stress and burnout that a school counselor may experience, reducing ambiguity and confusion could assist school counselors in managing the diverse demands of their job and ultimately improve the services they provide to students.

Overall, the implications for the profession of the list of essential components of school counselor professional identity that resulted from this study may include consistency amongst school counseling training programs as well as more consistency amongst school counseling programs across states, divisions, and schools. Additionally, this list can perhaps improve the professional advocacy efforts of the professional associations that support school counselors by creating a consistent unified platform to present to stakeholders and legislatures. The increase in consistency amongst school counseling training programs, in school counseling programs in K-12 education, and in platforms for professional advocacy may assist the profession by distinguishing for school counselors from other practitioners as well as supporting efforts to demonstrate how students are different as a result of the school counseling program.

Future Research

Additional studies utilizing different participants could be conducted to validate these items. Furthermore, categories for these components emerged during the qualitative coding process, specifically; personal characteristics, professional growth, professional knowledge and focus, professional roles, tasks, and functions. However, these categories were not presented to the panelists. A study that allows participants to review these components and sort them into categories may provide additional understanding as well as validation of the findings from this study.

Qualitative feedback from the panel of experts in this study suggested that there could be differences in the professional identity of school counselors based upon their level of practice (e.g., elementary, middle, & high). Additional qualitative and quantitative studies exploring the professional identity of school counselors at different levels may provide insight into whether and how level of practice impacts school counselor professional identity.

Lastly, a study to develop a valid and reliable instrument to measure professional identity could benefit school counselors and the school counseling profession. Once developed this instrument could be used to measure how years of experience, professional background, or interventions such as supervision appear to influence professional identity. Additionally this instrument could be used to measure the impact professional identity may have on school counselor performance, effective leadership, or school counselor self-efficacy.

Conclusion and Summary

The purpose of this study was to develop a list of essential components of school counselor professional identity utilizing an expert panel representing multiple perspectives within the school counseling profession. This essential list may offer a foundation as we attempt to move toward a unified perspective of school counseling within the field. The resulting list of essential components of school counselor professional identity may be an initial step toward improved school counselor performance, reduced ambiguity regarding roles and functions, improved consistency amongst training programs, and enhanced advocacy efforts. Although the establishment of this list of essential components of school counselor professional identity does not define this identity, it does provide a consensus regarding those components that are essential to that identity. Future research efforts may serve to further establish the professional identity of school counselors, the ability to measure the impact of interventions on this identity, and the impact this professional identity may have on school counselor performance, school counseling programs, and on the services that are provided to students.

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APPENDIX A**LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY**

Dear school counseling colleague:

My name is Amy Upton, school counseling department chair at Great Neck Middle School and a doctoral student in the Counselor Education and Supervision program at Old Dominion University. I am working on my dissertation research under the direct supervision of my dissertation chair, Dr. Tim Grothaus, Associate Professor and School Counseling Coordinator. I am conducting a Delphi study with school counseling experts to create a consensus list of essential components of school counselor professional identity. I would appreciate if you would consider participating as a school counseling expert.

To be considered an expert for the purposes of this study, you must meet two of the following seven criteria:

- have worked as a school counselor for at least three years,
- have earned either NCSC or NBPTS certification
- have worked as a school counseling district supervisor
- have worked as a school counselor in a school that has earned the ASCA RAMP designation or have received a state or national school counselor or school counselor educator award.
- have taught at least two master's or doctoral level school counseling specific classes at a university,
- have published in a peer referred journal or presented at a national conference on the topic of school counselor professional identity,

- o have served as state or national school counseling association officer or committee chair,

Your participation would be very much appreciated. If you choose to join the expert panel, I will ask you to provide a list of words or phrases that you believe are related to school counselor professional identity or its components.

After a list of items has been generated from the initial responses, all panelists will be asked to rank the items from 1-6 (strongly disagree to strongly agree that the item is an essential component of school counselor professional identity) for two separate rounds. Each of the three rounds should take approximately 10-25 minutes.

If you are willing to participate in this study (and you meet the criteria as an expert), please proceed by clicking the following link provided below which will direct you to an informed consent document, demographic form and the round one inquiry. You will have 10 days to complete the round one survey.

Additionally, if you know of anyone else whom you believe meets the criteria and may be willing to participate, please have them contact me or send me their contact information at: aupto001@odu.edu.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my dissertation chair, Dr. Tim Grothaus (tgrothau@odu.edu).

Sincerely,

Amy Upton

Thanks for your participation!

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

Title:

Essential Components of School Counselor Professional Identity: A Delphi Study

Introduction:

My name is Amy Upton, and I am the primary investigator for this study. I am a school counselor with 13 years' experience, currently working as a middle school counselor and department chair, and I am a doctoral candidate at Old Dominion University. Dr. Tim Grothaus, PhD, NCC, NCSC, ACS, an associate professor and school counseling coordinator in the Department of Counseling and Human Services at Old Dominion University will supervise this project. This form is intended to provide you with information to help you decide if you would or would not like to participate in this research.

Description of the study:

I am asking for your participation because you have been identified as an expert in the discipline of school counseling. The purpose of this study is to develop a consensus list of the essential components that constitute school counselor professional identity. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to commit to responding to three rounds of data collection. This work will consist of the following tasks

- Complete a demographics form
- Respond to an open-ended question about components of school counselor professional identity.

- Rate items generated during the open-ended questions process in a Likert style survey.
- Re-rate items on the Likert survey after reviewing the means and standard deviations for each item.

Withdrawal Privilege:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You can choose to withdraw at any time without consequence. Please ask questions and let me know about any concerns you may have. There will be no compensation provided.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept confidential throughout the process and will not be linked to specific results or data. You will not be informed of others who are participating. The research may be used in reports, presentations, and publications, but no names or other identifying information will be used.

Potential Risks and Benefits:

While there are no known risks associated with participating in this study, as with any research, there is some possibility that you may be subject to risks that have not yet been identified. The benefit to participating in this research will be your contribution to a uniform list of essential components of school counselor professional identity that may ultimately contribute to strengthening the professional identity of school counselors. You will also be contributing to the field by assisting a doctoral student in the completion of dissertation research.

Consent:

By completing and returning the attached Demographics Form, you are indicating that you would like to participate in the current study, that you understand the contents of this document, and are familiar with the purpose, risks and benefits of this research. You are also indicating that you understand what is being expected of you as a research participant. If you ever have questions about the study, you may contact Amy Upton at aupto001@odu.edu or Tim Grothaus at 757-683-3007, or tgrothau@odu.edu. If you have questions about your rights or this form, you should contact the Old Dominion University IRB Chair, George Maihafer at 757-683-4520, or gmaihafe@odu.edu.

Institutional Review Board Approval:

This study has been deemed exempt from IRB review by the Human Subjects Review Committee of the Darden College of Education (#201102082).

Amy Upton M.S. Ed.

Doctoral Candidate

Old Dominion University

Department of Counseling and Human Services

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APPENDIX C
ROUND ONE QUESTIONARE

- Professional identity may be defined as an overarching belief about oneself and one's chosen profession which helps a person to understand who they are and what they do as a professional while also providing a framework for practice and decision making. Please list words or phrases that describe or represent school counselor professional identity or its components. Please share as many as you can generate.

Optional:

- Please indicate any reasons for any of your choices of components listed above.
Any thoughts or feelings that you believe are relevant may be included here.

APPENDIX D**RESEARCH PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC FORM**

Expert Criteria (please check all that apply- at least two are needed for inclusion on Delphi Panel.)

- ☐ Have worked as a school counselor for at least three years
- ☐ Have earned either NCSC or NBPTS school counseling certification
- ☐ Have worked as a school counseling district supervisor
- ☐ Have worked as a school counselor in a school that has earned the ASCA RAMP designation or have received a state or national school counselor or school counselor educator award
- ☐ Have taught at least two master's or doctoral level school counseling specific classes at a university
- ☐ Have published in a peer referred journal or presented at a national conference on the topic of school counselor professional identity.
- ☐ Have served as state or national school counseling association officer or committee chair.

Gender:

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender

Highest Degree:

- ☐ MS
- ☐ Ed.S.
- ☐ Ph.D.
- ☐ Other (Please Specify)

Ethnicity:

- ☐ African American

Current Age

- ☐ 26 – 35

- ☐ Hispanic
 - ☐ Latino/Latina
 - ☐ Asian/Pacific Islander
 - ☐ Native American
 - ☐ Caucasian
 - ☐ Multiracial or multiethnic
 - ☐ Other (please Specify) _____
- ☐ 36 – 45
 - ☐ 46 – 55
 - ☐ 56 – 65
 - ☐ 66 or older

Years as a school counselor:

_____ Years at elementary level

_____ Years at middle/jr. high level

_____ Years at high school level

_____ Years at other (please specify)

National certifications held (please check all that apply)

- ☐ NCC/NCSC
- ☐ NBPTS
- ☐ Licensed Professional Counselor

Professional Association Memberships

- ☐ National Counseling Association
- ☐ State or Local Counseling Association
- ☐ National School Counseling Association
- ☐ State or Local School Counseling Association
- ☐ National Educational Association
- ☐ State or Local Educational Association

Other (please specify) _____

Current Professional Position _____

APPENDIX E

Table 2-1

Potential Aspects of School Counselor Professional Identity - from peer reviewed Articles

	Articles								
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9
Accountability	X			X	X				
Achievement/student focus				X	X		X	X	
Accreditation						X	X	X	X
Advocacy			X	X	X			X	
Career focus					X		X		
Clinical skills					X				
Collaboration/consultation							X		
Commitment			X						
Competence			X						
Context		X	X				X		
Counselor/counseling	X		X		X		X		X
National Certification							X		
Educator/education	X		X		X		X		
Expectations						X	X		
Experience		X				X		X	
History of profession		X					X	X	
Leadership			X		X				
Level of practice						X			

Table 2-1 CONTINUED

	Articles								
	A1	A2	A3	A4	A5	A6	A7	A8	A9
Multicultural/diversity							X		
Philosophy				X			X		
Prevention					X		X		
Association membership			X	X			X	X	X
Professional development				X				X	
Professional ethics	X		X						
Professional standards			X						
Roles	X	X	X	X					
Self reflection		X			X				
Self-care		X							
Self-conceptualization	X		X					X	
Skills & knowledge					X				
Social/emotional focus				X	X			X	
Stakeholder influences		X							
Supervision						X		X	
Training/Education	X	X	X		X	X	X		X
Values & attitudes	X	X					X		

A1 - Brott, 2006; A2 - Brott & Myers, 1999; A3 - Henderson et al., 2007; A4 - Johnson, 2000; A5 - Paisley et al., 2007; A6 - Culbreth et al., 2005; A7- Gale & Austin, 2003; A8 - Lambie & Williamson, 2004; A9 - Milsom & Akos, 2005

APPENDIX F

Table 2-2

Potential Aspects of School Counselor Professional Identity – from select Documents

	Publications					
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Accountability		X	X		X	
Achievement/student focus		X	X	X	X	X
Accreditation						
Advocacy		X	X	X	X	X
Career focus					X	X
Clinical skills						
Collaboration/consultation		X	X	X	X	
Commitment						
Competence						
Context						
Counselor/counseling		X	X	X	X	
National Certification		X	X	X	X	
Educator/education		X	X	X	X	
Expectations						
Experience					X	
History of profession				X		
Leadership		X	X	X	X	
Level of practice						

Table 2-2 CONTINUED

	Publications					
	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6
Multicultural/diversity	X		X	X	X	
Philosophy			X	X	X	
Prevention						
Association membership	X			X	X	
Professional development					X	
Professional ethics			X	X		
Professional standards				X		
Roles				X	X	
Self reflection						
Self-care				X		
Self-conceptualization						
Skills & knowledge				X		
Social/emotional focus		X			X	
Stakeholder influences						
Supervision						
Training/Education		X	X	X	X	
Values & attitudes						

P1 – ASCA Ethical Guidelines for School Counselors (2010); P2 – ASCA National Model (2005); P3- ASCA Role Statement for School Counselors (2009); P4 - CACREP Standards for School Counselors (2009). P5 – College Board NOSCA (2011); P6 – Education Trust (2009).

APPENDIX G

RESEARCH TEAM DATA ANALYSIS INSTRUCTIONS

For this study, a generic data analysis process adapted from Creswell (2009) and Hays & Singh (2012) will be utilized.

Individual Coding

1. Thoroughly read through the materials to gain an overall sense of the responses.
 - a. memo or jot down notes regarding their thoughts about the data.
2. Identify emic codes (those created by the participants)
3. Mark the text (phrases) and develop codes as you progress through the data
4. Compare emerging codes with emic codes, finding differences and similarities and cluster these as appropriate
5. Once initial codes have been developed, review codes and organize them, combining similar codes and creating sub codes where appropriate
6. Jot down notes or memos of impressions or reactions as you proceed through coding process.
7. As codes are developed and combined, jot down a definition or meaning for each code.

Consensus Coding

1. As a team, discuss the codes that each research team member has identified
 - a. Identify similarities and differences and merge similar codes

- b. Continue this process until a consensus is reached regarding the codes that represent components of school counselor professional identity.
2. Discuss the definitions established for each code or component and establish agreed upon operational definitions for each.
3. Once a consensus on codes and operational definitions has been reached a final codebook will be developed.

The identified codes will represent components to be used as items in the Likert scale instrument for round 2 data collection

4. Review the Likert scale (once developed) for representation of round 1 responses.

APPENDIX H**CONSENSUS CODEBOOK****Personal Characteristics**

Bold - beyond the usual limits of conventional thought or action; imaginative; challenging

Committed - to pledge (oneself) to a position on an issue or question;

Compassionate – to feel for another with a desire to help

Creative – imaginative, productive, original in thought

Empathetic - identifying with or vicariously experiencing feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another

Enthusiastic – eager or passionate

Ethical - being in accordance with the rules or standards for right conduct or practice, especially the standards of a profession

Flexible- adaptable, pliable, willing to yield and adjust

Insightful – understanding of relationship, forces or factors that influence a situation

Intelligent – quick understanding or reasoning

Multicultural competent – the ability to interact with people of diverse cultures while continually pursuing knowledge to enhance personal and professional practices.

Multitasked – ability to perform various tasks

Non-judgmental – open in attitude and thought, not passing judgment, accepting

Organized – structured in coordinating multiple projects and activities

Passionate – having intense emotions or feeling about something

Positive – seeing and expecting the good in people and things

Reflective – able to look at oneself or a situation and reconsider thoughts, actions and consequences

Reliable – able to be counted on for support or action

Results oriented – focused on the end result, setting goals to achieve

Self-aware – able to understand oneself, thoughts, motivations and biases

Self-starter – able to initiate action oneself, not needing external direction

Supportive – providing encouragement to others

Tolerant of ambiguity – able to accept uncertainty or unclear situations

Trustworthiness/safe – able to provide an environment where others can instill their trust and feel safe

Professional Knowledge

Clinically trained – educated or trained in skills and theories to work with individuals or groups regarding mental health issues

Awareness of Community resources – having a knowledge and awareness of various resources (i.e., mental health, social assistance, cultural supports) available in a community for individuals and families

Awareness of ethical and legal standards of the profession – knowing the ethical and legal standards that a profession is expected to adhere to (i.e., ACA code of ethics, ASCA ethical codes). Knowing what is expected of a professional to perform their job and protect their client/student. Knowing guidelines for right and wrong in a profession as well as legal statutes that impact professional practice.

Technological proficiency – being skilled and knowledgeable in the use of technology (computer hardware and software, smartboards) in order to fully embrace the data collection and analysis needed for the job.

Data driven program decisions – making decisions based upon analysis of data (i.e., grades, attendance, discipline, and other qualitative and quantitative measures). Using this data to inform decisions and practice.

Professional Roles

Advisor – one who gives counsel or provides information or suggestions regarding various topics.

Advocate – a person who serves as a voice for someone or something that otherwise may be unheard. The goal is often to enhance awareness, support, or facilitate change.

Career Advisor - one who gives counsel, provides information or suggestions regarding post-secondary jobs utilizing identification of interests, skills and goals of an individual.

Change agent – one who influences and impacts individuals and systems to facilitate changes and improvements needed.

Collaborator – one who works with others cooperatively to achieve an end result or common goal

College Advisor - one who gives counsel, provides information or suggestions regarding college/post-secondary education (including admissions, requirements, majors, and financial assistance)

Community liaison - one who serves to initiate or maintain a connection between the school and organizations and individuals within the community to facilitate cooperation and collaboration

Consultant – one who provides information, guidance and professional advice

Counselor – a professional who works with individuals, groups and families regarding mental health, wellness, education and career goals in an effort to assist and empower them.

Crisis Manager – an individual trained to address and manager unexpected situations of upheaval for individuals or organizations

Data collector – an individual who compiles data or information to better understand a situation.

Developmental specialist – an individual who has extensive knowledge regarding the stages of development individuals move through and how this impacts their thoughts and actions.

Education specialist – an individual with specific and extensive knowledge regarding learning and the educational process.

Educator – An individual who facilitates learning in others through instruction, training, and schooling. One whose purpose is to assist with the process of learning.

Expert researcher – An individual who is highly trained and knowledgeable at the process conducting systematic inquiry or investigation

Family liaison - one who serves to initiate or maintain a connection between the school and families to facilitate cooperation and collaboration

Leader – one who influences or leads others. One who others look to for direction.

Learner - one who is in the process of gaining knowledge and understanding

Mediator – one who works between individuals or parties to resolves difference and misunderstandings

Prevention specialist – an individual with extensive knowledge regarding possible issues that could arise and is versed in strategies to proactively avoid these issues or results.

Problem solver – an individual who analyzes and finds solutions to situations or problems.

Program coordinator – an individual who can bring together multiple aspects of developed plan of action or framework for working with students.

Referral specialist - an individual with extensive knowledge regarding issues or situations that are beyond the scope of the school to provide and who has an awareness of the outside resources available and the process for connecting and individual or family in need to these processes

Scheduler – an individual who designs the sequence of classes offered in a school or who places students into these classes.

Supporter – an individual who encourages others

Teacher – a person who instructs others in a school setting

Therapist – an individual trained in psychology methods who provides treatment for patients/clients to address mental health issues.

Professional Focus

Academic achievement – successful attainment of curricular objectives and increase in knowledge base.

Career development – the process of growth in understanding about professions, jobs, and the impact that one's interest and skills have on their choices.

Comprehensive programming – Development of a school counseling program that is inclusive of all needs, tasks, and domains (academic, career, and personal/social). Tying the program to the overarching school mission for the attainment of a similar goal for students.

Emotional development – the process of growth of feeling and maturity of individuals as they move toward adulthood.

Equity and Access for all students – meeting students' needs where they are and maintaining opportunity for all students regardless of their needs and backgrounds.

Personal development – the process of growth and understanding of an individual regarding their thoughts, feelings, goals and interactions as they move toward adulthood.

Post-secondary/career readiness – being knowledgeable and aware of options after high school for further education, training and jobs and being prepared academically and armed with the tools needed to accomplish the associated tasks required to move into this next stage of life.

Social development - the process of growth and understanding of oneself in interaction with others and their environments as they move toward adulthood.

Professional Tasks/Functions

Student advocacy – being the voice to take a stand for students as individuals and groups with the goal of supporting or creating change.

Leadership – providing influence professional or socially to influence others to work toward a goal

Collaboration – people working together toward a common goal

Coordination – bringing together multiple aspects into one process

Data driven programmatic decisions – decisions regarding the school counseling program and its delivery that are based upon measurable data (i.e., academic, attendance, discipline, or other qualitative or quantitative measures)

Program accountability – demonstrating that a program (i.e., school counseling program) is meeting its goals, and that the results of the functions of this program are measureable in their successes.

Professional Commitment and Growth

Membership in counseling associations – being a member of an organization that supports counselors through training, professional advocacy, and community (usually requires a fee).

Membership in School counseling associations – being a member of an organization that supports school counselors through training, professional advocacy and community (usually requires a fee).

Membership in Educational associations – being a member of an organization that supports educators through training, professional advocacy and community (usually requires a fee).

Mentoring/sharing expertise – an individual with greater experience working with less experienced professionals for the purpose of providing professional guidance.

Participating in supervision – participating in a relationship with either a more seasoned professional or a group of peer professionals for the purpose of discussing issues in daily professional practice for the goal of support and guidance.

Perusing ongoing professional development – regularly seeking out and participating in further training related to their professional practice

Presenting or publishing on school counseling issues – attending professional conferences or workshops and providing professional development regarding a topic as a presenter or writing about school counseling related issues for the purpose of supporting growth in the profession.

Professional advocacy – being a voice to take a stand for a profession to facilitate change or support of the profession. This is often to legislatures, school boards and stakeholders that influence the profession.

Providing professional development – leading instruction or workshops for other school counseling professionals to enhance the growth of other professionals.

APPENDIX I**ROUND TWO INVITATION**

Dear School Counseling Colleagues,

Thank you for your participation in round one of my Delphi study examining components of school counselor professional identity. A Likert scale survey has been developed from your responses.

I would like to invite you to complete the round two instrument which can be accessed via the link below. You will be asked to indicate your level of agreement regarding whether each of the items listed is an essential component of school counselor professional identity. You will be asked to choose from 6 possible responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This survey should take approximately 10-20 minutes to finish. Please complete the survey by June 29.

To continue, please follow the electronic link below.

Insert survey link

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my dissertation chair, Dr. Tim Grothaus (tgrothau@odu.edu).

Once again, thank you for your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Amy Upton

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

APPENDIX J**ROUND THREE EMAIL INVITATION TO ROUND TWO PARTICIPANTS**

Dear School Counseling Colleagues,

Thank you for your participation in my Delphi study examining components of school counselor professional identity. Your responses to the round two survey have been analyzed and the mean and standard deviation results for each item are provided in this final survey.

I would like to invite you to complete the final round survey instrument which can be accessed via the link below. Mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) results from the round two survey are included in this final survey for each item. You will be asked review the results for each item and to indicate your level of agreement regarding whether each of the items listed is an essential component of school counselor professional identity. Once again you will be asked to choose from 6 possible responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This survey should take approximately 10-20 minutes to finish. Please complete the survey by July 16. If you are interested in receiving the final results of this study you may indicate your interest by providing your email address on the final page of the survey.

To continue, please follow the electronic link below.

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

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my dissertation chair, Dr. Tim Grothaus (tgrothau@odu.edu).

Once again, thank you for your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Amy Upton

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

APPENDIX K**ROUND THREE INVITATION TO EXPERTS WHO DID NOT COMPLETE
ROUND TWO**

Dear School Counseling Colleagues,

Thank you for your participation in round one of my Delphi study examining components of school counselor professional identity. A Likert scale survey was developed from your responses.

I would like to invite you to complete the round three instrument which can be accessed via the link below. Mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) results from the round two survey are included in this final survey for each item. You will be asked review the results for each item and to indicate your level of agreement regarding whether each of the items listed is an essential component of school counselor professional identity. You will be asked to choose from 6 possible responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This survey should take approximately 10-20 minutes to finish. Please complete the survey by July 16. If you are interested in receiving the final results of this study you may indicate your interest by providing your email address on the final page of the survey.

To continue, please follow the electronic link below.

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

This link is uniquely tied to this survey and your email address. Please do not forward this message.

If you have any further questions regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me or my dissertation chair, Dr. Tim Grothaus (tgrothau@odu.edu).

Once again, thank you for your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Amy Upton

Please note: If you do not wish to receive further emails from us, please click the link below, and you will be automatically removed from our mailing list.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/optout.aspx>

APPENDIX L

Table 4-5

Descriptive Statistic Results of Essential Components

Essential Components	Round 2		Round 3	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Ethical	6.00	0.00	6.00	0.00
Awareness of Ethical and Legal Standards	5.96	0.21	5.95	0.22
Equity and Access for All Students	5.91	0.29	5.95	0.22
Student Advocacy	5.96	0.21	5.95	0.22
Advocate	6.00	0.00	5.95	0.22
Collaboration	5.91	0.29	5.86	0.36
Collaborator	5.86	0.35	5.86	0.36
Counselor	5.91	0.29	5.86	0.36
Multiculturally Competent	5.83	0.39	5.76	0.54
Reliable	5.83	0.39	5.75	0.55
Change Agent	5.65	0.65	5.75	0.44
Empathetic	5.78	0.42	5.71	0.56
Personal Development	5.65	0.57	5.71	0.56
Pursuing Ongoing Professional Development	5.83	0.39	5.68	0.48
Awareness of Community Resources	5.57	0.59	5.67	0.48
Trustworthy Safe	5.96	0.21	5.65	0.75
Leadership	5.78	0.42	5.65	0.49
Self Aware	5.96	0.21	5.62	0.74
Providing Program Accountability	5.70	0.56	5.62	0.59
Postsecondary Career Readiness	5.57	0.59	5.62	0.67
Implementing Data Driven Programmatic Decisions	5.65	0.57	5.62	0.50
Mentoring Sharing expertise	5.52	0.59	5.62	0.50
Flexible	5.70	0.47	5.57	0.81
Reflective	5.70	0.56	5.57	0.75
Learner	5.57	0.59	5.57	0.60
Social Development	5.74	0.54	5.57	0.60
Coordination	5.57	0.51	5.53	0.77
Committed	5.87	0.34	5.52	0.81
Results Oriented	5.35	0.71	5.52	0.75
Leader	5.65	0.57	5.52	0.60
Supportive	5.74	0.54	5.48	0.81
Enthusiastic	5.70	0.47	5.48	0.75
Passionate	5.65	0.57	5.48	0.75

Positive	5.73	0.55	5.48	0.75
Data Driven Decisions	5.52	0.67	5.48	0.75
Prevention Specialist	5.48	0.59	5.43	0.68
Engaging in Professional Advocacy	5.57	0.59	5.43	0.60
Consultant	5.57	0.66	5.4	0.68
Comprehensive Programming	5.91	0.29	5.38	0.80
Self Starter	5.74	0.45	5.38	0.80
Career Development	5.65	0.57	5.38	0.74
Participating in Supervision	5.22	1.13	5.35	0.75
Mediator	5.48	0.67	5.29	0.72
Developmental Specialist	5.30	0.70	5.25	0.72
Intelligent	5.48	0.79	5.24	0.83
Leading Professional Development Workshops	5.00	0.80	5.15	0.59
Crisis Manager	5.57	0.59	5.14	0.79
Technological Proficiency	4.87	0.69	5.14	0.79
Academic Achievement	5.61	0.58	5.1	0.79
Career Advisor	5.13	0.81	5	0.77
Family Liaison	5.13	0.97	5	0.65

APPENDIX M**ROUND ONE OPTIONAL RESPONSES**

1. The school counselor is the one voice/advocate for the school's students. They must help schools to take responsibility for reaching every student and ensure that all students graduate ready for success in both college and career.
2. school counselors employ counseling skills to effectively perform each of the roles/functions listed above. The unique contributions of a school counselor in education come from the combination of training (with an emphasis on counseling skills) and position in the school
3. Based on the ASCA Model, Developmental Guidance and Counseling, and RAMP criteria.
4. team approach - I have to able to work effectively with all stakeholders in my school community. ethics - Sometimes things get sticky and situations aren't always black or white. I rely on my coworkers to help me talk through tough situations. life's work - I consider my chosen vocation to be much more than a job. It really is my life's work. I'm passionate about the work I do. Glass-is-half-full - Sometimes it's hard, but I think school counselors need to be the kind of people who think positively and encourage kids, especially when no one else will/can. Data-driven - Common buzz word...but we really do need to reflect on what the data tell us about our programs and interventions. Imperfect - I am a living example of imperfection and that's how I challenge my students to have the courage to be imperfect. Hugs - I give hugs away freely...but never impose them on anyone. Continuing education - Graduate school, PLU's, conferences, seminars, faculty meetings, book-study groups...whatever it is and however you choose to do it is okay with me as long as you keep on learning Stability - something else that I strive for in my own life so that I can be an example for my child, as well as my students and coworkers. Classroom guidance, small groups, individual sessions - the "meat" of my program...my delivery system Advocate - This is also a buzz word...but one with lots of meaning. There are so many types of advocates. Right now, I am most concerned about being an advocate for students, as well as an advocate for the profession Community - I included community because I'm trying to become more educated about what goes on around me and how it affects my families. For example, deportation has become a salient issue for students and families with whom I work and I'm trying to learn how to better respond and work with families experiencing this stressful and scary situation.
5. not a therapist or 1-1 service provider
6. It is critical that the profession unites around the tenet that school counselors work in an educational setting, and that they are not in schools to provide therapy. Yes,

the school counselors have the core skills, but the profession must recognize the mission of schools and work and train school counselor to be effective leaders and advocates within that mission for students. The profession must recognize that the important stakeholders for school counselors are administrators, parents and community members. I aligned to the educational profession more than the mental health profession. That does imply that the mental health provider/counselor is not an important partner, but they are not the primary partner.

7. I believe that school counselors are educational experts who use their counseling expertise to develop a comprehensive school counseling program that is data-driven and designed to increase access to all students. All of the other descriptors identify the roles needed to make this goal happen
8. Counselor first, school counselor as a work setting second
9. School counselors are highly trained professional counselors who work in an educational setting, NOT educators with specialized training in counseling as ASCA proposes
10. All of the above seem basic or, even, prerequisite to having a solid and maturing professional identity
11. In order to best serve students, I feel strongly that the above components are necessary.
12. I embarked on my school counseling career when the literature was promoting the 3 C's - counseling, consulting, coordinating. I quickly adopted the 4th C of Co-teaching in recognition of the importance in engaging in systemic delivery of "developmental guidance" - classroom instruction intended to address the social-emotional and career developmental needs of all students. Considerably before the ASCA National Model took shape, I recognized the importance of, and engaged actively in the practices of leadership, collaboration, and advocacy on behalf of individual students and groups of students. I was the most trained in psychology and mental health and was recognized as the front-line mental health professional in the school. I was also most versed in addressing issues associated with students' demonstrating various challenging behaviors. As I work with students preparing to become school counselors in a program that follows the ASCA model and incorporates CACREP standards (sans CACREP recognition), I am increasingly of the belief that my practice as a school counselor is still necessary for the optimum opportunity for all students to benefit from public education.
13. I believe that professional identity is a continual process of personal and professional growth and development which often occurs through professional development opportunities, supervision, consultation/collaboration, and staying current with ASCA and relevant school counseling topics & concerns.

14. For me, the counselor AND educator piece is at the foundation. I know there is a debate about which takes priority, but I feel it is a false dichotomy. Personally, I am never not a counselor and never not an educator. Both identities inform every decision I made when I was a school counselor (even when I worked as a coach, or was chaperoning a field trip, etc.). As part of that, I also think it is critical that school counselors have solid clinical skills, because we are the first mental health specialists many students and parents come into contact with, and because we are the only mental health specialists many will see. That being said, the logistics and demands of the job also necessitate that we work systemically, and I believe this has been a huge transition but one that will ultimately help huge numbers of students. As above, I don't see this is a dichotomy, or as "abandoning" clinical skills for systemic interventions. Systemic interventions require clinical skills, and every individual intervention is, in a way, a systemic one as well (thinking ecologically). In the end, for me the job is about helping students get what they need out of their education so they can be productive, contributing members to the larger community. For me, this is what constitutes as close as we have to an "eternal truth" about our professional identity. What we do in order to help students be successful (individual counseling, guidance, career, advocacy, etc.) is transient...it will change over time as the needs of our students change, and it will alter from place to place depending on the demands of the communities. For me, then, my professional identity is about the end goal (student success), not the process (counseling or advocacy or advisement). The process is what I do. The end goal -- preparing students to be contributing community members-- is who I am.
15. I think that as a school counselor I am a central resource and leader in the school. As part of the school leadership team, I am advocating for what is best for children and I helped create and support the school mission and vision. I also spend quite a bit of time encouraging students to grow, learn and meet their full potential, while also doing the same for the staff and parents. I have been a parent and teacher educator through groups and workshops. I do teach valuable life skills to all facets of our school community. I facilitate students in conflict resolution and organization skills. I provide short term counseling and crisis response and then refer when more or deeper long term counseling is required. And though I have been in this particular role for 12 years, and have had a number of outside counseling roles as well as have been a teacher at the pre-school, elementary school and college levels, I continue to learn and change and modify and apply knowledge and skills daily
16. I just believe that as school counselors, our job is all encompassing. On any given day, we must wear a variety of hats. It's not just about counseling anymore. There is no rhyme or reason to our day - we come in with a schedule and to do list, and it often goes out the window with the first student or parent comes in. We must be prepared to punt on any given day depending on the needs that come forward. It's what makes our job frustrating and exciting at the same time.

17. I believe that all of the above embody pieces of the Professional School Counselor's identity. It is essential that areour future Professional School Counselor's have a strong sense of professional identity in order to maintain and sustain our profession in schools in the 21st century.
18. I believe school counselors should set the tone and expectations for the entire school. Professionalism is the key, and the ability to solve problems in a positive manner

APPENDIX N**ROUND TWO OPTIONAL RESPONSES**

1. I was thrown a little by "clinical experience." If "clinical" means in the schools then I strongly agree. If clinical means in a mental health setting, then I would disagree. I believe school counselors should all have field experiences and be able to practice their counseling skills in schools.
2. Too many items - not always distinctive. SC role is quite encompassing many terms would be appropriate. Perhaps a focus on the "critical" elements of the role or those that make it a distinctive position.
3. Some responses regarding Career or College Prep are less applicable in the strict sense at the elementary level. Understanding of strengths, weaknesses, interests and expectations of skills is important at all levels. Awareness of career opportunities is more general in elementary. Questions regarding data, for me, has to do with valuable data of direct impact. To attribute a divorce group to attendance rates at school, in my school, is ridiculous.
4. I believe the clinical training of school counselors is critical; however, the application of those skills is not to engage in therapy (e.g., treating depression), but to support students in school and use the skills to help students with adjustment to school
5. I noticed some typos (somewhat). Q #14: I assumed "perusing" meant "pursuing."
6. Some of the items would depend on the school counselor's level (elementarymiddle, or high school)

APPENDIX O**ROUND THREE OPTIONAL RESPONSES**

1. I was unsure about the one about being "clinically trained." I believe school counselor training should occur in schools, not in mental health locations. So if by "clinically trained" means schools or training specific to school counseling, then I would Strongly agree. If it is mental health training, then I would somewhat disagree.
2. The thing that was most difficult about this survey for me for reading through the that I agree school counselors need to have be effective (I'm thinking mostly of personal characteristics here, such as flexibility and creativity), but I don't know how I feel about them being part of our identity. In fact, if I had to do this survey again, I might well rate some of those items lower - depending on how I am framing the question in my mind. Is it important? And if so, does being important equate being part of an identity, which can be restrictive? (i.e., are less creative people less of professional counselors?)
3. Some questions asked me two things, for example, questions # 32, 34, 66. I wasn't sure which one to address. I see a big difference between presenting and publishing.
4. I believe that is essential to note the differences between "ideal" characteristics of Professional School Counselor versus the components that are integral to professional identity for the PSC in the 21st century. For example, bold, creative, etc. are not really issues related to the PSC's professional identity.

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Education

MSEd. Counseling	Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA	August 1999
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Experience

School Counseling Department Chair	Virginia Beach, VA	2010-Present
School Counselor	Virginia Beach, VA	2001-2010
School Counselor	Yonkers, NY	2000-2001
School Counselor	Virginia Beach, VA	1998-2000

Conference Presentations

Serving Those Who Serve: School Counselors and Military Families
 VSCA – Newport News, VA, March 15, 2012

Championing Change for our English Language Learners
 VSCA – Richmond, VA, March 24, 2011

Supervision for School Counselors: Benefits, Barriers, and Strategies for Success
 VSCA – Richmond, VA, March 24, 2011

The Relationship Between Moral Development, Multicultural Competency, and Supervision in School Counselors.
 SACES – Williamsburg, VA (Content session), October 30, 2010

The Blind Leading the Blind? Graduate Experiences in Clinical Supervision
 SACES – Williamsburg, VA (Poster Session), October 29, 2010

Partnering to Promote Student Self-Regulation.
 ASCA National Conference – Boston, MA, July 5, 2010

The Community College Connection. Choice or Consolation Prize?
 PCACAC Conference – Portsmouth, VA, April 27, 2009
 The College Board's National Forum – Houston, TX, November 6, 2008

Awards: CSI Delta Omega Chapter Outstanding Practitioner Award - Fall 2010