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AN INVESTIGATION OF RELATIONSHIPS AMONG

SCHOOL COUNSELORS' ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT,

MORAL REASONING,

AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CONFIDENTIALITY WITH MINORS

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the School of Education

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

Morgan E. Kiper Riechel

April 2013

Dedication

This research is dedicated to my loving and steadfast husband, Andrew, who has enthusiastically

supported me in all of my dreams and has been my grounding and my greatest joy for the past
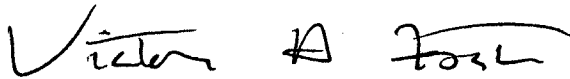
ten wonderful years.

AN INVESTIGATION OF RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SCHOOL COUNSELORS' ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY, MORAL REASONING, AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING
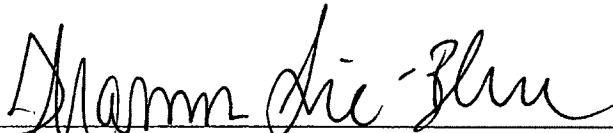
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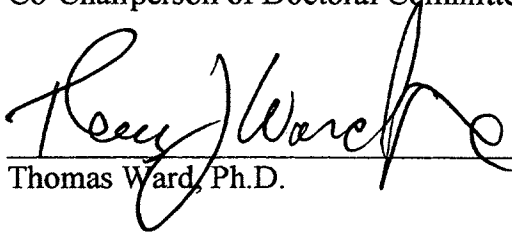Morgan E. Kiper Riechel

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AN INVESTIGATION OF RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SCHOOL COUNSELORS' ETHICAL PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT, MORAL REASONING, AND ATTITUDES TOWARD CONFIDENTIALITY WITH MINORS

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate relationships between school counselors' ethical professional identity development, level of moral reasoning and considerations for making decisions regarding confidentiality with minors in the school setting. Previous literature has explored the inter- and the intra-personal process of counselor professional identity development, but few studies have explored the cognitive process of constructing one's professional ethical obligations in increasingly complex terms and how various professional self-constructions may influence ethical behavior. With a sample population of 30 professional school counselors currently employed in Virginia, this study used a correlational research design to determine relationships between the constructs of professional ethical identity, moral reasoning, and considerations for decision-making regarding confidentiality with minors. Using Kegan's Subject-Object Interview Adapted to Essay Format, the Defining Issues Test-2 (DIT-2), and the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behaviors to measure these constructs, a moderate positive correlation was found between the Subject/Object essay assessment and the DIT-2; a positive correlation was found between considering the age of the student when making decisions on confidentiality and ethical professional identity (Kegan Subject-Object essay assessment), and considering whether one's decisions meet the expectations of school administration and whether the decisions complied with school district policies were both negatively correlated to level of ethical professional identity (Kegan Subject-Object essay assessment). No significant relationship was found between ethical professional identity level and whether or not the individual was a member of counseling professional organizations or attended post-graduate professional development trainings. Additionally, no significant relationship was found between ethical professional identity level and whether the individual graduated from a CACREP-accredited graduate program. Results and implications for the fields of school counseling and counselor education are discussed. Limitations for the study and suggestions for future research are also presented.

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An Investigation of Relationships Among School Counselors'

Ethical Professional Identity Development,

Moral Reasoning, and

Attitudes Toward Confidentiality with Minors

Chapter One

Introduction

This study investigated the development of an ethical professional identity in school counselors and the impact that development in this area has on moral reasoning and ethical decision-making around confidentiality with minors in the school setting. Chapter One provides an overview of critical issues related to the topic including challenges facing professions in general, and moves into a discussion of challenges facing the fields of counseling and school counseling more specifically. Chapter Two provides an overview of selected current, related research literature. Chapter Three outlines the research design and methodology including procedures for data analysis, and ethical considerations for the conduct of this study. Chapter four provides details of the results from the dependent measures as well participant demographic information. Chapter five is a discussion of the results with implications for the field of professional school counseling and counselor education.

Statement of the Problem

Development of an Ethical Professional Identity

A critical task of all professions, but particularly helping professions, is the maintenance of ethical and moral behavior among its members. Bebeau (2002) stated, "Professional practice is predominantly a moral enterprise" (pg. 271). Professions that impact public health have an obligation to provide the public with a standard of service and professional decision-making that is in the public's welfare. Professionals that serve the public must be motivated to place aside personal gain for the betterment of society—to "commit to assume full responsibility to place the interests of patients or clients before the self, or full commitment to putting the welfare of society before the welfare of the profession" (Bebeau & Monson, 2011).

To this end, professions adopt moral principles to guide practice. Typical examples of moral principles in helping professions include the motto *first do no harm,* and concepts such as client autonomy, fidelity, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice that are shared among multiple professional fields. Professions may also devise sets of ethical codes as guides for decision-making specific to the particular field. However, principles and codes alone are insufficient means to ensure ethical behavior among professionals.

In one model of moral behavior, Rest's (1999) Four Component Model, four distinct but related sub-processes interact before an individual acts in a morally responsible manner. First, one must be sensitive to the moral or ethical issue at hand. Knowledge of ethical standards or codes within the field can promote sensitivity to issues as such when they arise. Secondly, one must be able to reason, or judge, which action is morally right or wrong. While most professionals (and adults in the Western world) reason at a Stage 3, researchers argue that this level of moral reasoning is inadequate to meet the demands of today's professional environments (Kegan, 1982; Baxter-Magolda, 2004) and that development to more advanced stages is necessary for optimum performance and self-efficacy that occurs when one is able to "self-author" (Baxter-Magolda, 2004).

The third and fourth components in Rest's model, moral motivation and moral character are related to the development of a moral, or ethical identity. Being able to reason complexly about ethical issues does not ensure that individuals are equally motivated to act on their moral judgments. The development of a moral identity creates the necessity for coherence between identity and action, where to violate the moral or ethical values of the profession would violate a central aspect of the self. In a highly developed moral identity, the ethical professional obligation to do good is *essential* to the definition of oneself—"the motivational basis for moral

action lies in the internal demand for psychological self-consistency" (Blasi, 1998, pg. 129). The promotion of a distinct ethical, or moral, identity of members within that profession is key to ensure that professionals are motivated to act in a moral and ethical manner (Bebeau & Monson, 2011; Blasi, 1998; Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010; Hamilton, 2008). Any outward efforts to regulate a profession through moral principles or ethical codes may serve to generate the public's trust initially, but may not sustain the profession, "unless they are linked to a moral identity that not only keeps self-interest in check, but also guides and promotes a relationship based upon trust" (Bebeau & Monson, 2011).

Ethical training in most professions entails promoting knowledge of ethical codes, and practice applying ethical codes and moral principles in the field (Lambie, Ieva, & Ohrt, 2012). Seldom does professional ethical training include education in all four components of Rest's Four Component model. Viewing moral action a matter of four distinct and necessary components (moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral character and moral commitment) shifts the emphasis of professional training beyond simple familiarity with ethical codes and moral principles to a more comprehensive model of moral training, aiding in the development of not only increased principle reasoning, but the development of a distinct moral or ethical identity grounded in the ethical standards of the profession. This critical step in the promotion of an ethical identity provides the bridge between cognition and action (Bebeau, 2008; Blasi, 1980). Indeed, without this foundational grounding in an individual moral identity, ethical codes and aspirational practices of a profession are ineffective in guiding professional practice (Blasi, 1998; Bebeau & Monson, 2011).

Development of a professional identity grounded in a moral identity, or, an *ethical professional identity*, is a life-long process of self-transformation (Bebeau & Monson, 2012;

Halverson, 2006). Blasi (1984) wrote, "…moral judgments reflect the individual's general understanding of himself or herself, other people, social relations, and situations, and that this understanding can and does change as a result of the development of one's intelligence and of richer and more complex experience with the social world" (pg. 129). Self-identity (what Blasi calls the "essential self") is not simply a collection of traits or characteristics of the individual. Instead, it is a highly organized system of information about the self that is assigned meaning through the principles and values that guide the individual toward self-psychological-consistency. When one enters a profession with a clear set of obligations to the public, a code of ethics and moral principles, the professional's task is one of integrating the values, beliefs and principles of the profession with the values, beliefs, and principles that guide the individual self-identity (Bebeau, 2008; Blasi, 1980). This is a process which, for most individuals, does not fully synthesize until mid-career or later (Skovhold & Ronnestad, 2003).

Ethical Professional Identity Development in Counseling

Ethical professional identity is discussed in the context of many different helping professions (Bebeau, 2008; Hamilton, 2008). In particular, counselor professional identity is "at the forefront of national awareness within the counseling profession" (Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010, pg. 21) due in part to American Counseling Association's (2009) 20/20: A Vision for the Future of Counseling, which concluded that, "Sharing a common professional identity is critical for counselors" (paragraph 2). Professional identity is commonly defined as the integration of professional training with personal attributes in the context of a professional community (Nugent & Jones, 2009)—or, gaining proficiency in delivering the roles and functions typically served by members trained in the profession.

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While numerous articles are written on the topic of professional development in counselor education literature every year (Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010), few (if any) research articles have focused on the development of an *ethical* professional identity— specifically, the sense of obligation and commitment that members of a profession have to serve the greater good of society through engagement in that profession. While these two topics (professional identity and ethical professional identity) are related, exploration of the concept of ethical professional identity development would shed light on how professional counselors grow in capacity to make meaning of increasingly more complex ethical dilemmas in the profession, and continue to develop in the way they make meaning of their professional roles and obligations to clients and the larger community.

Recent research has explored the development of ethical professional identity in a number of helping professions: medicine (Self et al. 1992, 1993; Self & Olivarez, 1996), law (Monson & Hamilton, 2007), clergy (Foster, 2008), nursing (Duckett & Ryden, 1994), and dentistry (Bebeau & Thoma, 1994). Research studies exploring ways to increase young professionals' ethical professional identity development include interventions with a combination of didactic instruction on professional issues, written reflective exercises around the meaning of professionalism, as well as service or internship experiences (Bebeau, 2008).

Traditionally, however, ethical identity training in many professional fields involved only instruction in moral principles of autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice (Kitchener, 2000; Lambie, 2011; Beauchamp & Childress, 1994) and ethical codes particular to the profession (Monson & Hamilton, 2011). Additionally, professional training programs appear to commonly assume that a substantial portion of professional identity development as well as ethical knowledge is obtained through informal "osmosis": modeling experienced practitioners,

informal mentorships, and extended exposure to the field (Blasi, 1980). More recent research has indicated that this process of osmosis, if not coupled with more formal modes of instruction, seldom results in increased association with the behaviors and attitudes of the profession, integration of professional values or increased professional ethical behavior (Blasi, 1994, Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010).

In the field of counseling, professional training often includes at a minimum instruction on moral principles and formal ethical codes through a combination of academic classwork (ACA and ASCA both have codes of ethics for counselors) as well as hands-on supervised experience in a practicum and internship period (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs, CACREP, 2009). CACREP (2009) lists "Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice" as one of the eight core curricular experiences to be included in counselor preparation programs. Section 1 of CACREP's Standards for the Learning Environment include (abbreviated list): instruction on professional roles, functions and relationships; professional responsibilities to clients, self, and other professionals; awareness of professional organizations; professional credentialing, including certification, licensure, and accreditation practices and standards; the role and process of the professional counselor advocating on behalf of the profession; advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impeded access, equity, and success for clients; and, ethical standards of professional organizations and credentialing bodies, and applications of ethical and legal considerations in professional counseling (CACREP, 2009).

School counselors are additionally required to "understand ethical and legal considerations specifically related to the practice of school counseling" and to "demonstrate the ability to adhere to ethical and legal standards in school counseling" (CACREP, 2009, pg. 40).

ASCA Code of Ethics (2010) lists school counselors' "Responsibilities to the Profession" such as: conduct themselves in such a manner as to advance individual ethical practice and the profession; adhere to ethical standards of the profession, other official policy statements, such as ASCA's position statements, role statement and the ASCA National Model and relevant statutes established by federal, state and local governments, and when these are in conflict, to work responsibly for change. ACA's Ethical Standards require similar ethical obligations of professionals. Though CACREP, ACA and ASCA outline standards for the training and conduct of professional counselors as well as the need for a professional role orientation, they have little to say regarding how to best go about this process of ethical development.

Skovholt & Ronnestad's (2003) model of counselor development is one example of developmentally-based empirically validated research which tracks the intra-personal process of professional identity development for counselors. Their model outlines developmental milestones as counselors move from dependence on external evaluation of their skills as a counselor, toward a more internal locus of self-evaluation and professional competence. Based upon a longitudinal study of interviews with over 160 practicing counselors and therapists, this model has added a "unique and important" understanding to development of new professional counselors (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009, pg. 98). In Skovholt and Ronnestad's model, new professionals begin at the conventional phase, then transition to professional training, imitation of experts, conditional autonomy, exploration, and finally reach the final phases of professional development in mid-career or later of integration, individuation, and integrity.

Simultaneous to Skovholt and Ronnestad's process of intra-personal counselor development is the *inter*-personal process of counselor identity development (Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010). O'Bryne & Rosenberg (1998) describe the interpersonal aspect of counselor

professional identity development as the "sociocultural aspect" of counselor development. Novice members are inducted into a professional social system that reinforces certain behaviors, attitudes, values and practices, reinforces rules of engagement, and sets expectations for performance (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Gibson, et al., 2010; O'Bryne & Rosenberg, 1998). Through opportunities for formal and informal guidance from more senior members of the profession, novice counselors internalize the behaviors, attitudes, practices and values of the field, and begin to develop a professional identity which continues to be refined over the career lifespan by acculturation through guided participation with members of the field (O'Bryne & Rosenberg, 1998).

Though both processes, the intra- and inter-personal developmental process of professional identity development of counselors has been well researched and validated through extensive study, none of these studies mention the role of ethical or moral identity development in the formation of a professional identity for counselors and how a professional's role conception, sense of obligation to do the greater good for society, and integration of personal and professional priorities might change over time and exposure to the field.

Challenges for School Counselors

Both the intrapersonal and the interpersonal processes of professional identity development are particularly challenging for emerging school counselors. These same challenges prove to be potential barriers to the development of an ethical professional identity, influencing school counselors' conceptualization of the role of a school counselor in the school system and the ethical obligation inherent in the professional role to serve the best interests of the larger community. Due to their unique work environment in a school system as opposed to a stand-alone counseling agency or mental health facility, school counselors lack many of the

natural supports available in clinical and mental health counseling professional communities. Many school counselors find themselves working in isolation as the only school counselor in in their school system without clear or accessible colleagues to consult on ethical or clinical issues (Curry & Bickmore, 2012). Few school counselors in the field have opportunities for the support and ethical accountability of clinical supervision from a supervisor trained in counseling. School counselors also report a lack of professional development opportunities that are counseling-focused as opposed to teaching-focused (Busacca & Wester, 2006). Many report never having post-masters training in ethics (Busacca & Wester, 2006) or even consulting a counseling code of ethics after graduation (Trice-Black, Kiper Riechel, & Shillingford, in press)

Development of a rich and vibrant ethical professional community that is accessible to school counselors in their work setting is critical to the development of a moral identity (Blasi, 1984) and an ethical professional identity. Impediments to the formation of this culture limit the extent to which school counselors are socialized into a professional, ethical culture of school counseling. Welie & Rule (2006) have suggested that lack of connection with a professional culture can have additional injurious consequences for the professional by leading to premature exhaustion and burn-out and lack of sensitivity toward ethical issues, potentially placing clients at risk.

Many school counselors work in context of systems in which multiple ethical standards, laws, and educational policies exist and sometimes conflict (Lambie, 2011; Stone, 2005). They daily face the challenges of working in the school setting with minors who, in many states, do not legally own the right to informed consent, and the boundaries regarding student confidentiality and parents, teachers, administrators and other school stakeholders are often unclear (Glosoff & Pate, 2002; Davis & Michelson, 1994; Isaacs & Stone, 2001). The issues

brought to school by students today such as alcohol and drug use, divorce, poverty, homelessness, violence, disease epidemic including sexually transmitted diseases, bullying and suicidal ideation are intense and increasingly complex (Davis & Michelson, 1994; Lambie, 2011). At the same time, with recent budget cuts in many school districts across the county, the average number of students on a school counselor's caseload has swelled to over 459 students (ASCA, 2010). With more students to serve than ever, an increase in student mental health concerns, and a lack of clarity between state laws and professional counseling code of ethics, school counselors require an increased capacity for ethical decision-making (Davis & Michelson, 1994; Sprinthall, 1994). Developing higher level cognitive ability can support more complex decision-making skills (Sprinthall, 1994).

Theoretical Rationale

Justification of a Cognitive Developmental Framework

In order to adequately address these increasing demands on school counselor's role in the school setting, school counselors themselves must be able to handle the cognitive demand inherent in the challenging and often ambiguous nature of work with minors and multiple stakeholders in the school setting, the ability to negotiate among ethical priorities, and have access to a more adaptive schema for understanding complex issues and decision-making. A cognitive developmental framework is a potentially useful lens through which to view the development of an ethical professional identity among school counselors.

Two specific models of cognitive development, Kegan's constructivist self-identity development model and Rest's Neo-Kohlbergian model, are particularly appropriate frameworks through which to view constructions of self related to ethical professional identity (Monson & Hamilton, 2007). Both Kegan's and Rest's cognitive developmental theories are similar to other

human development and cognitive stage models such as Piaget's stages of cognitive

development, Erikson's Psychosocial model, Hunt's model of cognitive development (1974),

Loevinger's Ego Development model, Perry's Model of Intellectual Development, and Fowler's

Faith Development model (Bartone, Snook, Forsythe, Lewis & Bullis, 2007). Though each of

these models represents a various dimensions of self, both of these models seek to describe how

individuals construct internal meaning structures that provide the individual with increased

adaptability and ability to make meaning of their environment.

These cognitive developmental models also share the same theoretical and empirically

validated assumptions, beginning with the premise that all humans have an intrinsic potential for

growth through stages from lower order to higher order functioning (Sprinthall, 1994).

Individuals move through a series of hierarchical stages that advance in an invariant sequence of

stages that represent qualitatively different ways of making meaning (Sprinthall & Scott, 1989).

Moving from a lower stage of cognitive development to the next higher stage of development,

the individual gains increased mastery over the environment (Sprinthall, 1994).

A second assumption shared by these models is that individuals develop the ability to

understand and reason at more cognitively complex levels when exposed to an environment that

facilitates growth. Development does not happen automatically, but the potential for growth is

present in environments that provide a challenge to the current way of making meaning coupled

with adequate support (Sprinthall, 1994). Contrary to previous assertions that cognitive stage

development reaches a "ceiling" in early adulthood, a significant body of research has shown

that some adults can continue to advance in stage sequence (Sprinthall, 1994).

Finally, the assumption that "higher is better" is shared among these cognitive

development models. This assertion that higher levels of development are "better" does not

imply that an individual at a higher level is more intelligent or morally superior to someone at a lower level. Instead, it refers to the individual developing "better conceptual tools for making sense of the world and deriving guides for decision making" (Rest & Narvaez, 1994, p. 17). Sprinthall (1994) explained:

> "If the task at hand involves complex human relationship skills such as accurate empathy, the ability to read and flex, to select the appropriate model from the professional repertoire, then higher order psychological maturity across moral, ego, and conceptual development is clearly requisite" (pg. 96).

Justification for the Study

The role of counselor does indeed require these complex skills of relationship building, empathy, the ability to read and flex, and assess the use of appropriate interventions (Lambie, Ieva, & Mullen, 2011). In addition, the role of school counselor involves unique challenges in working with minors in the school setting with multiple stakeholders. Negotiating these complicated relationships and often competing ethical obligations requires advanced cognitive reasoning skills, particularly moral reasoning skills due to the frequency and intensity of ethical dilemmas in the school setting (Remley, 2002). According to the literature, school counselors at higher levels of cognitive development may reasonably be considered to have a better, or, a more adaptive, way of conceptualizing the professional obligations of school counselor and implications for ethical decision-making in the school setting. However, no known studies have explored the relationship between the development of an ethical professional identity and ethical behaviors among school counselors using a cognitive developmental framework. Further research is required to more fully understand this theoretical relationship between school counselor cognitive development (both constructivist self-development and moral development) and ethical decision-making and behaviors in the school setting. A better understanding of these potential relationships will aid counselor educators in developing curricula for school counseling

training programs that would more adequately prepare school counselors for the demands of the profession.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study was 1) to more fully understand school counselor ethical professional identity development using a cognitive developmental framework, and, 2) to understand the relationship between school counselor ethical professional identity development, moral reasoning, and decision-making and behaviors regarding ethical issues in the school setting. It is proposed that higher levels of school counselor ethical professional identity will promote more complex ethical reasoning and more adaptive attitudes and behaviors. More specifically, this research study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How is school counselor ethical professional identity development level related to ethical decision-making and ethical behaviors regarding confidentiality with minors in the school setting?

2. How is school counselor ethical professional identity development level related to developmental level of moral reasoning?

3. How do school counselors who are members of professional counseling organizations construct their ethical professional identity?

4. How do school counselors who are graduates of a CACREP-accredited masters degree program construct professional identity as compared to school counselors from graduate programs that are not CACREP-accredited?

Definitions of Terms

Ethical professional identity. The degree to which the individual has internalized a commitment to assume full responsibility to place the interests of clients before the self and the

welfare of society before the welfare of the profession (Bebeau & Monson, 2012). It is a "way of being" in the world where there is a degree of unity between the self and morality and the values of the profession are integrated with personal values (Bebeau & Monson, 2012).

Moral Development. Moral development is an extension of cognitive psychological theory which was first developed by Piaget and later expanded by Kohlberg to the moral domain of human functioning, describing the construction of individual's understanding of moral issues. Responding to criticisms of Kohlberg's original theory, James Rest devised the Neo-Kohlbergian model of moral reasoning.

Subject-Object Relationship. ""Subject-Object" refers to the mental construction of the dynamic between self and other. As development progresses, the individual moves that which is "subject" (i.e., the aspects of reality beyond our conscious recognition or "that which owns us") to "object" (i.e., "that which we own" or that which we consciously recognize or can articulate). "Subject" refers to that which is an implicit part of the self; "object" is that which we explicitly know, want, fear, or desire" (Hamilton, 2011, pg. 139).

General Research Hypotheses

This study sought to understand and describe school counselor ethical professional identity development and relationship between ethical professional identity, moral reasoning, and ethical decision-making and behaviors regarding confidentiality with minors in the school setting. It was expected that school counselors at higher levels of ethical professional identity would display correspondingly higher levels of moral reasoning development and more adaptive ethical decision-making and ethical behaviors.

Hypotheses

1. School counselor ethical professional identity development level (Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay format) will be positively related to moral reasoning development level (DIT-2).

2. School counselor ethical professional identity development level (Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay form) will be positively related to ethical decision-making and behaviors of maintaining confidentiality with minors in the school setting (Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior).

3. School counselors who are members of professional counseling organizations will display a consistent construction of their professional ethical identity (Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay form).

4. School counselors who are graduates of a CACREP-accredited masters degree program construct ethical professional identity (Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay form) in significantly different ways than school counselors from graduate programs that are not CACREP accredited.

Sample Description and Data Gathering Procedures

An invitation to participate in this study was sent to school counselors employed in Virginia public schools. A target sample minimum of 30 school counselor participants was ensured in order to achieve statistical significance for any results. All participants were administered the Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay form, the DIT-2, the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior survey and a demographics questionnaire. These instruments were loaded on the web-based survey tool, Qualtrics. Participants were emailed the link for the compiled instruments. Once completed, data was transferred from Qualtrics to statistical analysis software SPSS for further data analysis.

Limitations of the Study

The accessible population for this study is school counselors who are currently working in Virginia public schools. This sample population, however, poses several challenges to the generalizability of the study's results to the larger population of all school counselors in the United States. For one, this sample does not include school counselors who work in private schools—a significant number of professionals with over 360 state recognized accredited private schools in Virginia alone (Virginia Council for Private Education, 2012). It is known that, on average, private school counselors are older than the average public school counselor (The College Board, 2011), which may translate to more years of work experience. Prolonged exposure to a professional field has been shown to relate to ethical identity development level (Monson & Hamilton, 2011).

It is unknown whether school counselors working in private schools differ significantly from school counselors in public schools in other ways. Private schools may have different organizing structures with more or less support for school counselors' development. Opportunities for professional development, attending conferences, and joining professional organizations may differ as money is available for these activities. Additionally, private schools may have different requirements for working as a professional school counselor and may not require state licensure or certification as a professional school counselor to be hired.

Secondly, Virginia school counselors may differ significantly from school counselors in other states in their constructions of professional identity. Because Virginia is geographically close to Washington D.C., the location of national professional organizations headquarters such as ACA and ASCA, school counselors employed in Virginia may have more exposure to

professional advocacy, legal issues impacting the professional, and access to professional development and trainings sponsored by these professional groups.

A third limitation of this study is the time required to complete all four instruments. The time estimation was 50 minutes total (20 minutes for the Subject-Object essay questions, 20 minutes for the DIT, 8 minutes for the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior, and 2 minutes for the demographics questionnaire). Indeed, for those participants who completed the set of instrument in a single sitting it took them between 20 and 65 minutes to finish. A number of participants started the instruments and completed them over the course of several days. This is a significant time commitment for volunteer participants and likely negatively impacted the number of responses received. However, with a total response rate of 1.4% (51 responses out of the 3,681 email requests sent) in only a two-week response window, participant fatigue might have been mitigated by interest in the subject matter. This topic is likely to be of interest to school counselors and thus they may experience less fatigue and be more likely to complete the instruments. Also, having sample items to familiarize participants with the instruments has been linked to less fatigue and a sample item was included on the DIT-2 portion. To further mitigate this limitation, participants who chose to complete the instrument in its entirety were entered into a raffle to win a $100 Visa gift card. A completion bar was also added to the bottom of the instrument page in Qualtrics so that participants could track how close they were to completion. This is thought to reduce the number of participants who start the survey, but do not finish due to fatigue. If the participants can anticipate how much longer until completion, they are more likely to persevere which is likely to have been effective because few participants started the instrument without eventually completing it.

Summary

Chapter One provided an overview of the problem school counselors face in the development of a distinct ethical professional identity, and potential implications that this may have for moral reasoning and ethical decision-making and behaviors in the school setting. A purpose for the study as well as a rationale for the use of a cognitive developmental lens for understanding this problem was discussed. A general overview of the research design was presented with a definition of relevant terms, research hypotheses, a description of the sample and data collection procedures to be used, as well as an overview of potential limitations of the study.

Chapter Two

Review of Current Literature

This chapter provides an overview of current and relevant literature on Kegan's theory of constructivist self-development and the Neo-Kohlbergian model of moral development applied to the professions. Implications for the professional field of Counselor Education are examined, leading to the justification for this research study.

Kegan's Theory of Constructivist Self-Development

Kegan's view of the self is comprehensive, covering cognitive, emotional, social aspects of identity formation (Monson & Hamilton, 2007). In this model, Kegan outlines underlying structures of meaning that expand across the lifetime toward more complex ways of constructing one's relationship with others and the environment.

Development to each subsequent stage represents a qualitative shift in how one constructs meaning. Life experiences, particularly those that provide a significant challenge our current ways of making meaning, prompt individuals to develop a broader perspective, which then allows her or him to view circumstances from more complex, more intentional point of view (Monson & Hamilton, 2007). Like other stage models of development, Kegan's six stages, or levels, of development are *sequential*, following a typical progression for all individuals regardless of culture, gender or other context. However, development from one stage to the next occurs at different rates in individuals, and, though all humans retain the potential for growth throughout the lifespan, many individuals plateau at levels below the highest stages, Stage 4 and 5. Kegan's model is also *hierarchical and invariant*, meaning that each new level of development builds on the previous and representing more adaptive ways of meaning-making and that complexity of meaning-making. This growth is positively directed and once individuals

reach a higher level of development cognitive growth is maintained and individuals do not

regress to former, less complex ways of meaning-making.

This balance within each stage that supports the individuals' understanding of self at a

particular level is what Kegan refers as the "subject-object relationship." Being "subject to" a

relationship is to be imbedded in it, to lack perspective or the ability to analyze or critique the

relationship. It is the inability to stand outside of oneself (or, in Kegan's terms, being

"undifferentiated") that consequently limits the ability to make meaning in more complex ways.

In Kegan's (1982) book, *The Evolving Self*, he used an example of a little boy around four years

old (at Piaget's pre-operational stage) to illustrate this concept. If this little boy had an older

brother and if you were to ask the little boy, "Do you have a brother?" he would answer, "Yes."

But if you asked this little boy, "Does your brother have a brother?" he would likely answer,

"No," as the ability to take a perspective outside the self has not yet developed. He is subject to

his relationship with his brother and is not able to analyze the relationship from any other

perspective than his own; he is "unable to take the role of his perceptions while still being

himself, something other than his perceptions" (Kegan, 1982, pg. 50). Ideally, this process of

cognitive growth occurs throughout the lifespan as the environment places demands to find more

complex and adaptive ways of understanding the self in the environment.

When a relationship is said to become "object," however, one has developed a broader

perspective and is now able to image possibilities outside the relationship. The ability to look at

the relationship more *objectively*, as an entity separate from our sense of self, represents an

"evolution" in cognition. Kegan uses the term "evolution" to describe the movement from

subject to object that allows for greater complexity of thought and deeper understanding of

meaning. The evolution from subject to object is not simply an assimilation of new information,

but a true accommodation (in Piagetian terms) whereby the individual puts aside the old self, or the old way of knowing, and adopts a fundamentally new and more adaptive schema for understanding the self in one's environment. For many people, this evolution of meaning represents a crisis. Adopting a new way of knowing is a difficult process and typically results in a sense of psychological loss for the old way of making meaning. Those who see this crossroad as an opportunity to grow and develop, rather than simply a loss of old ways, view the change in more positive terms, what Bauer and McAdams (2011) call the point "where development finally feels good."

This evolution in understanding from subject to object, and the concept of "Object-relations," is the underlying conception behind Kegan's theory of self. Kegan defines object-relations as:

> Our relations to that which some motion has made separate or distinct from us... It is the motion, or evolution as a meaning-constitutive activity... It is not only the unifying, but also the generating context for both (1) thought and feeling, and (2) subject and object, or self and other. Evolutional activity involves the creating of the object (a process of differentiation) as well as our relating to it (a process of integration). By such a conception, object relations (really, subject-object relations) are not something that go on in the "space" between a wordless person and a personless world; rather they bring into being the very distinction in the first place (Kegan, 1982, pg. 76).

Rather than *being* that which one is subject to, one *has* it, and "I" becomes something wholly different and separate from the relationship. This creates a world that is separate from the individual, of *relating* to the world rather than being *imbedded* in it. What one is imbedded in what is and object to changes at each level of development throughout the lifespan. For instances, at Stage 1 a child is subject to her or his impulses and self-perceptions, but is object to body reflexes, sensing and movement of the body. An evolution to Stage 2 represents a movement to object of the impulses and perceptions, but

the child is still subject to her or his own needs, personal interests, wants and desires.

The table below illustrates the development between Kegan's different stages, and the

evolution between what is subject and what is object at each level.

Table 2.1

Kegan's Levels of Subject-Object Relations

	Stage 0 Incorporative	Stage 1 Impulsive	Stage 2 Imperial	Stage 3 Interpersonal	Stage 4 Institutional	Stage 5 Interindividual
Subject	Reflexes, sensing, moving	Impulses, perceptions	Needs, interests, wishes	Interpersonal mutuality	Authorship, identity, psychic administration, ideology	Interindividuality, interpenetrability of self-systems
Object	None	Reflexes, sensing, moving	Impulses, perceptions	Needs, interests, wishes	Interpersonal mutuality	Authorship, identity, psychic administration, ideology

Note. Adapted from "The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development," by R. Kegan, 1982, Harvard University Press, p. 86.

Constructivist Self-Development and Moral Development

Kegan and other researchers have noted specific overlap between Kegan's theory of self-

development and Kohlberg's theory of moral development (Kegan, 1982; Monson & Hamilton,

2007). Indeed, both theoretical and empirical evidence suggest a relationship between the two

frameworks (Monson & Hamilton, 2007; Rest, 1986). Monson and Hamilton's 2010 study on

entering law student's ethical professional identity revealed a statistically significant correlation

between DIT p scores at Kegan's Stage 3/4 transition. This relationship with post-conventional

reasoning at the 3/4 transition stage was consistent with previous research of various professional

populations (Roehrich & Bebeau, 2005; Monson & Bebeau, 2008). As with previous studies,

Monson & Hamilton's (2010) study did not find a statistically significant relationship between

DIT p score and Kegan stage level at any level other than 3/4 transition stage. This is possibly

due to the non-random sample used in this study, or the non-normally distributed Kegan stage scores seen in Monson & Hamilton's (2010) study as well as the previous studies cited earlier. More research is needed to more fully understand this relationship and to reduce the impact of limitations in previous studies.

Kegan called Kohlberg's research on moral cognition, "the single most significant extension of the Piagetian framework... demonstrating the power of the framework to address the development of the personal construction of the *social* world, and to take account of development in meaning making beyond adolescence into adulthood" (1981, pg. 50). Kegan believed that Kohlberg's work represented the same phenomenon that motivates the underlying evolution of personality—that which is represented in Piaget's work, Kegan's own work, and the work of other personality development theorists. The following table (from Kegan's *The Evolving Self, 1994*) illustrates ways in which Kegan's subject-object framework appear to correspond with the different levels of Kohlberg's moral development model.

Table 2.2

Subject Object Balancing in Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Stage	Subject ("structure")	Object ("content")
Punishment and obedience orientation	Social perceptions	Reflexes, sensations, movements
Instrumental orientation	Simple role-taking, marketplace reciprocity	Social perceptions
Interpersonal concordance orientation	Mutuality, reciprocal role-taking	Simple role-taking, marketplace reciprocity
Societal orientation	Societal group, institutional society	Mutuality, reciprocal role-taking
Universal principles orientation	Community of the whole, rights, interindividuality	Societal group, institutional society

Note. Adapted from "The Evolving Self: Problem and Process in Human Development," by R. Kegan, 1982, Harvard University Press, p. 71.

As seen in the table above, Kohlberg's model initially outlined a development sequence of six invariant stages of moral judgment that proceed toward an increasingly adaptable (or, adequate) understanding of justice or fairness (Snarey & Samuelson, 2008). Kohlberg adopted Piaget's stage theory with similar structural assumptions, one of the most fundamental being that individuals actively construct meaning of their world in increasingly complex ways when immersed in an environment that facilitates growth.

At the first stage of moral development, the Obedience and Punishment Orientation, what is "moral" is to avoid breaking rules. Subsequent development in moral cognition is represented by movement to an Instrumental Orientation and later an Interpersonal Concordance Orientation where what is moral is no longer simply following rules, but recognizing that other people have interests and perspectives that are different from one's own interests and perspectives. Acting morally at this stage involves taking other's perspectives into account.

Development to the subsequent stage, the Social Orientation, marks a change in how one views relationship to the larger society. At this stage, morality involves making decisions that maintain the social order and to be a good citizen (Snarey & Samuelson, 2008). Stage five is a relativistic perspective on morality—that "what is moral is being aware that many values and rules are relative to one's ground and subsuming these culturally relative values under fundamental human right, such as the rights of life and liberty, which are logically prior to society" (Snarey & Samuelson, 2008, pg. 60). The final stage, Universal Principles Orientation, has little empirical validity and only a very small percentage of individuals are theorized to ever reach this stage (Rest et al., 1999). In theory, however, in this stage of morality is guided by universal ethical principles where principles of justice, human rights, equality, freedom,

autonomy, and respect for the dignity of all humans are valued above all else, even when in conflict with laws of society.

For decades, Kohlberg's model of moral reasoning dominated the field of cognitive moral development (Lewis, 2012). However, due to significant critiques of Kohlberg's theory (Gilligan, 1982; Rest et al., 1999), reconfigured models as well as structurally diverse models have emerged more recently. Lewis (2012) wrote, "It is widely recognized that the psychology of moral development has entered a post-Kohlbergian phase" (p. 158). In his article, Lewis outlined two competing paradigms which have supplanted Kohlberg's original model of moral development in the 21st century. The first of these models was the work of Marvin Berkowitz and colleagues who developed the concept of a "moral anatomy," delineating the skills and traits that embody a fully-functioning moral agent.

The second paradigm described by Lewis is the Four Component Model first developed by James Rest and later refined by Rest and Narvaez as the Neo-Kohlbergian approach (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau and Thoma, 1999; Narvaez, 2005; Rest, Bebeau & Volker, 1986). Rest et al. (1999)'s Neo-Kohlbergian framework contends "Kohlberg's theory is still fruitful—although some problems warrant modification" (pg. 1). While retaining several of Kohlberg's core tenants, Rest et al. reconfigured Kohlberg's model to more comprehensively represent the whole of morality while also addressing major critiques of the original model. Of these two competing models, Berkowitz's moral anatomy and Rest's Neo-Kohlbergian model, the Neo-Kohlbergian approach has emerged as the more empirically valid (Rest et al., 1999).

The Neo-Kohlbergian Approach

Rest et al. (1986; 1999) proposed that morality is comprised of four distinct inner psychological processes, or components, which are necessary for outwardly observable moral

action. These four components include 1. Moral Sensitivity, which is the ability to interpret the situation and recognize that two moral or ethical principles are in conflict, to take the perspective of all parties involved and how cause and effect relationships may impact individuals involved; 2. Moral Judgment, or, the ability to reason with regard to which action would be the most morally-justifiable; 3. Moral Motivation, which is valuing moral principles, taking personal responsibility for moral outcomes, committing to moral action; and finally, 4. Moral Character, which is having courage to persist in moral action (Rest et al., 1999). While the ability to judge whether a decision is morally "right" has been considered the sole pre-requisite to moral behavior and is the basis of Kohlbergian morality (Morgan et al., 2000), recent studies indicate that moral judgment alone does not translate to moral behavior (Evans & Foster, 2000), but must occur in conjunction with the other three components. Indeed, measures of moral judgment such as the Defining Issues Test (DIT) account for less than 20% of the variance when correlated with a measure of moral behavior (Rest et al., 1999). When the other three components are left to randomly vary, the ability to predict moral behavior is mitigated. Conversely, evidence exists that predictive ability of moral behavior increases when a measure of one component (such as the DIT to measure moral judgment) is combined with a measure of another component such as a measure of moral sensitivity like the Dental Ethical Sensitivity Test (Bebeau, Rest & Yamoor, 1985), and Racial and Ethical Sensitivity Test (REST; Brabeck, Rogers, Sirin, Henderson, Benvenuto, Weaver & Ting, 2000), or with a measure of ethical professional identity such as the Professional Role Orientation Inventory for dentists (PROI; Bebeau, & Ozar, 1993) (Rest et al., 1999). An overview of studies combining measure of multiple components will be presented later in this paper.

Rest et al.'s (1984; 1999) Neo-Kohlbergian model provided a response to major critiques, particularly those by leveled by Gilligan et al. (1982). Gilligan and colleagues claimed that Kohlberg's original model privileged an ethic of justice over an ethic of care, which, they asserted, was gender-biased. They argued that classifying an ethic of justice typical of men as higher order reasoning negated the value of principled reasoning based on a care-ethic more typical of women (Evans & Foster, 2000; Sprinthall & Scott, 1989; Walker, 2006). Though no empirical evidence exists to support Gillian's gender critique-- research over the past 20 years indicates that men and women use both orientations of care and justice (Sprinthall & Scott, 1989)—Gilligan's work has served to bring increased attention to the "complex contextual nature of moral development" (Hayes, 1994, pg. 264) and has brought focus to principled reasoning of cultures other than the Caucasian male population that Kohlberg studied (Obidah, Jackson-Minot, Monroe & Williams, 2004; Walker & Snarey, 2004).

The Neo-Kohlbergian model addresses several other critiques of Kohlberg's original model. For one, it rejects the Piagetian concept of "hard stages," and instead describes a model of development where preference for and use of more developed thinking gradually shifts from one stage to the next (Rest et al., 1999). Neo-Kohlbergians use the term "schema" rather than "stage" to describe the set of principles that structure and guide an individual's decision-making.

The Neo-Kohlbergian model condenses Kohlberg's stages into fewer, more broad categories. For example, Kohlberg's original fifth and sixth stages are combined in the final "Principled Reasoning" stage. Instead of measuring advances at each separate stage, the Neo-Kohlbergian approach focuses on the distinctions between Conventional and Post-Conventional moral structures (or schemas) that arise at the principled reasoning stages. Rest et al. (1999) express the defining characteristic of Post-Conventional moral thinking as: "…that rights and

duties are based on sharable ideals for organizing cooperation in society, and are open to debate

and tests of logical consistency, experience of the community and coherence with acceptable

practice" (pg. 41). This provides the foundation for the Defining Issues Test, a measure of moral

reasoning that distinguishes between Convention and Post-Conventional moral reasoning, but it

is not sensitive to the distinctions between each of Kohlberg's six stages (Rest et al., 1999).

Rest's Neo-Kohlbergian model also acknowledges cultural influences by evaluating the

complexity of the process of moral behavior, rather than specific moral decisions or actions

(Walker & Snarey, 2004). Moral reasoning, in the Neo-Kohlbergian model, is "a developmental

progression based on principles... not simply on adjustment to cultural norms" (summarized in

Evans & Foster, 2000), recognizing "strike contrasts" between ethical orientations—what a

person "recognizes to be a moral dilemma; the ethical principles used to interpret a moral

dilemma; the preferred methods of dilemma resolution; and the ultimate end point of moral

maturity" (Walker & Snarey, pg. 4).

Additionally, the Neo-Kohlbergian model provides a clearer distinction between issues of

micro-morality and macro-morality. Micro-morality refers to developing interpersonal

relationships with other people through personal virtues that an individual holds (for example, by

showing courtesy and respect, being punctual, being thoughtful of others). Macro-morality

concerns the "formal structures of society that are involved in making cooperation possible at a

society level" (Rest et al, 1999, pg. 2). Such a distinction allows one to critique the current social

system and note injustices or defects in the social system (Rest et al., 1999). "Socially

constructed morality that represents a reflective equilibrium of cases and moral ideals is not

mindless conformity to the status quo" (Rest et al., 1999, pg. 28).

Finally, the constructivist approach of the Neo-Kohlbergian model distinguishes content from structure. A major implication of this is that it "allows for cross-cultural comparisons when it is obvious that cultures differ in terms of specific values, customs, and practices" (Rest, pg. 46). "In a modern world in which values vary across contexts, it seems inevitable that one's commitments to other's welfare will conflict with those of still others, or with prevailing norms for situations, and that reflection upon one's own moral choices will arise" (Hart & Matsuba, 2007, pg. 215). Though based upon foundational principles, Neo-Kohlbergian "principlism," has been described as "not rule principlism—or absolutism that neglects context—but rather a way of constructing a moral perspective that takes context into account" (Rest, pg. 46).

At each stage of Rest's component model, culture plays a formative role in individual constructions of moral behavior and "moral identity" (Hart & Matsuba, 2007). "Moral identity… emerges from the interplay of family background, personality, moral cognitions and attitudes, self-perceptions and moral emotions, and social relationship and interactions with social institutions" (Hart & Matsuba, 2007, pg. 228). This emphasis on moral identity as a motivation in moral action provides a theoretical link with Kegan's theory of self-identity development discussed previously.

Kegan, Rest, and the Professions

Both Kegan's and Rest's models have been used as a conceptual framework to understand identity development in professions, though relatively few research studies exist using either model. As discussed, Kegan's theory was originally developed to describe broad, overall, comprehensive cognitive development across multiple life domains. Kegan posited that as individuals are involved in a process of continuously constructing meaning of their environment, resulting in progressively more complex schema for understanding their

experiences. This concept can be applied to experiences in the professional realm as well as the

individual is continually evolving in his or her constructions of what it means to be a

professional which also increase in complexity over time. Bebeau and Lewis (2003) adapted

Kegan's framework to explore the development of professionalism in dentistry students; Monson

and Hamilton (2007) used the same adapted Kegan framework to track the emergence of a

unique ethical professional identity of lawyers. In both adaptations of Kegan's stages, Stage 2

construction was labeled "Independent Operator," which is distinguished by "external definitions

of self and of professionalism." The focus at this stage is on attaining a degree or a credential,

mastering technical skills, attaining egocentric goals, dichotomous "either-or" reasoning, and a

focus on rewards and avoidance of punishments.

A Stage 3 construction applied to the professions, The Team-Oriented Idealist, is

characterized by "interpersonal or social connectedness, drawing meaning from group

belonging." A professional at Stage 3 is characterized by diffuse boundaries between her own

view and values, and those of others. A Stage 4 professional, the Self-Defined Professional, is

highly self-reflective, can take multiple perspectives, and respects diversity. A professional at

this stage is no longer subject to other's view of self and can independently critique the influence

of others on one's own sense of self. Kegan believed this evolution to be essential for success in

professional roles (1994; Baxter-Magolda, 2004).

Table 2.3

Kegan's Subject-Object Stages Adapted to the Professions

Kegan's Subject-Object Stage	Adaption to the professions	Description	Understanding of professionalism
Stage 2: Imperial	The Independent Operator	The Independent Operator view themselves and the world in terms of individual interests and concrete, black-and-white role	Professionalism is meeting fixed, concrete, black-and-white role expectations. Motivation for meeting

		expectations. Personal success is paramount and is measured by concretely accomplishing individually valued goals and enacting specific role behaviors.	standards is wholly individual and based on a desire to be correct and effective.
Stage 3: Interpersonal	The Team-Oriented Idealist	Team-Oriented Idealists view themselves and others as having shared interconnections. Their capacity to make sense of the world, by taking multiple perspectives simultaneously, profoundly changes their sense of self and how they understand social reality—as shared experiences, psychological membership, and the internalization of social expectations and societal ideals. They often find themselves torn among multiple shared identities (eg. counselor, parent, spouse, etc.) with no easy way of coordinating them.	Idealistic and self-reflective, the Team-Oriented Idealist understands and identifies with their chosen profession. They see professionalism as meeting the expectations of those who are more knowledgeable and therefore more "legitimate." Because their identity is grounded in others, and particularly external authorities, they are vulnerable to "going along with others" for the sake of "getting along," and can have difficulty seeing boundaries between self and others.
Stage 4: Institutional	The Self-Defining Professional	A Self-Defining Professional forges a personal system of value and internal processes for evaluating those shared identities. As one's responsibilities multiply, the self-system of the Self-Defining Professional provides and internal compass for negotiating and resolving tensions among these multiple, shared expectations. Conflicts among the inevitable competing pulls of various roles and their attendant obligations are negotiated by adherence to one's own internal standard and values.	These individuals have constructed a self-system comprised of personal values integrated with those of the profession. Identity is not wholly embedded in their profession, yet they have created a vision of the "good" profession that is grounded in reflective practice, with the ability to critically assess aspects of the professions, yet remain strongly committed. Thus, they can become change agents within their profession.

Note. Adapted from Professional identity formation and transformation across the life span, by M. Bebeau and V. Monson, 2012, in Learning Trajectories, Innovation and Identity for Professional Development, A. McKee and M.Eraut (eds.), p. 152.

Only very few individuals throughout history have ever reached a Stage 5 construction, which Monson and Hamilton (2007) call "The Humanist" stage. Individuals at this stage are object to the interdependence of all people and systems. They have self-defined values which translate into a more authentic self and thus the capacity for more effective relationships.

In Monson and Hamilton's (2007) study of entering law students' development of ethical professional identity, Kegan's model was used to assess students' understanding of the nature of ethical professional identity and the role of the lawyer in society and to answer the question, "How do entering law students understand the meaning of professionalism?" Surveying a total of 88 law students, Kegan's Short Essay Questions (an adaption of Kegan's Subject-Object Interview), and the Defining Issues Test (DIT; a test of moral judgment and post-conventional reasoning; Rest, 1979) were administered online at the beginning of the students' law school experience.

Previous research indicated a positive correlation between higher stages of identity development and post-conventional reasoning (Rest, 1986), therefore the DIT was used to create convergent validity for the adaptation of Kegan's construct measurement to the short-essay questions format. A low correlation was found between Kegan's stage development and post-conventional reasoning, though a statistically significant difference was found between Stage 3/4 and Stages 2, 2/3, and 3 at $p = .04$ two-tailed t-test. Monson and Hamilton's (2007) study also found that self-reported service-learning experience and years of work experience significantly predicted cognitive developmental growth. In sum, this study found statistically significant, positive correlations between service learning and identity development, work experience and identity development, and service learning and work experience (Monson & Hamilton, 2007).

Other research studies have used Kegan's theory to explore the formation of an ethical

professional identity among dentists (Monson, 2009; Rule & Bebeau, 2005), engineers (Downey,

2008), clergy (Foster, 2008), medical professionals (Leach, 2008) and peer-review professions

(Hamilton, 2008). Rule and Bebeau's (2005) exploration of dental moral exemplars found that

becoming other-centered instead of self-centered is an attribute of moral maturity and a common

factor in moral exemplars who lead a life of committed action. Their study revealed that dental

moral exemplars could clearly articulate their professional role and expectations as well as

reflect on how their perceptions of those professional expectations have changed over their

career lifespan. These exemplars stated that:

> ...As young professionals, they did not see their professional responsibilities then the
> same way they see them today. They expressed considerable insights about their own
> professional identity formation, and they saw their sense of obligation to society and their
> profession as growing and changing over time. Toward the end of their career, they saw
> professional and community service as what they must do, rather than what would simply
> be good to do if one were so inclined (Bebeau, 2008, pg. 6).

Findings in this study were consistent with previous research findings that individuals

vary in the extent to which moral notions penetrate self-understanding (Bebeau, 2008). This

study also provided evidence for the theory that professional dentists' increased capacity to

perform professional roles and responsibilities as well as the ability to integrate personal values

with values of the profession is a developmental process that extends over the course of the

career lifespan.

Hamilton (2008) wrote a review of research presented at the Holloran Center for Ethical

Leadership in the Professions' first interdisciplinary conference/journal symposium on ethical

professional identity formation—an event which brought together researchers from the fields of

clergy, engineering, the health professions, law, professorate, and the sciences to discuss how

these peer-reviewed professions understand and promote adult moral formation into an ethical

professional identity for new members of their fields. According to Hamilton, a total of six of the articles reviewed determined that "a foundation for this (ethical professional) identity is created by self-knowledge and growth of the moral self from narcissism toward responsibility to other people" (pg, 363). Hamilton therefore concluded that a fundamental question of all professional graduate training programs is whether they are intentionally teaching this skill, fostering self-knowledge an other-directedness in students (2008). Unfortunately, one of the multi-disciplinary studies presented at this symposium confirmed what many professionals suspected: that across professions, there is little faculty-wide intentional commitment to fostering an ethical professional identity among students in training programs and that many professional training institutions lack the culture necessary to support student growth in this way (Colby & Sullivan, 2008).

While ethical professional identity development in the professions is a growing field of research, particularly due to the work at the Holloran Center for Ethical Leadership in the Professions and the Center for the Study of Ethical Development at the University of Minnesota and University of Alabama, no known studies have applied this important work (using Kegan's constructivist self-identity model) to the field of counseling.

A Neo-Kohlbergian developmental framework, however, has been used specifically with the field of professional counseling, and, particularly, in the training of new professional counselors. Recent research has explored the feasibility of increasing students' moral development level (typically as measured by the DIT) while in graduate training programs to ensure more adaptable functioning as a professional in the field. Because higher levels of cognitive moral development have been linked to reductions in prejudice and stereotypical thinking, more adaptive behaviors, more complex reasoning in problem-solving (Evans & Foster,

2000), greater empathic communication, increased autonomy, ability to match a client, and more flexibility (Brendel, Kolbert, & Foster, 2002; Sprinthall & Thies-Sprinthall, 1983), it is suggested that increasing cognitive development level of counselors-in-training would increase effective functioning as a counselor.

Cannon (2008) designed an intervention study using a deliberate psychological education (DPE) approach to increase the moral reasoning and multicultural competence of white counseling students in internship training. The DPE approach involves: a) a role-taking experience in helping; b) guided reflection, c) a balance between action and reflection; d) continuity; a e) a classroom climate that is both supportive and challenging (Sprinthall, 1994). By combining a core emphasis on clinical skills infused with ethical dilemma discussions in small groups, the researcher hoped to promoted increased cognitive development in the students. The study did not provide evidence that the DPE intervention was more effective in producing increased multi-cultural awareness; however, it was effective in promoting psychological growth. Furthermore, it provided a template for future similar interventions with the potential to "effectively produce thoughtful counselors who are prepared to work in a complex, rapidly-changing environment" (Cannon, 515).

Evans and Foster (2000) explored a similar topic in relationships among multicultural training, moral development, and racial identity development of white counseling students. Researchers in this study correlated measures of moral reasoning (DIT) and racial identity development (White Racial Identity Attitudes Scale, WRIAS) for a sample of 68 European American-white students enrolled in master's and educational specialist programs in counselor education. Results indicated no significant relationship between white racial identity and moral development score, however, using stepwise multiple regression analysis of other independent

variables, a significant relationship was found between number of multicultural training hours and variables of Reintegration and Autonomy (the greater the number of multicultural training hours, the lower the score on Reintegration and the higher the score on Autonomy). The authors discuss several limitations of the study that may have contributed to the non-significant relationship between cognitive development level and white racial identity level, which are theoretically positively related.

A research study by Foster and McAdams (1998) using a DPE intervention model to enhance cognitive moral reasoning of child-care counselors did produce significant results. The researchers created a developmentally-based intervention using the conditions for growth outlined in the DPE model using a 14-week in-service training with moral dilemma discussions, readings, journal assignments, and field-based experience. Participants were measured using the DIT and Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) on a pre-test and post-test. Increases in both measures between pre- and post-test were found statistically significant. Additionally, participants reported feelings of rejuvenation, increased confidence, renewed commitment to the profession and had developed a more flexible, tolerant and supportive approach to their job.

Another study by Brendel, Kolbert & Foster (2002) explored the use of a DPE approach infused throughout the curriculum of a masters-level counselor education program. Results from two instruments, a measure of cognitive complexity (Paragraph Completion Method, PCM) and a measure of moral reasoning (DIT) administered to 28 participants indicated positive and significant increase in cognitive complexity level and a positive, but non-significant trend. Authors offered several explanations for why students in this study gained in cognitive complexity but not principled reasoning: first, the possibility that counselor education programs do not promote all aspects of the DPE needed for growth to occur; second, that conceptual

development occurs first before moral development can occur, that "advances in cognitive complexity, similar to the Piagetian framework, are prerequisite for future gains in moral development to the principled stages" (pg. 223); third, that certain domains of cognitive development take precedence at certain points in the lifecycle. This study provided support for the incorporation of a developmental model of cognitive-complexity enhancement for professional training of counselors (Brendel, Kolbert & Foster, 2002).

Sprinthall (1994) also advocated for a cognitive-developmental model of training for counselors. Sprinthall used the theory of role-taking to place adolescent students in roles that required empathy, listening skills, and perspective-taking such as peer counseling, tutoring, teaching, and child care. With the other elements of a DPE approach in place, the study produced significant results in participants pre- and post-tests of psychological growth. Sprinthall (1994) presented the results of a meta-analysis of moral judgment effects in recent studies using the DIT. Results indicated a pattern of change with and average effect size considered "very significant" at 0.85. Citing work by Kohlberg and Kramer (1969) which theorized that adult cognitive development did not "ceiling out" during adulthood, but continued to advance in stage and sequence throughout the lifespan, Sprinthall surmised that a method similar to the role-taking method used in these studies with adolescents could be adapted for a population of adults with similar significant results. Indeed, Sprinthall claimed that higher-level development is "requisite" in accomplishing many of the tasks of adulthood, particularly in the professional arena, and should be promoted (Sprinthall, 1994, pg. 96).

Cognitive Development and School Counselors

While school counselor professional identity development parallels development of counselors in other fields of counseling in many ways, some aspects of development are unique

due to the conditions inherent in the schools setting (Froeschle & Crews, 2010; Remley, 2002). As with Kegan's model of self-identity development, few studies have utilized a Neo-Kohlbergian model to understand the impact of these unique factors on school counselor development. Cannon's (2010) study of ethical sensitivity to racial and gender intolerance in schools was the only study on an EBSCO-host database search that used moral development framework with a population sample of school counselors. Cannon used the Racial Ethical Sensitivity Test as a pre- and post-test, and found that school counseling interns showed statistically significant increases in racial ethical sensitivity after participating in courses in ethics and multicultural issues (2010).

Other cognitive frameworks such as Loevinger's ego development have been used in research studies with school counselor populations (though more often used generally to conceptualize counselor development and not specifically the unique development of school counselors). Lambie, Ieva, and Mullen (2010) explored the relationship between school counselors' ego development, ethical decision-making and legal and ethical knowledge. Theoretically, ego development level should influence knowledge of ethical and legal principles as well as ethical decision-making processes (Lambie et al., 2010; Loevinger, 1976). Using a sample of 186 school counselors and instruments measuring ego development (Washington University Sentence Completion Test, WUSCT, Hy & Loevinger, 1996), ethical decision-making (Dufrene, 2000) and ethical and legal knowledge (Lambie, 2010), a statistically significant positive relationship was found between level of ego development and ethical and legal knowledge scores.

No statistically significant relationship was found between ego development and ethical decision-making or ethical and legal knowledge and ethical decision-making scores (Lambie, et

al. 2010). These results were consistent with previous research with other samples of counseling students (Lambie, et al., 2010). An interesting finding in this study was that the average counselor scored at a lower level of ethical decision-making than counselors-in-training prior to completing an ethics course, pre-internship masters counseling students, and masters internship counseling students. Lambie et al. (2010) suggest "the average counselor is functioning at a lower level of ethical decision-making than counselors-in-training supporting the need for some type of intervention to promote their ethical decision-making" (pg. 56). The authors concluded that the support systems necessary for advanced ethical decision-making are absent in these school counselors' current work environments.

Lambie (2007) also conducted a national survey of 225 school counselors' ego development and level of burnout. Initial results using path analysis revealed that a model testing whether higher levels of ego development in school counselors contributed to lower levels of burnout did not fit the data. Therefore, no causal relationship was identified between ego level and burnout. However, one of the identified factors of burnout, personal accomplishment, did yield a statistically significant positive relationship with ego development. This study's findings concluded, "professional school counselors at higher levels of ego development preserve boundaries and engage in self-care which enables them to accept their occupational limitations and maintain affirmative feelings about their work" (pg. 86). This finding has important implications for the field of counselor education, providing further evidence that promoting student cognitive development in a master's level school counseling training program enhances school counselors' capacity to manage the demands of the job.

Challenges to School Counselor Ethical Professional Identity

These studies of school counselor cognitive development, though few, provide support for the need to promote school counselor cognitive development, ethical reasoning and decision-making both in counselor education masters level programs, and throughout the career lifespan. School counselors face a host of unique challenges to their professional development due to the particular context of their work setting in schools. As with the law students in Monson & Hamilton's (2007) study, these challenges to professional identity development may also pose a hurdle to the formation of an *ethical* professional identity—impacting school counselor's moral development, as well as beliefs about the role and professional obligations of a school counselor, and potentially attitudes and behaviors toward ethical issues in the school setting.

The school setting limits the availability of several counselor support systems that counselors in mental health agencies take for granted. First, clinical supervision in the school setting is non-existent for many school counselors. In most states, school counselors take a written exam to be certified or licensed as a professional school counselor. While counselors in mental health and clinical settings begin supervised practice to work toward state professional counseling licensure, school counselors not seeking a clinical license typically have no requirement for regular clinical supervision. It is not unusual for school counselors to be managed by their school's principal or assistant principal (Curry & Bickmore, 2012), who are professionals with typically no counseling training, understanding of counseling ethics or school counseling models. Without the opportunity for structured guided reflection on their practice as counselors through a formal supervision relationship, school counselors may be limited in their development (Bernard & Goodyear, 2009; Sprinthall, 1994).

Second, acculturation into an ethical, professional culture of school counseling is restricted by the fact that many school counselors work in isolation as the only counselor in their

school, and occasionally as the only counselor in the district. This is particularly true for school counselors working in elementary schools or in rural school settings (Curry & Bickmore, 2012). Such a lack of professional community presents a challenge to the process of professional socialization and adoption of the attitudes, behaviors, values, and ethics of the profession. As in Welie & Rule's (2006) article on isolationism in dentistry, school counselors, too, are up against "structural forces at work... that foster patterns of isolationism" (pg. 99).

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2005) supports a collaborative team approach with educators and other professions in the school system: "School counselors and school counseling program directors/supervisors collaborate with special educators, school nurses, school social workers, school psychologists, college counselors/admissions officers, physical therapists, occupational therapists and speech pathologists to advocate for optimal services for students and all other stakeholders" (ASCA Ethical Standards, 2010). However, how this collaborative team approach with other professions in the school impacts school counselor's development of a distinct ethical professional identity remains unclear, especially when those interactions with other professions represent the only professional relationships a school counselor encounters on a regular basis.

Third, though a desire for additional professional education has been reported (Busacca & Wester, 2006), practicing school counselors have scarce opportunities for on-going professional development related to counseling (Curry & Bickmore, 2012) and particularly in counseling ethics (Busacca & Wester, 2006). Curry and Bickmore's (2012) qualitative study of novice school counselor's induction into a school setting identified a theme of poor quality of professional development to enhance work performance. School counselors in this study conveyed that professional development opportunities available in their school districts were

teacher-oriented and focused on school counselor duties that were outside the scope of the ASCA National Model (2005). These school counselors found professional development activities in their district to be a "waste of time" and "dampening their belief that their unique role is important enough to warrant professional development specific to them" (pg. 117).

An additional theme uncovered in this study was the lack of formal mentorship for novice school counselors. While new school counselors expressed a desire for an experienced school counseling mentor to orient them to the school system, few were given this opportunity. When they were assigned a mentor, the relationship was often unstructured, inconsistent, and contact was frequently initiated by the novice school counselor furthering the impression that their role was not valued in the school as distinctly separate (Curry & Bickmore, 2012). Welie & Rule (2006) have suggested that lack of connection with a professional culture leads to a lack of sensitivity toward ethical issues, particularly client autonomy.

What impact might this lack of a consistent and supportive professional ethical community have on school counselors' development of an ethical professional identity? Without the support and guidance of a professional community that reinforces ethical decision making based upon professional counseling codes of ethics (ACA, 2005; ASCA, 2010), how school counselors construct their role in the school setting remains unclear and, furthermore, even less is known as to how construction of this role might change over time and extended exposure to the field. Theoretically, a school counselor's professional role orientation and ethical professional identity would have implications for both cognitive moral development (as discussed previously; Rest et al. 1999) and ethical behaviors in the professional setting.

Ethical Practice with Minors in the School Setting

School counselors face ethical issues more frequently than counselors who work in any other setting (Remley, 2002). The process of ethical decision-making is "integrative," involving the counselor's cognitive abilities, personal character and virtue, and decision-making skills (Lambie, 2011; Cottone & Tarvydas, 2006). In considering ethical decisions, counselors are recommended to reflect on a combination of a) professional codes of ethics and standards (such as ACA, 2005 and ASCA, 2010); b) professional best practices grounded in research; and c) application of moral principles of beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, autonomy, and fidelity (Kitchener, 2000; Lambie, 2011; Beauchamp & Childress, 1994). "When school counselors understand and appreciate professional ethical codes, standards of practice, and related research and literature, the ethical decision-making process is more effective" (Lambie, 2011, pg. 51).

However, results from a recent study indicate that over half of responding school counselors reported using a combination of common sense, colleagues, personal experience, school board policy and professional development as tools in ethical decision-making with no mention of reflection on ethical codes or moral principles (Meyer, 1998). A qualitative study by Trice-Black, Riechel and Shillingford (in press) found a similar theme of ethical training among school counselors in the field-- that school counselors report familiarity with professional codes of ethics, but seldom consult ethical codes after graduation from their training programs. Correspondingly, a study by Moyer and Sullivan (2008) found that school counselors do not share the same interpretation of ethical standards.

Ethical codes and moral principles help to define the school counseling profession and set a standard of ethical behavior of professional school counselors. In working with minors in the school setting whose rights to privacy, informed consent or confidentiality in the counseling relationship are, in many states, owned by their parents (Glosoff & Pate, 2002), these ethical and

moral guides for decision-making may conflict with local laws and educational policies (Glosoff & Pate, 2002). Bodenhorn (2006) describes confidentiality for minors as "an ill-defined legal area." School counselors have primary responsibility to the student (ASCA, 2010), but are equally responsible to multiple stakeholders in the school community (Isaacs & Stone, 1999; Relmey, 2002)—school counselors respect parents' rights "as the guiding voice in a child's life" as well as understand the importance of accountability to school administrators, faculty, staff and and the larger community in which the school is based (ASCA, 2010).

When these competing obligations come in conflict in the school setting, school counselors must negotiate ethical priorities (Glosoff & Pate, 2002). Remley and Herlihy (2001) recommend that, when faced with ethical conflicts, school counselors determine whether they are acting as any other reasonable school counselor would act in a similar circumstance. However, as Moyer, Sullivan and Growcock (2012) note, many school counselor operate in circumstances with a significant lack of available resources to support and guide one's behavior, making self-evaluating difficult.

Students in schools today have more mental health needs than ever before (Davis & Michelson, 1994). Problems such as alcohol and drug use, divorce, poverty, homelessness, violence, disease epidemic including sexually transmitted diseases, bullying and suicidal ideation are intense and increasingly complex (Davis & Michelson, 1994; Lambie, 2011). At the same time, with recent budget cuts in many school districts across the county, the average number of students on a school counselor's case-load has swelled to over 459 students (ASCA, 2010). As the issues that students bring to school counselors in the school setting have become more intense over the past few years (Davis & Michelson, 1994), school counselor ethical decision-making, particularly around issues of student confidentiality, has received increased attention.

Confidentialty. A recent survey by Bodenhorn (2006) identified issues of student

confidentiality in the school setting as the most frequent and most challenging ethical issue faced

by professional school counselors. A large percentage of variance has been shown to exist

between school counselors' approaches ethical dilemmas regarding issues of student privacy,

confidentiality and parental rights. Davis & Mickelson (1994) found less than 50% agreement

among school counselors regarding preferred ethical or legal decisions in these areas of student

privacy, confidentiality and parental rights. Decisions regarding confidentiality appear to differ

between school levels as well (elementary, middle and high). Isaacs and Stone (1999) gathered

responses from nearly 700 school counselors across the country, specifying whether school

counselors would break confidentiality in a wide variety of school-specific circumstances

presented. Results indicated that school counselors working at the elementary school level were

more likely to break confidentiality than school counselors working at either middle school or

high school levels.

In a survey of school counselors in two separate regions of the country, Stone and Isaacs

(2003) found that school counselors were less likely to breech student confidentiality after the

tragic school shootings at Columbine High School than before the tragedy, recognizing that to

prevent school violence, students must feel they can trust a counselor with important and

sensitive information (ex. if a student had information about another peer who intended harm to

other students). School counselors in this study appeared to agree that, "without the assurance of

confidentiality, most students will not seek their help and will not inform them when they have

information that a student plans violence toward others... Violence prevention will continue to

elude us unless we turn to our students, the most informed members of the educational

community regarding pending violence by their peers, and give them a safe place in which to report potential violence" (pg. 149).

Moyer, Sullivan, and Growcock's (2012) national study of school counselor explored school counselors' perceptions of when to break student confidentiality with school administrators. Using an instrument measuring school counselor behaviors toward confidentiality with students, participants read a series of vignettes about a student participating in rick-taking behaviors such as smoking, drinking alcohol, sexual activity, drug use, self-injurious behaviors, skipping class, and cheating on an exam. The age of the student in the vignette represented one independent variable: vignettes alternated between students aged 10, 12 and 16 years old. Participants were asked to respond to questions rating their beliefs about the degree to which it was ethical to break confidentiality in the particular vignette using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1, unquestionably not ethical, to 6, unquestionably ethical. Results indicated a high degree of variance among responses, although there was more agreement around alcohol, substance use, and sexual activity (Moyer, Sullivan & Growcock, 2012).

This study had other results of note: school counselors indicated that they believed breaking confidentiality was unquestionably ethical when student behaviors were directly observed and on school grounds during school hours; school counselors believed that breaking confidentiality with younger students is more ethical than breaking confidentiality with older students especially related to sexual behavior and tobacco use; school counselors were more likely to consider breaking confidentiality as ethical if their school had a policy in place that guided decisions; and, finally, counselors indicated that maintaining the counseling relationship with a student was more important than maintaining their relationship with administrators (Moyer, Sullivan, & Growcock, 2012). The authors note surprise in this last result, "given the

hierarchical nature of the counselor-administrator relationship and the potential pressure for counselors to act in ways that will result in favorable evaluations from administrators" (pg. 107). Curry and Bickmore (2012) confirm that this pressure to please school administration is felt by many school counselors.

Confidentiality is a critical aspect of the counseling relationship and school counselors are often faced with difficult ethical dilemmas in knowing when and how to breach student confidentiality with parents, school administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders in the most ethical manner possible (Moyer, Sullivan, & Growcock, 2012). Issues of student confidentiality, privacy and informed consent are the most frequent and the most challenging ethical issue facing school counselors in heir daily practice (Bodenhorn, 2006). With the increase in students on school counselors' caseloads, and an increase in the number and intensity of student mental health issues, the issue of school counselor ethical practice is critical for the field.

Conclusions and Implications

Overview of Research and Conclusions

Development of an ethical professional identity is important to all professions serving the public interest. An ethical professional identity of members within a profession ensures a standard of quality care for clients, ethical decision-making among members of the profession, and the development of a fully-formed moral identity as the "bridge" between *knowing* the right thing and *doing* the right thing (Bebeau, 2008). Interventions designed to promote the development of an ethical professional identity have been studied in various professional fields such as medicine (Self et al. 1992, 1993; Self & Olivarez, 1996), law (Monson & Hamilton, 2007), clergy (Foster, 2008), nursing (Duckett & Ryden, 1994), and dentistry (Bebeau & Thoma, 1994).

The field of professional counseling is one field that has not been studied, although much interest currently exists regarding development of a distinct counseling identity (Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2010). The field of school counseling, even more specifically, would benefit from exploration into the development of an ethical professional identity among members due to the unique professional context faced by school counselors. School counselors are often isolated in their work environments; they have fewer opportunities for clinical supervision, collegial oversight from other trained counselors, or mentorship within the profession; and they report a lack of counseling-related professional development opportunities in their schools. Yet school counselors are expected to support the personal, social and academic wellness of all students (ASCA, 2005) when individual caseloads have increased to an average of over 450 students, a student population which is known to have a higher frequency and more intense set of mental health needs than students populations of past cohorts.

Previous attempts to understand and describe school counselor professional identity have discussed the inter- and the intra-personal aspects of development, but these models have neglected to consider the impact of cognitive development on a school counselor's view of professional self, conceptualization of ethical obligations related to their role, and the impact on ethical decision-making and ethical behaviors in the school setting. Given the seriousness of the risks at stake related to student mental health, the relationships between these areas of school counselor functioning appear to be an important avenue for future research and may have important implications for counselor educators in professional training of school counselors.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter provides information on the proposed research design and methodology. A description of the population and sample being studied, data-gathering procedures, instrumentation, research hypotheses, process of data analysis will also be provided.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study was practicing school counselors who are employed in Virginia. School counselors in Virginia represent a wide range of diverse school districts from the densely populated districts in Northern Virginia and Hampton Roads area to the more sparsely populated areas in Western regions of Virginia. School counselors across the state work with students and families that differ along demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religious/spiritual backgrounds, and socio-economic background; some districts represent more student diversity in these categories than others. Virginia state licensure for school counselors requires a masters degree in a counseling or counseling-related field and specific graduate training in the following competency areas: The ability to support students by cooperatively working with parents/guardians and teachers; Understanding of the principle and theories of human growth and development throughout the lifespan and their implications for school guidance and counseling; Understanding of the social and cultural foundations of education and their implications for school guidance and counseling programs; Understanding of lifespan career development; Understanding of the skills and processes for counseling students; Understanding of the knowledge, skills, and processes for providing developmental group guidance; Understanding of the skills and processes related to the school counseling program at

the elementary, middle and second levels; Understanding the knowledge, skills, and processes of student appraisal and assessment relative to school guidance and counseling programs; Understanding of the counseling professional; Understanding of the skills and processes of research and evaluation aimed at improving school guidance and counseling programs (Virginia Department of Education).

Convenience sampling was used to access a sample of more than 30 subjects. An email invitation to participate in this study was sent to school counselors working in Virginia public schools. Criteria for inclusion in the sample includes any Virginia school counselor who: (1) holds a masters degree in school counseling (2) currently practices as a school counselor, (3) currently works in Virginia. The rationale supporting the inclusion criteria is to ensure subjects represent the target population and to control extraneous variables.

Data Collection

Method. Subjects for this study completed a demographics questionnaire and three assessments: an adaptation of Kegan's Subject-Object interview using short essay questions (Bebeau & Lewis, 2003; Monson & Hamilton, 2011), the Defining Issues Test (DIT-2), and the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior (Moyer & Sullivan, 2008). These assessments were compiled and made available online through the survey tool Qualtrics. Subjects who are current school counselors in Virginia public schools were sent an email invitation to participate with a web-link to access to the online survey tool. Contact information for the principal researcher was be provided if participants experience technical difficulties in accessing the assessments online.

All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, as well as any potential risks associated with participation. Participants retained the right to refuse to complete any

instrument, or to stop at any point during administration. Participants identities were not be made known in any way through the survey. To encourage participation, those who volunteer and complete the survey for this study were entered for the chance to win a $100 Visa gift card.

Instrumentation

Four instruments were used in this study: a demographics questionnaire, the Subject-Object interview adapted to short essay questions, the Defining Issues Test (DIT-2), and the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior survey (Moyer & Sullivan, 2008). All four instruments were uploaded to Qualtrics, an online survey software program, into one seamless interface starting with the informed consent, followed by Kegan's Subject-Object Interview adapted to short essay format, the DIT, the Ethical Dilemmas in Report Student Risk-Taking Behaviors survey, and finally the demographic questionnaire. All four instruments combined into one survey on Qualtrics took participants approximately 20-65 minutes to complete.

Informed consent (Appendix A). An informed consent form was the first page that participants saw when they accessed the online survey tool. Before proceeding to the rest of the survey, participants acknowledged that they read the information regarding the purpose of the study, an outline of participant's rights and expectations, and description of how the results of the study will be used in the future. Participants retained the right to refuse participation and withdraw from the study at any point without penalty. The informed consent form assured participants of the confidentiality of their answers. In no way will the answers participants provide be traced to their name or identity.

Demographic questionnaire (Appendix B). The demographics questionnaire captured the following information on participants: gender, ethnicity, year graduated with a masters'

degree in school counseling, whether the participant graduated from a CACREP-accredited program, highest degree earned, number of courses taken in legal/ethical issues, whether the participant has obtained state licensure (LPC or LMHC), what student level the participant is currently working with, and whether the participant has attended in-service or workshop training programs concerning legal and ethical issues in the past two years. These questions were listed in yes/no or multiple-choice form depending upon the question.

Kegan's Subject-Object Interview (Appendix C). The Short Essay Question adaptation of Kegan's original assessment of self-identity construction, the Subject-Object Interview, is more easily administered to larger populations of individuals, requiring fewer administrators, transcribers, and less time to complete-- taking only approximately 20 minutes for participants to complete in this study. Like Kegan's original instrument, the Subject-Object Short Essay Questions involves self-reflection on the individual's conceptions of self. The questions in the Short Essay format are created to explore the cognitive-social structures that provide the foundation for identity formation, and can be tailored particularly around the issue of professionalism (Monson & Hamilton, 2011). Unlike the original instrument, the Subject-Object Short Essay format requires responding in written form (as opposed to verbal) to five open ended questions drawn from the Interview. This revised format for assessing Kegan's stages has been used broadly for program assessment in law training programs (Monson & Hamilton, 2011), as well as dental training programs (Bebeau & Lewis, 2003) to measure students' level of ethical professional identity.

In Monson and Hamilton's (2011) longitudinal study of entering law students' level of ethical professional identity, questions on the Short Essay format included: *1) Personally, how do you understand the meaning of professionalism? How did you come to this understanding?*

2) What will you expect of yourself as you work toward becoming a lawyer? What will the profession expect of you? 3) What conflicts do you expect to experience (eg. between your responsibility to yourself and to others—patients, family, community, profession)? 4) What would be the worse thing for you if you failed to live up to the expectations you have set for yourself? 5) What would be the worst thing for you if you failed to live up to the expectations of your clients (the profession) (society)? For this study, these same questions prompts were used, slightly modified to fit the school counseling profession (ex. in question two, "lawyer" will be changed to "school counselor" and in questions three and five, responsibilities and expectations of the school community and administration will be added).

Responses to essay questions were then coded based upon stage content. Table 1 describes the system of stage coding criteria used in Monson and Hamilton's (2011) exploration of law students' ethical professional identity. The same criterion for coding responses will be utilized for this current investigation.

Defining Issues Test-2 (DIT-2) (Appendix D). The DIT is "an objective test of moral judgment derived from Kohlberg's theory of moral development" (Sutton, 1987). Administration of the DIT involves review of six moral dilemmas and 12 related questions where participants are asked to rate how important each question is to their conclusion on the dilemma, state their conclusion, and, finally, to rank the four most important questions related to their conclusion. From this data, researchers calculate a P index (the percentage of principled reasoning) and a D index (a composite score). Reliability for the DIT is high: correlations for test-retest range from .67 to .92 for the two indices (P index and D index). Cronbach's alphas are .77 (for the P index) and .79 (for the D index). The DIT has been normed for a variety of age groups including adolescents (Sutton, 1987).

Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior (Appendix E). The Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior is a 23-question survey regarding school counselor behaviors of reporting student risk-taking behaviors to school administration and parents. In the original version of this instrument, questions 1-13 ask the participant to consider a short vignette where a student Erin (a gender-neutral name) engages in risk-taking behavior such as smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, smoking marijuana, sexual activities, or skipping class. For participants who state that they work with elementary school students, Erin is stated to be 10 years old; for participants who work with middle school students, Erin is stated to be 12 years old; for participants who work with high school students, Erin is stated to be 16 years old. The participant responds on a 1-6 likert-scale with 1 indicating "unquestionably not ethical" to notify school administration and 6 indicating "unquestionably ethical" to notify school administration of Erin's behaviors. The participant is also asked to rate whether directly observing Erin in these behaviors would make a difference as well as whether the behaviors were reported or observed on school property during school hours, on school property before or after school hours, or off school property. Question 14 asks the participant to respond in narrative form whether or not the school her or she works at has policy regarding any of the former student risk-taking behaviors and whether that impacts the participant's answers to questions 1-13. Question 15 asks the participant to rate a list of potential factors that may impact the participant's decisions to break confidentiality to report adolescent risk-taking behaviors to parents. Question 16 asks the participant to rate herself or himself on a likert scale where 1 is "Very strict" in interpreting ethical standards and 5 is very flexible in interpreting ethical standards. Question 17 asks the participant to rate herself or himself on level of knowledge and familiarity with legal and ethical principles of the profession where 1 is "below average" and 5 is

"above average." Questions 18-23 are demographic questions which will be eliminated because they duplicated information gathered in the above demographics questionnaire.

The Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior was based upon a survey developed by Rae, Sullivan, Razo, George & Ramirez (2002) for use with pediatric and school psychologists. Moyer and Sullivan (2008; 2012) adapted the survey for use with school counselors with scenarios most commonly witnessed in the school setting. Reliability and construct validity of this instrument was not formally assessed by Moyer and Sullivan after the adaptations were made.

This most recent revision of the instrument for this study excluded questions 1-14 which asks the participant to respond to several different scenarios with Erin engaging in various risk taking behaviors and to list whether or not the participant's school district has school board policies which require reporting the various student risk-taking behavior. Questions 15-17 of the original instrument were retained. Four additional factors from relevant literature on confidentiality in the school setting were included for question 15 including: Relationship to parents/family, Prior relationship to student, Upholding ethical principles, and, Meeting the expectation of school administrators.

The purpose of shortening the instrument was to mitigate the effects of participant fatigue while retaining the key factors that are theoretically thought to most highly relate to the other dependent variables in this study.

Research Design

The purpose of this heuristic study was to deepen knowledge about the relationship between school counselor constructions of professional self-identity, level of moral reasoning, and attitudes toward confidentiality with minors using a correlational statistical model. As a tool,

correlational research allows the researcher to discover relationships between variables through the use of correlational statistics (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Additionally, correlational research provides information regarding the degree of the relationship between two variables (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). This study explored whether school counselors' level of ethical professional identity (as measured by the Kegan Subject-Object Short Essay Questions) is related to attitudes toward confidentiality with minors and developmental level of moral reasoning. School counselors at higher levels of self-construction development may have more complex structures for moral reasoning, and may have different attitudes toward handling the ethical issue of confidentiality with minors in the school setting. The purpose of the current study was to answer the following research questions:

1. How is school counselor ethical professional identity development level related to ethical decision-making and ethical behaviors regarding confidentiality with minors in the school setting?

2. How is school counselor ethical professional identity development level related to developmental level of moral reasoning?

3. How do school counselors who are members of professional counseling organizations construct their ethical professional identity?

4. How do school counselors who are graduates of a CACREP-accredited masters degree program construct professional identity as compared to school counselors from graduate programs that are not CACREP-accredited?

Hypotheses

1. School counselor ethical professional identity development level will be positively related to moral reasoning level.

2. School counselor ethical professional identity level will be positively related to ethical decision-making and behaviors of maintaining confidentiality with minors in the school setting.

3. School counselors who are members of professional counseling organizations will display a consistent construction of their professional ethical identity.

4. School counselors who are graduates of a CACREP-accredited masters degree program construct ethical professional identity in significantly different ways than school counselors from graduate programs that are not CACREP accredited.

Data Analysis

In correlational research, a correlation coefficient statistic is used to correlate samples' scores between two or more measures (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). For this study, scores from the Kegan Subject-Object Short Essay Questions, DIT, the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior, and demographics questionnaire will be entered into SPSS statistical software. The statistic tool Pearson's R will be run between all measures with a significance level of $p < .05$. In addition, multiple regression analyses will be run to control for variables and determine the relationship between professional self-construction development level, developmental level of moral reasoning, attitudes toward confidentiality with minors in the school setting, and results from the demographics questionnaire. Ideally, the sample size will be large enough to obtain a level of statistical significance.

Ethical Considerations

This research proposal was approved by the College of William and Mary's School of Education internal review board (protocol ID #EDIRC-2013-01-08-8362). All subjects were informed of their right to refuse to participate, or to withdraw from the study at any point without

penalty. Before taking the instruments, subjects read and electronically signed an informed

consent form on the first page of the online survey tool. Subjects were not able to access the

instruments until proving consent. No known risks were associated with participation in this

research study.

Informed Critique

As mentioned previously, some limitations to this study exist. For one, the accessible

population for this study of school counselors who are currently working in Virginia public

schools may represent significant differences from the larger population of professional school

counselors across the United States in both characteristics of school counselors who work in

public verses private schools and unique characteristics of school counselors in Virginia who

may have greater access to national resources through ACA and ASCA in Washington D.C. It is

unknown how either of these variables may impact school counselors' ethical professional

identity development. Because this study does not include a comparison group of school

counselors working outside of Virginia or in private school settings, the impact of these factors

will not be assessed for significance and therefore results from this study should not be

generalized to the larger population of all school counselors. However, greater knowledge of

how public school counselors in any state across the United States construct their ethical

professional identity is valuable information in itself, and is a topic that has not previously been

discussed in the research literature.

A second limitation of this study is the time required to complete all four instruments.

An average time of 50 minutes total for completion of the instruments is a significant time

commitment for volunteer participants. Strategies were implemented to mitigate the effect of

participant fatigue when completing the set of instruments and seem to have had an effect with

the resulting .14% completion rate. Participant fatigue is also related to the subject matter and this topic is likely to be of interest to school counselors and thus they may have experienced less fatigue.

Despite these limitations, the potential benefits of this study's results for the profession of school counseling, the field of Counselor Education, and the education of future school counselors are substantial. No known study to date has explored the development of school counselor ethical professional identity or its relationship to moral reasoning or ethical decision-making with minors in the school setting. This study has the potential to expand what is currently known about school counselor professional training (which has previously focused on role, tasks, and skills acquisition), by extending the knowledge base to include a greater understanding of the process of *being* a school counselor—the transformative process of adopting a professional identity; integrating the values, beliefs, and ethics of the profession; and committing to serve the interests of one's clients and placing aside self-interest. While much research literature has explored the former, little if any research has investigated the latter.

Conclusions

Leach (2008) questioned, "How do we preserve and nurture authentic human and moral reflexes in our young learners? How do we foster authentic professionalism and moral development in young people when the context in which young people are being formed is itself morally challenged? Transcendence of self-interest is not a technique—it is *a way of being*. The resident, in addition to learning the science and art (of the profession), must also learn a new way of being in the world in order to become a fully-developed professional. The resident's journey is an inner journey. We have a heavy obligation to help them."

Previous research from other service-professions such as medicine (Self et al. 1992,

1993; Self & Olivarez, 1996), law (Monson & Hamilton, 2007), clergy (Foster, 2008), nursing

(Duckett & Ryden, 1994), and dentistry (Bebeau & Thoma, 1994) have suggested that this

transformative process is one that happens over the course of a lifetime (Bebeau & Monson,

2012; Halverson, 2006; Skovhold & Ronnestad, 2003), and that advanced levels of identify

formation (including ethical professional identity formation) are rarely achieved until mid-career

(Lewis et al., 2005). The literature also suggests that this process of professional identity

formation and tran-formation cannot happen without explicit instruction, support and

opportunities for professional reflection (Beabeau & Monson, 2012). In the field of counseling

(and school counseling in particular), this is an unknown process. It is likely that counselor

ethical professional identity follows the same developmental trajectory as these other

professions, and indeed, a strong theoretical link exists between the development of counselor

ethical professional identity and the same development of other helping or service professions.

For those of us who are charged with the "heavy obligation" to support school counselors

through their inner journey of development, this research study increases knowledge of school

counselor ethical professional identity development, and how ethical professional identity might

relate to other aspects of professional practice such as moral judgment and ethical behaviors

around confidentiality with minors. This information represents a critical gap in current

understanding of school counselor development as well as a essential component in the creation

of a comprehensive and relevant education that will enable school counselors to develop more

complex schemas for negotiating the complicated stakeholder relationships, competing ethical

obligations, and other unique challenges that are inherent in the professional role.

Chapter Four

Results

Chapter four provides an overview of statistical analyses performed on data collected in this study. First, a detailed description of the study's sample is provided. This information will be compared to data known about the larger population. Second, a correlational analysis of the dependent variables is discussed, followed by an overview of statistical analysis related to each of the research questions. An alpha level of .05 was used for all statistical tests, meaning that the researcher will, with 95% certainty, reject the null hypothesis when in fact it should be rejected. An alpha level of .05 is the typical practice in education research (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). While it would be reasonable to use an alpha level of .10 for this exploratory research to increase statistical power, raising the alpha level to .10 also increases the risk of Type I error (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Therefore, the alpha level of .05 was chosen as most appropriate for this study.

Description of the Study

Sampling, Instrument Administration and Scoring

This investigation of relationships between school counselors' ethical professional identity development level, moral reasoning and attitudes toward confidentiality with minors in the school setting used a correlational research design. A set of four instruments (Kegan's Subject-Object Interview adapted to Essay-format, the DIT-2, a revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior, and a demographics questionnaire) was emailed through Qualtrics to 3,681 public school counselors in Virginia—all public school counselors in the state of Virginia who have a publically accessible email address on their district's website. This number represented school counselors from every county in Virginia with the exception of Roanoke City Schools whose district has a policy that school personnel not be contacted to

participate in research studies unless the study has previously approved through central office. A total of 51 responses were captured, however, 21 of the responses were not useable because either the respondent was not currently living in Virginia (n = 1), or the Subject/Object essays were too short to code and a clear distinction between the content and the structure of the response was not able to be determined (n = 20). The remaining 30 responses were coded using Bebeau and Lewis' (2004) method for assessing identity formation. The DIT-2 responses were sent to the Center for Study Ethical Development for scoring.

Demographic Information

Total Sample

Demographic information was collected from all 51 participants who completed the set of instruments. A number of responses were not useable because either the respondent was not currently working in Virginia or because they could not be scored on the Subject/Object Essays. Demographic information for the remaining 30 participants is presented below. Demographic questions included: age, gender, race/ethnicity, state where currently working as a professional school counselor, academic degrees, year you completed your graduate degree, CACREP-accreditation status of training program, number of years practicing as a professional school counselor, licenses and certifications held, number of training courses attended in counseling ethics over the past two years, current counseling professional organization membership, participation in professional development opportunities through counseling professional organizations, school level of current position, characterization of political views (very liberal, somewhat liberal, neither liberal nor conservative, somewhat conservative, very conservative), US citizenship, and primary language.

Gender

The sample of 30 school counselors included 26 females (n= 26) and 4 males (n= 4). Females represented 83.9% of the sample and males represented 12.9% of the sample. A national survey of school counselors conducted by the College Board (2011) found that across the nation, females outnumbered males in the profession by a ratio of approximately 3:1. In their sample, females represented 77% and males represented 33%. This College Board study also found that of all states, Virginia had the lowest percentage of male school counselors at 14%. The ratio of female to male school counselors in the College Board study for Virginia is similar to this current study's female to male ratio.

Age

The age range for this sample was from 23 years old to 64 years old. The mean age was 41 with a standard deviation of 12.47 (M = 41, SD = 12.47). The median age was 38 and the mode was 29. The same College Board national survey (2011) mentioned above found an even distribution of ages between the range of 30-65 with fewer school counselors in the 23-30 range. The College Board study noted that Virginia, on average, had a younger population of school counselors than any other state and that public school counselors, nationally, were younger on average than private school counselors (approximately 12% of counselors in public schools are over age 60, whereas nearly 25% of private school counselors are over age 60; The College Board, 2011). This current study's age demographic was similar to results found by the College Board's (2011) study for Virginia.

Race and Ethnicity

In this sample, one participant identified as African American/Black (n = 1), 28 identified as Caucasian/White (n = 28), and one participant identified as Other Race/Ethnicity (not specified; n = 1). Zero (n = 0) participants identified as Asian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or

American Indian/ Other Native American. This sample represents less racial or ethnic diversity than has been shown to exist among school counselors nationally (The College Board, 2011) or even among Virginia school counselors (The College Board, 2011). Nationally, approximately 10% of school counselors identify as Hispanic or Latino, 75% identify as "white" and 8% identify as African American or black (The College Board, 2011).

Work Experience and Training

All 30 of the participants (n = 30) currently work in a Virginia public school as a professional school counselor, meeting the criteria for the target sample. Participants were asked to chose all degrees they have earned from a list of options: Master's degree in counseling, Master's degree in non-counseling, Education specialist degree in counseling, Education specialist degree in non-counseling, PhD in counseling, and PhD in non-counseling. A frequency chart of responses is listed below.

Table 4.1

Participant Graduate Degrees Earned

	Frequency	Percent
Master's degree in counseling	28	90.3
Master's degree in non-counseling	2	6.5
Education specialist degree in counseling	2	3.2
Education specialist degree in non-counseling	1	3.2
PhD in counseling	1	3.2
PhD in non-counseling	1	3.2

The two participants who responded that they did not have a master's degree in counseling had an Education Specialist degree in counseling and a PhD in a non-counseling field respectively.

Participants were asked to report the year they received their first graduate degree in a counseling-related field with an option for "not applicable" if the participant did not obtain a

degree in a counseling-related field. The range of responses was from 1970 or earlier to 2012. The median year for obtaining a graduate degree in counseling was 2000 and the mode was 2004. The mean and standard deviation are not reported for this demographic as this lower end of the scale (1970 or before) may skew the data depending upon how many years before 1970 the participants who checked this box obtained their degree. A total of 21 (n = 21; 67%) participants reported that they had graduated from a CACREP-accredited graduate program; 9 (n = 9; 29%) reported that they did not.

Participants reported a range of 0-39 years of professional experience as a school counselor. The mean number of years of professional school counseling experience was 12.53 (M = 12.53, SD = 9.2) with a median number of years of 10.5 and a mode of 6. When asked to identify certifications and/or licenses they hold from a list of options (certified professional school counselor, licensed social worker, licensed professional counselor, licensed marriage and family therapist, not licensed or certified, or "other"), 23 (n = 23, 25%) participants hold a school counseling certification, one (n = 1, 3.2%) was a licensed social worker, two (n = 2, 6.5%) were licensed professional counselors, and zero (n = 0) identified as licensed marriage and family therapists or not-licensed or not-certified. Eight participants (n = 8, 25%) reported having additional training and certifications beyond the options that were listed.

A total of 18 (n = 18, 58%) have worked at the elementary school level at some point in their professional career as a school counselor. Seventeen (n = 17, 54%) have experience working at the middle school level. A total of 23 (74%) have worked at the high school level.

Professional Development

Three quarters (n = 20; 75%) of the respondents are current members of a professional counseling organization and one quarter are not currently members (n = 10; 25%). Of the total

sample (n = 30), three (n = 3; 9.7%) reported that they did not attend professional development through a professional counseling organization in the past 12 months. Eight (n = 8; 25.8%) reported that they have attended at least one professional development training or workshop through a professional counseling organization in the past 12 months. A total of 19 (n = 19; 63%) participants have attended two or more professional development training or workshops through a professional counseling organization over the past 12 months. (See frequency table below for a more detailed breakdown of the number of professional development events respondents reported to have attended).

Table 4.2

Professional Development Events Attended

Number of professional development events attended	Frequency	Percent
0 events	3	9.7
1 event	8	25.8
2 events	10	32.3
3 events	4	12.9
4 events	1	3.2
5 events	2	6.5
6 or more events	2	6.5

Of workshops or trainings specifically geared toward counseling ethics and ethical practice, 17 (n = 17, 54%) attended either zero or one event over the past two year (there was no option on the survey to specify "zero" or "not applicable" so it is not possible to distinguish between those participants who have participated in one even and those who have not participated in any events over the past two years). Twelve participants (n = 12, 38%) reported participating in two events over the past two years and one participant (n = 1; 3.2%) reported

attending three or more events specifically on counseling ethics and ethical practice over the past two years.

Table 4.3

Counseling Ethics Training Attended

Number of counseling ethics workshops/trainings attended	Frequency	Percent
0 events or 1 event	17	54.8
2 events	12	38.7
3 or more events	1	3.2

The sample of 30 professional school counselors at public schools in Virginia for this current study are similar to reported demographics from previous studies in terms of female to male ratio, age range and mean age, as well as years of professional experience (The College Board, 2011). The sample for this study is dissimilar from previous studies in racial and ethnic diversity, representing a more narrow perspective of diversity than the predicted population of public school counselors in Virginia (as reported by previous studies; The College Board, 2011).

Dependent Instruments Descriptive Statistics

This section will provide information about the scoring of the dependent instruments, mean scores for each measure in this study's sample, as well as mean scores for the instruments nationally with similar populations. Information will be provided on the Kegan Subject/Object Interview adapted to Essay-format, The DIT-2, and the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior.

Kegan Subject/Object Interview Adapted to Essay Questions

This method of assessing Subject/Object developmental level was devised by Bebeau and Lewis (2004). Participants are asked to respond in essay-format to a series of five questions that

are intended to elicit emotion surrounding issues of professionalism and professional identity (see appendix C). The purpose of these questions is not to see if the individuals can respond accurately or comprehensively to all of the questions, but to reveal the cognitive structure of how the respondents conceptualize their professional role and professional self (Bebeau & Lewis, 2004). To measure this, it is important that the researcher scoring the essays be able to distinguish between the content of what is written, and the structure of meaning that is underlying in order to identify an *estimation* stage or phase of identity formation. Indeed, Monson & Hamilton (2010) note that this method for assessment is an *estimation* of stage development level in one narrow aspect of self (professionalism); the more precise measure of Kegan Subject-Object stage level is the Subject Object Interview (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1988). However, previous studies using Bebeau & Lewis' method have identified statistically-significant differences between stage estimations (Barton, Snook, Forsythe, Lewis, & Bullis, 2007; Monson & Hamilton, 2008; Monson & Hamilton, 2010; Roehrich & Bebeau, 2005), indicating that this method is able to differentiate between subject-object stages.

Bebeau & Lewis' (2004) Manual for Assessing and Promoting Identity Development provided information on scoring the essays and how to identify structure that indicates stage development. Their manual included example essays with commentary on scoring, suggestions for the reflective writing process, and recommendations for modifying the essay questions to fit different professions and different stage development levels within the profession. Personal communication with Verna Monson, a colleague of Bebeau and Lewis who has conducted research on professional ethical identity development using Bebeau and Lewis' methodology, also provided clarification on scoring procedures.

The principal researcher scored all Subject/Object essays. First, however, inter-rater reliability was established with an expert rater in the field. This expert rater trained with Robert Kegan, developer of the Subject-Object theory and Subject/Object interview, at Harvard University in the 1990's, and has taught Kegan's theory at the doctoral level for 20 years. In addition, this expert rater has conducted her own research using cognitive developmental theory to understand counselors' professional identity development and has attended workshops by Murial Bebeau, . An 95% agreement level was achieved between the two raters' stage coding of the essays, after which the principal research scored the remaining essays.

Subject-Object development levels have been conceptualized as a sequence of hierarchical, invariant, and increasingly complex constructions of self. Subject-Object levels adapted to the professions by Bebeau and Lewis (2002) include seven distinct stages with transitions between each stage: Stage 2, The Independent Operator; Stage 2/3 Transition; Stage 3, The Team Oriented Idealist; Stage 3/4 Transition, Stage 4, The Self-Defining Professional; Stage 4/5 Transition; and, finally, Stage 5, the Humanist. Individuals at transition stages (2/3, 3/4, or 4/5) show evidence of the more advanced stage but are still primarily oriented in the previous stage. The mean Subject/Object stages for adults is Stage 3, The Team Idealist (Kegan, 1981). In this study's sample, Stages 2, 2/3 Transition, 3, 3/4 Transition, and Stage 4 were represented. Only a very small percentage of the larger population is at a Stage 4/5 Transition or Stage 5 (Kegan, 1994; Monson & Hamilton, 2011) so it is not surprising that these stages were not represented in this study's sample.

Table 4.4

Subject Object Stage Level

S/O Stage	Frequency	Percent

Stage 2 (Independent Operator)	6	19.4
Stage 2/3 Transition	2	6.5
Stage 3 (Team Idealist)	15	48.4
Stage 3/4 Transition	4	12.9
Stage 4 (Self-Defining Professional)	3	9.7
Stage 4/5 Transition	0	0
Stage 5 (Humanist)	0	0

The mean Subject/Object score for this sample was 2.93 (M = 2.93; SD = .5979), median of 3.0 and the mode was 3.0. This is consistent with previous literature indicating that the modal level for adults in professional fields is the Team Oriented Idealist, or, Stage 3 (Kegan, 1994).

The Defining Issues Test-2 (DIT-2)

The DIT-2 is a revision of the original DIT created by Rest (1979). The DIT-2, developed by Rest, Narveez, Thoma, and Bebeau (1999), is more up-to-date, shorter, has more streamlined instructions, eliminates fewer subjects for unreliability, and has higher validity and reliability than the original DIT. Like the original, the DIT-2 measures moral judgment schema, which is known as the "P score." The P score is the degree to which respondents prefer post-conventional reasoning over less complex levels of reasoning. Confirmatory factor analysis of the DIT-2 found an underlying structure of three general schemas: personal interests, maintaining norms, and post-conventional (pertaining to moral ideals and frameworks to solve complex issues). The P Score is the sum of Stages 5A, SB, and 6 (all post-conventional reasoning levels) which is then converted to a percent ranging from 0 to 95.

The DIT-2 also introduced an N2 score (which is highly correlated with the P Score), representing the degree to which respondents prefer post-conventional reasoning AND reject personal-interest reasoning schema (Thoma, 2006). For this study, the P Score was utilized as it

is the score that is most familiar to researchers (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003). The DIT-2 is scored by the Office for the Study of Ethical Development at the University of Alabama. All raw DIT-2 data and demographics information for this study were sent to the Center for scoring and were received in electronic form two weeks later.

The mean DIT-2 P score for this study's sample was 37.6 (M = 37.6, SD = 18.26). Normative data for the DIT is compiled by the Office for the Study of Ethical Development at the University of Alabama and is available, listed by participant education level, through their *Guide for DIT-2: A Guide for using the Defining Issues Test, Version 2*. In this study's sample all 30 participant have at least one graduate degree. Normative DIT-2 data for individuals with graduate-level degrees is a mean DIT-2 score of 41.06 (M = 41.06, SD = 15.77, n = 853) (Bebeau & Thoma, 2003). Bebeau & Thoma (2003) caution researchers when using normative data for the DIT-2 because normative data statistics have not taken into account specific demographics that might influence DIT-2 scores such as region of the country or type of education (professional training vs. liberal arts, for instance). The normative scores listed by education level provide a general guideline for understanding the sample population, which, in this sample population is slightly below the normative data for individuals with a graduate degree with a 3-point mean difference and a wider standard deviation from the mean. Table 4.5 below presents the mean and standard deviation for the DIT-2 P scores in this study and mean and standard deviation DIT-2 P scores for the comparative sample by education level.

Table 4.5

DIT-2 P Score Means and Standard Deviations

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Current Study	37.6	18.26
Comparative Group by Education	41.06	15.77

Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior

On the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior, participants were asked to rank, on a 1-5 scale, the following considerations when dealing with student risk-taking behavior: the seriousness of the behavior, upholding the law, complying with school district policies, protecting the student, not disrupting the process of counseling, likelihood that the student will continue counseling after breaking confidentiality, gender of the student, age of the student, your relationship to the student's parents/family, prior relationship to the student, upholding ethical principles, meeting expectations of school administration. Participants were also asked to rate themselves on a 1-5 scale on ability to interpret ethical standards and level of knowledge of legal and ethical principles. When considering whether or not to break confidentiality when aware of student risk-taking behavior, respondents were most likely to consider how to best protect the student (M = 4.97; SD = .183) and the seriousness of the behavior (M = 4.90, SD = .305). Participants were least likely to consider the gender of the student in making these decisions (M = 1.47; SD = .819). Results for all factors on this instrument are presented below in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

Considerations for When to Break Student Confidentiality

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Seriousness of behavior	30	4	5	4.90	.31
Upholding law	30	3	5	4.70	.54
Complying with school district policies	30	3	5	4.50	.63
Protecting student	30	4	5	4.97	.18

Not disrupting counseling process	30	1	5	3.50	1.08
Likelihood student will continue counseling	30	1	5	3.33	1.06
Gender of student	30	1	3	1.47	.82
Age of student	30	1	5	2.77	1.38
Relationship to family	30	1	5	2.57	1.19
Prior relationship to student	30	1	4	2.80	1.13
Upholding ethical principles	30	2	5	4.73	.79
Meeting expectations of school administration	30	1	5	3.93	.87
Self rating: Interpreting ethical standards	30	1	4	2.23	1.10
Self rating: knowledge of legal/ethical principles	30	3	5	4.17	.59

Note. Rating scale: 1 = extremely unimportant, 2 = somewhat unimportant, 3 = neutral, 4 = somewhat important, 5 = extremely important.

Previous research using the Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior survey indicated the same two factors as the most likely to be considered with a mean of 4.61 (M = 4.61, SD = .95) for protecting the student and a mean of 4.62 (M = 4.62; SD = .91) for seriousness of the risk-taking behavior (Moyer & Sullivan, 2012). As with this study's results, Moyer and Sullivan (2012) found student gender to be the least likely consideration (M = 1.71; SD = 1.07) in deciding whether to hold or to break confidentiality with student risk-taking behaviors. Table 4.7 below shows means and standard deviations for this comparative study by Moyer and Sullivan (2012).

Table 4.7

Comparison Study Means and Standard Deviations

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Seriousness of behavior	331	1	5	4.62	.91
Upholding law	330	1	5	4.13	1.05
Complying with school district policies	332	1	5	3.95	1.10
Protecting student	328	1	5	4.61	.95
Not disrupting counseling process	329	1	5	3.52	1.05
Likelihood student will continue counseling	329	1	5	3.35	1.12
Gender of student	331	1	5	1.72	1.07
Age of student	328	1	5	2.85	1.41
Prior relationship to student	329	1	5	4.01	.97
Meeting expectations of school administration	329	1	5	2.78	1.21

Note. Rating scale: 1 = extremely unimportant, 2 = somewhat unimportant, 3 = neutral, 4 = somewhat important, 5 = extremely important.

Statistical Analysis of Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following section will report statistical analyses performed relative to the four research hypotheses for this study. The four research hypotheses are listed below.

Hypothesis I.

School counselor ethical professional identity development level (Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay format) will be positively related to moral reasoning development level (DIT-2).

Hypothesis II.

School counselor ethical professional identity development level (Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay form) will be positively related to considerations when

making ethical decisions regarding confidentiality with minors in the school setting (Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior).

Hypothesis III.

School counselors who are members of professional counseling organizations will display a consistent construction of their professional ethical identity (Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay form).

Hypothesis IV.

School counselors who are graduates of a CACREP-accredited masters degree program construct ethical professional identity (Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay form) in significantly different ways than school counselors from graduate programs that are not CACREP accredited.

Results

Hypothesis I. A Pearson product moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between Kegan Subject-Object developmental level and the DIT-2 moral reasoning level. The results of the correlation statistical analysis indicated a significant positive correlation of .481 ($r = .481$, $p = .007$).

Table 4.8

Pearson Correlation Between S/O Level and DIT-2

	Subject/Object Pearson Correlation	Significance
DIT-2	.481	.007

Hypothesis II. A Pearson product moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between Kegan Subject-Object developmental level and factors that school counselors consider when making decisions regarding confidentiality with minors in the school

setting. A significant negative correlation was found between Subject/Object level and complying with school district policies ($r = -.412$, $p = .024$) and meeting the expectations of administration ($r = -.441$, $p = .015$). A significant positive correlation was found between Subject/Object level and age of student ($r = .377$, $p = .040$). All correlations and significance statistics for Subject/Object level and each potential factor to consider when making ethical decisions regarding confidentiality with minors in the school setting are reported in table 4.9

Table 4.9

Pearson Correlations Between S/O Level and Considerations for Confidentiality

| | Subject/Object | |
	Pearson Correlation	Significance
Seriousness of behavior	.151	.425
Upholding law	-.172	.362
Complying with school district policies	-.412*	.024
Protecting student	.137	.471
Not disrupting counseling process	-.349	-.349
Likelihood student will continue counseling	-.154	.417
Gender of student	-.005	.980
Age of student	.377*	.040
Relationship to family	.031	.873
Relationship to student	.133	.483
Upholding ethical principles	-.223	.236
Meeting expectations of school administration	-.441*	.015
Self rating: Interpreting ethical standards	.181	.338
Self rating: Knowledge of legal/ethical principles	.081	.670

* Significant at $p = .05$

Hypothesis III. A Pearson product moment correlation was used to examine the relationship between Kegan Subject-Object developmental level and membership in professional

counseling organizations. No statistically significant relationship was found between

Subject/Object developmental level and professional organization membership (r = -.100, p =

.598), Subject/Object developmental level and participation in professional development

trainings through professional counseling organizations (r = -.128, p = .502), or Subject/Object

developmental level and professional training in ethics (r = .195, p = .301).

Table 4.10

Pearson Correlations Between S/O Level and Professional Membership, Professional Training

| | Subject/Object Pearson | |
	Correlation	Significance
Professional Organization Membership	-.100	.598
Professional Development Trainings Attended	-.128	.502
Professional Training in Ethics	.195	.301

Hypothesis IV. A Pearson product moment correlation was used to examine the

relationship between Kegan Subject-Object developmental level and graduation from a

CACREP-accredited counseling-related graduate program. No significant relationship was found

between the two variables (r = -.359, p = .051).

Table 4.11

Pearson Correlations Between S/O Level and CACREP-Accreditation

| | Subject/Object | |
| | Pearson | |
	Correlation	Significance
CACREP-Accreditation Status of Training Program	-.359	.051

Additional Findings

Independent samples t-test for DIT-2 scores and whether or not the participant was a Licensed Professional Counselor showed a significant difference in mean scores (t = 2.262, .032). Participants with their LPC had a mean DIT-2 P score of 64.000. By comparison, non-LPC participants had a mean DIT-2 P score of 35.714. An independent samples t-test for Subject/Object Developmental level and whether or not the participant was a Licensed Professional Counselor was non-significant (t = .770, p = .448).

A Pearson product moment correlation statistic identified a significant negative correlation between DIT-2 scores and working at the middle school level (r = -.374, p = .042) and Subject/Object developmental level and working at the middle school level (r = -.405, p = .026).

Significant positive correlations were found to exist between school level (elementary, middle and high) and considerations for when to break confidentiality regarding risk-taking behaviors among minors. Among elementary school counselors, a Pearson product moment correlation statistic revealed a positive correlation with consideration of the age of the student in when to break confidentiality (r = .546, p = .002), considering the counselor's relationship with the family (r = .380, p = .038), and the counselor's confidence in interpreting ethical standards (r = .494, p = .006). A negative correlation was found between elementary school counselors and rating of their own level of legal and ethical knowledge (r = -.366, p = .047). Among middle school counselors, a negative correlation was found with consideration of the age of the student (r = -.479, p = .007), and middle school counselors' rating of their own interpretation of ethical standards (r = -.509, p = .004). Among high school counselors, upholding the law (r = -.373, p = .043) and upholding ethical principles (r= -.378, p= .040) were both negatively correlated with working at the high school level.

Summary

Chapter four included an overview of all statistical analyses that were used to answer this study's research questions. The chapter first included a detailed description of the study's sample demographic independent variables including frequencies, percents, and means for age, gender, race/ethnicity, state where currently working as a professional school counselor, academic degrees, year earned graduate degree, CACREP-accreditation status of training program, number of years practicing as a professional school counselor, licenses and certifications held, number of training courses attended in counseling ethics over the past two years, current counseling professional organization membership, participation in professional development opportunities through counseling professional organizations, school level of current position, characterization of political views (very liberal, somewhat liberal, neither liberal nor conservative, somewhat conservative, very conservative), US citizenship, and primary language. These demographics frequencies, percents and means were then compared to demographic statistics from similar previous studies. This provided the reader with a better understanding of the unique characteristics of this study's sample as well as ways in which it mirrored samples from previous studies and may reflect larger general trends.

Next, the chapter provided descriptive statistics about the study's dependent instruments, the Kegan Subject/Object Interview Adapted to Essay Questions, the DIT-2, and the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior. Information was provided regarding scoring procedures for the instruments. Normative data for the instruments was listed when available.

Lastly, research hypotheses for this study were reviewed and a description of all statistical analyses performed on that data set to answer each of the research questions was

presented. In summary, a significant positive correlation (r = .481, p = .007) was found using a Pearson product moment correlation statistic between Kegan Subect-Object level and DIT-2 P score. Using the same statistic, a significant positive correlation was found between Subject/Object level and considering the age of the student when deciding whether to break confidentiality (r = .33, p = .040).

A significant negative correlation was found between Subject-Object level and complying with school district policies when considering whether to break student confidentiality (r = -.412, p = .024) and considering meeting the expectations of administration when considering whether to break student confidentiality (r = -.441, p = 0.15), both using a Pearson product moment correlation statistic. All other factors were non-significant; correlations and significance for these factors were presented in Table 4.8. No significant relationship was found between Subject-Object level and membership in professional counseling organizations (r = -.100, p = .598) using a Pearson product moment correlation. Additionally, no significant relationship was found using a Pearson product moment correlation using the variables of Subject-Object level and graduation from a CACREP-accredited training program (r = -.359, p = .051).

While chapter 4 provided the data analysis procedures and results, chapter 5 will provide a discussion of potential implications for these results. Future research that extends what is currently known about the subject of this study will be explored. Additionally, strengths and limitations of this study will be examined.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

Results from this study increase our understanding of school counselors' ethical professional identity and how their constructions of ethical professional identity relate to school counselors' moral development and related factors school counselors consider when making decisions about student confidentiality in the school setting. Chapter five includes a brief overview of the current study and research methodology, implications of the results for the fields of school counseling and counselor education, as well as strengths and limitations of this study. The chapter concludes with possible avenues for future research.

Overview of Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand relationships between school counselors' ethical professional identity, moral reasoning, and considerations for when to break or hold student confidentiality in the school setting. Previous studies have examined intra- and internal processes of professional identity development (Gibson, Dollarhide & Moss, 2012), but no known studies have considered the role of ethical identity development in the formation of a professional identity for school counselors.

As mentioned previously, many school counselors work in context of systems in which multiple ethical standards, laws, and educational policies exist and sometimes conflict (Lambie, 2011; Stone, 2005). School counselors face the challenge of working in the school setting with minors who do not legally own the right to informed consent, and the boundaries regarding student confidentiality and parents, teachers, administrators and other school stakeholders are often unclear (Glosoff & Pate, 2002; Davis & Michelson, 1994; Isaacs & Stone, 2001). The issues brought to school by students today include alcohol and drug use, divorce, poverty,

homelessness, violence, disease epidemic including sexually transmitted diseases, bullying and suicidal ideation are intense and increasingly complex (Davis & Michelson, 1994; Lambie, 2011). Simultaneously, the average number of students on a school counselor's caseload has increased to over 450 students (ASCA, 2010), and with recent budget cuts in many school districts across the county indicate that this trend is on the rise.

The complex role and functions school counselors serve in K-12 schools requires advanced capacity for ethical reasoning and decision-making (Lambie et al., 2011). In order to adequately address the demanding and often ambiguous nature of work with minors and multiple stakeholders in the school setting, school counselors themselves must have access to a more adaptive cognitive schema for understanding complex issues and decision-making.

Chapter one introduced and substantiated the unique challenges school counselors negotiate in developing a distinct ethical professional identity as well the need for adaptive cognitive ability and problem-solving to face the daily challenges of the professional role. The need to extend research regard the role of ethical professional identity and cognitive functioning, related to comprehension of ethical issues and decision-making in the school setting was substantiated.

Chapter two presented current literature related to Robert Kegan's theory of constructivist self-development, Neo-Kohlbergian moral development, professional ethical identity, and cognitive developmental theory applied to the field of school counseling. In light of the lack of empirical research exploring school counselor professional ethical identity, the researcher proposed a study examining the relationship between school counselor professional ethical identity, moral reasoning and considerations for ethical dilemmas in the school setting.

This study sought to increase our understanding of these complex issues and to better understand how school counselors conceptualize their ethical professional obligations and how their constructions of these obligations translates to specific behaviors in their work setting. By combining two developmental-measures, Kegan's Subject-Object instrument and the DIT-2 measure of moral reasoning, along with a behavioral measure, the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behaviors, this exploratory study has contributed to our understanding of the nature of an ethical professional identity in school counselors and applications of cognitive development to school counseling practice.

This study consisted of a sample of 51 public school counselors in Virginia. These 51 school counselors completed Kegan's Subject-Object Interview Adapted to Short Essays, the DIT-2, the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior, and a demographics questionnaire including age, gender, race/ethnicity, state where currently working as a professional school counselor, academic degrees, year you completed your graduate degree, CACREP-accreditation status of training program, number of years practicing as a professional school counselor, licenses and certifications held, number of training courses attended in counseling ethics over the past two years, current counseling professional organization membership, participation in professional development opportunities through counseling professional organizations, school level of current position, characterization of political views (very liberal, somewhat liberal, neither liberal nor conservative, somewhat conservative, very conservative), US citizenship, and primary language.

In scoring the Subject-Object Essays, only 30 of the original 51 were able to be scored. Of the remaining 30 responses that were able to be scored, 83.9% were female and 12.9% male; the mean age was 38 with a range of 23-64 years old; 28 identified as Caucasian/White, one

identified as African American/Black, and one identified as Other Race/Ethnicity; 28 reported having a masters degree in counseling, two with a masters degree in a non-counseling field, two with an education specialist degree in counseling, one with an education specialist degree in a non-counseling field, one with a PhD in counseling and one with a PhD in a non-counseling field; the mean number of years experience was 12.53 (SD = 9.2); 23 held a school counseling license, one was a licensed social worker, and two were licensed professional counselors; 58% have worked at the elementary school level, 54% at the middle school level, and 74% at the high school level; 75% were current members of a professional counseling organizations; 25.8% reported that they have attended at least one professional development training or workshop through a professional counseling organization in the past 12 months.

It was hypothesized that school counselor ethical professional identity development level would be positively related to moral reasoning development level, that school counselor ethical professional identity development level would be positively related to considerations when making ethical decisions regarding confidentiality with minors in the school setting, that school counselors who are members of professional counseling organizations will display a consistent construction of their professional ethical identity, and that school counselors who are graduates of a CACREP-accredited masters degree training program construct ethical professional identity in significantly different ways than school counselors from graduate programs that are not CACREP-accredited.

Results of this study indicated support for the first hypothesis that Subject-Object level would be positively correlated with moral reasoning level. Partial support was found for hypothesis two with significant correlations found between Subject/Object level and considerations of complying with school district policies, the student's age, meeting the

expectations of school administration. No support was found for hypothesis three that there would be a relationship between Subject/Object developmental level and professional organization membership, Subject/Object developmental level and participation in professional development trainings through professional counseling organizations, or Subject/Object developmental level and professional training in ethics. Additionally, no support was found for hypothesis four that school counselors who graduated from a CACREP-accredited training program would construct their ethical professional identity in a particular way that was significantly different than graduates of non-CACREP accredited training programs. However, with a p value of .051, a larger sample size may have produced significant results.

Discussion of Major Research Findings

General Research Questions

Research Question I. The first research question in this study asked, "How is school counselor ethical professional identity development level related to moral reasoning developmental level?" First, I will discuss ways in which ethical professional identity levels have been assessed in the past. Traditionally, constructions of ethical professional identity have been assessed using the Kegan Subject-Object Interview (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1988). This method, however, is time consuming, taking approximately 90 minutes per Subject/Object interview (Lahey, 1988), costly to transcribe and code, and cumbersome to administer to large sample populations for research studies or program evaluation (Monson, personal communication, 2013). Ethical professional identity has also been assessed through the Epistemological Reflection interview (Baxter-Magolda, 2004), the Wabash National Study interview (King et al., 2009), and the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT) which measures a related construct, ego development (Hy & Loevinger, 1996).

In search of a way to make the Subject-Object assessment more accessible for use, but retain the ability to ascertain concepts of identity and constructions of meaning-making, Bebeau and Lewis (2003) devised the reflective essay method of assessment. Using an essay format to identify Kegan Subject-Object level is a relatively new method with limited validity, though recent studies have provided support for this method (Bebeau & Lewis, 2003; Monson & Hamilton, 2011; Roehrich & Bebeau, 2005) and have been received positively in the field (Thoma, personal communication, 2013). It is important to note that the essay methodology uses a more narrow frame of reference than the Subject-Object Interview. The Subject-Object Interview assesses overall stage of consciousness development whereas the essay methodology assesses professional role concepts, specifically looking at a particular phenomenon such as professionalism through the lens of Kegan's stage theory (Monson, personal communication, 2013). This focus on professional role concepts offer a means to focus empirically on the crucial professional context related to contemporary complex challenges and obligations. Results from the essay methodology are not equivalent to the Subject-Object interview's stage of consciousness development level, although they are related and recent studies have found strong agreement between the two (Bebeau & Lewis, 2003; Monson & Hamilton, 2011; Roehrich & Bebeau, 2005).

Theoretically, both the Kegan Subject-Object Interview assessment and the essay methodology should show a strong positive correlation with other developmental measures such as the Defining Issues Test (DIT-2), which assesses moral development level, or the Washington University Sentence Completion Test (WUSCT), which assesses ego development level (Monson & Hamilton, 2011). The first research questions for this study sought to determine that relationship: How is school counselor ethical professional identity development level (Subject-

Object essay) related to moral reasoning development level (DIT-2)? Results from this study showed a moderate positive correlation of .481 (p = .007), which was consistent with the research hypothesis for this study that a significant, positive relationship would be established.

Results from previous studies combining Subject/Object estimate using the essay methodology and the DIT-2 show similar trends and are presented in Table 5.1 in comparison to results from this current study. Monson and Hamilton's (2010) study of law students used a non-random sample, which precluded the use of inferential statistics in analyzing data. Instead, they used non-parametric crossstabs correlation analysis of mean DIT-2 P scores by Kegan stage score estimate. They found a low positive correlation between the two variables. They also found a statistically significant difference between Subject/Object Stage 3/4 and Stages 2, 2/3, and 3 (p = .04) using t-tests with Subject/Object stage as the grouping variable.

Table 5.1

Mean DIT Scores by Kegan Stage Estimate, Current Study Compared to Prior Studies

Kegan Stage Estimates	Current Study	Monson & Hamilton 2010 (law students)	Roehrich & Bebeau 2005 (dental students)	Monson & Hamilton 2008 (dental students)
Stage/Transition	P Score M, SD	P Score M, SD	P Score M, SD	P Score M, SD
Stage 2 (Independent Operator)	26.67 (9.77) (n = 6)	39.39 (14.05) (n = 11)	39.7 (12.5) (n = 6)	43.61 (14.33) (n = 12)
2/3 Transition	17.00 (21.21) (n = 2)	38.53 (14.34) (n = 18)	43.4 (12.9) (n = 32)	43.57 (12.99) (n = 49)
Stage 3 (Team-Oriented Idealist)	39.47 (20.00) (n = 15)	40.43 (18.04) (n = 23)	41.2 (2.5) (n = 4)	45.09 (11.94) (n = 18)

3/4 Transition	44.00 (10.58) (n = 4)	47.46 (14.94) (n = 20)	47.7 (24.3) (n = 4)	45.09 (12.50) (n = 12)
Stage 4 (Self-Defining Professional)	55.33 (6.11) (n = 3)	46.67 (n = 1)	0	50.00 (11.94) (n = 4)
Mean	37.6 (18.26) (n = 30)	43.1 (14.80) (n = 73)	43.1 (13.3) (n = 46)	44.33 (12.68) (n = 95)

Note: Adapted from Monson and Hamilton, 2011, p. 406.

As can be seen by Table 5.1, results from this study follow a similar pattern as previous studies, with DIT-2 P scores trending upward with Subject/Object stage estimation. Using independent samples t-tests in this study, a statistically significant difference was found between Stage 3.5 and Stage 2, between Stage 3 and Stage 4, between Stage 2.5 and Stage 4, and between Stage 2 and Stage 4. This indicates that the Subject/Object instrument was sensitive to detecting stage differences between the more extreme ends of the scale, but less sensitive to differences between stages in the middle of the scale. This also reflects results from Monson and Hamilton's (2010) study that found a significance difference in DIT-2 P score, although at the 3/4 transition level. One additional difference between Monson and Hamilton's (2010) study and this current study is that instead of a significant *low* positive correlation between Subject/Object stage estimate and DIT-2 P scores, this current study found a significant *moderate* positive correlation (using Pearson's product moment correlation statistic as opposed to Monson and Hamilton's use of categorical crosstabs analysis). Had the sampling of Monson and Hamilton's (2010) been normally distributed, their study might have shown a stronger correlation using a Pearson product moment correlation statistic. Had this current study's sample size been larger, the

correlation might have been stronger in this study as well. The issue of sampling will be discussed further in the strengths and limitations section of this chapter.

Research Question II. The second research question in this study asked, "How is school counselor ethical professional identity development level related to considerations when making ethical decisions regarding confidentiality with minors in the school setting?" The Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behaviors survey asked participants to respond to 12 possible factors to consider when making decisions about breaking student confidentiality to report risk-taking behaviors. The potential factors included: seriousness of the student's behavior, upholding the law, complying with school district policies, protecting the student, not disrupting the counseling process, likelihood that the student will continue counseling, gender of the student, age of the student, relationship to the student's family, having a prior relationship to the student, upholding ethical principles, meeting the expectations of school administration. All 12 of these possible factors were analyzed individually using a Pearson product moment correlation statistic to examine potential relationships with Subject/Object level.

The purpose of this research question was to investigate the relationship between ethical professional identity and ethical decision-making and action. Bebeau (2008) stated that an ethical identity provides the bridge between cognition and action. If that is indeed the case, one should expect to see a relationship between ethical identity and particular actions, or considerations for action. However, the link between reasoning and action has been know as the "judgment-action gap" (Walker, 2004). The research hypothesis for research question two explored whether ethical professional identity would be positively related to considerations when making ethical decisions regarding risk-taking behaviors among minors in the school setting.

The research hypothesis was partially confirmed with significant correlations between Subject/Object stage estimation and the factors of complying with school district policies, age of student, and meeting the expectations of administration. A significant negative correlation was found between Subject/Object level and complying with school district policies ($r = -.412$, $p = .024$) and meeting the expectations of administration ($r = -.441$, $p = .015$) at an alpha level of .05. A significant positive correlation was found between Subject/Object level and age of student at the .05 alpha level ($r = .377$, $p = .040$). Correlations with the other nine potential factors were found non-significant at the .05 level and are reported in chapter 4 and in Table 4.8.

Generally speaking, moral identity concerns the degree to which morality is an important part of a person's identity. These results indicate that the higher the school counselors' level of ethical professional identity, the less he or she considers factors of whether or not the decision follows school district policies or is meeting the expectations of administration and is more likely to consider the age of the student in deciding whether to break confidentiality to report student risk-taking behaviors. These results are consistent with research in moral development that looks at a shift from external locus of evolution to a more internal locus of evaluation with increased cognitive development (Kegan, 1982)—participants seemed to indicate that they were less likely to consider whether their decisions were in line with what external authority figures believed to be the "right" course of action. The findings are also consistent with previous literature that individual at higher levels of cognitive development are more sensitive to interventions that are developmentally appropriate for their client (Hunt, 1971; Sprinthall, 1994)—hence, school counselors at higher level of ethical professional identity tend to consider student age in their evaluation of when it is appropriate to break confidentiality to report student risk-taking behaviors.

Interestingly, despite theoretical convergent validity between the Subject/Object assessment and the DIT-2, a Pearson product moment correlation between the DIT-2 P score and the 12 potential factors produced no significant results. The factor of complying with school district policies produced a correlation of -.360 (p = .051) and, with a larger sample, this likely would have produced significant results. This discrepancy is likely also due to the modest correlation of .481 between the Subject/Object essay assessment and the DIT-2 in this study.

This lack of stronger agreement between the two instruments could be explained in a number of ways. For one, the Subject/Object essay methodology does not have the research base and established empirically validity of the DIT-2. Because scoring of the Subject-Object essays is conducted by hand, the instrument is more susceptible to scorer bias than the DIT-2 and may reflect the scorers' own professional ethical identity and what they feel is a more cognitively-adaptive approach. Though the primary researcher and scorer of the essays used Bebeau and Lewis' (2003) scoring manual and also received additional help from experts in the field, additional training in scoring the Subject/Object reflective essays for the primary researchers (and scorer of the essays) might increase scoring validity and perhaps result in a stronger relationship between the two instruments.

It is also possible that professional ethical identity (measured by the Subject-Object assessment) is not as closely related to moral reasoning (measured by the DIT-2) as previously theorized. It is possible that the Subject-Object assessment is measuring a slightly related and yet distinct construct from the DIT-2 P score. As with this current study, a number of other previous studies have established a relationship between the two constructs, though a modest relationship (Bartone, Snook, Forsythe, Lewis & Bullis 2007; Monson & Hamilton, 2008; Monson & Hamilton, 2010; Roehrich & Bebeau, 2005). This research on methods to assess ethical
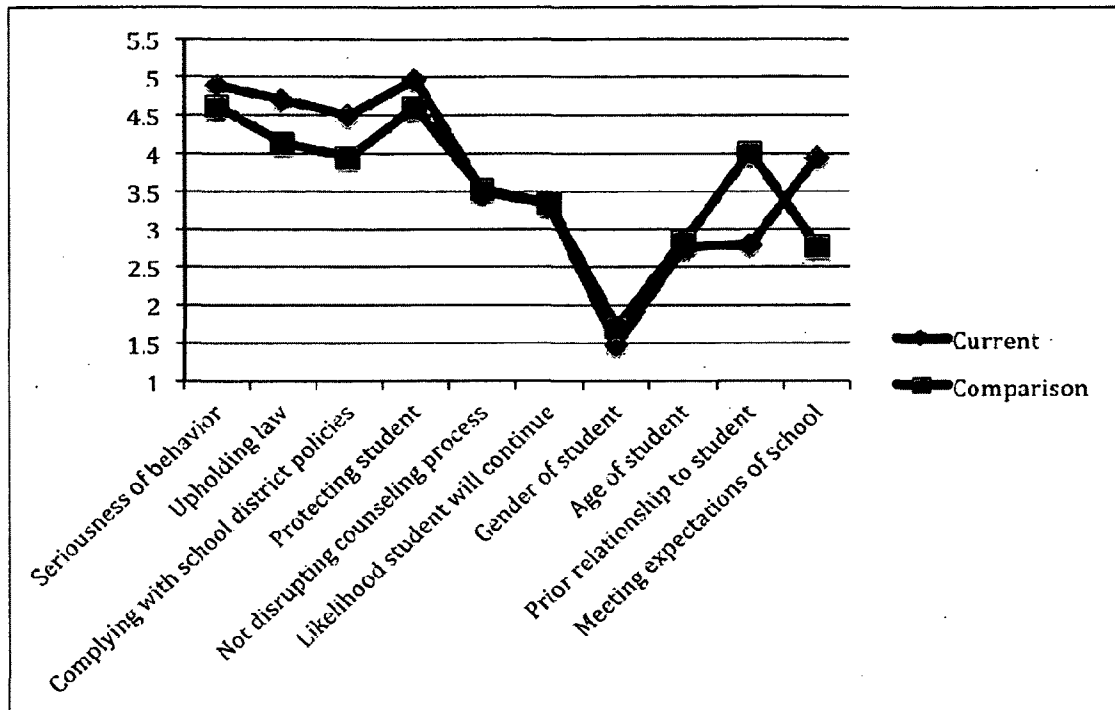
professional identity is in its infancy, and, though it holds promise for the future, additional research studies should be conducted to more firmly establish to what degree these two constructs are related, and the increase validity of the essay method in assessing Subject-Object developmental level.

Also of note, in comparing mean scores for each of the potential factors in this current study to mean scores from the comparison study (Moyer, Sullivan, & Growcock, 2012), several significant trends emerge. While respondents to this current study were similar to the previous comparison study on factors of seriousness of student behavior, upholding the law, complying with school district policies, protecting the student, not disrupting the counseling process, likelihood that the student will continue counseling, gender of the student, and age of the student, respondents to this current study differed significantly from the previous comparison study on factors of having a prior relationship to the student and meeting the expectations of school administration. Participants of the current study were less likely than participants of the previous comparison study to consider their prior relationship with a student and were more likely to consider the expectations of school administration when making decisions regarding student confidentiality.

Figure 5.1

Graph of Mean Scores of Current Study and Comparison Group

Research Question III. The third research question in this study asked, "How do school

counselors who are members of professional counseling organizations construct their

professional ethical identity?" Professional organizations often have the goal of supporting the

development and professional identity of members of the professional field. The American

Counseling Association is "dedicated to the growth and development of counselors and those

they help" by providing resources and services that will allow counselors to "expand your

knowledge and enhance skills, grow your professional network, demonstrate your commitment

to the counseling profession and those you serve" and provide access to products and services

(www.counseling.org, accessed on March 25, 2013).

ASCA's website (accessed on March 25, 2013) states that its purpose is to, "support

school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, personal/social and career

development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as

responsible members of society." ASCA provides professional development, publications and

other resources, research and advocacy to more than 31,000 professional school counselors around the globe. With a similar mission, the Virginia School Counselor Association works to "actively promote excellence in the profession of school counseling and to provide member support through professional development, advocacy, leadership, accountability, and collaboration" (www.vsca.org, accessed March 25, 2013). VSCA's current membership among school counselors in Virginia as of February, 2013, the time of this study, was nearly 1000 members (www.vsca.org).

If the aim of these organizations is to promote professional development and construction of a particular professional identity, school counselors who are active members in these organizations might be assumed to have a more developed sense of professional self, or ethical professional identity. Additionally, both ACA and ASCA have professional codes of ethics that theoretically members of their organization are more attune to than non-members.

The research hypothesis three for this study was that school counselors who are members of professional counseling organizations will display a consistent construction of their professional ethical identity (as measured by the Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay form). Of the 30 participants, 20 (66%) identified as current members of professional counseling organizations and 10 (33%) identified as not a current member. No statistically significant relationship between these two variables of professional organization membership and Subject/Object developmental level was found using a Pearson product moment correlation statistic ($r = -.100$, $p = .598$); therefore, research hypothesis three was not supported.

Two additional variables were included to assess for the influence of professional organizations on development of ethical professional identity of school counselors and to moderate for the type of participation members have in their professional organizations: number

of professional development trainings through professional counseling organizations attended per year (even if the participant was not a current member of the counseling organization), and number of workshops in ethical training the participant has attended over the past two years. Neither of these additional variables was statistically significant with a correlation of .195 (p = .301) for number of ethics workshops or trainings attended per year, and a correlation of -.128 (p = .502) for number of professional development opportunities attended through professional counseling organizations. Frequencies and percents for these variables are listed in chapter 4.

These results which indicate that membership in professional organizations or additional professional development training have no significant impact on ethical professional identity are surprising considering the goals and missions of these professional organizations and the fact that cognitive development has been show to be enhanced through education and professional training (Baxter-Magolda, 2004; Bebeau, 2008; Sprinthall, 1994). It is possible that the training received through professional counseling organizations is focused on counseling skills and functions of the role rather than specifically cognitive development and promoting a more complex conceptualization of one's professional identity and professional obligations. Indeed, it appears that these professional development trainings do not provide school counselors in the field with a level of engagement that produces more advanced understanding of professional issues, professional obligations, and tools for negotiating ethical priorities—tools that support school counselors in understanding their professional obligations in a more sophisticated and nuanced manner. A complex understanding of ethical issues and advanced ethical decision-making has been shown to be necessary to meet the demands of the profession (Lambie, 2007; Kegan, 1994). However, without support to develop these more complex cognitive tools in the form of professional training provided by the larger professional community, and considering the

absence of support from their individual work environments in schools (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Lambie, Ieva, & Mullen, 2011), how are school counselors able to effectively navigate challenging ethical dilemmas?

Sprinthall's (1994) work on the effectiveness of professional development training is consistent with these results. His work clarified that standard professional development workshops provide much didactic information, however, they fail to provide the level of engagement in the conceptually complex concerns that are likely to promote psychological development. Sprinthall (1994) outlined the conditions necessary for adult cognitive development to take place in a systematic manner, a process which he called "Deliberate Psychological Education" (DPE; Sprinthall, 1994). Traditional professional development programs are unlikely to promote the critical contemplation and perturbation necessary for adult psychological development, and findings from this current study may support this body of literature. However, applying the DPE model to professional development training in the field could provide an environment where more complex understanding of professional obligations could be explored. A more thorough explanation of the Deliberate Psychological Education will be discussed later in this chapter.

Research Question IV. The fourth research question in this study asked, "How do school counselors who graduated from a CACREP-accredited masters degree program construct their professional ethical identity as compared to graduates from a non-CACREP-accredited masters degree program?" CACREP, as an accrediting council, sets a standard of quality for counseling programs. CACREP's website lists the value of attending a CACREP-accredited program as "recognition that the program has been evaluated and meets or exceeds national standards, knowledge that he graduate has met prerequisites for credentialing and is ready for

entry into professional practice, and an understanding that the focus of the program will be on professional counseling, not psychology, education or other helping professions" (www.cacrep.org, accessed March 25, 2013). CACREP provides a list of standards (2009) that counseling training programs must meet or exceed in order to be listed as accredited. CACREP maintains that graduates of CACREP-accredited programs perform higher on the National Counselor Examination for Licensure and Certification than graduates from non-CACREP-accredited programs and that CACREP promotes counselor professional identity (www.cacrep.org).

The research hypothesis for research question four was that school counselors who are graduates of a CACREP-accredited masters degree programs construct ethical professional identity (Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay form) in significantly different ways than school counselors from graduate programs that are not CACREP accredited. A Pearson product moment correlation statistic showed this hypothesis to be not- supported ($r = -.359$, $p = .051$). With a larger sample size, this statistic likely would have been significant at the .05 alpha level. However, it is interested to note that this correlation (though non-significant) represented a negative relationship, meaning school counselors who graduated from a CACREP-accredited program displayed lower levels of ethical professional identity as measured by the Subject-Object reflective essay assessment. A Pearson product moment correlation statistic measuring DIT-2 P score by CACREP graduate status also produced a non-significant correlation, however it was a positive trend rather than negative ($r = .209$; $p = .267$). Theoretically, these two instruments should provide trends in the same direction as they both related to cognitive development level. As mentioned before, this lack of agreement between the two may be indicative of scoring error on the Subject-Object essay assessment or possibly that the Subject-

Object assessment and the DIT-2 are measuring different constructs. This relationship between cognitive development level and training program accreditation status should continued to be investigated in the future as it appears that error in the instruments has contributed to this study's results that are inconsistent with previous literature.

Additional statistics were run on these variables of Subject-Object stage and CACREP graduate status to check for significant relationships. The variable of Subject-Object stage estimation was changed from a scale measure to a nominal measure and crosstabs chi-square and correlation analyses were run. Both analyses were non-significant at the .05 level: chi-square tests produced a value of 6.11 (p = .191) and a correlation analysis produced a Pearson's R of -.359 (.051).

Critique and Limitations

The current study explored relationships between school counselors' ethical professional identity, moral reasoning and considerations when making ethical decisions regarding confidentiality with minors in the school setting. This was an exploratory study using Kegan's Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay format, a method of assessment with preliminary empirical validity, the DIT-2, with theoretical convergent validity with the Subject-Object assessment, and a third instrument that assessed considerations for ethical decision-making and behaviors. Demographics information was collected from participants to answer research questions and to use as moderating variables for the dependent instruments. As with any research study using human subjects, this study has limitations that are important to note. These limitations confine the results and contribute to potential threats to external validity. These limitations will be discussed in terms of sampling procedures and responses, instrumentation, and overall research design.

Sampling

Sampling procedures for this study involved collecting email address for all public school counselors in the state of Virginia who have a publically-accessible email address located on the district or school website. A total of 3,681 email addresses were collected. An invitation to participate in this research study was sent to all 3,681 email addresses with a web-link to the study instruments that were loaded onto Qualtrics. Of the 3,681 invited participants, 51 participants followed the link and completed all study instruments on Qualtrics. Of those 51, one response was unusable because the participant was not currently working in Virginia. An additional 20 responses were unusable because the Subject-Object essays were too short or thin to provide evidence of stage estimation and could not be sored. The remaining 30 responses were analyzed for this study. This represents a 1.4% overall response rate and a .8% usable response rate within the 2-week response window. A response rate of 10% is considered desirable for education research. This study, by comparison, does not meet this threshold. I will discuss several reasons why this might be the case.

Sheehan (2001) conducted a review of email survey response rates and found common variables that increase response rate: the number of questions in the survey, the number of pre-notification contacts, number of follow-up contacts and survey topic salience. While this topic is likely to be a salient topic to most school counselors in Virginia, the number of questions in the total survey was likely a significant deterrent for potential volunteers. The informed consent page on Qualtrics stated that the estimated time of completion for the instruments was 45 minutes; indeed, the actual time for completion was an average of 50 minutes for participants—a significant time commitment for school counselors. Qualtrics did not capture uncompleted responses to the study instruments so it is unclear how many participants started the instruments

but did not complete due to fatigue. Methods were put in place to reduce participant fatigue such as the addition of a completion bar at the bottom of the Qualtrics page so that participants would know how close to completion they were. Also, a monetary incentive of a $100 Visa gift card for one out of every 30 participants was used to increase participation and completion of the study instruments. While these incentives may have contributed to a few additional responses, Shih and Fan (2009) indicate that, in general, incentives have little overall statistically significant impact on response rate.

Three notifications were sent to participants during the data-collection window to remind them of the invitation to participate in the survey. According to Sheehan (2001), these notifications increase participant response rate. However, the data-collection window of two weeks likely reduced the opportunity for school counselors to respond to the invitation, particularly in light of the fact that the invitation was sent during the spring semester at a time that several school districts may have been on spring vacation.

Additionally, as previously mentioned, the accessible population for this study was school counselors who are currently working in Virginia public schools. This sample population, however, poses several challenges to the generalizability of the study's results to the larger population of all school counselors in the United States. For one, this sample does not include school counselors who work in private schools—a significant number of professionals with over 360 state recognized accredited private schools in Virginia alone (Virginia Council for Private Education, 2012). It is known that, on average, private school counselors are older than the average public school counselor (The College Board, 2011), which may translate to more years of work experience. Prolonged exposure to a professional field has been shown to relate to ethical identity development level (Monson & Hamilton, 2011).

It is unknown whether school counselors working in private schools differ significantly from school counselors in public schools in other ways. Private schools may have different organizing structures with more or less support for school counselors' development. Opportunities for professional development, attending conferences, and joining professional organizations may differ as money is available for these activities. Additionally, private schools may have different requirements for working as a professional school counselor and may not require state licensure or certification for school counselor placement.

Secondly, Virginia school counselors may differ significantly from school counselors in other states in their constructions of professional identity. Because Virginia is geographically close to Washington D.C., the location of national professional organizations headquarters such as ACA and ASCA, school counselors employed in Virginia may have more exposure to professional advocacy, legal issues impacting the professional, and access to professional development and trainings sponsored by these professional groups.

Few previous studies have explored professional identity issues in Virginia school counselors, so it is unclear whether this study's sample is even a representative sample of Virginia's public school counselors. A survey by the College Board (2011) indicates that this sample might be similar in terms of gender distribution and age range. It appears to be dissimilar in racial and ethnic representation. Walker and Snarey's (2004) research has shown that the neo-Kohlbergian model of moral development is consistent across cultures, races, and ethnicities. However, it is unknown how racial and ethnic identity may impact one's constructions of professional identity. As culture and ethnicity provide the lens through which one views the world, it is possible that this may also influence one's view of professional obligations and ways of understanding and negotiating challenges of the profession.

Of note related to the population sample, Roanoke City Public Schools had a district policy that prohibits school counselors working in the district from responding to research survey that are not pre-approved by Central Office. Therefore, all Roanoke City Public Schools school counselors were removed from the email distribution list. This included 22 school counselor email addresses. Roanoake City Public Schools is a unique district in a more remote, rural area of western Virginia where many of the school counselors are the only counseling professionals in their buildings. School counselors from this area have reported feeling isolated from state-level professional development opportunities through VSCA (personal communication with VSCA members, 2013). Removal of this entire district from the sampling population removed a potentially unique perspective on school counselor ethical professional identity, school counselor roles and ethical obligations.

Instrumentation

As previously mentioned, the Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay format is a new methodology for assessing Subject-Object stage and has limited validity, although initial studies by Bebeau and Lewis (2003) and Monson and Hamilton (2010) have provided empirical support for this method of assessment. Additional studies with larger and more diverse sample populations are needed to increase validity for the use of this adapted methodology for Subject-Object stage assessment. This current study contributes to the body of research in providing the possibility for a more efficient, less expensive, and more accessible method for assessing Kegan Subject-Object stage development in the reflective essays.

As also mentioned in the previous section, the length of the survey instrument posed a challenge to response rate (Shih & Fan, 2009), participant fatigue, and possibly to the quality of responses received. The average length of time to complete the survey instrument at 50 minutes

is a considerable time commitment for participants. Participants were notified of this time to complete the instruments at the beginning of the study in the informed consent. This may have contributed to volunteer attrition at the outset. Additional participants may have not persisted to completion due to the extended length of the instruments, although statistics on this are not available as this information was not captured by Qualtrics. Time constraints may have prevents participants from fully answering the Subject-Object essays, or from providing reflective and in-depth responses, contributing to the large number of unusable responses because the answers were too short or thin to provide evidence of Subject/Object stage structure.

A final consideration of the instrumentation is the validity of online assessment compared to paper assessments that are completed in-person or by mail. It is unknown, in general, how the mode and setting in which an instrument is delivered may impact its validity. For this study, email invitations were sent out during the work-week when participants were likely at their jobs. If they attempted to take the instruments during the work day, they may have been distracted or less engaged in the instrument than if they had taken the instrument by paper at home or in an environment controlled by the researcher. Shih and Fan's (2009) meta-analysis indicated that paper, mailed versions of an instrument are superior to obtaining higher response rates than online versions, but their study did not consider whether or not the setting in which individuals take the instrument impacts the validity of the instrument. The Office for the Study of Ethical Development is currently studying the impact of online-use of the DIT-2 as compared to the paper version of the same assessment. Initial studies have supported the reliability and discriminant validity of both versions of the assessment (Xu, Irad-Nejad, & Thoma, 2007).

For the Subject-Object assessed by essay responses, the traditional method for administering is in person with paper and pen in an environment controlled by the researcher

(usually a university classroom). Monson and Hamilton (2010) used a web-based tool to administer the Subject-Object assessment to first year law school students, however, this assessment was part of a graded class assignments and expectations were set by the researchers and test administrators the students fully answer each question with in-depth, self-reflective responses. This type of assessment used in a web-based format poses a particular challenge when used with volunteer participants who lack a natural incentive such as students writing an assignment in a graded class. As with this current study, the result will likely be short and thin responses that do not include the depth of self-reflection that is necessary to code for Subject-Object structure. This significant challenge should be considered and addressed if this instrument is used in this manner for future studies.

Research Design

The research design of correlation research itself has limitations of note. The purpose of correlation research is to discover relationships between variables through the use of correlation statistics"(Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). While correlation research can provide information about relationships between two or more variables, this research design does not provide information about or assumptions of causation (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Correlation research can be used to establish cause and effect relationships between variables and the degree and direction of a relationship between variables, however, this is unlikely that this information will lead to clear conclusions about the phenomenon being studied (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). These limitations of correlational research were understood and anticipated when this research design was chosen for this study and the limitations do not detract from the information gleaned in this exploratory study. In fact, they establish a line of future inquiry to more clearly understand these

relationships among variables and to explore a potential causal relationship using a different research methodology such as experimental design (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007).

Implications for Findings

The purpose of this correlational study was to increase what is known about school counselor ethical professional identity and to understand how particular constructions of ethical professional identity may relate to school counselor moral reasoning and considerations for ethical decision-making and behaviors. Very little is known about how school counselors in the field construct their professional ethical obligations. Even less is know about how these cognitive constructions impact school counselor practice. Bebeau (2008) has suggested that development of a fully-formed moral identity is the "bridge" between *knowing* the right thing and *doing* the right thing. To better understand these relationships between identity, cognition and action, this current study sought to examine the relationships between the following constructs: school counselors' ethical professional identity as measured by the Kegan Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay format, school counselors' moral reasoning as measured by the DIT-2, and school counselors' considerations for confidentiality with minors in the school setting as measured by the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behaviors survey.

Data obtained in this study provides an important initial view into how school counselors construct their ethical professional identities and ethical obligations to students and other stakeholders. These data provide a baseline for future studies. Indeed, replication of this study with a larger sample population and a more racially and ethnically diverse population which more closely reflects the lager population of school counselors would be an initial line for the next phase of research. Increasing the sample size to 100 or more participants would provide a more substantial basis for understanding relationships between the constructs being studied.

Capturing additional information from participants regarding their school setting (for example, rural, suburban or urban location; Title I designation; whether the school counselors have a director of counseling for the district; how many school counselors work in the building; money available through the district for school counselor professional development) would shed additional light on the unique characteristics of the sample population and provide an opportunity for the researcher to control for these variables using quantitative methodology.

While this currently study established support for the relationship between cognitive development and specific considerations for ethical decision-making regarding confidentiality with students, future studies should be designed in order to more clearly link school counselor cognitive development with specific ethical behaviors. Using a similar correlational research design with the addition of a behavioral measure that asks participants to specify what action or in-action they would take when faced with an ethical dilemma would allow for an analysis of relationships between school counselor cognitive reasoning about ethical issues, and ethical action. Such instruments exist (Dufrene, 2000; Lambie, et al., 2010; Moyer & Sullivan, 2008), however, these instruments were considered too long for use in combination with the other instruments used in this current study. If future studies are to use these instruments in their entirety, effort should be taken to reduce participant fatigue by considering the method and location for administering the instruments.

The Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay format used in this study provides rich descriptive data that can also be analyzed using qualitative analysis procedures. These data can be analyzed to more fully understand the lived experiences of individual school counselors and how they make meaning of their professional role, challenges faced in their professional lives, and conflict between the expectations others hold of their professional role and expectations they

have for themselves as professionals (Cresswell, 2008). Qualitative analysis of this data can also provide a deeper understanding of the proposed structure of ethical professional identity stages outlined by Bebeau and Lewis (2003) and measured by the Kegan Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay format. Bebeau and Lewis (2003) and later studies (Bartone et a., 2007; Monson & Hamilton 2008, 2010; Roehrich & Bebeau, 2005) assessed a sample of professionals from the fields of dentistry, law, and military to validate the Kegan Subject-Object Interview adapted to essay format. It has been inferred that this structure of stage development would apply to other professions such as school counseling, but analyzing the data for qualitative themes can provide grounding for deeper understanding of constructs that are consistent with the literature.

This study also contributes to the field of Counselor Education and what is known about effective preparation of school counselors, building a foundation for interventions with school counselors-in-training to enhance ethical professional identity and moral reasoning systematically. Higher levels of cognitive development have been shown to relate to more adaptive behaviors (Bebeau, 2008; Brendel, et al., 2002; Sprinthall, 1994). Therefore, promoting development in counselor preparation programs would enable school counselors to develop more complex schemas for negotiating ethical priorities, making ethical decisions, and taking ethical action related to the complicated stakeholder relationships, competing ethical obligations, and other unique challenges that are inherent in the professional role.

Sprinthall (1994) developed an intervention model to promote cognitive development in professional training programs for teachers and counselors: the Deliberate Psychological Education (DPE) approach. The DPE approach requires five conditions that must occur simultaneously in a supportive environment to promote development: a) a role-taking experience in helping; b) guided reflection, c) a balance between action and reflection; d) continuity; and e)

a classroom climate that is both supportive and challenging (Sprinthall, 1994). Previous studies in professional fields using the DPE intervention with counselors have produced significant results indicating that cognitive development is, indeed, sensitive to intervention and may be promoted systematically when all DPE conditions are met (Bebeau, 2008; Brendel, Kolbert & Foster, 2002; Cannon, 2008; Foster & McAdams, 1998; Monson & Hamilton, 2010; Sprinthall, 1994). An intervention methodology uses in these previous studies could be used in school counselor training programs to promote development in ethical professional identity and moral domains to provide further empirical support.

Conclusion

School counselors have a heavy obligation to support the academic, personal/social and career development of all students under their care, which is, for most school counselors, a case load of over 450 students (ASCA, 2009). This support in multiple domains of student development must occur in the context of an education system where various ethical standards, laws, and educational policies conflict (Lambie, 2011; Stone, 2005) and the boundaries regarding ethical obligations to student, parents, teachers, administrators and other school stakeholders are unclear (Glosoff & Pate, 2002; Davis & Michelson, 1994; Isaacs & Stone, 2001). The issues brought to school by students today such as alcohol and drug use, divorce, poverty, homelessness, violence, disease epidemic including sexually transmitted diseases, bullying and suicidal ideation are intense and increasingly complex (Davis & Michelson, 1994; Lambie, 2011). Consequently, issues of school counselor premature exhaustion and burnout are of great concern for the promotion of the field and, most importantly, the safety and wellbeing of the client (Lambie, 2007; Welie & Rule, 2006).

Understanding how school counselors construct their ethical professional identity, ethical obligations, and the challenges faced in the field and how these constructions impact ethical decision-making and behaviors in the schools can provide the field and Counselor Education with important information regarding ways to support school counselor ethical professional development and enhance school counselor practice at a time when K-12 students are greatly in need of the support school counselors are uniquely trained to provide. Future studies should explore school counselor constructions of ethical professional identity in greater depth through qualitative analysis, in addition to considering research designs that more clearly link school counselor cognitive development with specific ethical behaviors in the school setting. The impact of this current study's results provides a foundation for counselor educators to understand how school counselors conceptualize their ethical obligations and to be sensitive to provide opportunities for school counselors to reflect on these professional issues. Counselor educators can provide learning environment where school counselors-in-training can be challenged and supported to consider the problems inherent in the profession with greater complexity, modeling more adaptive behaviors and interventions to more adequately meet the demands of this important profession.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent

I, (print name here)_____, am willing to participate in a study of ethical professional identity development in school counselors. I understand that this study is being conducted by Morgan Kiper Riechel, a doctoral candidate in Counselor Education at the College of William and Mary.

As a participant in this study, I am aware that I will be asked to complete a set of four research instruments: a brief demographic questionnaire, Kegan's Subject-Object Short Essay Questions, the Defining Issues Test (DIT-2), and the Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior survey. These instruments have been uploaded to Qualtrics, a web-based survey software program.

I am aware that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from this study at any time without penalty. The assessments and demographic questionnaire will be confidential. No identifying information will be reported in the study results.

By participating in this study, I understand that there are no obvious risks to my physical or mental health.

Confidentiality Statement

As a participant in this study, I am aware that all results from the survey instruments will be kept confidential and my name will not be associated with any of the results of this study.

I fully understand the above statements, and do hereby consent to participate in this study.

_____   _____
Participant's Name   Date

Appendix B

Demographics Questionnaire

Gender: _____ (1) male _____ (2) female

Age:_____

Race (please check only one group):

_____ (1) Asian, Pacific Islander, Asian American

_____ (2) Black, African American

_____ (3) Latino, Hispanic

_____ (4) Native American, American Indian or Alaskan Native

_____ (5) White, Caucasian, European American

_____ (6) Other (please specify _____)

Highest level of education (please check all that apply):

____ Ph.D.-(year)_____(field) _____

____ Ed.D. -(year)_____(field)_____

____ M.A./M.S./M.S.W.- (year)_____(field)_____

_____Other - (year)_____(field)_____

Did you attend a CACREP-accredited master's program in school counseling? ____ yes____no

Year you graduated with your master's degree in school counseling?_____

Number of years you have practiced as a professional school counselor: _____

Please check all licenses and certifications that you currently hold:

        1. ___ Certified School Counselor

        2. ___ Licensed Social Worker

        3. ___ Licensed Professional Counselor

        4. ___ Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

        5. ___ Other (please specify)_____

        6. ___ Not currently licensed or certified

Number of courses or workshops you have taken in counseling ethics in the past two years?

____1 ____2 ____3 ____4 ____more than 4

Do you actively participate in ASCA's professional development opportunities (conferences, trainings workshops)?

_____ yes, ____ # per year _____ no

In what level of school do you currently work? (check all that apply)

_____elementary _____middle/junior high _____high school

Appendix C

Kegan's Subject-Object Short Essay Questions

1) Personally, how do you understand the meaning of professionalism? How did you come to this understanding?

2) What will you expect of yourself as you work toward becoming a Professional School Counselor? What will the profession expect of you?

3) What conflicts do you expect to experience (eg. between your responsibility to yourself and to others—clients, families, school administration, school community, larger community, profession)?

4) What would be the worse thing for you if you failed to live up to the expectations you have set for yourself?

5) What would be the worst thing for you if you failed to live up to the expectations of your clients (the profession) (school administration) (school community) (society)?

Appendix D

Defining Issues Test

(sample question)

Imagine that you are about to vote for a candidate for the Presidency of the United States. Imagine that before you vote, you are given several questions, and asked which is the most important to you in making up your mind about which candidate to vote for. In this example, 5 items are given. On a rating scale of 1 to 5 (1=Great, 2=Much, 3=Some, 4=Little, 5=No). Please rate the importance of the item (issue) by filling in which pencil one of the bubbles on the answer sheet by each item.

1. Financially, you are personally better off now than you were four years ago?
2. Does one candidate have a superior moral character?
3. Which candidate stands the tallest?
4. Which candidate would make the best world leader?
5. Which candidate has the best ideas for our country's internal problems, like crime and health care?

Appendix E

Revised Ethical Dilemmas in Reporting Student Risk-Taking Behavior

1. Please rate how important each of the following considerations is in your decision to break confidentiality to report student risk-taking behaviors.

Extremely Unimportant 1	Somewhat Unimportant 2	Neutral 3	Somewhat Important 4	Extremely Important 5

- Apparent seriousness of the risk-taking behavior   1   2   3   4   5
- Upholding the law   1   2   3   4   5
- Complying with school/district policies   1   2   3   4   5
- Protecting the student   1   2   3   4   5
- Not disrupting the process of counseling   1   2   3   4   5
- Likelihood that student will continue counseling after breaking confidentiality   1   2   3   4   5
- Gender of the student   1   2   3   4   5
- Age of the student   1   2   3   4   5
- Relationship to parents/family   1   2   3   4   5
- Prior relationship to student   1   2   3   4   5
- Upholding ethical principles   1   2   3   4   5
- Meeting the expectations of school administrators   1   2   3   4   5

2. When interpreting ethical standards, how would you rate yourself?

Very Strict 1	Somewhat Strict 2	Between Strict & Flexible 3	Somewhat Flexible 4	Very Flexible 5

3. How would you rate your level of knowledge and familiarity with legal and ethical principles for your profession?

Below Average 1	Somewhat Below Average 2	Average 3	Somewhat Above Average 4	Above Average 5

VITAE

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