

2018

Professional Identity Differences in Novice Counselors

Mary Dolores Katalinic
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Counselor Education & Supervision

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Mary Dolores Katalinic

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Walden University
2018

Abstract

Professional Identity Differences in Novice Counselors

by

Mary Dolores Katalinic

MA, Lenoir-Rhyne University, 2012

BS, Lenoir-Rhyne University, 2010

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Many researchers have found that differences exist in counselors' professional identity (PI) associated with gender, learning opportunities, and specialty area. However, researchers have not focused on the impact of counselors' type of education program (online vs traditional) to PI. The purpose of this study was to address this gap and determine if differences exist in PI across program types for novice counselors. The framework for this study was built around the concept of PI, defined as including knowledge, expertise, professional roles, attitudes, behaviors, and interactions. The research question was designed to examine the differences in PIs across traditional and online education settings. A convenience sample of 140 new graduate participants was obtained for this cross-sectional survey study—113 from traditional programs and 27 from online programs. PI of participants was measured using the Professional Identity Scale in Counseling (PISC) and data were analyzed using an analysis of covariance with the covariates of gender and specialty area. The results did not show a significant difference in PI between program types, however, the means of the PISC showed that the group of online graduates scored slightly higher. While not statistically significant, the findings of the study contribute to positive social change by showing that no differences exist across the PI development of novice counselors based on program type. Therefore, counselor educators can continue to practice in ways that foster the development of students based on their education program type. Counselor education that fosters the development of student PI contributes to the community as a whole by producing individuals who are competent and knowledgeable for professional practice.

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Dedication

My dissertation is dedicated to my guardian angels, Nannie and Da, who always taught me that I can reach my highest potential and told me to “dream, reach, believe, and one day you will achieve.”

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I never thought that being called “Dr. K” in high school would be something that would actually come true. I am so thankful that with several individuals help, my dream has been turned into a reality.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Background

In the growing age of technology and online counselor education programs, counselor educators need to be aware of the impact of education program types on the professional identity of students. Therefore, in this research study I sought to identify if any differences in professional identity exist in counselors who attended traditional or online counselor education programs. To date, researchers have investigated differences between education settings (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009) as well as differences in professional identity based on diversity (Healey & Hays, 2012; Meyers, 2016; Nelson & Jackson, 2003), experiential tasks (Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010; Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014), and counselor development (Kaufman & Schwartz, 2004; Luke & Goodrich, 2010). However, there is limited research on professional identity as influenced by educational setting. Counselors' professional identities may develop differently due to educational setting. Therefore, the results of my research may contribute to positive social change by identifying the areas of professional identity traditional and online educational programs should focus on for student development.

This chapter includes a review of the basic tenets of this research study. I have included the problem and purpose statements which encouraged the development of this study on professional identity differences. The discussion also includes the research question and hypothesis. Further, this chapter includes an introduction to the conceptual framework of professional identity development (PID) based on the research of Woo (2013) who developed the Professional Identity Scale in Counseling (PISC). After a

review of the conceptual framework, I review the definitions, assumptions, scope, delimitations, and limitations.

Research related to this study includes topics work on education settings and professional identity. Education settings are of focus in literature in regard to what constitutes a traditional and online setting based on the percentage of instruction provided via electronic methodologies (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009). Specifically, researchers describe traditional education as a method in which 0% of instruction occurs online (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009). However, discussions and assignments which are not providing instruction can occur through electronic methods (Landers, 2009). On the other hand, online education refers to education that provides instruction 80% or more through electronic means (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Cummings, Chaffin, & Cockerham, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009). According to the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2018), online education includes programs that deliver instruction 50% or more of the time via online or distance technologies. Online education stems from distance education methods that began as early as 1840 when Isaac Pitman offered to teach shorthand by mail (Beasley Preffer, 2008; Conklin, 2008; Hall, 2016). Since then, distance education has evolved to include online methodology as a way to meet unique learner's needs who may have previously experienced barriers to education in the traditional setting (Beasley Preffer, 2008; Conklin, 2008; Flores, 2012; Meder, 2013; Nelson, 2015). Researchers focusing on traditional and online education settings have found a difference in education formats and final grade obtained by students (Urtel, 2008)

and that online learners gain more knowledge (Landers, 2009). Considering these research results, I conclude that differences may continue into counselor education programs and student development of professional identity.

Researchers have focused on professional identity because of the impact a counselor's professional identity has in professional practice and society (CACREP, 2015; Gibson et al., 2012). Researchers have suggested that professional identity varies because of special considerations such as population demographics (Healey & Hays, 2012), experiential learning opportunities (Luke & Goodrich, 2010), and educational level (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). For example, gender has been found to have an impact on professional identity because women are more likely to score higher on areas related to orientation and beliefs but are less likely to be engaged in professional conferences (Healey & Hays, 2012). Additionally, Meyers (2016) found that women develop professional identity through connectedness and relationships with others. Ethnic diversity can also impact the multiple identities of professionals as these individuals work to incorporate cultural preferences with professional development (Hinojosa, 2011; Nelson & Jackson, 2003). Wiseman and Egozi (2006) suggested that Israeli professionals who have personal counseling were less likely to have professional difficulties and experience burnout which, was directly related to their level of PID. Continuing with diverse populations, Pfohl (2014) described how preparation for working with sexual minorities can help facilitate the development of a more comprehensive identity. Similar to differences in diverse individuals, various activities positively influence professional identity and roles (Allen Lincicome, 2015; Kaufman & Schwartz, 2004; Luke &

Goodrich, 2010; Murdock, Stipanovic, & Lucas, 2013). These include leadership positions (Luke & Goodrich, 2010), mentoring (Allen Lincicome, 2015; Murdock et al., 2013), and supervision (Kaufman & Schwartz, 2004). Most influential on professional identity are experiential learning opportunities, which provide vital experiences for the professional development of counselors-in-training and new counselors (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014). Researchers have also suggested that more advanced counselors have a stronger professional identity because they have had opportunities to gain more experiences (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). These research findings indicate that as a whole, differences exist in professional identity based on experiences of the individual.

While researchers have focused on educational settings in relation to several factors, researchers to date have not connected educational setting and professional identity. In this study, I addressed a gap in the literature to determine if differences in professional identity exist in counselors who attended traditional or online education programs. Understanding if differences in professional identity exist is important because the number of online programs is growing, and counselor educators must know how to appropriately foster the professional identities of students. Appropriately fostering the development of professional identity in students can help ensure that students enter the profession competent and confident in professional practice. The results of my research may assist counselor educators in focusing on one or more of the six areas of professional identity to further foster development in students. Therefore, this study aids counselor educators in providing the best possible education to counselors-in-training who, in turn, will have a direct impact on society. These counselors have a direct impact on society

through professional practice with clients and through interactions with other professionals. These interactions demonstrate professional competence or lack thereof by individuals and subsequently demonstrate the need for additional research determining what areas of professional identity counselors-in-training need further development.

Problem Statement

Literature on PID has encompassed a wide range of subjects including the development of counselors-in-training (Prosek & Hurt, 2014), online training programs (Robey, 2009; Perry, 2012), and the transition from counselor-in-training to professional counselor (Gibson, Dooley, Kelchner, Moss, & Vacchio, 2012). Researchers have not studied the differences in the PID of counselors-in-training enrolled in traditional and online accredited counseling programs.

Researchers have determined that counseling degree programs designed to deliver counselor education with the requirements of CACREP can contribute to higher levels of counseling professional identity (Mascari & Webber, 2013). Mascari and Webber (2013) demonstrated how students who graduate from CACREP accredited programs had a stronger professional identity and had a greater portability of licenses. However, no research exists comparing the professional identity of students in traditional and online counseling programs. Therefore, a problem exists in that counselor educators do not know if there are differences in PID of new counselors based on whether they graduated from traditional or online graduate programs in counseling.

Counselor educators are responsible for educating and training counselors-in-training for professional practice, regardless of the institutional setting (CACREP, 2017).

This responsibility highlights the importance of understanding whether differences exist between academic settings so that students and educators can decide between appropriate educational options. Online learning environments may have power differences between instructors and students as compared to a traditional institution (Peach & Bieber, 2015). For example, online learning creates a change in educational norms regarding professors' responsibilities and roles (Peach & Bieber, 2015) as well as the ability for students to resist conforming to institutional practices (Gale, Wheeler, & Kelly, 2007). Traditional education also values the roles of professor and student as increased interactions occur additionally helping to alleviate anxiety (Erichsen & Bollinger, 2011). Computers were introduced into counselor education programs as early as 1984 to aid in student reflection, career readiness, and self-awareness (Robey, 2009). Technology facilitated training in assessment, note-taking, and evaluation, which subsequently lead to the development of online counselor education courses (Robey, 2009). Today, over 60 CACREP accredited online counselor education programs exist (CACREP, 2018), indicating a need for this research. Understanding the differences in PID between traditional and online academic settings can help to ensure every student receives the best education and preparation for the profession.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative survey study was to determine whether there are differences in new counseling graduates' PID between traditional/brick and mortar and online counseling programs. Professional identity was the dependent variable, and the type of education setting was the independent variable. There are six subscales in Woo's

(2013) PISC including (a) engagement behaviors, (b) knowledge of the profession, (c) professional roles and expertise, (d) attitude, (e) philosophy of the profession, and (f) professional values. The results of this study contribute to the literature on professional identity by exploring whether there are differences in development that occur between traditional and online learners. Results of this research study may assist counselor educators in fostering the development of the PID of their counselors-in-training in a manner most appropriate for the type of program.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference across the six factors of professional identity, as measured by the PISC, of new counselors who completed traditional or online counseling master's degree programs after controlling for graduates' gender identity and counseling specialty area?

H₀: After controlling graduates' gender identity and counseling specialty area, there is no statistically significant difference in professional identity between novice counselors educated in traditional master's level counseling degree programs and those educated in online master's level programs, as measured by PISC scores across sub-factors for (a) knowledge of the profession and its philosophy, (b) expertise required of members of the profession, (c) understanding of members' professional roles, (d) attitudes towards the profession and oneself, (e) behaviors expected of members of the profession, and (f) interactions with other professionals in the field.

H₁: After controlling graduates' gender identity and counseling specialty area, there is a statistically significant difference in professional identity between novice

counseling educated in traditional master's level counseling degree programs and those educated in online master's level degree programs, as measured by PISC scores across sub-factors for (a) knowledge of the profession and its philosophy, (b) expertise required of members of the profession, (c) understanding of members' professional roles, (d) attitudes towards the profession and oneself, (e) behaviors expected of members of the profession, and (f) interactions with other professionals in the field.

Conceptual Framework

This study was grounded in the concept of professional identity (Woo, 2013). Woo (2013) described the concept of professional identity as including the six areas: "(a) knowledge of the profession and its philosophy, (b) expertise required of members of the profession, (c) understanding of members' professional roles, (d) attitudes towards the profession and oneself, (e) behaviors expected of members of the profession, and (f) interactions with other professionals in the field" (p. 31). Woo identified these six areas as contributing to the definition of professional identity after a review of the literature and identification of common themes of what impacts professional identity in current research.

Remley and Herlihy's (2014) described professional identity as associated with individuals' understanding of the history of counseling, the philosophy surrounding counseling, the roles of the counselor, ethical considerations, ethical pride, and engagement in the profession. Emerson (2010) similarly defined professional identity by using six core areas described by CACREP. Emerson (2010) determined that these six areas were complex and was not able to create an appropriate measure of professional

identity. While Calley and Hawley (2008) created a non-generalizable instrument, the researchers' definition of professional identity similarly included six areas. Those areas were values, professional activities, scholarship, theoretical orientation, history of the profession, and credentialing. However, Healey and Hays (2012) went a different direction in their definition by focusing on professional identity as a process of understanding the profession and integrating self-concept with the role, philosophy, and professional characteristics.

Woo's (2013) is a more collective definition because it incorporates many aspects of professional identity described in other definitions. Woo (2013) used the definition to develop the PISC, which is the assessment measure I used in this research. The scale yielded a composite score for professional identity and scores on six subscales which I used in data analysis. The composite score helped in determining if there is an overall difference in professional identity across settings, and the subscale scores helped to determine differences across the six areas of professional identity.

Nature of the Study

For this study, I used a quantitative, non-experimental survey design. The population of focus was new counselors within 1.5 years of graduation from a CACREP accredited graduate degree program in counseling. I solicited participation by emailing two listservs. These listservs provided an electronic means to reach counseling students, graduates, and counselor educators who could participate, or forward or post the link for new graduates. I used quantitative measures to understand the variables of professional identity and type of program attending. I did not use other quantitative methods because

my design was not experimental (see Creswell, 2009). Cross-sectional survey design was most appropriate because I collected data from participants at one point in time (see Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, & DeWaard, 2015; Groves et al., 2009). Cross-sectional survey methodology was helpful in eliciting responses to items, which are meant to understand concepts such as backgrounds, experiences, and attitudes (see Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015), which was the goal of this study. Additionally, this cross-sectional survey methodology approach mirrored present research on PID (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Dollarhide, Gibson, & Moss, 2013; Limberg et al., 2013). I analyzed the demographic data through frequencies. I analyzed the scale data using a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) for difference between the mean composite score of PID for two independent groups and a difference in each of the six areas of professional identity in the PISC while controlling for the other five areas and the two controlling variables of gender and specialty area.

Definitions

I used the following operational definitions throughout this study.

Accredited programs: Programs accredited by CACREP. These programs must have full accreditation while the individual was in the counseling program. Programs that were in the initial application process or accreditation lapsed were not eligible for participation.

Online education settings: Programs that have 80% or more of instruction delivered online (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Cummings et al., 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009). In this instance, the instruction is primarily occurring through electronic means.

For the purpose of this study, online education setting is a program which delivers 50% or more content either in an online or distance-based program since this is the definition offered by CACREP specific to counseling programs (CACREP, 2018).

Professional identity: Woo (2013) described the six areas developed by counselors as including “(a) knowledge of the profession and its philosophy, (b) expertise required of members of the profession, (c) understanding of members’ professional roles, (d) attitudes towards the profession and oneself, (e) behaviors expected of members of the profession, and (f) interactions with other professionals in the field” (p. 31). First, knowledge of the profession involves an expansive knowledge of the counseling profession and the meaning of being a counseling professional. Philosophy of the profession includes the basis of professional work including core beliefs and values of the profession’s philosophy. The next area, professional roles and expertise include questions to assess the individual’s knowledge and skills developed, which are specific to counseling. Attitude is the subscale that has questions incorporating pride for the profession and belief in the future of the profession had by the counseling professional. Additionally, engagement behaviors include involvement in the profession including professional associations, publishing, presenting, reading research and journals, advocacy, credentialing, and participating in community services. The final area, interaction, includes questions regarding the socialization process and the interpersonal component of identity development.

Traditional education setting: Also called a brick and mortar education setting, a traditional setting involves programs where the instructor and the learner are together

more than half of the time at an institution (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009). However, researchers have more specifically identified that the percentage of learning occurs face-to-face may be at least 70% of the time when using web-facilitated learning such as course hubs (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009). These percentages for instruction are important; however, in this study, traditional education setting is defined as a setting that delivers instruction in person more than 51% of the time.

Assumptions

I made several assumptions in this study. First, I assumed that the participants would respond in a willing and honest manner. This assumption was needed because the responses may not have been valid if a participant did not respond honestly. Another assumption was that participants were appropriately identified when determining qualifications for participation, and that all had graduated within the prior year and a half of the study. Third, I assumed that participants were able to read and understand the scale items in the PISC. Assuming that individuals could read the scale was necessary for use of the scale, which is pre-established and an effective measure of PID. I also assumed that there were no other factors that may have impacted the results of the study. This included the assumption that the participants were a representative sample of the counseling population.

Scope and Delimitations

In this study, I focused on counselors who had graduated within 1.5 years from either a traditional or online master's level counseling program. This specific population

was selected because, while possible, students may have been harder to solicit participation from out of fear of coercion from instructors. This study was only open to individuals with internet network access because the survey involved internet-based technology to provide a link to participants. I used web-based survey methodology because of financial constraints of mailing a paper and pencil survey to a membership list from a professional association. Electronic methodology also allowed for more efficient quantitative analysis because the online environment provided a direct download for data responses and then direct analysis.

The population selected online included only individuals who could speak English because the demographic survey and the PISC have not been translated to other languages. I focused on the population of students attending either traditional or online educational settings because a limited amount of research exists comparing the two populations. The population also included individuals across the United States in hopes of being able to generalize the results to the entire population of new counselors.

Limitations

The research study design and methodology had some limitations. The first limitation was recruitment methodology, which required that individuals either be part of a listserv or know someone who may forward the invitation to them. I addressed this limitation by posting the invitation on the American Counseling Association (ACA) community called ACA Connect and the American Mental Health Association (AMHCA) community as well as Facebook pages. I also addressed this limitation by

generating a back-up plan for contacting CACREP program contacts to distribute the participation invitation as needed.

Another limitation was that the research did not control for professional involvement the participants had with the graduate program and any extracurricular involvement the participants had in the profession (i.e. association involvement, honor society involvement, previous work experience). Since the study primarily focused on educational setting, professional involvement was not of focus. A bias could have resulted from multiple emails for recruitment of participation. I limited this by sending a max number of emails over a certain period of time.

Significance

Counselor educators and supervisors have the responsibility of facilitating PID of graduate students and new counselors; there is thus a need to help counselor educators understand how to best influence the professional identity of students (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Healey & Hays, 2012). Specifically, in this study, I sought to understand each of the six aspects of recent graduates' comprehensive professional identity including engagement behaviors, knowledge of the profession, professional roles and expertise, attitude, philosophy of the profession, and professional values, which researchers have described in the literature (Emerson, 2010; Remley & Herlihy, 2014; Woo, 2013). This study is significant because a better understanding of the development of the six areas of professional identity in individuals could help counselor educators assist in the PID of their students (Calley & Hawley, 2008), particularly across settings. The understanding of the differences in professional identity depending on the type of program by counselor

educators can address a gap in the literature and make an impact on the profession by ensuring that all counselors-in-training receive the best possible opportunity for development of their professional identity. Knowing the differences in professional identity can help counselor educators in developing experiences to meet the needs of their specific students in each of the six areas of professional identity. For example, both types of educational programs can then provide experiences in each of the areas of professional identity which scored as low as a result of this research. Knowledge of these differences may also contribute to the level of competence the professionals enter the profession as knowledge and philosophy are two of the areas of focus in professional identity. Having knowledge of these differences can lead to positive social change because counselors can develop in areas specific to their needs as either traditional or online learners. This social change then impacts the professional community as individuals enter the profession knowledgeable and able to provide high-quality services.

Summary

In Chapter 1, I described the major tenets of this research study in which I sought to determine if differences exist in PID between traditional and online new master's level counseling graduates. I reviewed the background, problem statement, purpose statement, and research question that helped to guide my conceptual framework of the study. I then used the framework to describe the definitions associated with the study and the assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and overall significance of the research study. While this is an overall review of the study, in the next chapter I work to justify the study through a thorough literature review.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature on educational settings and professional identity of counselors is very limited. The results of research provide knowledge of differences in students and the learning provided in each setting. Researchers have identified what constitutes traditional, hybrid, and online education (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009), as well as criticisms of each method (Beasley Preffer, 2008; Duran, 2014). Limited research exists on counselor education in both settings, but results of extant research have indicated that PID may occur similarly in both (Perry, 2012; Robey, 2009). Researchers specifically studying professional identity have suggested that professional identity is very different across gender, specialty areas, and experiences. However, there has been no research addressing the possible differences in professional identity between traditional and online education settings.

Literature Search Strategy

In this chapter, I seek to describe the theoretical foundation and literature on professional identity as related to traditional and distance counselor education programs. I searched for the literature using various library databases including Academic Search Complete, ProQuest Central, PsychINFO, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. Search terms included *professional identity*, *PID*, *counselor*, *counselor education*, *counselors-in-training*, *traditional education*, *brick and mortar*, *online education*, *distance education*, *Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)*, and *accredited programs*. Search term combinations included combinations of *professional identity* and related terms and then *counselor* and related

terms. I also researched online and distance education using a broad search including all types of degree programs to obtain a wider range of information. When researching types of programs, I used the term *mental health professional* to obtain some research for setting and mental health programs. The literature search was an ongoing process beginning in 2015. The years of publication were not limited but were specific to the most recent literature for the professional identity evaluation instruments. I periodically rechecked the search items about every two months as new research became available in various sources including dissertations and peer-reviewed journals.

Conceptual Framework

The framework for this study comes from research on professional identity. Woo's (2013) is one of the most recent studies. Woo sought to provide a new definition of professional identity and develop a measure for the definition of professional identity using relevant literature. However, a large part of literature has relied on the conceptual definition of professional identity provided by Remley and Herlihy (2014). The definition includes individuals understanding the history, philosophy, roles, ethical considerations, professional pride, and professional engagement in the counseling profession. Researchers such as Calley and Hawley (2008), Emerson (2010), Healey and Hays (2012), and Woo (2013) have sought to add to this definition as they create their own.

Emerson (2010) used the definition of professional identity as described by Remley and Herlihy (2014) to develop a new professional identity measure. The definition focused on six core areas, which are similar to the CACREP definition of professional identity (Emerson, 2010). Using this new definition, Emerson developed an

evaluation which did not test be reliable and valid as the six areas are more complex than originally thought (Emerson, 2010). Similar to the results of Emerson (2010), the results of Calley and Hawley (2008), were not intended to be generalizable and did not meet standards for reliability and validity for standardized instruments. Calley and Hawley (2008) utilized six areas for evaluation including values, professional activities, scholarship, theoretical orientation, history of the profession, and credentialing. In addition to Emerson (2010) and Calley and Hawley (2008), Healey and Hays (2012) described professional identity differently, focusing on a process where an individual begins to understand his profession and integrate his or her self-concept with the role, philosophy, and professional characteristics. This definition of professional identity has contributed to researchers' investigations of gender differences, engagement and orientation, and development as related to professional identity (Healey & Hays, 2012).

While these definitions were comprehensive, the research studies that use them have no significant findings. Due to limited significant findings, Woo (2013) offered a comprehensive definition that directly corresponds to the evaluation instrument she developed. The definition includes six areas: “(a) knowledge of the profession and its philosophy, (b) expertise required of members of the profession, (c) understanding of members' professional roles, (d) attitudes towards the profession and oneself, (e) behaviors expected of members of the profession, and (f) interactions with other professionals in the field.” (Woo, 2013, p. 31). These areas are of focus because they are comprehensive and inclusive of the prior definitions of professional identity in research. The definition provided by Woo (2013) is the conceptual framework I used for this

research because it is the definition used in the assessment measure, the definition is comprehensive, and the work of Woo has been used in subsequent literature. Based on this information, I determined that the definition was the most appropriate framework for this research.

Education Settings

Counselors-in-training receive education in traditional and distance academic settings. Distance education is learning in which the instructor and learner are at a distance for more than half the time (Urtel, 2008), and traditional education is where the instructor and learner are together more than half the time. These education methodologies are similar in content provided but different regarding the instruction of the content (Landers, 2009).

Traditional Education

Traditional education includes the brick and mortar methodology of instruction where a learner attends a class at an institution. In this methodology, 0% of content or instruction occurs online (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009). Traditional education offers the opportunity for increased interaction between individuals, which can subsequently lessen anxiety (Erichsen & Bolliger, 2011). Similarly, web-facilitated courses are courses that have 1% to 29% of content occurring online but are primarily face-to-face (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009). In web-facilitated learning, course hubs or management systems help to coordinate course material, discussions, and assignments (Landers, 2009). Researchers have described these traditional classrooms as superior since the classroom offers an opportunity for additional

communication, comprehension, and evaluation (Wuensch, Aziz, Ozan, Kishore, & Tabrizi, 2008). Specifically, Wuensch et al. (2008) described several advantages to face-to-face education. These benefits include a natural social and spatial awareness for students and instructors, an easier more efficient interaction between individuals, and more reliable assessment processes (Wuensch et al., 2008). Overall, traditional education settings are the most natural settings for an individual to attend courses.

Blended or Hybrid Education

Similar to traditional education, blended education has started to make a rise in educational practices as it involves the use of more technology. Blended education focuses on coursework where 30-79% of instruction is online (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009). In this case, part of the education is provided online, but the course also incorporates face to face learning opportunities. Zobdeh-Asadi (2004) described how blended education seems to be working as a mixture of methodologies and increases productivity and achieves better results.

Online Education

Online education has been consistently described as an environment where 80% or more of material is delivered online through the internet to communicate, collaborate, and deliver content (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Cummings et al., 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009). I focused on online education because many adult learners are transitioning to using online education settings even though distance education has been around for some time (Albrecht & Jones, 2011). Distance education techniques began in 1961 with audio-tutorial approaches where courses utilize recordings in class or standalone (Landers,

2009). However, distance education originally began in 1840 when Isaac Pitman offered to teach shorthand writing by mail (Beasley Preffer, 2008; Conklin, 2008; Hall, 2016). Now, online education has advanced through course formats, primarily using course hubs and management systems to deliver instruction (Duran, 2014; Wuensch et al., 2008). These courses may also be uniform across course sections to increase quality uniform instructional delivery (Duran, 2014; Rovai, Ponton, Wighting, & Baker, 2007).

There is a need to understand online education, given that researchers have found that distance education occurs in 90% of 2-year and 4-year public institutions of higher education (Waits & Lewis, 2003). Additionally, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, n.d.) described how 28.5% of students in fall of 2014 were enrolled in any distance education course at a degree-granting postsecondary institution in an undergraduate or post-baccalaureate program. Over 7 million students take courses exclusively through distance education (Hall, 2016) and online education is the primary gateway for two of the five largest institutions of higher education (Brock, 2010). Due to the increase in online education opportunities, it is evident that institutions value online education opportunities. These opportunities include organizations offering several courses in both online and traditional methodologies or several different degrees or training programs entirely online (Duran, 2014; Hall, 2016). Online education offers students with transportation or health issues (Flores, 2012), or employment demands (Beasley Preffer, 2008; Nelson, 2015) the chance to expand their educational opportunities (Conklin, 2008; Meder, 2013).

Research on online education has focused on the academic success of online learners (Urtel, 2008). Results of the research have indicated that there is a difference in traditional and online education formats (Urtel, 2008) but that distance education is beneficial for learners who may not have the opportunity to participate in traditional education settings (Albrecht & Jones, 2011). When examining knowledge obtained by students, researchers focusing on online education have found that web-based instruction is 6% more effective (Landers, 2009). Researchers have also found a significant difference in the final grade and academic performance between traditional and distance education bachelors level students (Urtel, 2008).

Criticisms and Problems

Due to the differences in the traditional and online settings, several criticisms or problems exist. First, one criticism is the difference in facilitation of course rooms in traditional settings or online settings without uniform course sections (Beasley Preffer, 2008; Duran, 2014). In this case, each instructor can mold his or her practices to the classroom environment. Another criticism is the use of courses to be standalone courses or courses part of a larger academic program (Duran, 2014). If courses are part of a larger academic program, then there may be more uniformity in the course's structure and content. Online education also poses additional costs for learners (Beasley Preffer, 2008) including cost of internet access and computers. While several criticisms of online education exist, individuals are utilizing various techniques to minimize these criticisms and gain an equal education opportunity (Beasley Preffer, 2008).

In addition to criticisms of education programs, personal characteristics of the learner impact education gained by an individual. Specifically, online students must have more personal responsibility for their learning than face to face students (Duran, 2014; Nelson, 2015). Online students must also have a greater amount of intrinsic motivation to acquire and demonstrate knowledge through assignments and activities (Duran, 2014). Graduate students especially need to have more intrinsic motivation to complete courses due to the increased rigor in coursework (Rovai et al., 2007). While personal characteristics impact education, personal interactions may also impact education. Specific to counseling, online education may limit the amount of personal interaction and collaboration which can impact the development of interpersonal skills which are essential to counseling (Cummings et al., 2015).

Many scholars view both traditional and online environments as equals even though there are criticisms and differences (Conklin, 2008; Duran, 2014). For example, having both types of environments available to students allows individuals to have increased access to education (Beasley Preffer, 2008). In addition to online education increasing educational opportunity, online education also fosters the use of innovative techniques and ever-adapting technology (Beasley Preffer, 2008; Meder, 2013) and allows students the opportunity to develop knowledge and a comprehensive documentation style quicker due to assignments and activities (Nelson, 2015). One example of developing knowledge is the use of discussion boards, which help in demonstrating knowledge while also preparing students for professional conversations

and feedback (Nelson, 2015). These criticisms and differences demonstrate important considerations when implementing an online education program.

Importance of Understanding Differences

Understanding differences between programs is of importance because of the growing number of online education programs. Specifically, educational programs are implementing online programs because of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors to help programs and students succeed (Duran, 2014). Both of these educational programs appeal to students with different personalities (Beasley Preffer, 2008) and thus understanding differences is important when educating and fostering the professional identity of all students. Understanding if differences exist in professional identity between these educational methodologies can help identify if active (online) or passive (traditional) learning methodologies impact student development (Zobdeh-Asadi, 2004).

Counselor Education

The process of educating counseling professionals' dates to the early 1900s in the use of counseling in public school systems (Remley & Herlihy, 2014). The process, termed counselor education, has existed for several decades seeking to develop knowledgeable professionals. The counseling profession includes specific training, specializations or credentials, and professional organizations (Gale & Austin, 2003). One organization, the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), developed several standards and accreditation documents for the accreditation of counseling programs in the late 1960s and early 1970s (CACREP, 2017). Subsequent development of CACREP occurred in 1984 to provide leadership and guidelines for

excellence in the preparation of counseling and related educational programs (CACREP, 2017). These counseling preparation programs, whether accredited or not accredited, include a framework for educators to prepare the future of the profession in either traditional or distance education settings.

Professional Identity

Professional identity is the term which describes the way an individual views their personal and professional relationship (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Spurgeon (2012) argued that an individual should develop a professional identity before developing a professional counseling identity. Professional identity is a topic which is prominent in literature as well as in the standards published by CACREP (CACREP, 2015). The *2016 CACREP Standards* primarily focus was on developing students with a strong professional identity (CACREP, 2015). The curriculum standards offered by CACREP encourage a strong foundation through a comprehensive curriculum program. Additionally, a unified counseling identity has arisen from the development of these standards of curriculum (Brandy-Amoon & Keefe-Cooperman, 2017). While a unified identity exists, educators differ in how they foster student development due to the standards for counselor training being a broad framework for facilitation of education (Gale & Austin, 2003). The framework offers consistency in the knowledge the students acquire (Spurgeon, 2012) but not how students receive the information to develop knowledge. Counseling programs then have the freedom to encourage Individuals to develop their professional counseling identity through gaining knowledge in either traditional or non-traditional methodologies. The professional counseling identity developed by individuals can have subsequent

effects on the effectiveness of professional practice (Gale & Austin, 2003; Healey & Hays, 2012; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). More specific knowledge can help understand the process of development of professional identity in professionals.

Professional Identity Development

Professional identity development is of focus in research as individuals have sought to gain a better understanding of how individuals develop their identity. Research such as Healey and Hays (2012) and Nelson and Jackson (2003) have found that diverse individuals develop their identity differently. Additional research of Luke and Goodrich (2010) suggested that individuals develop professional identity through different tasks and activities. Researchers have also focused on PID through various educational levels (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Overall, researchers have sought to describe these differences to gain a comprehensive understanding of development.

Various populations. Research on professional identity development has demonstrated a difference in development among diverse individuals. First, differences among genders exists within research (Healey & Hays, 2012; Meyers, 2016). Healey and Hays (2012) described how societal gender role expectations, personal values, and engagement in professional activities actively influence professional identity. These gender role expectations include how external socially defined roles impact professional practice through performance role expectations (Healey & Hays, 2012). Through qualitative analysis, Healey and Hays (2012) determined through their results that gender has an impact on professional identity differences in counselors.

First, identifying as male or female has an impact on professional identity and philosophy (Healey & Hays, 2012). Findings indicated that male participants feel more empowered and are involved in more leadership positions and receive more mentorship and encouragement as a result (Healey & Hays, 2012). One result of male engagement could contribute to female's attendance at conferences as attendees and not as presenters. Additionally, gender differences existed in that female's scored higher on orientation and beliefs subscales. (Healey & Hays, 2012). Scoring higher in orientation and beliefs is evident from the findings of women being willing to attend professional conferences but not present at the same quantity as males (Healey & Hays, 2012).

Continuing with the understanding of gender differences includes a focus on women as unique learners which subsequently impacts identity development (Meyers, 2016). Meyers (2016) focused on women's identity development as occurring through connectedness and relationships. Further, Meyers described how women tend to view professional identity through womanhood or unique gender dynamics. The focus on womanhood leads these women to feel as though they are in a fight for equality related to professional identity and roles (Meyers, 2016). Gender impacts the gender socialization of learners, the legitimacy of women learners, and the recognition of gender in the learning environment (Meyers, 2016). Therefore, gender has an impact on PID because while men are simply able to become engaged in the profession (Healey & Hays, 2012), women feel as though they must fight for the opportunity to engage (Meyers, 2016). The differences between genders inform professionals of how identifying a gender can impact engagement activities and the learning environment.

Similar to gender, diversity or specifically ethnicity also has an impact on identity development. While there is not a vast array of literature on ethnicity, the Hispanic and Israeli populations have been of focus in research. A qualitative study focused on the experiences of Hispanic counseling students and suggested 7 areas of importance for PID in Hispanic students. According to Nelson and Jackson (2003), these include knowledge, personal growth, experience, relationships, accomplishment, costs, and perceptions. Counselor educators can focus on these 7 areas to foster the development of Hispanic trainees. Additionally, professionals should have knowledge of the multiple identities of Mexican American women including gender, sexual orientation, and ability status (Hinojosa, 2011). Being knowledgeable of these various identities that can impact professional identity differences (Hinojosa, 2011) can allow counselor educators to include activities which facilitate development in individuals specific to his or her unique needs.

Researchers have also focused on Israeli populations and PID (Wiseman & Egozi, 2006). Wiseman and Egozi (2006) conducted research on personal therapy for Israeli school counselors which yielded results describing how counselors who have personal counseling have less professional difficulties and less burnout. Additionally, these counselors' satisfaction with professional identity was varied depending on seniority (Wiseman & Egozi, 2006). Knowledge of the differences between cultures regarding development can encourage professionals to utilize tasks which best meet the population's needs.

Another area of diversity which is important to consider is sexual orientation. For example, Pfohl (2014) described how sexual orientation is important because one's self-awareness plays an essential role in the development of one's personal and professional identity. Integrating sexual orientation into personal development counselor trainees can subsequently develop a more comprehensive professional identity (Pfohl, 2004). Pfohl (2014) described how a discussion of biases and preparation of trainees for working with sexual minorities is one way to develop a trainee's identity. Research of Speciale, Gess, and Speedlin (2015) focused on the intersection of identities within counselor education to subsequently offer an inclusive environment for all individuals. While Speciale et al. (2015) did not specifically describe the impact of identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQQIA) the discussion suggested that an inclusive learning environment for the LGBTQQIA population can positively facilitate their identity development.

The differences of focus include gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation yielding knowledge that professional identity is a unique process for every group or population. The results of the research described the overarching importance of knowing the engagement differences between genders (Healey & Hays, 2012; Meyers, 2016), themes in development for various ethnic groups (Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Hinojosa, 2011; Wiseman & Egozi, 2005), and the importance of offering an inclusive learning environment for LGBTQQIA (Special et al., 2015). These differences across populations are important for understanding how different counselor and counselor education trainees develop their professional identities.

Tasks and activities. Tasks and activities are also of focus in research based on the previously described themes for PID. These tasks, such as leadership activities (Luke & Goodrich, 2010), experiential learning opportunities (Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010; Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014), mentoring (Allen Lincicome, 2015; Murdock, Stipanovic, & Lucas, 2013) and supervision (Kaufman & Schwartz, 2004) are influential when facilitating the development of professional identity in individuals. The tasks are unique in that each focus on a different level of development for the professional and development in different specialty areas of counseling. Results of research has provided evidence for use of these techniques in fostering the development of trainees and professionals. The following is a review of methods that have been found as useful for counselor trainee development as well as counselor educator development.

Leadership activities. First, counselor educators have fostered the development in trainees is through various tasks such as using leadership opportunities. Luke and Goodrich (2010) focused on the interaction between Chi Sigma Iota chapter leadership and PID. Specifically, the researchers focused on early career counselors who held a leadership position in the chapter (Luke & Goodrich, 2010). Researchers provided a theoretical model for the integration of leadership and identity through grounded theory based on the results. Specifically, the theoretical model included 6 components some of which included an authentic learning experience, the contextual condition of the system, and consequences of bridging or not bridging the gaps. Based on the results, Luke and Goodrich (2010) suggested that leadership activity could include PID.

Experiential learning tasks and opportunities. Another area, experiential learning tasks and opportunities, help to describe specific student development for master's level students. Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss (2010) suggested that the individual is responsible for expanding their knowledge and the counselor educator is there to serve as a guide. The results focused on the ability of the individual to facilitate change through increasing self-evaluation, self-motivation, and self-location (Gibson et al., 2010). Similarly, Moss, Gibson, and Dollarhide (2014) focused on the transformational tasks of PID at various points in a counselors' career. Through qualitative interviewing of beginning, experienced, and expert counselors, several themes emerged which contribute to PID (Moss et al., 2014). The first theme counselors identified was experiencing an adjustment to professional expectations as beginning counselors adjust to the role which they had imagined and the subsequent reality of the role (Moss et al., 2014). In the second theme, counselors worked towards both separating and integrating their personal and professional lives to compartmentalize their roles (Moss et al., 2014). Another theme, which is further identified more specifically later on in the manuscript, was the use of an experienced guide as a mentor or supervisor (Moss et al., 2014). The theme of continuous learning is evident as individuals focus on the acquisition of additional knowledge throughout one's professional career. Similarly, a theme exists surrounding professional practice and work with clients as impacting identity development. These themes are evident in varying levels of importance throughout developmental levels as essential in the development of professional identity. Overall, these experiential tasks help the individual in serving as a quality judge to

determine what is significant in the environment and what experiences will foster a strong development of professional identity.

Mentoring. The use of mentoring in PID is beneficial as professionals foster the development of other professionals through support, mutual respect, and understanding (Allen Lincicome, 2015; Murdock et al., 2013). Mentoring is a task which helps lead mentees towards a certain direction of professional development as well as provides insight into the profession (Murdock et al., 2013). Lanman (2011) identified the use of mentoring as the most influential experience for professional identity formation. One example of the use of mentoring to foster development is Curry (2011) who focused on mentoring for African American female doctoral students. The results of the qualitative study indicated that mentoring relationships increase engagement in professional development activities related to professional identity and individuals felt more supported in their development (Curry, 2011). Similarly, Murdock et al. (2013) utilized co-mentoring to increase connections with master's and doctoral level students. The researchers concluded that that co-mentoring can aid in PID through professional engagement (Murdock et al., 2012). Mentoring can also impact the individual's view of themselves as new professionals in the field (Lanman, 2011). In conclusion, the researchers presented provide evidence that mentoring provides appropriate support to students for increasing their development of professional identity.

Supervision. Similar to mentoring, supervision is a task that can facilitate PID. The use of supervision has also been of focus in research as a method for fostering professional identity. Various styles of supervision may contribute to the development of

professional identity in supervisees (Kaufman & Schwartz, 2004). For example, psychodynamic models of supervision may assist in helping students increase their dynamic understanding and engage in self-reflection while effectively developing a professional identity (Kaufman & Schwartz, 2003). Cognitive or behavioral methods may increase their confidence in providing services which directly impacts professional identity (Kaufman & Schwartz, 2003). Kaufman and Schwartz (2003) described developmental models of supervision as assisting students in developing a professional identity at the similar rate of developing confidence and autonomy. Various models of supervision are useful in developing a professional identity of students who are at varying developmental levels and needs.

Perry (2012) utilized online supervision as a method for facilitating professional identity. Perry's (2012) results focused on the use of supervision as a multifaceted and complex method for facilitating professional identities. The use of supervision allowed supervisees to utilize their background as a basis for PID (Perry, 2012). Supervision in an online format as evident by Perry (2012) is a method to develop a professional identity in online students. When using supervision as a method for development, supervisors should carefully determine which model and method of supervision may best fit the development of their supervisees.

Developmental levels and specialty areas. Similar to the differences in professional identity across groups and the various tasks that facilitate PID, several differences in development occur across developmental levels and specialty areas. One major difference in development was evident in the findings of Prosek and Hurt (2014) which described

how there is a difference in PID between novice and advanced master's level counselor trainees. The advanced level trainees had greater amounts of professional development as compared to the novice level trainees as advanced level trainees have transitioned through 3 evident states (Prosek & Hurt, 2014) Prosek and Hurt (2014) described these as: (a) identifying with the philosophy of the profession, (b) applying of knowledge to practice, and (c) congruency in the individual with the professional and personal identity. Prosek and Hurt (2014) concluded that the experiential learning opportunities offered by internships allow advanced level trainees greater opportunities for development and increased length of time of a counseling programs allow for more experiential learning opportunities to assist in the development of an advanced identity. Counselor educators can utilize the results of Prosek and Hurt (2014) as a guide for the development of a counseling program that fosters the identity development in both novice and advanced level trainees.

Researchers have also focused on identity development of counselor education doctoral students (Lanman, 2011; Limberg et al., 2013). Lanman (2011) and Limberg et al. (2013) provide research results correlating experiential learning tasks and developmental levels or specialty area. The researchers suggest PID of doctoral students occurs through development of programmatic goals, experiential learning opportunities, relationships with faculty members and mentors, and the perception of being a counselor educator by faculty (Lanman, 2011; Limberg et al., 2013). These activities correspond to the three areas of counselor education of teaching, research, and supervision subsequently fostering a comprehensive professional identity for counselor educators (Limberg et al.,

2013). Counselor educators can then apply these results of research to previously gained knowledge of developing counselor trainees to develop a counselor education program which fosters the development of PI in counselor education doctoral students.

Researchers have also investigated the PID of school counselors including potential role confusion in the transition from a student and to practicing professional (Gibson, Dooley, Kelchner, Moss, & Bryan Vacchio, 2012) and the role of conflict or conflict decisions (Brott & Myers, 1999). Gibson et al. (2012) described how school counselors in training should have the opportunity to develop a strong professional identity so that when these individuals join the profession, they do not experience role confusion. Researchers describe how the development of a professional identity should include an evaluation of personal identity and strengths as applied and integrated with professional identity (Gibson et al., 2012; Lewis & Hatch, 2008). Development of professional identity in school counselors can contribute to the services provided by the school counselor and has several implications for practice (Brott & Myers, 1999). Therefore, counselor educators should be mindful of the unique development of the professional identity of school counselors and foster a development that is rich in professional service and standards for practice. In sum, the development of trainees should focus on their unique needs as well as the role of the professional.

Educational level. Professional identity development occurs in both master's level and doctoral level trainees and professionals. Therefore, it is evident via the CACREP (2015) standards that counselor training programs focus on the development of individuals across the areas of personal/social, academic, and career (Shores, 2011). This

development includes PID of counselors-in-training including the themes of knowledge of professional orientation, values, and development (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). These themes were further expanded by Woo (2013) as including knowledge, philosophy, roles, attitude, engagement behaviors, and interaction with the profession. In addition to themes, a large difference exists in professional identity across novice levels of trainees and advanced level trainees (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Development of professional identity in counselor trainees is essential and very comprehensive as these trainees are joining the profession through their knowledge and role.

Professional identity development also includes the development of counselor education doctoral students as they transition from the role of professional counselor. Researchers have particularly focused on the themes of PID of counselor educators (Allen Lincicome, 2015; Protivnak & Foss, 2009). Allen Lincicome (2015) described these themes as centering around the self, including intrinsic value, self, benefice and external forces. Protivnak and Foss (2009) also described several external forces or themes of the departmental characteristics, faculty members, and support systems.

Additionally, Dollarhide et al. (2012) and Limberg et al. (2013) described the identity development of counselor education doctoral students as understood based on program goals, experiential learning activities or transformational tasks, and problematic goals. Other themes identified by Lanman (2011) when focusing on counselor educator development included the role of mentoring, inclusion of the educator identity, and the meaning of being a counselor. These themes were also relevant to the work of Calley and Hawley (2008) which found that academic degrees, association membership, theoretical

orientation, courses taught, scholarship and services, and self-identification had an impact on the PID of practicing counselor educators. The researchers suggest that there is a difference in professional identity for counselor educators as they progress from merging their personal, professional, and new professional identities through learning and scholarship activities.

The research on educational level can be inferred as differences in PID exist across master's level counselors and doctoral level counselor educators. These differences exist because the individual is responsible for accepting their new professional identity which is unique to each group. Therefore, understanding in more detail the experiences of both counselor trainees and doctoral students can help counselor educators in providing opportunities for development. Through this advanced level of development, counselors and counselor educators can be more prepared when entering the field.

Type of setting. The benefits of distance education have subsequently impacted counselor education programs as educators seek to meet the needs of adult learners. Beginning in 1984, computers became integrated into counselor education classrooms (Meder, 2013; Robey, 2009). Computers help in identifying skills in reflection, career information, and self-awareness (Robey, 2009). The use of technology continued through training in assessment, note-taking, and evaluation which eventually lead to the development of distance education courses which used computer-aided instruction (Robey, 2009). The need for technology integrated counselor education programs was evident as program administrators had directives to incorporate technology in coursework

so that students could understand new technology (Meder, 2013). Meder (2013) described how online education programs allowed counselor preparation programs the opportunity to reach more diverse students. For counselor educators to educate these students appropriately, Bloom & Walz (2003) published a book specific to the incorporation of technology in cyber counseling and cyberlearning. Resources such as these have contributed to the creation of over 60 distance education master's or doctoral level programs available through CACREP (CACREP, 2018).

Even though most of counseling programs are traditional programs (Watson, 2012), Robey (2009) suggested that professional identity can be taught similarly in both traditional and distance education settings. More specifically, similar to traditional educators, distance educators can foster professional identity through group interactions (Perry, 2012). Understanding the types of programs demonstrates support for CACREP as traditional, hybrid, and online educational programs can now be accredited (Meder, 2013). However, while both types of programs are accredited, not all counselor educators agree that both methodologies are equally as effective (Meder, 2013). More knowledge is needed since limited research exists on professional identity and types of counselor education programs.

Instrument development. Several researchers have sought to develop scales to measure professional identity or research what differences occur in professional identity. These various scales have sought to measure the researcher's definition of professional identity. Variances in the measures occur through the definitions of the professional identity construct, the populations of focus, and the criteria used to assess the definition.

Counselor identity scale. One of the first scales developed was The Counselor Identity Scale (CIS) by Moore-Pruitt (1994) which operationalized counselor ego identity based on the belief that professional identity is a domain of ego identity. The goal of the scale was to examine how individuals develop their identity by developing religious, political, and gender role ideologies. The scale focused on knowledge of research which suggested that identity forms through developmental stages, development of knowledge, independence, the initial emergence of identity, and the use of self (Moore-Pruitt, 1994). Using the knowledge of research, the scale was “based on theory and research in training, developmental psychology, and ego identity” (Moore-Pruitt, 1994, p.8). The 36-item revised scale included the following 4 areas of identity statuses: (a) achievement, (b) diffusion, (c) foreclosure, and (d) moratorium. Content, convergent, and divergent validity were all established in the scale. While this scale is beneficial to research on professional identity, it does not focus on professional identity specifically but professional identity through identity status.

Counseling profession scale. Another scale, the Counseling Profession Scale (CPS) developed in completion of Gray’s (2000) dissertation. The scale used 14 items to measure the beliefs of having a strong counseling professional identity. The CPS used a five-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) with six of the items having a reverse score. Higher scores on the CPS indicate deeper beliefs in having a strong professional identity as important. The scale was determined to be appropriate as established in a pilot study by Gray (2000).

Professional identity and engagement scale. Further development of identity scales continued with the development of the Professional Identity and Engagement Scale (PIES) by Puglia (2008) which was developed and used in Puglia's dissertation. The results of the scale sought to provide a measure of agreement regarding counseling as separate from other mental health professions and the engagement of counselors-in-training attending accredited master's programs. The scale included three sections focusing on components of professional identity; knowledge, philosophy, and engagement; and professional engagement activities. The final revision of the scale included 18 items with higher scores indicating higher levels of counselor agreement with the philosophy of counseling.

Counselor professional identity measure. More recently, Emerson (2010) developed the Counselor Professional Identity Measure (CPI) based on a derived definition of professional identity from literature. The definition focused on six components of: (a) history, (b) knowledge and understanding of philosophy, (c) knowledge of roles and functions, (d) sense of pride, (e) involvement in the profession, and (f) knowledge and understanding of ethics (Emerson, 2010). The developer intended for the scale to measure the six areas of identity. The first five areas use a 6-point Likert scale where the last area uses an open-ended response area. The scale was designed for use with all counselors in all specialty areas and career development. While the scale sought to include extensive knowledge of professional identity, the scale is not reliable and valid as the items measured were more complex than originally thought.

Professional identity scale in counseling. Of primary focus for this research study was Woo's (2013) Professional Identity Scale in Counseling (PISC). Similar to Emerson (2010), Woo developed the PISC based on a comprehensive definition of professional identity derived by components widely accepted in professional identity literature (Emerson, 2010; Puglia; 2008; Remley & Herlihy, 2014). This definition includes six primary areas of focus including: (a) knowledge, (b) philosophy, (c), professional roles and expertise, (d) attitude, (e) engagement behaviors, and (f) interactions. The first included knowledge of the profession which sought to assess knowledge of counseling history, ethical standards, roles, various organizations, and credentialing and journals. The second focused on the philosophy of the profession including developmental perspective, preventative approach, wellness, empowerment, and advocacy. The third area, professional roles and expertise, included the roles and expertise counselors should have for professional roles of being a counselor, educator, supervisor, and consultant. The fourth area of attitude focused on pride for the profession and how an individual believes in the future of the profession. The fifth area surrounded the engagement behaviors regarding professional activities and behaviors. Lastly, the sixth area included the interactions of individuals with the profession.

Through expert reviews, Woo (2013) developed a 53-item Likert scale survey as a new assessment of professional identity. The six items of the scale were consistent with counseling literature. Additionally, the scale was tested to be reliable as supported by a moderate to high internal consistency for five of the six scales. Further examination of the sixth factor may be needed as this factor yielded a low-reliability coefficient. The

PISC also has convergent validity as compared to other professional identity scales demonstrating highly valid measures of professional identity. Additionally, social desirability did not have an impact on the scale, and therefore discriminant validity exists. The scale also appears to be able to measure differences in levels of PID between master's level and doctoral level counseling professionals.

Support. Additional support for the PISC has occurred through recent literature. Littlefield (2016) used the five factors which demonstrated reliability and eliminated professional values which did not demonstrate reliability. Littlefield (2016) reported that the scale demonstrated appropriateness for use in the study and supported the use of the scale with additional populations such as career counselors. Further, the study mentioned that two of the subscales might need reevaluation for reliability. In another study, Kautzman-East (2016) utilized three of the six subscales to measure three independent variables in a study which focused on personality, professional identity, and advocacy actions. Peed (2017) provided additional support of the PSIC to evaluate school counselor professional identity. Support was provided in Peed (2017) as the PSIC had basic psychometric analysis for reliability including consistency. Harwood (2017) also used the PISC with an interpreting population demonstrating the various uses of the scale with diverse populations. Overall, the PISC appears to be the most appropriate and recent measure of professional identity suitable for the chosen population.

Summary

Several themes are evident after a review of the present literature on traditional and online education settings and professional identity in counselor education. First, the

research on educational methodologies (Beasley Preffer, 2008; Duran, 2014; Urtel, 2008) suggested that additional research is needed to determine if differences exist between the settings. The literature review further translated to the need for research to determine if differences exist in professional identity across these educational methodologies. This research is new and important as the results may meet a gap in the literature by specifically determining which (if any) of the six areas of professional identity are different across educational settings. Due to existing differences in other areas of traditional and online education, this research assesses in another way these settings are different for learners. This study contributed to the research of professional identity through demonstrating the consistent need for gaining a better understanding of professional identity in counselor training programs. Through a survey methodology using the PISC, I determined if differences exist across educational settings.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Using results of this quantitative survey study, I sought to determine whether there are differences in new counseling graduates' PID across traditional/brick and mortar and online counseling programs. Professional identity includes six areas: (a) engagement behaviors, (b) knowledge of the profession, (c) professional roles and expertise, (d) attitude, (e) philosophy of the profession, and (f) professional values. Additionally, the two groups for comparison were graduates from the traditional education setting and those from the online education setting. In this chapter, I focus on the overall research design and rationale for completion of the study. I discuss methodology, instrumentation, threats to validity, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

Variables

The study included several variables related to professional identity and educational setting. Professional identity is one variable I measured using the PISC, which includes six subscales associated with the areas I outlined in the previous subsection (Woo, 2013). Additional variables included the education setting types of traditional education and online education.

Design

Non-experimental cross-sectional survey methodology was most appropriate for this study because it allowed me to obtain data related to the experiences of participants at one point in time. Cross-sectional survey methodology is beneficial because the

methodology allows researchers the ability to gain an understanding of backgrounds, experiences, and attitudes of participants (Frankfort-Nachmias, Nachmias, & DeWaard, 2015). Recent research focusing on professional identity has also involved this methodology (Calley & Hawley, 2008).

Constraints

Surveying participants has constraints related to the population and solicitation of participation. The participants were recent master's-level graduates within 1.5 years of graduation. The specific population led to a resource constraint because no email listserv exists strictly for counselors, regardless of association affiliation. Using multiple listservs including COUNSGRADS and CESNET may be one way to address the constraints. Additionally, using the listservs can ensure solicitation of participation of non-association members to increase the generalizability of results. I addressed the constraint by asking individuals to forward the invitation to any individuals who might fit this study. Specific to the CESNET listserv, the population of focus for the invitation was faculty from counseling programs. I asked those individuals who were willing to forward the information to their programs' recent graduates. To recruit additional participants, I also posted the invitation for participation on community boards of the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American Mental Health Counseling Association (AMHCA), and Facebook. Another alternate plan for participation, which was utilized in this research, included reaching out to counseling programs listed on the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) website with an invitation to forward the research participation invitation.

Research Consistency

As I noted in Chapter 1, cross-sectional survey methodology is a method that researchers commonly use to focus on professional identity. For example, Calley and Hawley (2008) used cross-sectional methodology for a survey of counselor educators to measure their professional identity. Similarly, Dollarhide, Gibson, and Moss (2013) sought to understand transformational tasks doctoral students complete during PID. While this study was qualitative, the study did utilize cross-sectional methodology to recruit participants. Limberg et al. (2013) similarly researched the professional identity of doctoral students using a cross-sectional methodology to recruit participants for a focus group. Thus, my research aligned with completed research by mirroring others' research methodologies.

Methodology

Population

The target population was master's level counselors within 1.5 year of graduation from a graduate program in counseling from either traditional or online CACREP accredited programs. Only graduates from CACREP programs were eligible to be participants because CACREP focuses on the identity development of individuals particular to personal/social, academic, and career development (CACREP, 2015; Shores, 2011). According to the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report*, the total number of graduates in 2015 was 11,860 (CACREP, 2016). This population included all counselors who had entered into the profession regardless of specialty area and association membership.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

I used a convenience sampling method to select participants via email recruitment. While simple random sampling is beneficial for reducing sampling bias, there would have been no way to ensure every new graduate had an equal chance of participating in the study (see Groves et al., 2009; Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). Therefore, a convenience sample of participants active on several listservs helped me obtain a range of participants and include both counselors who are members and non-members of professional associations. I solicited participation through email in the COUNSGRAD listserv and the CESNET listserv. I also posted the invitation on several different Facebook pages to allow individuals an easy opportunity to forward the invitation. Further, I posted the invitation for participation on multiple community pages including the ACA Community page, and the AMHCA community page. The participation invitation was also sent to each CACREP program contact listed on the CACREP website. In the solicitation for participation emails and postings, I requested that individuals forward the information to professionals who may be eligible for participation. I changed the verbiage in the CESNET invitation for participation specifically to attract the attention of faculty members who could forward the invitation to recent graduates. This was a form of snowball sampling, which Frankfort-Nachmias et al. (2015) described as useful when trying to reach hidden populations. Using snowball sampling is beneficial because little or no harm can come from receiving an email from fellow professionals, and the individual would not know if the recommended recipient

participated. Even through using snowball sampling and multiple methods of solicitation, I did not obtain the adequate sample size, as determined by G*Power analysis.

The sampling frame for the study included the parameters of new counselors who were within 1.5 years of graduation. Participants were eligible for participation if they attended a program which was delivered primarily in the traditional classroom setting where 0% of the instructional content is delivered online or if the instructional content was delivered 80% or more online. The sampling frame included individuals throughout the United States.

A G*Power analysis for sample size involved MANCOVA for global effects. The a priori test was calculated using a standard effect size of .0625, alpha of 0.05, power of 0.95, number of groups being 2, and the response variables being 8 (including all covariates and control variables). This calculation yielded a sample size of 372 for a MANCOVA for global effects.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I recruited participants through email invitation to listservs, posting to electronic community boards. An additional recruitment procedure included a request for individuals to forward the email to individuals who may have been eligible to participate. The email invitation included a brief description of the study and the qualification for participating in the study (see Appendix B). If individuals choose to participate, they could follow an included link that provided direct access to the survey. The initial survey webpage included the screening questions for participants (see Appendix C). The next page had a similar description of the study, an explanation regarding participants'

anonymity, and the informed consent document. This webpage also had an option of opting out of the study at any time and for any reason. The recruitment of participants was also be solicited through snowball sampling through individuals forwarding the research information to possible participants (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). Snowball sampling occurred through individuals forwarding the information to possible participants and eligible participants completing the survey. No potential breaches of confidentiality were possible as no identifying information was in the survey questions and referrers have no way of knowing if an individual participated unless the participant chooses to disclose. Additional follow up emails or postings were used to increase participation to both listservs and electronic community boards.

I collected the data for the study using the web-based survey system SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey was useful because it did not collect IP addresses of the participants, thereby increasing anonymity. Further, the SurveyMonkey system did not have access to survey responses. Individuals first had access the informed consent, which contained items such as eligibility, risks, a notification of where to find the results of the data, and an option to print out the informed consent for future reference. Individuals then acknowledged agreement with the informed consent document by continuing with the survey. Once beginning the survey, participants completed basic demographic information and the PISC. Participants exited the survey through an exit webpage. No follow up procedures were required.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The present research study utilized a demographical questionnaire and a pre-established scale for professional identity in counselors. The demographical questionnaire was developed using the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report* (CACREP, 2015). The report contains data specific to gender, ethnicity, and type of counseling program which are the primary demographic questions for the study. Gender included options of Male, Female, and Other/Undisclosed. The ethnicity question included eight options and one option of Other/Undisclosed. The specialty area or counseling program option included the 12 programs represented by CACREP (2015). Therefore, to collect demographical data, the same responses were used to generate a representative sample. This information was analyzed using frequencies.

The scale, the PISC was developed by Woo (2013) in attempts to develop a reliable and valid scale based on the most comprehensive definition of professional identity in the counseling profession. The original version of the PISC developed in 2010 consisted of 62-items being content reviewed by a panel of experts (Woo, 2013). The final PISC developed includes 53 items on a Likert scale with a 1-6 rating ranging from 'not at all in agreement' at 1 to 'totally in agreement' at 6 with 'neutral/uncertain' being between 3 and 4 and takes approximately 20 minutes to complete (Woo, 2013; Woo & Henfield, 2015). At the completion of the scale, the composite score comes from number response for each question on the Likert scale. The higher the total composite score (max score of 318), then the higher the individual's level of professional identity as evident by the individual's level of agreement with each question which positively corresponds to

professional identity. The PISC is the most appropriate scale to utilize because, while other scales exist, this scale provides a comprehensive assessment of professional identity recently used in literature (Harwood, 2017; Kautzman-East, 2016; Littlefield, 2016; Peed, 2017).

Other scales such as the Counselor Identity Scale (CIS) focuses on identity through religious, political, and gender role ideologies through development stages, development of knowledge, independence, the emergence of identity and use of self (Moore-Pruitt, 1994). The CIS is useful but does not specifically focus on professional identity. Another scale which incorporates professional identity but does not solely focus on the concept is the Professional Identity and Engagement Scale (PIES) that was developed by Puglia (2008). Puglia's (2008) development of the PIES focused on the development of a scale that included the components of professional identity regarding knowledge, philosophy, and engagement as well as professional engagement activities. While those scales do not focus on professional identity specifically, the Counseling Profession Scale (CPS) measures the beliefs surrounding having a strong counseling professional identity (Gray, 2000). The CPS was determined to be appropriate but was dated and therefore, may not be effective in measuring the current definition of counseling professional identity. This scale may not be effective as researchers have evolved the definition of professional identity since 2000 with the most recent definitions offered by Woo in 2013 and 2014 by Remley and Herlihy. Similarly, the Counselor Professional Identity Measure by Emerson (2010) includes a definition of professional identity focused on (a) history, (b) knowledge and understanding of philosophy, (c)

knowledge of roles and functions, (d) sense of pride, (e) involvement in profession, and (f) knowledge and understanding of ethics. While Emerson (2000) came close to developing a scale to measure professional identity, the psychometric properties yielded less than acceptable reliability and validity results. Due to these previously developed scales either not focusing on professional identity specifically or not being tested to be reliable and valid, the PISC is the most appropriate scale for this study. This research used the PISC with permission from Woo obtained on October 20, 2017. The permission letter is in Appendix A.

Properties

Initial assessment of the psychometric properties for the PISC began during the conception of the scale (Woo, 2013). Before assessing the scale, analysis first included a factor analysis (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The dataset revealed a KMO measure of .880 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity as statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 9726.923$, $df = 1891$, $p = 0.000$). These results are helpful in determining that it is appropriate to continue with factor analysis. The factor analysis was conducted using the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) which yielded an initial 15-factor solution which may not be providing a clear solution for the data set. Based on a scree plot, Woo (2013) determined that a six-factor solution may be most appropriate. Further, a parallel analysis extracted a total of seven factors. Due to the low degree of correlations between the factors, the researcher utilized a PCA with varimax rotation to extract both six and seven-factor analyses. Overall, the six-factor solution was found to be most appropriate and yielded variances in each of the six factors 10.5%, 9.54%, 7.09%, 6.57%,

5.1%, and 3.75% respectively. As a whole, the factor analysis explained 42.54% of the variance in the dataset. The items in the scale were further evaluated and included if the factor loading was 0.40 or higher yielding 53-items remaining.

The reliability of the PISC is evident in Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The alphas for each of the six-factor areas include engagement behaviors (α -0.884), knowledge of the profession (α -0.879), professional poles and expertise (α -0.804), attitude (α -0.818), philosophy of the profession (α -0.717), and professional values (α -0.44). As a whole, four of the six subscales had a strong internal reliability of ≥ 0.804 .

Assessment of convergent validity used a comparison of the instrument and the Professional Identity and Values Scale (Woo, 2013). Convergent validity is evident by positive correlations between each subscale of the PISC and the subscale Professional Orientation and Values (POV) of the PIVS. A moderate to high correlation was expected and found as positive correlations existed between the PISC subscales 1 through 5 and the PIVS Professional Development. Positive correlations were found between the PISC total score and the PIVS – POV ($r = 0.473, p < 0.01$) as well as the PISC total scores and PIVS – PD ($r = 0.636, p < 0.01$). The assessment of discriminate validity began through the Marlowe-Crowne (20). All PISC subscales had low or non-significant correlations with the measure of social desirability, M-C (20) suggesting that participants were not answering in a socially desirable manner. Woo (2013) also utilized an independent samples T-Test to determine if any differences existed between each of the four participant groups. The T-Test found several statistically significant differences between groups including master's level counselors in training and doctoral level counseling

students ($t(180) = -7.13, p = 0.005$), master's level counselors-in-training and counselor educators ($t(213) = -9.805, p = 0.004$), doctoral level counseling students and counselor practitioners ($t(153) = -5.212, p = 0.000$), and between counseling practitioners and counselor educators ($t(186) = -7.529, p = 0.001$) all measured by the PISC total scores. Therefore, the psychometric properties through factor analysis, tests of reliability and validity and T-tests provide support for the use of the PISC in this research.

Populations

Support for the PISC occurs in four different research areas related to counseling. Littlefield (2016) utilized the scale with career counselors yielding results which suggest that the scale is appropriate for use with this additional population. Similarly, Harwood (2017) adapted the scale to fit an interpreting population. Kautzman-East (2016) utilized three of the six subscales because the three scales best met the needs of the study. The study focused on a population of licensed professional counselors. Kautzman-East (2016) also chose to utilize the scale even though the scale is newly developed. Peed (2017) also utilized the scale with another diverse population indicating that the scale is appropriate for use with the school counseling population.

Threats to Validity

While validity issues exist in research, researchers attempt to alleviate these issues through utilizing various techniques and strategies. Validity issues include external validity, internal validity, and construct validity. This research study had several validity issues which I have addressed.

External Validity

First, external validity focuses on the external factors impacting the participants which are outside of the researcher's control. These issues can lead to sampling issues such as non-representation and reactive arrangements due to a non-natural setting (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). For this study, only sampling issues might arise as the research is not using reactive arrangements and the participants are in their own natural environment. This research addressed sampling issues through sampling participants through various listservs, online community posts, and snowball sampling. Also, the sample only includes counselors who attended programs accredited by CACREP, and thus the sample will only be generalizable to programs with such accreditation.

Internal Validity

Another validity issue which exists is internal validity which focuses on changes in the variables before the research study. This study had threats to internal validity due to the education which the participants received. For example, if an individual had a below average experience in their graduate program or were less involved than average, then their professional identity may be impacted. Additionally, the study did not consider the level of involvement the individual has had in professional associations. Another factor which may impact the internal validity is the instrumentation of using the PISC and if the individual has been exposed to the scale before. Unfortunately, these are not factors that can be controlled and asking if they have had pre-exposure to the scale is not relevant to the study. Other threats to internal validity included having multiple invitations for

participation may bias the results. I extended invitations to participants over an extended period to ensure that participants do not receive multiple emails simultaneously.

Construct Validity

The research also had threats to construct validity which establishes if a measurement measures the intended construct (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). First, construct validity is limited by using an instrument, the PISC, which has documented psychometric properties which are statistically significant as previously described. Also, the instrument has been of use in several research studies to date validating the appropriateness of the scale measuring the construct of professional identity. The results of the research may also result in statistical conclusion validity if participants responded in a socially desirable way. However, previous research suggests that when using this scale, past participants have not responded in a socially desirable way (Woo, 2013). Addressing these additional types of validity comes from focusing on specific development of the scale and previous use of the scale.

Ethical Procedures

Ethical procedures are important in conducting research to ensure no harm is done to participants. Additionally, research should not coerce or persuade participants to participate or respond in a certain way (Frankfort-Nachmias et al., 2015). In this research study, I followed the recommendations of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University, obtained approval (number I07-17-18-0608778), and provide evidence of this approval in Appendix B.

Human Participants

The treatment of human participants also requires approval by the IRB specific to obtaining permission to solicit participation via email for an online study. One ethical consideration for the use of human participants lies in a possible breach of data specific to the participant's responses to the survey. Therefore, this research used an online survey methodology which did not collect computer IP addresses or any identifying information from participants. An additional ethical issue existed if an individual chooses not to finish completing the survey. If the individual does not complete the survey, then the data from that individual will not be retained. Specific to the population of human participants, recruitment of new graduates may come from former faculty if they were to forward the invitation to previous students and thus may appear to be coercive. I have chosen not to solicit participation from current graduate students due to not having direct access to the students electronically. Without direct access I would have to ask counseling programs to distribute the information. While this research asked that individuals forward this study to those who may qualify, I could not control the individual feelings of those who receive the forwarded email.

Treatment of Data

The data collected sought to provide information related to answering the research question: is there a statistically significant difference between the traditional and online professional identity of new counselors who completed traditional or online counseling master's degree programs as measured by the PISC after controlling for gender and specialty area? Specifically, my null hypothesis was that after controlling graduates'

gender identity and counseling specialty area, there is no statistically significant difference in professional identity between novice counselors educated in traditional master's level counseling degree programs and those educated in online master's level programs, as measured by PISC scores across sub-factors for (a) knowledge of the profession and its philosophy, (b) expertise required of members of the profession, (c) understanding of members' professional roles, (d) attitudes towards the profession and oneself, (e) behaviors expected of members of the profession, and (f) interactions with other professionals in the field. My alternate hypothesis was that after controlling graduates' gender identity and counseling specialty area, there is a statistically significant difference in professional identity between novice counseling educated in traditional master's level counseling degree programs and those educated in online master's level degree programs, as measured by PISC scores across sub-factors for (a) knowledge of the profession and its philosophy, (b) expertise required of members of the profession, (c) understanding of members' professional roles, (d) attitudes towards the profession and oneself, (e) behaviors expected of members of the profession, and (f) interactions with other professionals in the field.

The data collected was completely anonymous with only basic demographic information including gender, ethnicity, and counseling specialty area be of importance. Also, data storage occurred in a locked file stored electronically offline on my password protected computer with one external hard disk backup which will contain the locked file. Protecting the data in this manner ensured the data is stored safely and ensured the data remains confidential and protected.

Statistical analyses on data via SPSS included the composite score of the 53-item PISC and the score for each of the subscales. While there is no research indicating what constitutes a high score, the closer the score is to the max score leads suggests a higher level of professional identity in that area. Each item on the scale is worth six points with the max for the entire scale being 318 points and a mean response of 5.10. The items on the scale make up a subscale of questions for each of the six areas of progression identity. The 14 items on the engagement Behaviors subscale results in a max score of 84 with a mean response of 4.49. The 10 items on the knowledge of the profession subscale results in a max score of 60 points with a response of 5.09. The attitude subscale and professional roles and expertise subscale each includes nine items with a 54-point max score and have a 5.33 and 5.66 mean response respectively. The fifth subscale of philosophy of the profession has seven items resulting in a max score of 42 with a mean response of 5.41. The last subscale of professional orientation and values includes four items resulting in a max score of 24 and a mean response of 4.85. The data collected was analyzed via MANVOCA to determine differences in the composite mean, and across the means of the covariates after controlling for gender and specialty area. Controlling for gender and specialty area is important as the present study is only looking at educational setting as influential.

Summary

This chapter reviews the research methodology for the proposed research study. Specifically, the research study utilizes a cross-sectional survey methodology using the PISC. Participants taking the PISC are individuals who are new graduates within the past

18 months in the United States from either a traditional or online educational setting. Participants were recruited through online methodology using two listservs and through posting on electronic community boards. Limitations exist in the research but sought to be controlled through additional sampling measures and other changes in the research methodology. In Chapter 4, I provide information related to the data collection, a descriptive of the sample, and I report the findings of the statistical analysis based on the data obtained through survey methodology.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I first provide a review of the research study including the purpose, research question, and hypotheses. I then describe the data collection procedures, discrepancies in the original data collection plan, demographic characteristics and representativeness of the sample, and the basic data analyses. I conclude with the results of the data analyses including but not limited to descriptive statistics, statistical assumptions and tests, and the findings of data analyses.

Purpose

Researchers have found that professional identity of counselors is impacted by variables such as diversity (Healey & Hays, 2012; Meyers, 2016; Nelson & Jackson, 2003), experiential tasks (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014), and counselor development (Kaufman & Schwartz, 2004; Luke & Goodrich, 2010). However, while a difference in education settings has been a focus in research (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009), researchers have not focused on the impact of educational setting on professional identity. Even though technology has been incorporated into counseling programs starting in 1961, researchers have not focused on the impact of educational setting on professional identity (Landers, 2009). Expanding the use of technology has led to the 69 different online programs out of the total 790 accredited counseling programs with some institutions having more than one type of program. In this study, I sought to determine if differences exist between new counseling graduates' PID in traditional and online counseling programs that are CACREP accredited. Professional identity, the dependent variable, includes six subscales as described by Woo

(2013): (a) engagement behaviors, (b) knowledge of the profession, (c) professional roles and expertise, (d) attitude, (e) philosophy of the profession, and (f) professional values. The type of education setting was the independent variable, which included traditional settings where 50% or more instruction is completed face-to-face and online education setting where 50% or more of instruction is delivered online. This percentage of instruction for traditional programs is based on current research (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009) and the percentage for online instruction is based on the CACREP (2016) definition of what constitutes an online program since this research focuses on CACREP accredited programs. The results of this study could contribute to the professional identity literature by showing whether there are differences in development that occur between traditional and online learners. Results of this research study also could assist counselor educators in fostering the development of the PID of their counselors-in-training in a manner most appropriate for the type of program.

Research Question and Hypotheses

I developed one comprehensive research question to drive the collection of data and analysis. The question was all-inclusive because it incorporated the composite of professional identity as well as the six subscales of professional identity as described by Woo (2013).

RQ1: Is there a statistically significant difference across the six factors of professional identity, as measured by the PISC, of new counselors who completed traditional or online counseling master's degree programs after controlling for graduates' gender identity and counseling specialty area?

Therefore, my hypothesis for the research question was:

*H*₀: After controlling graduates' gender identity and counseling specialty area, there is no statistically significant difference in professional identity between novice counselors educated in traditional master's level counseling degree programs and those educated in online master's level programs, as measured by PISC scores across sub-factors for (a) knowledge of the profession and its philosophy, (b) expertise required of members of the profession, (c) understanding of members' professional roles, (d) attitudes towards the profession and oneself, (e) behaviors expected of members of the profession, and (f) interactions with other professionals in the field.

Subsequently, my alternate hypothesis which sought to inform and educate counseling professionals was:

*H*₁: After controlling graduates' gender identity and counseling specialty area, there is a statistically significant difference in professional identity between novice counseling educated in traditional master's level counseling degree programs and those educated in online master's level degree programs, as measured by PISC scores across sub-factors for (a) knowledge of the profession and its philosophy, (b) expertise required of members of the profession, (c) understanding of members' professional roles, (d) attitudes towards the profession and oneself, (e) behaviors expected of members of the profession, and (f) interactions with other professionals in the field.

In the remaining sections, I describe the data collection strategies, the results of the study, and the differences between my data collection plan described in Chapter 3 and

the actual data collection procedure I used. I describe the response rates of my participants as well as the basic demographic information collected in the survey. A large part of my discussion will include the statistical analysis, an interpretation of the findings based on my research question, and a discussion of implications of the results.

Overall, the chapter will include detailed information regarding the analysis, findings, results, and interpretation of results. Nonetheless, I do want to note here that the findings of my study suggested that I should accept the null hypothesis indicating that there is not a difference in professional identity across these two populations after controlling for gender and specialty area. However, the online program group did score higher across the dependent variables of professional identity.

Data Collection

In this study, I used an online survey to obtain data from new counseling graduate participants. The first page of the online survey included two screening questions focused on graduation date and accreditation status, which mirrored questions from the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report* (2015) that I used to determine if the participants indicated a representative sample. The screening questions can be found in Appendix C. Also, on the first page, a question asked if the participant attended a traditional or online program and a description of the characteristics of each (e.g., instruction occurs 50% or more face-to-face). The second page provided the informed consent and acknowledgment of consent via a yes or no question. If participants chose to proceed, they then answered a demographic questionnaire asking for gender, ethnicity, and specialty area. These questions also mirrored the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report* (2015) to maintain

consistency and are located in Appendix C. After that point, participants were asked a series of 53 questions from the PISC (Woo, 2010). I obtained written permission from the author Hong Ryun Woo to use the PISC and a copy of this permission can be found in Appendix A. Additionally, I obtained permission from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) before collecting data. I included the IRB approval number in the invitation to participate which can be found in Appendix B. Once I obtained approval from the IRB, I began recruitment of participants by using convenience and snowball sampling for 8 weeks.

Over these 8 weeks, I used several phases of recruitment with the hope of obtaining a wide range of participants. These phases of recruitment yielded a total response of 191 individuals with 140 individuals completely participating. First, I recruited participants by using the CES*NET and COUNSGRADS listservs as previously described in Chapter 3. These listservs are for counselor educators and counseling graduate students, respectively. I emailed the CES*NET listserv three times over a period of 8 weeks. Similarly, I emailed the COUNSGRADS listserv four times over a period of 8 weeks with the last email being directed specifically towards online graduates. I also posted the invitation for participation on the American Counseling Association (ACA) community page for research participation. A large number of participants were recruited via Facebook posts. The request for participation was posted on Facebook pages and groups for specific state associations for counselors, mental health counselors, school counselors, new counselors, and counseling alumni. Since I asked individuals to forward

my invitation to other participants, I was not able to obtain a true estimate of how many people the survey reached.

In Chapter 3, I described my backup plan for recruitment, which I used because I was not obtaining enough participants through using my original plan alone. As described, the request for participation was sent to each of the 420 program contacts for the 790 accredited programs since some institutions have more than one program. This list was obtained from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) webpage of accredited programs. I sent the first email individually to each of the program contacts so that their email was personally addressed to them. Given that I sent my initial email during summer break, I sent three additional reminder emails to these contacts over a period of 6 weeks. Of these 420 programs, over 30 program contacts responded saying they would forward the participation of invitation. The last participation request included a request specifically for participants who were graduates from online programs.

At the close of data collection, 191 responses were recorded. Of the 191 responses, 32 individuals were ineligible for participation due to the graduation date, and 27 individuals were ineligible due to accreditation status. All of the respondents, including those deemed ineligible, included 147 participants from traditional programs and 44 participants from online programs. The results of the survey yielded 140 complete responses, including 113 respondents from traditional programs and 27 respondents from online programs. Considering the 140 eligible and complete responses out of 191 total responses yielded a completion rate of 73%.

As previously described, I used a data collection procedure of convenience sampling through cross-sectional survey methodology as this is a procedure which has been used successfully in prior research on professional identity (Calley & Hawley, 2008; Dollarhide, et al., 2013; Limberg et al., 2013). The actual procedures included those detailed in Chapter 3 including the backup plan of sending the participation for invitation to program contacts from accredited programs. I made the decision to carry out this plan after one week of collecting data obtained less than 50 respondents since my targeted sample size was 372. The rest of the data collection procedures were executed as described in Chapter 3 with a focus on appropriately spacing out follow up emails across one week or more each time. I chose to schedule follow up emails due to many of the program contacts I emailed having automatic out of office replies. Sending follow up emails when these contacts returned to the office may have helped in increasing participation rates.

A single difference in the data collection plan was the addition of a request for graduates from online programs in the final participation request email. I aimed to increase the sample size of my two groups through including a specific request for graduates from online programs in my final invitation for participation. As a whole, the data collection procedure was the same regarding how the recruitment was completed and verbiage used to recruit individuals. However, the procedure changed with the addition of a sentence asking for graduates from online programs in the final solicitation.

The sample of the population who participated in the research was similar to the population described in the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report (2015)*. The participant

population is being compared to the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report (2015)* as this is the report which contains descriptive information about the accredited counseling programs including but not limited to gender, ethnicity, and specialty area. This research had a participant population of 12.14% male and 87.14% female where the report population was 17.42% male and 82.58% female. Additionally, the ethnicity percentages of the population were consistent with the report. A final percentage to note is the specialty areas of the participant population which were also similar. However, one notable difference is the difference of community counselor participants (3.57%) to the report (15.77%). This key difference could be due to the transition of Community Counseling programs to Clinical Mental Health programs after the *2009 CACREP Standards* when programs were up for re-accreditation (CACREP, 2014). When considering each of these percentages, I conclude that the sample is representative of the population but does not include enough participants (140) to be proportional to the total population (11,860).

Covariates

Justification of the inclusion of the covariates comes from research on professional identity. The first covariate of gender was included because researchers have suggested that gender impacts professional identity development as women may have more developed orientation and beliefs but lower in their engagement in professional conferences as presenters (Healey & Hays, 2012). More extensively, societal gender role expectations and personal values may also influence professional identity (Healey & Hays, 2012). Men may be more empowered and involved in leadership positions leading

to more mentorship and encouragement opportunities (Healey & Hays, 2012).

Additionally, Meyers (2016) found connectedness and relationships impacts a woman's professional identity. Meyers (2016) also found that women view professional identity through gender dynamics and may fight for equality in professional identity and roles.

Therefore, gender is an appropriate covariate as men may find it easier to become engaged in the profession while women feel as though they have to fight for the opportunity to engage.

The second covariate of specialty area has also been a focus of researchers. Specifically, researchers have found differences in professional identity between novice and advanced level master's level counselor trainees (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). While not specific to this population in the present study, Lanman (2011) and Limberg et al. (2013) suggest that doctoral students develop professional identity through program goals, experiential learning opportunities, relationships, and perception. Compared to counselor educators, results of Littlefield (2016) conclude that career counselors score significantly lower on professional identity. Additionally, school counselors may experience role confusion as they transition from being a student to practicing school counselor (Gibson et al., 2012). Researchers have suggested that a school counselor's professional identity and strengths should be evaluated so that the results can be integrated with professional identity development (Gibson et al., 2012; Lewis & Hatch, 2008). The professional identity of school counselors has several implications for practice as professional identity relates to the services provided (Brott & Meyers, 1999). Due to research beginning to

identify differences in professional identity and specialty areas, the inclusion of the specialty area covariate was also appropriate.

Results

Based on the results of analysis using the data collected, I sought to identify differences in professional identity between graduates from traditional programs and online programs. Data for the present research was obtained through the data collection procedures outlined above and collected in the website SurveyMonkey. SurveyMonkey did not collect any identifying information from the 191 respondents nor the I.P. address of their computer location. After closing the survey, I downloaded the raw data to Microsoft Excel and cleaned the data from respondents who did not meet the inclusion criteria or did not fully complete the survey. The remaining 140 respondents had complete responses eligible for data analysis. The data analysis was performed using the software program IBM SPSS Version 24. The data analysis included tests for descriptive statistics, tests to validate the assumptions, and then the ANCOVA to first determine if differences existed across the total score. Since no differences were found, the MANCOVA was not conducted; however, the means and standard deviations of each of the six subscales is reported.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics help in describing the characteristics of a data set (see Salkind, 2008). These statistics include basic demographical information about the participants as well as more specific statistics. These additional statistics include the mean and standard deviation of the data set (see Creswell, 2009). I first begin by

describing the demographical characteristics of gender, ethnicity, and specialty area of the study participants before describing the means of the variables.

Gender. Eligible participants included new graduates within 1.5 years (December 2016-July 2018) from CACREP accredited traditional or online counseling programs. The variable of gender was measured as a categorical variable of male, female, and other/undisclosed. For this research, the data collection procedures yielded a sample which was 12.14% male ($n = 17$), 87.14% female ($n = 122$), and 0.71% other/undisclosed ($n = 1$). However, as discussed in greater detail in the assumptions section, 1 participant outlier was excluded from the analysis. After removing this participant, there were a total of 139 participants including 12.2% male ($n = 17$), 87.1% female ($n = 121$), and .7% other/undisclosed ($n = 1$). The gender percentages are represented in Table 1.

Table 1

Gender

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	17	12.2%
Female	121	87.1%
Other/undisclosed	1	.7%

Ethnicity. Additionally, the sample's ethnicity included 13.57% African American/Black ($n = 19$), 2.14% American Indian/Native American ($n = 3$), 2.14% Asian American ($n = 3$), 68.57% Caucasian/White ($n = 96$), 5.71% Hispanic/Latino ($n = 8$), 7.14% Multiracial ($n = 10$), and 0.71% non-resident Alien ($n = 1$). Similar to before, the demographical characteristics of the sample were compared to the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report* (2015). Compared to this report, the respondents were similar in many

demographical areas. First, the gender percentages for both the research participants and the report are similar in that the majority of the participants were female. A three or more percent difference in the representation of the populations exists in the ethnicities of African American/Black, American Indian/Native American, Caucasian/White, Multiracial, and Other. However, many of the percentages of ethnicities are similar. These demographical variables of gender and ethnicity are represented in Table 1 for both the research participants and the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report* (CACREP, 2015).

Table 2

Percentages of Demographical Variables

	Participants	<i>2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report</i>
Male	12.14%	17.42%
Female	87.14%	82.58%
Other/undisclosed	0.71%	-
African American/Black	13.57%	18.35%
American Indian/Native American	2.14%	0.59%
Asian American	2.14%	2.04%
Caucasian/White	68.57%	60.55%
Hispanic/Latino	5.71%	8.53%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.00%	0.13%
Multiracial	7.14%	2.05%
Non-resident Alien	0.71%	0.73%
Other/undisclosed	0.00%	7.03%

Specialty area. Also, the sample's specialty area included a majority of clinical mental health counselors (42.14%, n = 59), school counselors (25.71%, n = 36), and

mental health counselors (10.71%, n = 15) with other specialty areas representing 8% or less of the respondents. I also compared the specialty areas to the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report* (CACREP, 2015). Specialty areas with a 5% or more difference in respondents and the CACREP report include Addiction, Clinical Mental Health, Community, and School. However, the majority of the participants being clinical mental health, mental health, and school specialty areas remains consistent across the respondents and the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report* (2015). One difference is that the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report* also includes 15.77% of the population being community counselors where my sample only included 3.57% (n = 5) community counselors. This percentage may be especially different as many programs who go through reaccreditation are transitioning to Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) rather than Community Counseling (CC). Changing the names of programs came with the *2009 CACREP Standards* which required existing CC programs to transition to CMHC (CACREP, 2014). The percentages of specialty areas are represented in Table 3.

Table 3

Percentages of Specialty Areas

	Participants	<i>2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report</i>
Addiction	5.00%	0.05%
Career	2.14%	0.38%
Clinical mental health	42.14%	35.47%
College	0.00%	0.32%
Community	3.57%	15.77%
Gerontological	0.00%	0.00%
Marriage, couple, and family	7.86%	5.55%

Mental health	10.71%	9.54%
School	25.71%	30.93%
Student affairs	0.00%	1.09%
Student affairs and college	0.71%	0.74%
Dually-accredited clinical rehabilitation/clinical mental health	2.14%	0.17%

Representative Sample

The sample is representative of the population as the demographical statistics, as a whole, are similar to the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report (2015)*. However, the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report (2015)* noted that the total number of graduates in 2015 was 11,860. Taking into consideration the number of graduates, the number of participants may not be a representative sample of the population merely because the number of graduates (11,890) is so large compared to the sample size (140).

Means

Descriptive statistics also include the mean and standard deviation of the data set (see Creswell, 2009). For this research, the descriptive statistics are measured for the independent variables of program type, which are considered as categorical variables. I also measured the dependent variables using the scale scores from the PISC. In my study, I utilized descriptive statistics to compare each of the two groups, traditional and online programs, to the total possible score on the PISC and the six subscales. The descriptive statistics used to describe these groups include the mean (M) and standard deviation (SD).

I used the data from the present research results to compare the means of the total score of the PISC and the six subscales of the PISC to the total possible score calculated

during the instrument construction and validation (Woo & Henfield, 2015). The data is expressed as a mean \pm standard deviation. The traditional program scored less (266.93 \pm 22.327) than the online program group (275.62 \pm 22.345). For the first subscale, Engagement Behaviors, online program group scored higher than the traditional program group (59.00 \pm 12.241; 57.58 \pm 11.173, respectively). The second subscale, Knowledge of the Profession, had higher results for the online program group (55.62 \pm 5.521) compared to the traditional program group (52.10 \pm 6.454). Additionally, the third subscale of Attitude yielded higher mean for the online program group (50.85 \pm 3.029) compared to the traditional program group (49.07 \pm 4.250). The fourth subscale of Professional Roles and Expertise was similarly rated higher for the online program group (52.31 \pm 2.112) than the traditional program group (51.19 \pm 3.578). The fifth subscale of Philosophy of the Profession was greater for the online program group (39.12 \pm 2.805) than the traditional program group, 38.44 \pm 3.545). Finally, for the six subscale, Professional Orientation and Values maintained consistency and was higher for the online program group (18.73 \pm 3.550) than the traditional program group (18.54 \pm 3.616). This data is depicted in Table 4.

Table 4

Mean Total Score on the PISC

	Program type	M	SD	PISC possible total score
Engagement behaviors	Traditional	57.58	11.173	84
	Online	59.00	12.241	

Knowledge of the profession	Traditional	52.10	6.454	60
	Online	55.62	5.521	
Attitude	Traditional	49.07	4.250	54
	Online	50.85	3.029	
Professional role and expertise	Traditional	51.19	3.578	54
	Online	52.31	2.112	
Philosophy of the profession	Traditional	38.44	3.545	42
	Online	39.12	32.8895	
Professional orientation and values	Traditional	18.54	3.616	24
	Online	18.73	3.550	
Total PISC	Traditional	266.93	22.327	318
	Online	275.62	21.431	

In addition to the means of the total scores, the mean of the responses can help in providing descriptive statistics as it relates to the test-retest reliability of the instrument. As a whole, the PISC had a high level of internal consistency, as determined by Cronbach's alpha of .887. The Cronbach's alpha was calculated using a reliability statistical analysis for all items of the PISC. Additionally, each of the average responses are within one standard deviation (*SD*) from the mean responses as identified by Woo and Henfield (2015). These means are depicted in Table 5.

Table 5

Mean Response Score on PISC

	Program type	M	PISC M	PISC <i>SD</i>
Engagement behaviors	Traditional	4.11	4.49	0.95
	Online	4.21		
Knowledge of the profession	Traditional	5.21	5.09	0.73
	Online	5.56		
Attitude	Traditional	5.45	5.33	0.50
	Online	5.65		
Professional role and expertise	Traditional	5.69	5.66	0.38
	Online	5.81		
Philosophy of the profession	Traditional	5.49	5.41	0.48
	Online	5.59		

Professional orientation and values	Traditional	4.64	4.85	0.78
	Online	4.68		
Total PISC	Traditional	5.04	5.10	0.47
	Online	5.20		

Therefore, a comparison of the reliability co-efficient and means of the present study results to that of the original test for reliability and validity in Woo and Henfield (2015) yielded very similar data. Having similar outcomes for reliability and validity ensures that the dataset is an appropriate measure of professional identity and further analysis could be conducted to determine if difference exist between groups.

Statistical Assumptions

Statistical assumptions help to determine if the statistical analysis can be completed and that the analysis will compute a result or data score (see Field, 2015; Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2016). When statistical assumptions are true, then many potential sources of bias in the research has been reduced (see Field, 2015). Analyses of variance all share similar assumptions and in the case of multiple analyses of covariance, the same assumptions apply with some additions (see Field, 2015). For example, most analyses of variance must demonstrate a linear relationship, normality, homoscedasticity or homogeneity of variance, and independence (Field, 2015). For analyses of covariance, assumptions also include having homogeneity of regression slopes (Field, 2015). Other, simpler, assumptions include having continuous variables, a categorical independent variable with two or more groups, continuous covariates, and independence of observations. Each of these assumptions were met within this research design and thus, I

continued to test the rest of the assumptions. However, I first had to assess for outliers in the data.

One assumption is that there are no outliers within each group of the independent variable (the program types). Boxplots of the data helped in identifying outliers. Upon looking at the total PISC score dependent variable boxplot, there were only two outliers, and neither was an extreme outlier (see Figure 1). The first outlier, respondent 82, had an average response of 3.92 with a total PISC score of 208 and the second outlier, respondent 151, had an average response of 2.71 with a total PISC score of 144. Also, it is important to note that participant 151 had a total score of 144 out of a possible 318, which is less than half of the possible score and is more than two standard deviations ($SD = 32.91$) from the mean score of the group which the participant belonged ($M = 270.74$). It is possible that these participants either responded less favorably when rating themselves and such the outliers are classified as genuinely unusual outliers. Therefore, since participant 151 was different than the mean PISC score of 5.1 as reported by Woo and Henfield (2015) and the total score was less than half of the possible total score, I decided to remove participant 151 from the dataset for the remaining analyses.

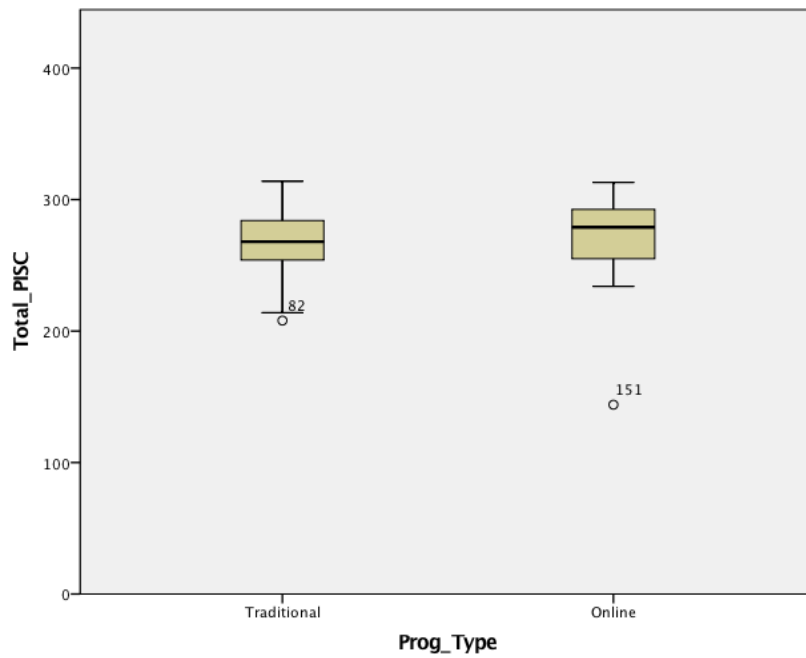


Figure 1 Boxplot for outliers in program type by total PISC.

After removing the participant, I reran the boxplots, and only one outlier remained in the total PISC dependent variable, and the outlier was extremely close to the boxplot, see Figure 2.

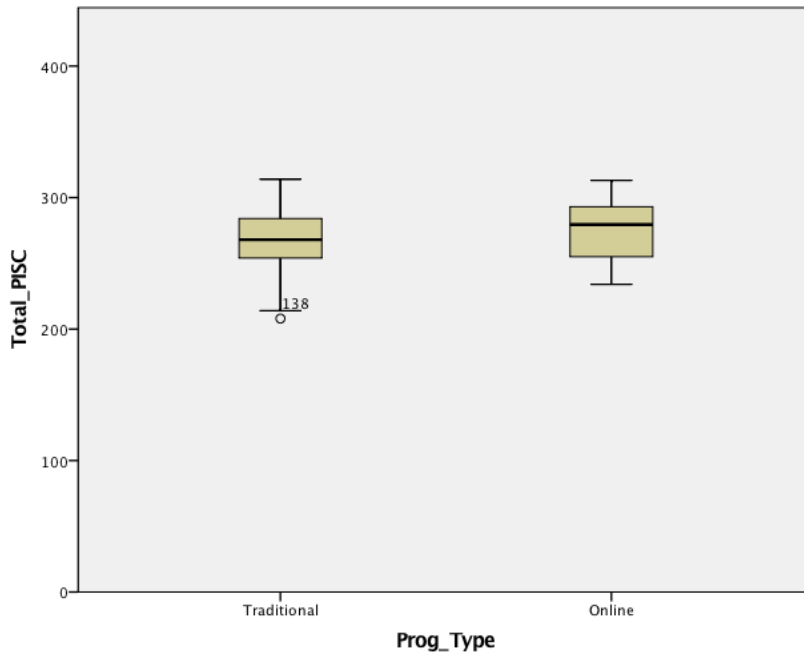


Figure 2. Boxplot for outliers in program type by total PISC after removing one outlier.

Beginning with the assumptions of variance, a linear relationship assumes that the dependent variables are linearly related to each group of the independent variable. Due to using categorical variables (gender, specialty program, and program type), I am unable to test for linearity. Specifically, when testing linearity with these variables using a scatterplot, the data was presented in vertical columns based on the category (i.e. male or female), which does not determine if a linear relationship exists. Therefore, I assume the relationship between variables is linear in nature since, due to the nature of the variables, I could not visually inspect the data for linearity.

The Shapiro-Wilk test for normality was used to test significance for the normality assumption. The standardized residuals for the traditional program type and

online was normally distributed, as assessed by the Shapiro-Wilk's test ($p > .05$). The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Shapiro-Wilk Test for Normality

Program type	Statistic	df	Sig.
Traditional	.983	113	.164
Online	.942	26	.147

The next assumption focuses on homogeneity of variance in that the residuals are equal for all groups of the independent variable. Testing homogeneity of variance is especially important in this study due to the unequal sample sizes of the two groups. Through a Levene's Test for Equality of Error Variances, there was homogeneity of variance ($p = .914$). The final assumption, homogeneity of regression slopes, is used to determine if the interaction between program type, gender, and specialty program is significant. There was homogeneity of regression slopes as the interaction term was not significant $F(2, 133) = .933, p = .396$. Therefore, even though the groups have unequal sample sizes, the statistical assumption of homogeneity of variance was met and further statistical analyses were conducted.

Statistical Analyses

Statistical analysis is helpful when determining if a difference truly exists and what trends exist in the data based on data (see Field, 2015). These statistical analyses are completed using the research question and hypotheses as a guide point for determining the most appropriate analysis (see Field, 2015). An ANCOVA is the most appropriate test to address the research question which asked if there was a statistically significant

difference across the six factors of professional identity as measured by the PISC of new counselors who completed traditional or online counseling master's degree programs after controlling for graduate gender identity and counseling specialty area. This statistical test was most appropriate as an ANCOVA is an analysis of variance in several variables. As described in the previous section, the statistical assumptions for an ANCOVA were met, and I proceeded to run the desired statistical test.

Analysis. An ANCOVA was the statistical test used to determine if there is an influence of one independent variables with two groups, traditional and online education settings and the total score of the PISC after controlling for gender and specialty area. The decision was made to conduct an ANVOCA based on the minimal differences in the mean responses and total scores on the subscales of the PISC. The ANCOVA was used to test for overall differences between the two groups using the total PISC score. A one-way ANCOVA did not show a significant difference in professional identity based on program type after controlling for the two covariates, $F(1,135) = 2.687, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. These results are not significant due to the significance being .104 which is higher than the required p-value of .05. These results are depicted in Table 7. Due to non-significant results, no difference was found between these two groups and therefore, I accepted the null hypothesis that there is not a difference between groups.

Table 7

ANCOVA Results for Group Differences in Professional Identity

Source	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Program type	1	1296.275	2.687	.104	.020

- a. $R^2 = .055$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .034$)

However, as previously discussed, the means of the online group scores across the six subscales and total PISC score were slightly higher than the traditional group. This indicates that while no significant results were found through the ANCOVA, it is possible that differences still exist. Even if I were to exclude the covariates and conduct an ANOVA, the results of the data analysis, $F(1,137) = 3.246$, $p > .05$, would still lead me to accept the null hypothesis in that no significant difference exists between groups. However, the significance calculated in an ANOVA of .074 is closer to the required p-value of .05.

Summary

In the present study, I originally planned to use MANCOVA to determine if differences exist across professional identity in graduates from CACREP accredited traditional programs and online programs. I intended to utilize a MANCOVA so that the effects of the covariates of gender and specialty area would not be calculated in determining differences and so that I could analyze all seven dependent variables at the same time, each subscale of the PISC and the total score of the PISC. However, I chose to run an ANCOVA to first determine if differences existed across the groups before doing further analyses. I made the decision to include the covariates based on literature surrounding gender includes that of Healey and Hays (2012) and Meyers (2016) which determined that there are differences in men's and women's professional identity. Similarly, several research studies have investigated specialty area and how it impacts counselor education doctoral students (Lanman, 2011; Limberg, 2013) and school

counselors (Brott & Meyers, 1999; Gibson et. al, 2012), and thus specialty area was also included as a covariate.

After testing for the assumptions, I proceeded with the ANCOVA to determine if any difference existed in professional identity across these two groups while controlling for gender and specialty area. While the results of the ANCOVA, and the ANOVA when taking out the covariates, were not significant and I accepted the null hypothesis and rejected the alternate hypothesis, the data did reveal that the online program group scored higher across all subscales and the total PISC. These results suggest that there is not a significant difference across the two groups, but that one group (online) is more confident or experienced in their professional identity as evident by higher means on the PISC.

In Chapter 5, I provide an interpretation of the findings based on the statistical analyses presented in this chapter as applied to the previous literature on professional identity and program type. I will also describe the limitations of this study and recommendations for future research to expand knowledge surrounding professional identity. I will conclude my Chapter 5 with a discussion of the social change implications that may be an outcome of the findings of this study and a final summary of the primary results of my research study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Professional identity of counselors is important because one's identity influences how they portray themselves in the profession, impact the profession, and assist clients. The conceptual framework I used to explore professional identity includes a focus on six primary areas: "(a) knowledge of the profession and its philosophy, (b) expertise required of members of the profession, (c) understanding of members' professional roles, (d) attitudes towards the profession and oneself, (e) behaviors expected of members of the profession, and (f) interactions with other professionals in the field" (Woo, 2012, p. 31). However, while professional identity is important, the differences in the development of professional identity between traditional and online programs have not been researched. In this study, participants graduated from accredited traditional and online programs. Historically, a traditional program is defined as one that provides 50% or more of instruction face-to-face, while online methods provide 50% or more of instruction in an online setting. While researchers have proposed variations to the percentage of instruction for online programs (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Cummings et al., 2015; Hall, 106; Landers, 2009), I used the percentage of instruction for online programs as described by CACREP (2018) because CACREP accredited programs are a key inclusion criterion of the population studied. The purpose of this study was to determine if differences exist across educational programs in new graduate professional identity.

In this study, I sought to address this gap in literature by using a cross-sectional online survey methodology. Specifically, I used the PISC (Woo, 2013), which has been previously developed, validated, and used in recent literature (Harwood, 2017;

Kautzman-East, 2016; Littlefield, 2016; Reed, 2017; Scott, 2018). A total of 191 participants responded to the participation requests I sent through electronic media. Of these 191 responses, 140 complete responses were eligible for inclusion in data analysis. As I described in Chapter 4, the results of the data analysis showed that there was not a significant difference in professional identity between the groups of traditional and online program graduates. Therefore, I accepted the null hypothesis, thereby rejecting the alternate hypothesis.

Interpretation of the Findings

Professional identity is a result of individuals understanding various aspects of the profession and using that in professional practice (Remley & Herlihy, 2014). These concepts of professional identity as well as the differences in education program types are of greater focus in Chapter 2. Researchers have previously discussed what constitutes professional identity as well as the development of a measure of professional identity (Emerson, 2010; Healey & Hays, 2012; Remley & Herlihy, 2014; Woo, 2013). The most recent and comprehensive definition of professional identity was presented by Woo (2013) and is directly related to the measure developed for professional identity, the PISC. Researchers have used surveys such as the PISC and qualitative methods such as interviewing to determine what differences exist in professional identity across various groups such as gender (Healey & Hays, 2012; Meyers, 2016), ethnicity (Hinojosa, 2011; Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Wiseman & Egozi, 2006), and sexual orientation (Pfohl, 2014; Speciale et al., 2015). Additionally, differences in professional identity are evident across tasks and activities such as leadership experiences, supervision, and mentoring

(Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010; Lanman, 2011; Luke & Goodrich, 2010; Moss et al., 2014; Murdock et al., 2013). In addition to professional identity, researchers have begun to study what defines a program type (Allen & Seanman, 2015; Hall, 2016; Landers, 2009) as well as the impact of various program types on educational outcomes (Beasley Pfreffer, 2008; Duran, 2014; Nelson, 2015). For example, personal interaction and intrinsic motivation have been found to impact educational outcomes (Rovai et al., 2007). With regard to program type, it is important to consider if active (traditional) or passive (online) learning methodology impact student development (Zobdeh-Asadi, 2004).

Considering this prior research, I developed this study using one independent variable with two groups (program type including traditional and online programs) and seven dependent variables including each of the six subscales in the PISC and the total PISC. I also focused on the differences in professional identity as impacted by gender and specialty area in literature and decided to use these two variables as covariates. Therefore, I used an ANCOVA to determine if differences existed in professional identity across the two groups of program type after controlling for gender and specialty area. While the analysis did not reveal significant results, I have made several conclusions based on the results.

Respondents

First a review of the participants is important before discussing the data analyses and implications of the results. I gathered a total of 191 recorded responses to the survey. There was a 73% completion rate, including a total of 140 complete responses eligible for analysis with 113 respondents from traditional programs and 27 respondents from online

programs. This response and completion rate did result in unequal sized groups for data analysis. However, after testing assumptions to be able to run the MANCOVA, one significant outlier was removed from the data analysis and subsequently dropped the number of online participants to 26. This resulted in respondents that were 12.2% male ($n = 17$), 87.1% female ($n = 121$), and .7% other/undisclosed ($n = 1$). The participant gender was consistent with the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report (2015)* which describes a population of students that is majority female (82.58%).

The ethnic distribution of the population was also similar to the *2015 CACREP Vital Statistics Report (2015)*. The sample included 13.57% African American/Black ($n = 19$), 2.14% American Indian/Native American ($n = 3$), 2.14% Asian American ($n = 3$), 68.57% Caucasian/White ($n = 96$), 5.71% Hispanic/Latino ($n = 8$), 7.14% Multiracial ($n = 10$), and 0.71% non-resident Alien ($n = 1$) participants. The one participant outlier removed was Caucasian/White, which reduced the percentage to 68.3%. The only notable differences between the sample and the demographics of the population is that my sample had a lower percentage of African American/Black (13.57%) participants compared to the report (18.35%), a higher percentage of Caucasian/white (68.3%) compared to the report (60.55%), a higher multiracial percentage (7.14%) compared to the report (2.05%), and a lower other/undisclosed percentage (0.00%) compared to the report (7.03%). Overall, these respondents begin to demonstrate a representativeness of the sample; however, the sample is not representative due to such a small number of participants ($n = 139$) compared to the total population of 11,860 (CACREP, 2015).

Differences Across Groups

The conceptual framework of professional identity previously described in Chapter 2 is the framework I used in this study. Specifically, I used Woo's (2013) six different areas of professional identity, yielding a score on each area and a total composite score for professional identity. I first focused on testing for a difference between the groups through an ANCOVA.

A one-way ANCOVA did not show a statistically significant difference in professional identity based on program type after controlling for gender and specialty area $F(1,135) = 2.687, p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$. The findings of no significant difference between groups indicate that there is no difference between professional identity of traditional and online students. This research further supports the equality of online education when compared to traditional education. These findings support the research of Allen and Seaman (2015) which stated that 77% of academic leaders rate the learning outcomes of traditional and online education as the same. This research also supports the results of Cummings, Chaffin, and Cockerham (2015) which described no significant differences in educational outcomes between traditional and online social work students. Specifically, Cummings et al. (2015) described how no differences were found between traditional and online students regarding knowledge attainment and skill development. While Cummings et al.'s (2015) research focused on social work and this research focused on counseling, both sets of participants were members of a helping profession. Therefore, this research and the support of previous research suggests that online

education is equally as successful in student development, both in terms of knowledge and personal development.

However, upon looking at the means of the two groups, I found that students from online programs consistently scored higher by just a few points in each subscale on the PISC and on the total PISC. These differences in scores may be due to chance because of the small sample size. If not due to chance, these findings indicate that while not significant, these students still scored higher than traditional students. These higher scores can possibly be explained by current literature.

The findings of higher means for the online group are consistent with Landers' (2009) findings indicating that online education is 6% more effective when focusing on the knowledge gained by the students. Landers' (2009) described how the effectiveness of online classes may be due to the changing of the online course room and sophisticated design of classes. This is consistent with Duran (2014) which described online courses as being uniform for all students. Additionally, online programs provide the opportunity for knowledge to be gained through various assignments and activities (Nelson, 2015). Therefore, having an increase in knowledge gained and a quicker acquisition of knowledge can contribute to positive professional identity. This is evident through Woo's (2013) description of how individuals with a strong professional identity would be knowledgeable about the profession. Therefore, this research supports and expands on Landers' (2009) and Nelson's (2015) idea that greater knowledge is gained but that a greater identity is also developed in students.

The knowledge of the profession continues to include orientation to the profession (Woo, 2013) because knowledge and orientation are key in how the individual performs as a professional. In my study, online students scored over three points higher on the subscale, which was consistent with Landers' (2009) findings. Another possible reason for the difference in means could be the uniformity of online programs. Online courses are typically more uniform because they are a part of a larger program (Duran, 2014). Students participating in a uniform program have the ability to develop knowledge of their topic area while acquiring professional orientation through experiential learning opportunities such as online supervision (Duran, 2014). This research supports the research of Perry (2012) which utilized online supervision as a way to develop professional identity. It is possible that online students have a greater orientation to the profession due to online supervision opportunities.

Similar to the Knowledge subscale, the Engagement and Professional Role and Expertise subscales were also rated higher by the online group. This was consistent with Duran's (2014) findings, which showed that a major theme in online education is the need to meet student needs. Specifically, Duran (2014) described the importance of faculty being available to students and providing services that help meet their needs and expand knowledge, including online supervision. Through having increased support services through greater flexibility in meeting with faculty and increased opportunities for supervision and mentoring, students can develop their professional identity in the areas of engagement and professional role and expertise. These students develop through the modeling and involvement of their faculty. Mirroring the work of Duran (2014), this

research suggests that online students learn how to engage in professional practice, role, and expertise through increased support services provided to students.

More intrinsic motivation is needed by graduate students to complete online courses (Duran, 2014; Rovai et al., 2007). Specifically, in Rovai et al.'s (2007) study, e-learning students scored higher in all three intrinsic motivation measures to know, to accomplish things, and to experience stimulation. Through having greater intrinsic motivation, students are more apt to participate in their education and subsequently report a more pleasurable experience and greater satisfaction with online learning. With increased satisfaction comes increased involvement by the student. This student involvement can then translate into an attitude for the profession (Subscale 3 in the PISC) which conveys pride for the profession and belief in the profession's future (Woo, 2013). Therefore, in this research online students scoring higher on the attitude subscale is consistent with the research of Rovai et al. (2007). Online students have a greater appreciation and motivation to complete coursework which translates to a higher attitude towards their professional orientation.

Through the literature presented before, I sought to explain why online students scored higher across the subscales and the total PISC. However, while I described some of the subscale topics of the PISC, not all of the subscales can be explained by literature merely because the literature on online learners does not exist. However, as a whole, the literature along with the results of the present study suggests that online learners while not significant, scored higher across the subscales and total PISC due to increased knowledge, uniformity of programs, the flexibility of faculty to meet student needs, and

greater intrinsic motivation of students. More research focusing on program types and professional identity are needed due to the results of the present research yielding a non-significant relationship and to better identify reasoning for the differences in means in the sub scores and to determine if the differences were merely by chance. However, as a whole, this research supports the ideas presented in literature that online learners are more motivated to participate in coursework and that online learning is more effective in terms of knowledge gained by individuals.

Limitations of the Study

This research study also includes limitations just like many research studies. First and most importantly, the low sample size is a significant limitation to the study. While the participants' demographical characteristics were similar to that of the population of students in accredited programs, the number of participants ($n = 140$) represented such a small amount of the entire population of graduates in one year ($n = 11,860$). Additionally, there were also unequal sizes for the two groups. Having a low number of participants and unequal group sizes could have impacted the variability. Therefore, the results of the present research are similar for the demographical characteristics of the entire population but is not an effective measure for the representativeness of the population. The sample limitation comes from the recruitment of participants and that the population of new graduates is a hidden population. This is a hidden population due to the use of several various recruitment procedures still not acquiring enough participation.

I attempted to address the small sample size limitation by using several recruitment processes including two listservs, community boards on association websites,

reaching out to 420 program contacts associated with 790 programs, and posting on several Facebook pages, groups, and associations. However, many program contacts responded that they had no way of contacting their alumni as a directory does not exist. Other program contacts responded that they are not allowed to contact alumni due to university restrictions. When posting on Facebook, I found that many state associations for counseling, school counseling, mental health counseling, and other counseling areas do not allow public posts. I was able to post or send a message to approximately 90 pages. However, I am unsure of the number of posts that were approved by page administrators or were sent to other individuals through snowball sampling. I also posted on some pages for new counselors but searching for these pages yielded very few results.

Another limitation is that of using electronic survey methodology. The participation invitation included a link to the survey including three screening questions, consent, and a response to agree to the consent. The participants then began the survey with demographical questions and then the 53-item questionnaire. A total of 14 respondents clicked that they consented but never clicked to continue with the survey. Additionally, another 14 respondents began the survey but never finished. I am not certain that clicking through nine pages of the survey hindered the response rate, but it is important to mention.

An additional limitation of the study is that the independent variable of program type only included traditional and online methodologies. While there are no CACREP statistics on the number of hybrid programs, research may be needed to begin to understand differences in the population of hybrid learners as well. As the number of

online programs grows, I expect that the research related to the differences in online education, traditional education, and hybrid education will similarly grow.

Recommendations

The impact of professional identity on professional service demonstrates the importance of further research, especially due to the non-significant results found in this study. While the study yielded non-significant results, the mean total score on each subscale and total PISC may suggest that online students have a slightly higher professional identity. Additional research on professional identity and types of educational programs can address the specific limitation of a small sample size.

First, it would be beneficial to repeat this research procedure in a way that obtains a larger sample size. Obtaining a larger sample size would make the results more generalizable to the entire population of new graduates. If when recreating this study, statistical significance is evident in the total scores, the researcher may be able to identify more specifically what differences exist across the subscales. While the research results had higher means for the online group, the differences were not significant. Additional research with higher sample sizes may help to determine if online students do have a higher developed professional identity or if the differences in means was due to chance. Additional research which removes the covariates could also be beneficial since the results of the ANOVA were closer to the significance level.

A researcher may also conduct research that enhances the understanding of professional identity development in education settings through surveys or qualitative interviewing. The researcher may use knowledge of previous research such as

professional identity and leadership activities (Luke & Goodrich, 2010), experiential learning tasks and opportunities (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., 2014), or mentoring (Allen Lincome, 2015; Curry, 2011 Lanman, 2011; Murdock et al., 2015) to help in understanding the process of development as impacted by education setting. Increased research in these topics focused on education setting may help provide more knowledge as an increasing number of online programs are created. This research may specifically be beneficial for Counselor Education and Supervision programs as programs seek to change program structure to ways which best cultivate professional identity in students.

Evident differences between traditional and online students was found in previous research. Specifically, traditional education can help improve interaction between individuals and have more reliable assessment procedures (Wuensch et al., 2009); however, online education provides more flexibility in the interactions to meet student needs (Duran, 2014). Online education has been shown to be more effective when considering knowledge gained by students and their academic performance (Landers, 2009; Urtel, 2008). The difference in knowledge and performance may be due to the increase in intrinsic motivation needed by online learners (Duran, 2014). However, a student's personality, home life, and accessibility may be a deciding factor in deciding to attend either a traditional or online program (Beasley Preffer, 2008). Future researchers may choose to focus on the differences in characteristics of learners from various program types due to previous research being limited.

Implications

The findings of this study offer several implications for positive social change by considering the findings of the present study. Limited research exists on professional identity and program type even though professional identity is of importance on the practicing of professionals. Professional counselors utilize their professional identity in their interactions with clients and the profession. Specifically, a lack of clear integration of personal and professional identity can hinder one's counseling abilities (Moore-Pruitt, 1994) due to not having enough knowledge and confidence in one's abilities. Overall, a lack of development of professional identity can lead to decreased effectiveness with professional practice (Gale & Austin, 2003; Healey & Hays, 2012; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Having a limited or decreased professional identity can translate to an individual without a clear foundation and philosophy, which identifies themselves in the profession (Healey & Hays, 2012). Therefore, research has suggested that counselor educators should create opportunities for professional engagement and advocacy in students which then facilitate the development of a stronger professional identity (Prosek & Hurt, 2014).

For positive social change to occur, counselor educators should consider the results of this research study that, while non-significant, may suggest that there may be differences in professional identity and type of program setting. Specifically, those online students develop a stronger professional identity due to interactions and personal characteristics. Additionally, counseling students may use these research results in personally driving their development for professional identity in each of the six areas. By impacting these two types of students (traditional and online), social change can occur

not through how counseling programs are presented but through the outcomes of each program within graduates' professional practice. This change subsequently continues to the societal level as the professional begins to practice in society post-graduation.

Through having a well-developed professional identity, individuals can make a positive impact on society through direct interactions with clients and professional interactions with colleagues and in the profession. For example, individuals with a stronger professional identity are more inclined to contribute to the field through conducting and participating in research, have high confidence in the profession, demonstrate beliefs in clients for change and success, and take part in professional development activities through publications, conferences, and committee positions.

Practicing counselor educators may use this research to focus on the intentionality of learning opportunities and how the opportunity may impact the individual. Specifically, these learning opportunities would be carefully selected to help facilitate the development of a stronger professional identity in students. Additionally, counselor educators may change their practice so that they are more mindful of their interactions with students and availability to meet student needs. As previously described in Duran's (2014) research interactions and availability can positively impact students which translates to a positive development of professional identity specific to orientation and values. This intentionality by counselor educators can help in preparing students who are equipped for the profession.

Conclusion

In this study, I used a quantitative survey methodology to obtain results which sought to determine if differences exist in the dependent variable of professional identity across the independent variable of educational setting while controlling for the variables of gender and specialty area. I utilized convenience and snowball sampling to obtain participants who graduated from CACREP programs between December 2016 and July 2018. My sample included 139 eligible responses that were used in data analyses. These responses were analyzed using a one-way ANCOVA for determining if differences existed in professional identity across program type after controlling for gender and specialty area. The results did not reveal a significant relationship; I subsequently rejected the alternate hypothesis in favor of the null hypothesis.

The need for the present research is driven by literature on the definition and measure of professional identity (Woo, 2013). Additionally, this research considers what impacts professional identity such as gender, specialty area, experience, and experiential learning opportunities (Healey & Hays, 2012; Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Luke & Goodrich, 2010). Additionally, research has investigated differences in educational types (Allen & Seaman, 2015; Duran, 2014; Urtel, 2008) and the inclusion of electronic methods in counselor education (Meder, 2013; Robey, 2009). However, this research does not overlap and consider both professional identity and education setting in the same research. I specifically did not find any literature related to these topics jointly or anything suggesting one's impact on the other.

The results of this survey did not reveal a significant relationship between professional identity and program type. However, the means from the subscale scores and total PISC scores for the online group were higher than the traditional group. This information may be helpful for counselor educators from both settings to consider when working with counselors-in-training to ensure they each have appropriate opportunities for professional identity development.

With the growing use of technology and the growing number of online education programs, counselor educators continue to need to understand the differences in online education from traditional education. In this study, I sought to determine if differences exist, so that counselor educators have more knowledge of these differences when developing learning opportunities for students. While no differences were found with significance, the results may suggest a difference in means as the online group scored higher across the subscales and total PISC. With knowledge of online students having a higher score of professional identity, counselor educators may start to consider the differences in the format of these settings and the impact on students.

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Appendix A: Permission to Use PISC

2/26/2018

Mail [REDACTED]

Re: Seeking Permission to use PISC

Mary Katalinic

Fri 10/20/2017 3:48 PM

Sent Items

To: Woo,Hong Ryun <[REDACTED]>

Dr. Woo,

Thank you so much! I am looking forward to beginning the research process.

Mary

Mary Katalinic, MA
 Doctoral Student, Counselor Education and Supervision - Walden University
 School Counselor, Berea Elementary School

From: Woo,Hong Ryun <[REDACTED]>
 Sent: Friday, October 20, 2017 12:43 PM
 To: Mary Katalinic
 Subject: Re: Seeking Permission to use PISC

Dear Mary,

Attached, please find the PISC published in JCLA and the scoring guide.
 Good luck with your study!

Dr. Woo

[Hongryun Woo, Ph.D., NCC](#)
 Assistant Professor
 Dept. of Counseling and Human Development
 University of Louisville
 Phone: [REDACTED]
 E-mail: [REDACTED]

From: Mary Katalinic <[REDACTED]>
 Sent: Tuesday, October 17, 2017 9:20:08 PM
 To: Woo,Hong Ryun
 Subject: Seeking Permission to use PISC

Hello Dr. Woo,

I am emailing you to seek permission to use the PISC for upcoming research studies including my dissertation. I am a doctoral student with Walden University and my Dissertation Chair is Dr. Walter Frazier.

If this is acceptable, I was wondering if you had the revised version of the instrument available or if the test version in your dissertation was the final version generated?

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Mary Katalinic, MA
 Doctoral Student, Counselor Education and Supervision - Walden University
 School Counselor, Berea Elementary School

Appendix B: Invitation to Participate

Dear Counselor,

I am completing my dissertation research in part of my PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision program at Walden University. The title of my study is “Professional Identity Differences in Novice Counselors” (IRB approval # **I07-17-18-0608778**). The results of this study may help determine if differences exist in the professional identity of counselors from traditional and online training programs. Eligible Participants include:

- Professional counselors who graduated between the months of December 2016 and July 2018 from either traditional or online CACREP accredited counseling programs.

Participation should not take more than 10-minutes to complete and participants are eligible to withdraw anytime.

If interested, please follow this link: [REDACTED]

If you have any questions, I can be reached at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] My dissertation chair, Dr. Walter Frazier, can be reached at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,
Mary Katalinic

Appendix C: Screening and Demographic Questions

Screening Questions

Did you recently graduate between the months of December 2016 and May 2018?

- Yes
- No

Was your program accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs during your attendance?

- Yes
- No

Was your school traditional (more than 50% of instruction spent face to face) or online (more than 50% of instruction delivered online)?

Note: Assignments and Discussions which occur online do not count as instruction.

- Traditional
- Online

Demographic questions

Which best describes your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other/undisclosed

Which best describes your ethnicity?

- African American/Black
- American Indian/Native American
- Asian American
- Caucasian/White
- Hispanic/Latino
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Multiracial
- Non-resident Alien
- Other/undisclosed

Which best describes your specialty area?

- Addiction
- Career
- Clinical Mental Health
- College
- Community
- Gerontological
- Marriage, Couple, and Family

- Mental Health
- School
- Student Affairs
- Student Affairs and College
- Dually-accredited Clinical Rehabilitation/Clinical Mental Health