Professional Identity Development of Counselor Education Doctoral Students

Colette T. Dollarhide, Donna M. Gibson, and Julie M. Moss

The authors used grounded theory to explore professional identity transitions for 23 counselor education doctoral students in a cross-section sample based on nodal points in their programs. The transformational tasks that doctoral students face involve integration of multiple identities, evolution of confidence and legitimacy, and acceptance of responsibility as the source of knowledge about the profession. The authors offer implications for training doctoral students.

Keywords: professional identity, counselor education, doctoral education, grounded theory, development

Professional identity, as defined by the Council for Accreditation for Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP] (2009, Section II), comprises the activities inherent in the “professional leadership roles of counselor education, supervision, counseling practice, and research” (p. 53) and includes developing counseling expertise and collaborative relationships, participating in professional counseling organizations, and contributing to scholarly research. Additionally, professional identity includes intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions (Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010). In the intrapersonal dimension, professionals self-label as members of that profession and strive to integrate their personal identity with that of the profession, working to adopt professionally viable skills, values, roles, attitudes, ethics, modes of thinking, and patterns of problem solving (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; Nugent & Jones, 2009). In the interpersonal dimension, new professionals confront feedback about their personal/professional integration that is offered by supervising members of the professional community (O’Byrne & Rosenberg, 1998) and strive to enter the professional culture (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006). The process of professional identity development is a cycle of learning, practice, and feedback in which the new professional experiences dependence and autonomy in the search for individuation, professional viability, and internal locus of evaluation (Auxier et al., 2003).

Qualitative studies of professional identity highlight the importance of professional identity for counselor trainees and new professional counselors (e.g., Gibson et al., 2010; Luke & Goodrich, 2010; Nelson & Jackson, 2009).
Nelson and Jackson (2003) found that master’s-level Latino students experienced unique cultural issues in addition to the professional identity experiences common to all participants, and Luke and Goodrich (2010) found that leadership experience fostered strong counselor professional identity in both master’s- and doctoral-level new professional counselors. Gibson et al. (2010) examined professional identity at each of four educational transition points for 43 master’s-level counselor trainees. They found three transformational tasks that described professional identity, including an internalized definition of counseling, internalized responsibility for professional growth, and a systemic identity integrated with the professional community. This process seemed to evolve from external validation, through course work, experience, and commitment, to self-validation.

These previous studies focused on the counselor trainee at the master’s level or counselor practitioner at the master’s or doctoral level, but they did not examine the professional identity of enrolled counselor education doctoral students. There have been studies designed to qualitatively capture retention issues in doctoral experience in counselor education (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005; Hughes & Kleist, 2005; Protivnak & Foss, 2009). Collectively, findings indicate the following retention factors for doctoral students: student expectations and experiences in the program, academic match, and social–personal match (Hoskins & Goldberg, 2005); degree of involvement in the program and confirmation of their abilities (Hughes & Kleist, 2005); and departmental culture, mentoring, academic challenges and triumphs, support systems including peers, and personal issues (Protivnak & Foss, 2009). However, none of these authors connected the reported experiences with different stages of the doctoral experience.

In terms of elements of identity, research identity (Lambie & Vaccaro, 2011; Reisetter et al., 2004) and supervisor identity (Nelson, Oliver, & Capps, 2006) have been studied, but the timing of these identity elements has not been explored. Carlson, Portman, and Bartlett (2006) proposed a doctoral student professional identity development model that prescribes certain experiences (i.e., research, publications, grants, service, presentations) during specific years of the doctoral counselor education program. Although this proposal was not based on their research of the efficacy of the model, Carlson et al. recognized the process of transformation that occurs when transitioning from community professional to student to university professional.

It is reasonable to assert that doctoral students, as future counselor educators, must have a strong professional identity in order to provide adequate education to future counselor education students. Specifically, gaining a more exact understanding of the experiences of doctoral students as they transition from community professional to student to university professional may provide insight into their professional identity. Hence, this study focuses on describing the professional identity transitions of doctoral students in counselor education to describe the transformational tasks found in doctoral study.
Methodology

We created a series of four separate studies on professional identity to understand the professional identity of the following individuals involved in the professional counseling community: counselors-in-training (Gibson et al., 2010), practicing professional counselors (Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, in press), doctoral students in counselor education, and counselor educators. No data were used more than once in analyses and reporting across all four studies. The goal was to understand professional identity transitions of counselor education doctoral students using a grounded theory tradition (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Researchers

Qualitative research derives from the discovery of shared meaning between the researchers and the participants and requires transparency on the part of the researchers (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The researchers are women, ages 37 to 55; two are counselor educators with 30 years of combined professorial and research experience, and one is a recent graduate of a doctoral program in counselor education. We have a long-term interest in professional identity, sharing the bias that professional identity shapes the way a professional interacts with students, clients, and other professionals. We also agree that training experiences directly affect the trainee’s professional identity at all levels within counseling. Specific to doctoral students, we hypothesized that understanding the unique experiences of participants at cross-sections of doctoral training could result in a theory of development that could later be verified or disconfirmed in longitudinal studies. We held no assumptions that the two campuses from which the participants were derived would vary from each other in ways that would influence the resulting theory.

Participants and Procedures

During this 1-year study, a cross-section of participants (N = 23; 18 women and 5 men) were interviewed at nodal points in their doctoral programs: 10 1st-year students, five 2nd-year students, two students after comprehensive exams but before their dissertation proposals, and six individuals after completing their dissertations. In terms of ethnicity, 14 self-identified as White (60%), eight as African American/Black (34%), and one as multi-racial (i.e., Latino and White; 4%). The mean age of the participants was 32 (range = 24–54 years, SD = 5.34). Of the 23 participants, 13 (56%) had family members with master’s degrees, and five (21%) had family members who held doctorates. Specialty areas included school counseling (n = 13; 56%), clinical/community counseling (n = 6; 26%), marriage and family counseling (n = 2; 8%), rehabilitation counseling (n = 1; 2%), and pastoral counseling (n = 1; 2%). In terms of professional goals after graduation, 12 (52%) expressed a desire to work solely as a counselor educator, and 11 (48%) expressed a desire to work in a combination of counselor education and some form of professional counseling practice.
Both campuses are large (20,000+ students) universities with Carnegie classifications of very high research activity. Cohorts were defined by status relative to graduation; both programs had similar structure at the doctoral level (one program was CACREP-accredited, with 15 participants, and the other was not CACREP-accredited, with eight participants). Both programs had similar formats: the 1st year consisted of intensive coursework, teaching, and supervising (Year 1); the 2nd year began with coursework and student participation in faculty scholarship (Year 2) and ended with successful completion of comprehensive exams (post-comps); and the program concluded with the dissertation phase (dissertation). We selected these nodal points because of our perception that these time-frames represented challenges to the students’ sense of identity. Cohorts were grouped on the basis of these nodal points and not on the students’ full- or part-time status in the program.

After we obtained institutional review board approval from both campuses, the doctoral students at each campus, one in the midwest and one in the southeastern United States, were contacted through electronic mailing lists, and participants were invited to contact the researcher at each campus (first two authors). We rigorously discussed detailed informed consent with each participant and carefully monitored the rights of each participant to minimize power issues between the doctoral students and us. In addition, the study was timed so that we were no longer responsible for immediate evaluation of the participants. No discomfort was reported; all participants continued with the study. The first two authors conducted the interviews for their respective campuses.

Data Collection

Semistructured interviews were designed to elicit participants’ experience of their professional identity during their doctoral program, and the results were used to develop a theory of professional identity transitions during doctoral training in counselor education. Focus groups allow participants to reflect on the responses of others and expand on their own responses (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), so the first two authors conducted seven focus group interviews lasting approximately 60–90 minutes each—one on each campus and four on the other—each consisting of 3–6 respondents. In addition, the first two authors accommodated five participants’ schedules and preferred formats, providing individual telephone or face-to-face interviews for those participants. Interviews took place during one academic year, so no participant was interviewed in more than one category.

The first two authors designed interview questions that mirrored the first two studies on professional identity development previously conducted by us (Gibson et al., 2010; Moss et al., in press). Topics addressed included the following: definition of counselor education and any changes over time, professional identity and factors that influenced it, needs to progress in their professional identity, and prioritization of counselor educator roles.
After each interview or focus group, the third author transcribed each recording verbatim, and we evaluated transcripts for saturation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) to determine if additional participants were needed to fully explore the process under investigation. No additional participants were deemed necessary.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

We worked independently first to code all transcripts, then communicated frequently at subsequent stages of data analysis to coconstruct themes by consensus. We worked to reduce researcher bias through openly challenging each other with any conclusions. Although the first study of this series yielded a useful conceptual theory termed transformational tasks (Gibson et al., 2010), the second study with counseling practitioners (Moss et al., in press) yielded a similar but not identical theory. The data for this study were not collected to confirm or contradict the findings from those previous studies, so the process of data analysis was informed only by the desire to identify the issues and process related to professional identity emergent from the data.

All coding was done manually. Line-by-line open coding was focused on coding for differences based on cohort level termed Year 1, Year 2, post-comps, and dissertation stage. Professional identity was conceptualized as a continuum (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), so the transcripts of the Year 1 cohort and dissertation stage cohort were examined and coded for concepts and categories to “anchor” the ends of the continuum. These transcripts were deemed “start” and “end” of the professional identity process under study. After these anchors were identified, the transcripts of the remaining two training levels, Year 2 and post-comps, were then coded. At this point, the team discovered that the content of the post-comps cohort was not different in content or substance from the Year 2 cohort. These two groups were then combined for continuing analysis.

At the end of the open-coding process, the team articulated categories that transcended training levels, and the researchers arrived at consensus before moving to axial coding. We obtained consensus by engaging in diagramming data and applying metaphors to key concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In axial coding, the categories are refined by examining the differences and similarities among the remaining three cohorts, while simultaneously noting participant transitions that would be used in the construction of the grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Finally, selective coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) allowed us to synthesize axial codes into an abstract theory to suggest a possible developmental progression through the doctoral experience. At this final stage, we discovered that the process codes did mirror the transformational task model outlined in the first study, even though the tasks themselves were unique to this population (Gibson et al., 2010).

Credibility was addressed through transparency in the study design, thick description of data analysis, and triangulation of data sources and of multiple researchers reflecting on their own professional identity and data through
memo writing and consensus building. Transferability was enhanced through use of a diverse participant pool. Finally, dependability and confirmability were enhanced by our articulation of personal biases and assumptions and the use of frequent conversation, collective analysis, and consensus so that researcher biases were minimized.

Results

As students progress in their doctoral study in counselor education, they face multiple challenges in their professional identity development. Viewed at each nodal point, these challenges are identified process themes. Figure 1 is an overview of the three themes or transformational tasks (on the side of the cube: integration of multiple identities, evolving legitimacy, and acceptance of responsibility) with the progression for each task across time (on top of the cube). On the face of the cube is the three-stage growth process evident in each of the three tasks.

Integration of Multiple Identities

Related to this first transformational task, participants came into their program with a professional identity as a counselor that evolved into the identity of
doctoral student, which then evolved into the identity of counselor educator. They described the process as cumulative; those at the end of their programs realized that the identities of counselor and doctoral student are integrated into their identity as early counselor educator, building one on the other. Participants spoke of this as a time of stressful transitions, as stated by a Year 1 participant: “I feel like I’m in my infancy as a PhD student, a counselor educator, but my identity as a clinician is very strong, so there’s that dissonance between the two.” In Year 2, participants seemed to fully embrace the identity of a doctoral student; one said, “I would identify myself right now as a PhD student. I feel like that’s a professional identity in itself.” Finally, for those in the dissertation stage, there is a final shift: “It was probably a hybrid of the two [identities]. Sort of like ‘I know I’m going to be a counselor educator but at the moment I’m a doc student.’ Then I think this past semester has been a shift to ‘Ok, now I’m the counselor educator, not the doc student.’”

Evolving Legitimacy

The second transformational task involved both internal and external validation. In Year 1, doctoral students have experienced success as a practitioner, but struggle with their confidence in doctoral experience. A Year 1 participant stated, “[F]or a while I was comfortable identifying myself as a high school counselor, and now . . . I am a student. . . . I feel like I’m bouncing between the two.” Another participant described how confidence ebbs and flows: “‘In this part I’m good, and now I’m lost again,’ then ‘In that part I’m good, and I’m lost again,’ and so it’s kind of an ebb and flow.” External validation, a sense of legitimacy, was derived from professors as the primary source of feedback about performance. For example, one participant described his performance anxiety: “[In supervision] you have that opportunity to kind of fumble a little bit, and figure your way through things. . . . It’s not [done] in front of your professor, or advisor, who you want to impress.”

Students in Year 2 have experienced some successes at the tasks of counselor education, and yet they recognize that the dissertation is the final test. Revealing a lack of confidence or internal validation, one participant said “You know you got the pedagogy, you’ve done some teaching, you’ve done a little supervision, you’ve dabbled in all of it, but . . . it [the dissertation] is like crossing the burning sands, it’s a trial you’ve got to go through to say I’m worthy.” Respondents also struggled with external legitimacy. For one respondent, feedback from both peers and professors influenced the way she perceived her work:

I was supposed to be coauthoring a chapter with another doc student. . . . [W]hen the other doc student gave me their piece, it was crap, and I knew it was crap. . . . It came to the point where the book was due and they [the faculty authors] said, ‘This is crap,’ and just rewrote it. That was a really, really tough thing for me.

For those in the dissertation stage, the source of confidence came from performance, and many of the participants expressed new comfort with the research experience. One participant stated,
I was very surprised that I would enjoy [research] and that’s something that I love the power of research. . . . I enjoyed the writing part of every single word, you know. . . . I was reading something that I had written, wow. . . . It sounded pretty good.

Furthermore, those in the dissertation stage expressed more awareness of peers and colleagues as sources of legitimacy, rather than focusing only on the feedback of professors. Knowing that the process of publication and resulting tenure depends on one’s professional reputation with peers, the connection of doctoral students with their cohort peers in the program and their new colleagues in the field provides a source of external validation that increases with time in the program. For example, one participant who had finished her dissertation said, “Seeing my colleagues and how they manage their counselor educator identities is influential in helping to balance me, but I’ve been trying to maintain my own idea of what I want to be.”

Acceptance of Responsibility

Evidence for the third transformational task was found as participants expressed their understanding of counselor education, moving from the perception that creating and disseminating new knowledge was the purview of expert others to accepting responsibility for creating and teaching new information in the field. Year 1 participants expressed textbook definitions of counselor education using third person references, such as, “I define counselor education as, um, a professional in the field of counseling whether as a counselor educator or as experienced counselor. . . . I see them as being advocates.” In Year 2, the definition changes to a more fluid but still future-oriented definition: “But I don’t think I really embraced it because it was all theoretical because it was all like: when I’m teaching I will. . . . when I’m supervising I will. . . .” Finally, those in the dissertation stage expressed a much more personalized definition of counselor education, suggesting the internalization of identity that comes from experience: “I really think counselor education is teaching people to be comprehensive and professional. So . . . being responsible for bringing in things that I think are important for students to learn, I think that’s a big part of it.”

In addition to personalizing responsibility for training, respondents in each cohort also articulated different levels of responsibility for creating new knowledge for the profession. Teaching was an important learning opportunity for participants in Year 1 to reflect on their role as future educators: “Seeing [the master’s students] in that very initial stage of wanting to become a counselor has hit me with why I want to do what I want to do.” For those in Year 2, relationships with master’s students in class and supervision experiences were profound reminders of their responsibility for training the next generation of counselors. One participant relayed this idea in her experience:

This master’s student asks to meet with me about class. I think that was really significant. . . . that she saw me in the role of a professional educator. That kind of bolstered the way I viewed myself and gave me more confidence. The next week I felt different, and I felt more professional and I felt more like a counselor educator.
Those in the dissertation stage reported that their teaching and interacting with the next generation of counselors was an important part of their responsibility, and it needed to be authentic, informed by their own research or experience. As stated by one participant,

I don’t ever want teach a master’s course in something I’m not doing. I don’t like to speak from a book; I like to speak from experience. I will always counsel . . . to legitimize what I’m teaching.

In addition to teaching in counselor education, participants expressed their new role as an author of new knowledge when they spoke of presenting at conferences, conducting their own research, and mentoring the next generation of counselors.

**Professional Identity Transformation Process**

The process of identity development over time is suggested as a tripartite progression (see the face of the cube depicted in Figure 1). Year 1 participants entered the doctoral program seeking validation from external sources—professors, peers, supervisors, and other counselors. Several participants spoke about the desire to receive validation from others; when they spoke about influential persons who encouraged them into doctoral study, they named former advisors and professors. One Year 1 participant stated, “They [professors] would pick those [master’s] students who they felt would be good candidates for counselor education and doctoral candidates and would explain to them ‘This is what we could see you doing.’”

One participant who was in the start of her 2nd year voiced the second stage, the shift to experience as the main source of validation, saying,

I spend a lot of time watching the faculty member teach and . . . I find myself thinking of things that I would change. Before I came in thinking “Well, this person is obviously the expert” and now I’m seeing the changes that I would [make].

This ability to think critically about the performance of experts suggests that her experience provides ways to reflect on what she is learning. This is also seen in the following quote from a Year 2 participant: “The things that are more significant experiences were meeting with that student [about class] and processing my supervision experience with peers in the cohort. Those experiences changed the way I view myself.”

Finally, the third stage of the process, self-validation, is the time of integration and autonomy. Consistent with findings from previous studies (Auxier et al., 2003; Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson et al., 2010), participants at the end of the doctoral process expressed the desire to be more autonomous, as indicated in the following statement by one of the participants.

I need to be able to write my own road map. And do it without being under the protection of the program, to do it on my own and see what it feels like. And you know, to be the one that’s ultimately responsible, 100%.
They also expressed their need to integrate all the identities: counselor, doctoral student, and counselor educator, as in “I’m still confident in my counseling skills and my work as a school counselor. And I have become confident in my skills as a counselor educator.”

Discussion

Findings indicate multiple layers in understanding the experience of professional identity for counselor education doctoral students. As Smith, Maroney, Nelson, Abel, and Abel (2006) noted, the process of developing a professional identity includes multiple realities and changes. As a lifelong process that often begins with entering a training program, it evolves through the life span and includes the intersection of personal characteristics and external factors that are similar to the transformational tasks and process found in this study (Reid, Dahlgren, Petocz, & Dahlgren, 2008; Studer, 2007). In this cross-sectional study, the transformational tasks were articulated at specific times in the doctoral programs and/or during specific experiences. The data obtained can add to the existing literature on the professional identity of counselor education doctoral students. Although these tasks changed over students’ progression in the program, progression was visible within each of the tasks. Consistent with Gibson et al. (2010), there is movement from a need for external validation, successful experience as validation, and eventually self-validation with each of these tasks.

The findings of this study can be contextualized with a study that explored research identity in counselor education doctoral students (Lambie & Vaccaro, 2011). Within the transformational tasks, the transition to a source of knowledge for the profession is consistent with the internalization of a research identity. In order to develop a research identity, doctoral students first need to see themselves as the creators of new knowledge in the field. The finding that participants in the dissertation stage were most likely to accept the responsibility for new knowledge is consistent with Lambie and Vaccaro’s (2011) finding that research self-efficacy increases with time over the doctoral program.

Furthermore, the second transformational task, evolution of confidence (internal sense of validation) and legitimacy (external sense of validation), is supported by previous studies (Nelson et al., 2006; Protivnak & Foss, 2009). As seen in Figure 1, confidence comes with experience, and legitimacy comes from positive faculty feedback (when expectations meet reality) that eventually shifts to feedback from peers/colleagues. The importance of faculty expectations and peer supports as sources of legitimacy are supported by Protivnak and Foss (2009), who found that common doctoral experiences were departmental culture and politics (need for congruency and support), mentoring (personal support), academics and congruent expectations (having to rely on peers for information), support systems (peers most important, friends, family), and personal issues (role transition). In addition, this study is congruent with the study conducted by Nelson et al. (2006), who also emphasized the value of connection with professional organizations, peers, supervisors, and professors. Personal issues and the
need for support that come from a lack of confidence were expressed by respondents as they explored the multiplicities of their identity and searched for sources of validation.

Similar to Hughes and Kleist’s (2005) findings that doctoral students in their 1st year experienced cycles of self-doubt, integration, and confirmation, the present findings focus on that same cycle as an overall descriptor of the entire doctoral experience. Similar structure for counselor development can also be found in Stoltenberg and McNeill’s (2010) levels of therapists, from entry-level counselors of Level 1, to therapeutic “adolescence” of Level 2, to integration of Level 3. Furthermore, Borders, Rainey, Crutchfield, and Martin (1996) found that experience increased positive beliefs about abilities. Whereas their study focused on supervision, the role of experience in self-validation and integration was evident in this study also.

The findings of this study include limitations that are important to acknowledge. First, this study included participants from only two campuses, and these were institutions with very high research activity classifications, which may have influenced the responses in terms of emphasis on research. Variances in data could have resulted from different data collection methods (focus groups, phone, and individual interviews), because group dynamics of the focus group interviews could have influenced the degree to which individual participants contributed, although no differences in content were evident. Furthermore, as a cross-sectional study, development is hypothesized in the model but cannot be confirmed without longitudinal studies. Finally, the limitations of interpretive inquiry characteristic of qualitative research may suggest that alternative interpretations are possible from the results.

Implications for Counselor Education

Support for doctoral students can be informed by each of the described transformational tasks. All participants articulated the importance of peer relationships; therefore, a cohort or group format could be recommended for a developmentally grounded doctoral support program. Ongoing dialogue about how students feel about themselves and their program is suggested. Counselor education programs that are not cohort designed may implement this support curriculum to provide both professional and peer mentoring opportunities, which were important in the validation process within the transformational tasks of the doctoral students in our study. Providing doctoral students with information on these transformational tasks and the validation process across time might stimulate discussion about identity transitions and forms of validation that have been helpful to them in their development.

During their 1st year, doctoral students need support in managing the first transition of identity to preserve their practitioner identity and add the evolving identity as a doctoral student. Recognition of their prior success as a practitioner could help them manage their confidence, and stress management techniques could help them reduce their anxiety. At this time, conversations about the role of counselor educators could be offered to encourage students’ reflection on the responsibility of being the expert for
new knowledge through research, teaching, and presentations. Also, the importance of relationships with faculty as the source of legitimacy cannot be underestimated, because faculty feedback to new doctoral students is crucial for their evolving sense of professional legitimacy and identity.

In the middle of the doctoral experience, professional identity development seems to entail the integration of both practitioner and doctoral student identities. The doctoral support group could emphasize students’ current successes in teaching, supervision, and scholarship, which will help students develop confidence and legitimacy. Giving them tasks that allow them to appreciate their clinical skills and their doctoral successes could be beneficial. Processing students’ experiences with teaching can enhance their responsibilities as educators of the next generation of counselors and as creators of new knowledge, enhancing their research identities (Lambie & Vaccaro, 2011). The integration of their experiences into their identities could foster their growth overall.

In the final phase of their professional identity group, peer relationships seem to be crucial in the development of legitimacy. These connections among students can be reinforced as they conduct research and publish together and as a group transition into being counselor educators. Dialogue about internalizing the definition and responsibilities of a counselor educator in training the next generation of counselors and seeing oneself as the expert/disseminator of new knowledge in the field could cement their evolving identities. Finally, the integration of counselor, doctoral student, and counselor educator identities could be supported as the students support each other.

This doctoral support group would be supported by counselor education faculty and would be normalized as part of the doctoral experience. Although many programs have research groups that bring doctoral students together, those groups may not focus on providing the kind of integrated support proposed here. It is important that doctoral students have a forum to discuss research, share academic resources, and provide feedback to each other on their dissertations, and this support program would add a holistic identity-focused experience found to be important in this study.

Future research could involve various institutions on the basis of accreditation status, location in the country, research-intensive status, and demographics such as those found in historically black colleges and universities. For example, future research with doctoral students from different program structures and final project/dissertation requirements may yield different results in transformational tasks and/or processes. Efficacy studies on the outcomes of a doctoral support group as described earlier might also provide additional insights into the doctoral student’s professional identity development, as would longitudinal studies that track the identity development of doctoral students throughout their programs. Alternatively, similar qualitative research could be undertaken with doctoral graduates who reflect on their doctoral experiences to see if time and perspective will alter the professional identity process as outlined in this study.
Conclusion

It is well known that doctoral study is a time of intense transitions, involving research identity, supervisor identity, educator identity, practitioner identity, and student identity. Confidence, legitimacy, relationships, responsibility—all of these various elements of self are explored and, hopefully, integrated into the doctoral student experience. Understanding the difficult, often painful work of integrating these elements into a coherent whole can help counselor educators shepherd the next generation of counselor educators into the profession.

References


