Various scholars have researched and written about professional identity (see Trede et al., 2012) and have identified professional identity as the knowledge, philosophy, expertise, attitudes, behaviors, and interactions as members of the profession (Woo et al., 2014). The important role that university training programs have in professional identity development is underscored by a call for transformative learning where students are active participants in constructing a professional identity (Trede et al., 2012). This is nurtured through authentic learning particularly during field experiences, such as internships.

There is sparse but substantive research attention related to professional identity development in the counseling profession with little differentiation among various types of counselors, such as school counselors and mental health counselors (Dong et al., 2017; Gibson et al., 2012; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). In the current study, the focus was on professional identity of school counselors-in-training. Therefore, the researchers selected a seminal grounded theory for the professional identity development of school counselors (Brott & Myers, 1999) to provide a meaningful framework in conceptualizing the research. The “blending of influences” (Brott & Myers, 1999, p. 343) is one’s self-conceptualizations or personal guidelines that “provide a meaning-making framework in carrying out the professional role” (p. 343). The dynamic interplay of four phases, namely structuring, interacting, distinguishing, and evolving, highlights the fluid nature as a process rather than an outcome. It is a transformative process that takes place as the individual moves from external or structural guidelines to an internal or attitudinal conceptualization of one’s role as a professional (Brott & Myers, 1999). Hence, providing intentional learning experiences that promote professional identity development among school counselors-in-training are important to the transition from student to entry-level professional (Woo et al., 2017). The transition process moves from what has been learned (i.e., comfort zone) to one’s authorship of a professional identity (i.e., edge-emotions, mindsight). This process can be nurtured through scaffolding activities, such as reflective journaling, for critical self-reflective practices.

A Conceptual Framework

To be human is to make meaning out of experiences. As Mezirow (2012) suggested, the human condition is best
understood “as a continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings” (p. 73). Reflection is essential to meaning-making as it remains intentionally thoughtful about an experience through explaining that experience and determining future implications and actions (Dewey, 1925; Merriam & Bierema, 2014; Schön, 1983). By examining what is being experienced and re-examining what is already known, the brain constructs meanings leading to more complex perceptions (Taylor & Marienau, 2016). A pathway to this complexity is through critical self-reflection (Brookfield, 2015; Cheng et al., 2015), which is a metacognitive activity that “requires understanding the nature of reasons and their methods, logic, and justification” (Mezirow, 2003, p. 61).

Reflective practice is a dual process of reflection-in-action on one’s thoughts while practicing and reflection-on-action about one’s experiences (Stedmon & Dallos, 2009), which harkens to Schön’s (1983) model for the reflective practitioner. It is through personal reflexivity that the individual looks back over and reflects on the event as an idiothetic meaning-making experience: describing what is known, questioning the experience, exploring emotive responses, and making sense of the remembered reflective episodes (Stedmon & Dallos, 2009).

Several concepts from recent adult development literature related to exploring emotive responses are central to this study and speak to personal reflexivity. First, emotive understanding in critical self-reflection is an unambiguous focus on the interrelationship between emotions and cognitions (Mäkikii, 2010, 2012). Second, comfort zones are the biological and emotional safe zones where we survive and hold our current frames of reference without questioning them (Mäkikii, 2010, 2012). Third, edge-emotions are the unpleasant automatic response emotions felt when we are challenged. The key for critical reflection is to recognize your edge-emotions (Mäkikii, 2019) in the liminal space (i.e., the in-between space of transition; MacLaren et al., 2017) that holds us in our comfort zones. This creates an authentic dynamic process that fosters transformative learning (Hoggan et al., 2017). Fourth, mindsight is the focused attention of integrating emotions and mental processes by seeing with more clarity what is inside as we become the author of our own story (Siegel, 2010). Mindsight is a process allowing us to see a much larger whole through an interconnection of meaning and purpose. The focused attention of mindsight makes it possible “to see what is inside, to accept it, and, in the accepting, to let it go, and, finally, to transform it” (Siegel, 2010, p. x). The more we are aware of mindsight, and cultivate it, the more there exists an opportunity for personal reflexivity through purposeful critical self-reflective practice.

Scaffolding strategies to purposefully engage the individual in critical self-reflective practices are not only cognitive activities but also emotive and creative. These strategies help to mediate the tension between theory (what has been learned) and practice (how it is experienced; Savaya & Gardner, 2012) by engaging the individual in an intentional activity, such as journaling, discussions, poetry, or other creative mediums. Through intentional critical self-reflective practices, the individual is constructing meaning from experience and confronting what is unexpected, unfamiliar, surprising, and maybe even disturbing (Kreber, 2012). By using critical self-reflective practices, one becomes vulnerable to an emotive understanding by letting go of one’s comfort zone and engaging in the edge-emotions, thereby promoting authenticity through personal reflexivity.

**Vlogging as a Tool for Personal Reflexivity**

One scaffolding strategy to engage the individual in personal reflexivity is vlogging. Vlogging consists of a single-turn asynchronous video monolog recording composed of the spoken word and visual behavior (Aran et al., 2014). With widespread accessibility to Smartphones and their video recording capabilities, vlogging can be a key component in reflective practice and the heutagogy of “learner-centered learning” (Agonács & Matos, 2019, p. 224) where students are actively engaged in linking what is being experienced to what has been learned (Denton, 2011). Heutagogy is an emerging approach to learning and is associated with e-learning, digital technologies, and distance education (Agonács & Matos, 2019), which provides students the ability to develop skills such as autonomy, exploration, and critical self-reflection (Blaschke, 2021). Heutagogy is based on the principle of learner agency and allows students to be more self-directed, creative, and active within a sociocultural context that can prepare students for the workforce (Blaschke, 2021). Reflective practice improves self-awareness, critical thinking, communication, affective development, self-directed learning, and professionalism (Roessger, 2014). Longstanding instructional activities promoting reflective practice include Socratic questioning, discussion prompts, and written journaling (Landy et al., 2016). However, these activities tend to occur only during class time or are approached as a written paper to be graded oftentimes written in the past tense as a diary of what has happened.

Vlogging is a new-wave of reflective practice that can be more responsive and in-the-moment as the vlogger authentically expresses one’s self. The spontaneity and emotive displays that are captured in video recordings are first-person, present-tense perspectives and can provide opportunities for the vlogger to be thoughtfully reflective. Vloggings are video snapshots that can be shared with the instructor and become a time-stamped critical self-reflective journal. Vloggings are about focus: technical, practical, and critical (Leijen et al., 2012). Technical vloggings are descriptive and at a superficial level; practical vloggings are situated reflections that explore experiences in context; and critical vloggings are self-reflections that demonstrate one’s deepening and broadening meaning-making narrative. Thus, vloggings are a tool to engage in critical self-reflective practice.
Vloggings show promise as an educational tool for reflective practice in a variety of disciplines, such as teacher education (e.g., Fidan & Debbag, 2018), medical education (e.g., Sheriff et al., 2018), counselor education (Janson & Filibert, 2018; Parikh et al., 2012), and undergraduate education (Chu et al., 2012). Researchers acknowledge that vlogs are a form of autobiography in crafting an agentive self (Lundby, 2008) and journeying into the authentic self (MacLaren et al., 2017). Vloggings can improve psychological well-being (Song et al., 2012) and can have transformative potential during transitions (Raun, 2015). Reflective video journaling of graduate students has been demonstrated to foster self-efficacy and self-development (Parikh et al., 2012).

Clear guidelines need to be given so that both instructor and student understand the purpose, logistics, and expectations for vloggings as a critical self-reflective practice. These guidelines include why students are being asked to engage in vloggings, what is required for vloggings (i.e., minimum length of each recording, whether recordings can be edited, how and where to share the recording, due date/time), whether vloggings will be viewed only by the instructor or by peers as well, and where to go for help, particularly assistance with technology. Structured prompts as questions or a focus of introspection need to be stated as a stimulus for vloggers to engage in critical self-reflection. The critical incident technique (CIT; Flanagan, 1954) is a well-established method asking respondents to focus on real events and draw inferences (see Butterfield et al., 2009). The CIT was deemed suitable for structuring a critical self-reflective practice in the current study.

The rationale for the current research was to explore professional identity development of graduate students completing a two-semester internship through their intentional critical self-reflective practice using weekly vloggings. Previous research with school counselors-in-training has used email exchanges between interns and supervisors (Gordon & Luke, 2012) and video journaling twice during one semester of internship (Parikh et al., 2012). However, there is a lack of research focusing on the professional identity development of school counselors-in-training across two semesters of internship using technology as a scaffolding tool for weekly reflective journaling. Therefore, the purpose was to explore professional identity development through personal reflexivity as a space between what was described and what was experienced. The guiding research question in this case study was how does a school counseling intern experience their professional identity through critical self-reflection?

**Methods**

The researchers used interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith et al., 2009/2012) as an idiographic focus in discovering the uniqueness of how one constructs meaning out of lived experiences (Dowling & Cooney, 2012; Mackey, 2005). The interpretative nature of IPA makes this methodology well suited for an in-depth analysis of a case study (Larkin et al., 2019). Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014) contend that IPA researchers focus on the depth of the case rather than the breadth of the overall study when “rich and meaningful data have been collected” (p. 9). For most of the published IPA research, findings are in-depth interpretations of a particular phenomenon and do not aim to be a representative sample or generalizable (Larkin et al., 2019).

Using IPA, the researchers were interested in how counseling interns were constructing their professional identity through uniquely lived experiences that were shared through weekly vloggings as an intentional self-reflective practice. It was an exploration of a space between what was being experienced and what had been learned. IPA allowed the researchers to uncover the uniqueness of counseling interns’ lived experiences (Dowling & Cooney, 2012).

**Archival Data and Participants**

Archival data used in this study were recorded monologs (vloggings) submitted weekly with students responding to the critical incident technique prompt, “Reflecting on this week at internship, what is a critical incident that occurred that speaks to your emerging professional identity?” Vloggings were uploaded to the course management system and accessed only by the respective student and professor.

After obtaining approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which granted access to use only the audio from the archived video recordings, potential participants (N=8) who had graduated with their master’s degree were contacted by email explaining the research and providing a link to the informed consent. A total of seven electronically signed consents were obtained (female=5, male=2; White=7; age range=23–30). Using a random number assignment protocol, each participant was identified by number for the duration of the research to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

**Study Procedures**

Weekly vloggings for the seven participants were accessed and downloaded to a two-factor authentication password-protected computer. From the seven, one participant was randomly selected as the case study and identified as 494. The total number of vloggings produced by the participant was 26 (fall = 13; spring = 13) at an average recording length of 2 minutes and 56 seconds (2:56) per vlogging with a range of 1:16 to 5:59.

The transcription of each vlogging was completed using four steps. First, the recordings for participant 494 were uploaded to Canvas into The Studio, which provided access to automated captioning. Second, captioning produced a written transcription that was edited for accuracy by a research assistant to create a verbatim transcription, which
was downloaded into a Word document. Third, each verbatim transcription was verified for accuracy by another research assistant. Fourth, the verified verbatim transcription was formatted as a Word document table of three columns with the transcription placed in the middle column. This became the document used by each team member for coding. After the transcription process was completed, the videos were kept on secure computers using two-factor authentication access.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed Smith et al. (2009/2012) step-by-step strategy employing an iterative and inductive cycle. Throughout the analysis, each researcher kept a journal reflecting on the process, coded data, and emerging psychological knowledge about what all this might mean for the participant. The researchers’ journaling was important to bracketing the context of the analysis.

Each researcher read and re-read the transcripts with a keen eye on experiential claims, concerns, and understandings within each vlog. Individually each team member took initial notes about the vloggings by focusing on and composing descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments (Smith et al., 2009/2012). Descriptive comments focus on things that matter to the participant. Linguistic comments focus the analysis on the participant’s use of idiosyncratic language and phrasing. Conceptual comments engage researchers in an interpretative process that shifts the focus toward an understanding of the meanings given from the participant’s perspective.

Next, the researchers met as a group to go through each vlogging and discuss differences and similarities in initial noting by each team member. This process led to identifying emergent patterns by using convergence and divergence perspectives to uncover the commonality and nuance for each vlogging, within each semester, and as a cumulative for all of the individual’s vloggings. A search for connections across emergent patterns was accomplished by using “abstraction” (Smith et al., 2009/2012, p. 96) to uncover the emergent themes and develop an “overarching super-ordinate” (p. 96) theme. Throughout the process, the researchers were sensitive to finding the “gem” (Smith, 2011, p. 13), which is something in the transcript that sticks out loudly to say meaning is situated here and is key to understanding the participant’s world and the meaning given to one’s existence (Smith & Eatough, 2019). The researchers examined their mapping of the emergent themes for the “specific function” (Smith et al., 2009/2012, p. 98), which is the dialog between the researchers and the data about what it might mean for the participant in this context (Larkin & Thompson, 2012). The interpretation was coded as notes to himself. After all vloggings were analyzed, the overall structure, or gestalt, was constructed, which illustrated the relationship between and among the themes by highlighting the gems and connecting them to the super-ordinate theme. After the gestalt was established, the researchers developed a distinctive narrative using data extracts.

Findings

The super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis in this case study was connecting the dots... it’s all about the kids. For this participant, the self-reflexive journey across 26 vloggings was a dynamic process through the themes of figuring it out, processing the ebb and flow of emotions, and owning it. A visual representation of the gestalt was created to highlight the structure of the emergent themes in this case to answer the research question: How does a school counseling intern experience their professional identity through critical self-reflection? (see Figure 1). In the sections that follow, the three emergent themes for this case are examined and joined to the super-ordinate using extracts and gems from the participant’s vloggings. The researchers’ IPA is presented with an opening paragraph that sets the stage for the respective theme followed by analyses of fall internship and spring internship. Direct quotes are identified by vlogging date (e.g., September 1 as 9.01).

Theme 1: Figuring it Out

This individual used his weekly critical self-reflections to describe what happened, reflect-on-action, and then turn inward in revealing his reflexivity through the experiences of “becoming a school counselor.” These critical self-reflections were identified by the researchers as the intern’s notes to...
himself. As the fall 2016 internship progressed, the intern developed an authentic voice that progressed into critical self-reflection as he challenged his presumptions and detailed the process of developing his professional identity.

**Fall Internship**

During the fall semester, the intern was open to this being a new experience with a new supervisor. And just when the intern was figuring it out, a critical incident created a disruption. Although there were consistent positive experiences particularly with students, the intern questioned his competence whenever there was a negative experience. Two critical incidents that disrupted his comfort zone included (a) the way a teacher approached him, and “I was kind of being attacked and like I was incompetent and wasn’t doing my job” (9.01); and (b) a student whom he had been counseling digressed and that “doubt that creeps into my head... it’s like discouraging and encouraging, it’s this weird dynamic” (9.23). Two critical incidents that brought to his attention the need for adaptability included (a) a school bomb threat that was “like really unpredictable... anything is bound to happen at any time” (10.07), and (b) standardized testing where “it’s weird, it doesn’t seem right, I mean, I know it’s part of the role... it just seems like it takes so much away from the role that we’re actually supposed to fill” (11.19). Out of these critical incidents came his situated cognitions in figuring it out.

The intern used vloggings about critical incidents to understand the roles, responsibilities, and relationships of being a school counseling intern. Initially, he was thinking through (e.g., “I think... I thought... I know”) what he was experiencing and reminding himself what he was doing well. There is a shift from questioning himself to trusting what he knows. These critical reflections were interpreted through the researchers’ coding for notes to himself that surfaced during the seventh vlogging at mid-semester. These were reminders that school can be unpredictable (10.7), make an effort to get to know the students (10.28), creative interventions [in counseling] are really good (11.05), do what we were trained to do (11.19), and realize how to put the pieces together (12.03). The function appeared to be how he was connecting the dots of being a school counselor by figuring out that it’s all about the kids.

What emanated from the critical incident reflections was a self-reflexive process getting to the essence of his identity in being a school counselor. His critical self-awareness process was a progression from a descriptive focus being reflective about what he was experiencing to an authentic dialog on how he was experiencing as a critical self-reflexive focus. Vloggings provided a look into the process of identity development in how this participant at times struggled with putting into practice what he had been taught and “trying to figure it out and kind of struggling through it a little bit” (11.13). He figured out that getting to know the kids, knowing what was going on with the kids, and getting the background story were essential to who he was as a school counselor. These are lessons learned: “So, it was really interesting, and it taught me a lesson not to glance over things... allowing them to tell their own stories and deciding what is important to them” (11.05). Further, he wanted the students to know “who I am... I’m a relatable person” (10.2), “I really, really care” (11.13), and “[I] understand what [they] are going through” (12.03). He was figuring it out that this is a two-way relationship where “you really do have to make the effort to get to know the kid individually rather than, you know, just assume you know what is going on” (10.28).

**Spring Internship**

The spring semester found the intern leaving his fall site and being employed as a school counselor at a new site, which increased his professional responsibilities while continuing with his internship requirements. This overarching critical incident was a significant disruption to his comfort zone during the winter break and commencing of the spring semester. The start of the new semester was figuring it out: How to bring closure at his previous site and leave the students while beginning at a new site with changing responsibilities. “Kind of been a whirlwind trying to figure out how to switch sites” (1.16). He was at his previous site to meet briefly with students he had been counseling in the fall: “It’s been cool to see the trust that I’ve developed with some of these kids” (1.16). He was cognizant of the added responsibilities at the new site and was figuring out his plan. His “objects of concern” (Larkin & Thompson, 2012, p. 105) dealt with “trying to figure out more and more” (1.16) handling an increased student caseload, developing his own style as a school counselor, needing a more organized system, and taking suggestions from supervisors. The vloggings’ discourse demonstrated this intern’s honesty and genuineness to share with a supervisor how he was figuring it out as the spring semester progressed.

There were noted disruptions within the internship experience dealing with crisis interventions that included suicide assessments, suicide bereavement, and Department of Child Services (DCS) referrals. The researchers coded notes to himself as he experienced these crisis interventions where there were competing priorities between what a student needed and what the procedures required, working with resources outside and within the school, and struggling with becoming comfortable with the uncomfortable. These crisis interventions were a catalyst for his lessons learned: “I’m realizing how important it is to be flexible in the role of a school counselor” (3.06).

After several weeks of arduous crisis interventions, he established another lesson of importance: “How important self-care is and how I need to make sure that I don’t stop [self-care]” (3.06). He detailed the time it took and the stress he experienced with multiple crisis situations: “There’s a lot
going on, and I could feel kind of weigh in on me” (3.06). A realization that figuring it out goes beyond just the roles and responsibilities of a school counselor: “The main lesson I’m learning right now is that the need for self-care is legitimate” (3.06).

The noted disruptions that were central to his self-reflective vloggings illuminated his awareness and assimilation of the struggle in figuring it out. He embraced his lessons learned by finding solutions to difficult issues that led to gaining competence and developing agency. The semester unfolded from what he was doing (e.g., change in sites [1.16], time management skills [1.21, 2.19]) to being a more self-reflective practitioner: “what I am dealing with” (2.05), “the main lesson I am learning” (3.06), and “it was a cool moment because I could hear in my own head” (4.02). The researchers explored the function of figuring it out as his agency in struggling with and accepting the variability and complexity of being a school counselor. His reality was that schools have established procedures and his lessons learned were noted as flexibility and self-care.

In the next theme, the emotive aspects of experiencing his identity in becoming a school counselor are detailed. Emotions are an important aspect of IPA (Smith et al., 2009/2012), which can be interpreted through edge-emotions that arise from disorienting dilemmas and can be pathways for examining one’s assumptions (Mälkki, 2019; Mälkki & Green, 2014). The researchers explored the participant’s emotional qualities and expressions to dig deeper into his situated subjective experiences in meaning-making that emerged as a theme of processing the ebb and flow of emotions.

### Theme 2: Processing Ebb and Flow of Emotions

The intern’s experiences gave rise to a range of emotions that at times were reflective of his growing self-confidence and at other times reflective of his self-doubt. This was the ebb and flow of emotions that sometimes was evident within a single vlogging and other times noted across multiple vloggings. His linguistic expression was frequently preceded with “I felt” or “it feels like” or “I felt stuck,” and his style of expression was “it was calming,” “it’s really cool,” “it really stinks,” “it stuck with me,” and “I’ve been stuck.” Examples of this participant’s specific named emotions ranged from “confident...comfortable...excited...surprised...glad” to “doubt...confused...struggling...helpless...nervous.” The ebb and flow of emotions was captured by this participant as he dealt with critical incidents shared in his vloggings. As edge-emotions (Mälkki, 2019), these were transformational moments in his professional identity development from student to professional as he examined his assumptions. His use of metaphor allowed the researchers to uncover how he was unpacking his meaning and mattering: “in a pickle,” “it’s been a whirlwind,” and “spinning in circles.”

### Fall Internship

As he was put in situations where he was seeing first-hand how a school counselor performed in the role, he found solace in exploring his negative and positive emotions while processing the reality of “my role” (9.15). Being excited to get started and take on responsibilities at the start of the semester also set him up for an uncomfortable confrontation from a teacher: “I was kind of being attacked and like I was like incompetent, and I wasn’t doing my job...it really stinks” (9.01). This brought up an edge-emotion of his biggest fear that he didn’t know what he was doing, which made him doubt himself. Although it stuck with him throughout the day, his vlogging of this critical incident finished with, “dismissing comments like that...and taking them as constructive advice” (9.01). His edge-emotion of fear led him to reexamine his self-doubt because he could recognize that he was doing “good things in this school” (9.01). Another edge-emotion was brought up when dealing with a suicide assessment: “I’ve really been scared of because I think it’s such a delicate situation where some kid is in crisis” (9.13). This edge-emotion of scared promoted confidence and competence because he could take what he had learned in his ethics class and handle the suicide assessment: “For me that experience really demystified the process” (9.13). Then there was the edge-emotion of “comfortable” (10.02), which eased his self-doubt allowing him to experience confidence by becoming established in a school, relating to students, and being engaged in the role.

There was an ebb and flow of emotions from being “confused” (10.24) to being “surprised” (11.05). The edge-emotion of confused was experienced in counseling one student: “It just seems like we’re just spinning in circles and circles” (10.24). The intern needed to confront his assumption that talking in counseling was enough; he needed to implement an intervention to help the student gain insight so that the intern would “have a much clearer understanding of what [the student] is going through right now” (10.24). The edge-emotion of being surprised “taught me a lesson” (11.05). He addressed his assumptions of what he expected a student would talk about and what was important to the student. The lesson he learned was “not to gauge over things...creative interventions are very good especially with high school kids...allowing them to tell their stories” (11.05). Being confused and surprised led the intern to reaffirm his commitment as a school counselor by focusing on “what is important to [the kids]” (11.05).

After being stuck in trying to be a certain kind of school counselor for most of the semester, 494 recognized that the fall semester was “coming together for me” (12.03). Sometimes the dissonance in edge-emotions can lead to personal insight, which was captured toward the end of the semester as

It also just kind of came together, like, in the moment and I could feel... I just felt more attached to what he was saying...
Um. . .I felt glued and, like, I was really understanding it. And that, like, he understood that I felt what he was going through. So it. . .I don’t know, it’s just a positive experience and, like, pieces that I maybe put together before but I didn’t realize I was putting together before. (12.03)

**Spring Internship**

The spring semester started with the intern leaving his previous placement and being employed as a school counselor at another site where he was thrown into new roles with added responsibility. His ebb and flow of emotions began with “sad” (1.16) in the abruptness of leaving the students he had built relationships with and had planned to continue working within a therapeutic manner. Within the same vlogging, he processed his emotive experiences from the fall site as “it’s been cool to see the trust I’ve developed with some of these kids” (1.16); plus, “I’m excited” (1.16) to begin at the new site. He is showing a positive feedback loop of being able to process the sad with the excited.

His edge-emotions across the spring semester ranged from intimidating, concerned, helpless, overwhelmed, and anxious to glad, confident, relief, and competent. There was a more in-depth exploration of his emotive experiences as his critical incidents were reflective of added responsibilities, and his role as a school counselor was becoming more real. A number of the critical incidents were related to crisis intervention, and his positive feedback loop was tied to making it all about the kids. Calling mobile crisis for a suicide assessment had been intimidating but was now less intimidating (“I’m glad the way it went” [1.21]). Calling the Department of Children Services about a student who lives in an abusive home: “I’m concerned for this student. . .I’m not glad that this student has that going on in her life, but I am glad that I feel more confident going forward” (2.19). In another critical incident where he wasn’t sure that the student was returning to a safe home environment, “I don’t feel good about it at all” (3.27). His self-reflective moment toward the end of the semester was drawn from a number of crisis intervention experiences. His emotive expressions were from previously being “overwhelmed . . .kind of feel helpless . . .super anxious about doing suicide assessment” to feeling competent in using these assessments as “I’ve seen how valuable they can be” (4.23) for keeping students safe. This was another of his lessons learned that informed his evolving professional identity.

The ebb and flow of emotions were expressed through his added responsibilities and the weight of being a school counselor. His increased confidence and competence were reflected in the critical incidents of doing the job to help individual students. As IPA researchers, we were seeing the phenomenon of how he was connecting the dots . . .it’s all about the kids. The third theme, owning it, connects what matters to the intern with the meaning he was creating in his professional identity.

**Fall Internship**

It was evident that he was able to trust the supervisor who was listening to the vloggings, and, generally, there was little to no technical focus. When he did use a technical focus by being descriptive and superficial, this seemed to serve the purpose of explaining what happened so that he could explore his critical self-reflection of the event. Throughout the vloggings across the fall semester, he demonstrated vulnerability and honesty in narrating his journey to the supervisor; he was owning it as an intern.

Early vloggings during the fall semester were more practical in focus exploring his vulnerability as an intern. Although he was feeling comfortable with the other school counselors and meeting the students during the first 2 weeks, his concerns were related to one incident with one teacher. This seemed to rattle his confidence and amplify his vulnerability as an intern; “It [made] me doubt a lot, it made me question myself a lot” (9.01). On more than one occasion, he was involved with suicide assessments. Initially, he felt vulnerable to such a “delicate situation” (9.13); however, with experience, the process was demystified, and he gained role clarity and confidence in his journey to owning it as an intern and school counselor.

He wrestled with role clarity: finding his place (9.01), following the protocol (9.13), being outside his role (9.15), having multiple roles and responsibilities (10.7), and not being a part of the status quo (11.19). As he was owning it, he says, “I really do not know what happened, but I just feel really comfortable in the lunchroom and going around [to] all the tables and being energetic” (10.02). He explored these situated experiences, and, by mid-semester, there was a critical self-reflection that “kind of made me recognize again the different roles that I can take on in the school” (10.7), and “it

**Theme 3: Owning It**

The participant’s vloggings deliberated his socially constructed purpose and meanings of the internship experiences. At times, the experiences were situated reflections that explored his experiences in context. As a practical focus in the vloggings, he explored his connection between what he had learned previously to what he was doing currently. At other times, the experiences were critical self-reflections exploring his meaning-making narrative: “I don’t like this,” “I don’t know,” “questioning myself a lot.” These deliberations examined his previous assumptions, which led to more complex personally constructed meanings. The researchers gave voice to this participant’s personalization as owning it, which was his personal reflexivity in clarifying his role and authoring his emerging professional identity. Further, in the fall, this was about being vulnerable and taking responsibility; in the spring, it was about building trust and being flexible. This is a dynamic process with an interplay between purpose and meaning.
made me feel much more confident in the school” (10.7). By the end of the semester, his role clarity was captured with “things just kind of came together for me” (12.03). He talked about how he felt much more confident in the school as he was owning it through his role clarity and taking on more responsibility.

The intern’s practical focus on his responsibilities was informing who he was as an intern and whom he was striving to be as a school counselor. He was self-evaluative (9.23), he handled unpredictable situations through adaptability (10.7), and he addressed his assumptions about students (10.28). This variety of experiences with increasing responsibilities seemed to be where he was owning it through his emerging professional compass by connecting the dots. . .it’s all about the kids. The researchers were struck at the end of the fall semester in his vlogging that captured how his internal professional compass was tied to his empathic understanding and relationships with students transcribed from what 494 stated as

Coming together for me about the role of a counselor in the school. . .just kind of came together, like, in the moment and I could feel, I just felt more attached to what the [student] was saying. . .I felt glued and like I was really understanding it. . .he understood that I felt what he was going through. . .pieces that I maybe put together before but I didn’t realize I was putting together before. . .positively impacting our relationship and what we were doing. . .just fun to think about afterwards. (12.03)

The shift to a critical focus in the vloggings for this participant was interpreted by the researchers at a deeper level as he was recognizing what he didn’t know, he needed to struggle with figuring it out for himself, and that this process of becoming a school counselor was hard. He was authoring an emerging professional identity: His situated positionality in being relational, flexible, and adaptable. This emerging professional identity was confounded when he did not return to the same school as an intern for the spring semester. His situated positionality in the next semester was at a different school as both an intern and a school counselor under contract. What will be his experiences and how will he make meaning in this new context?

**Spring Internship**

The first vlogging in the spring semester was descriptive of his change in school site and responsibilities: “It’s kind of been a whirlwind trying to figure out how to switch sites” (1.16). This vlogging began with a technical focus (“I ended up getting the position”), moved to a practical focus (“develop my own style. . .I’m not going to be the same person as who I’m replacing”), and wove in a critical focus (“part of the process that has been a little bit sad. . .the abruptness of having to leave kids at [previous site]”). His edge-emotion was interpreted as bittersweet. His mindsight was a bigger picture of trust. His perspective was seeing what he had developed previously (“trust that I’ve developed with some of the kids”) and trusting that those students had others to help them now that he was no longer at that school. He was letting go of where he had been and moving in where he was now. The researchers noted the increased frequency in using the word “obviously” across a number of vloggings. This was noted as a gem because it was sticking out loudly in communicating how he was owning it.

There were dimensions of trust: building trusting relationships with others (e.g., supervisor, school counselors, teachers, students) and students trusting him. In just the second week of the semester, he was directly handling crisis interventions where trusting relationships were critical to keeping students safe and using school and community resources. “And it was distressing in the moment, it ended up being fine because I think we did build a little bit of trust” (1.21). Calling the Department of Child Services (DCS) to initiate an investigation to ensure the safety of a student was “an intimidating experience”: “There’s a student who trusts enough to open up about something that’s very intimate and give me those details” (2.19). In another suicide assessment instance, a student “actually wanted me to call his mom because it would kind of open up conversation between him and his mom” (4.02). An adolescent who was in the process of transitioning from female to male was “a unique experience for me” (4.09). Even though he had not worked with this student before, the student was waiting for him, and they completed a safety plan together. “I think all in all it went well, and I think we’re definitely creating a support system for this student and making sure that they have the resources they need to feel safe at school” (4.09). These experiences with crisis intervention highlighted how building trust with students and having trusting relationships with others (e.g., parents, DCS) were core to his owning it.

In coming to grips with his role, he developed agency through intentional actions and disclosure of his self-doubt. In a particularly poignant moment, he disclosed that, in some situations, he was helpless, such as being in the room when a mother told her daughter that her boyfriend had committed suicide: “So, I just felt helpless like I felt there was nothing I could do. I felt like I was useless” (2.26). In this vlogging, he repeated “I don’t know” three times: “how unprepared I am,” “what to say to some of them besides just be there,” and “how to comfort them.” Further, his intentional actions were instrumental in coming to grips with his role. He experimented with a variety of counseling approaches with positive results (2.12, 3.12, 4.02). He recognized how he was being culturally responsive (4.09) and was figuring out how to respond to student needs (4.30).

A gem that emanated from the researchers’ interpretative analysis was this intern’s taking action to care for self, others, and the setting. This is emerged from numerable vloggings as (a) for himself, “I think the main lesson I’m learning
right now that the need for self-care is legitimate” (3.06); (b) for the students, “so that they know that you’re there to help them if something is serious or if something does come up” (4.30); and (c) for the setting, “we are trying to figure out a way to facilitate conversation around the topic of suicide. . . Making the conversation more open” (4.30).

The authorship of the intern’s emerging professional identity from the spring semester was how his experiences and actions were woven together: “there’s a bunch of different things that tied together” (2.19). His vloggings were reflexive of how helping adolescents through certain situations was hard but a learning experience. His struggles were mainly dealing with crisis management and wanting to keep students safe as reflected in the verbatim transcription as

I’m obviously concerned for the student and her well-being at home in her safety. But, it was also a learning experience. . . how different things tied together that I have learned previously. So, I’m not glad the student has that going on in her life, but I’m glad that I feel more confident going forward. (2.19)

In sum, the central process of the intern’s owning it was not from events that happened at the internship site but rather his process of putting the pieces together through a critical self-reflexive narrative. His owning it was a fluid process as he was figuring it out while processing the ebb and flow of emotions. He was enacting his professional identity through different situated positionalities, which were captured across time in his vloggings. By struggling to find his place, he became reflexive; by becoming personally reflexive, he was owning it. The essence of what mattered to the intern was trusting relationships and taking care of self, others, and the setting. This was the core of his professional compass as a school counselor. By the end of the spring semester, he had progressed from learning as an intern to being a school counselor. This was the interconnectivity of the emergent themes that produced the super-ordinate: connecting the dots. . . it’s all about the kids.

Engagement in Critical Self-Reflective Process

Transformative learning is an authentic dynamic process where one breaks out of previously held frames of reference or comfort zones by addressing one’s edge-emotions (Mäkki, 2012). The current study reflects a transformative learning process for the participant as his edge-emotions led him to re-examine what he had learned and the assumptions he held to gain insight by reaffirming his commitment in being a school counselor. His biggest fear was a mindset of being incompetent; so he presented his fear, accepted it so he could let go of it, and then transformed it (Siegel, 2010). Through weekly vloggings, the participant’s focus was at times technical in describing so he could set the stage of what happened and at other times practical as he found connections and explored his vulnerability. The critical self-reflective focus was his deeper level of recognizing what he did not know and needing to struggle with figuring it out for himself. The significance of this critical self-reflection was that becoming a school counselor was a hard process. Vloggings seem to be a means for engaging the individual in a reflective practice linking what was being experienced to one’s personal meaning-making narrative (Charantiya, 2012; Cranton, 2006).

Vloggings in the current study were an intentional scaffolding strategy to engage the individual in a critical self-reflective process, which is vital to school counselor development (Wong-Wylie, 2007). Using the critical incident technique (CIT; Flanagan, 1954), the supervisor’s instructions were concise, and video recordings using a Smartphone provided easy access for sharing and exploring the emotions of experiences, which echoes Clarke’s (2009) findings. Further, Parikh et al. (2012) advocated engaging individuals in reflective practices using video journaling to increase self-understanding and professional growth. Therefore, from the current study, vloggings can support authenticity in reflections and can promote engagement in self-development and transformational professional growth (Parikh et al., 2012).

The dimensions of trust that surfaced for the participant in this study highlighted how building trust with students and having trusting relationships with others were core to his owning it. This can be extended into his engagement with vloggings that seemed to demonstrate he experienced a safe space where he could trust the supervisor: He felt supported, and he was willing to be vulnerable. Vulnerability is vital to effective critical self-reflection (Brookfield, 2015). Daloz (1999) promoted that support is key in the success of the student’s journey in becoming a professional. Support was present in the current study mainly through the submission of weekly vloggings and receiving feedback from the supervisor. Vloggings allowed the intern to engage in his transformative learning process through critical self-reflective practice (Schön, 1983).
Dynamic Developmental Process

In school counselor training programs, there are required field experiences, such as internships, that allow trainees to enhance their independence and advance their growth in skills and professional functioning (Storlie et al., 2017). These real-world experiences in the workplace foster professional identity development that “is dynamic and fluid, implying a shift and transformation by students of personal and professional knowledge, skills and dispositions” (Trede et al., 2012, p.379). Entering into the internship can elicit edge-emotions and challenge the intern’s confidence (Storlie et al., 2017).

In the current case, the intern experienced an ebb and flow of emotions that he shared in his vloggings; he confronted his fear of being incompetent, which led to the insight that his professional compass was it’s all about the kids. This was seen as a dynamic developmental process occurring within and across time; for this intern, this was not a linear process. His sense of becoming was validated through “doing” the internship and “being” a school counselor, which is similar to findings from McLean (2017) In the current case study, this was an intra- and inter-personal iterative journey integrating his lessons learned with his meaning-making professional compass.

The intern’s professional development also came to be known as notes to himself, which were catalysts for lessons learned. Mostly, these notes were a result of struggles he was having in becoming a school counselor and his edge-emotions that were uncomfortable. In facing these struggles, he found his solutions, which increased his confidence. The researchers saw this as a developmental process. He would doubt himself, he would find and test solutions, he then gained competence, and, from this process, he built his agency in being a school counselor. Each situated positionality presented a new avenue in this developmental process. What progressed out of the dilemmas and struggles he faced was to connect the dots and understand the essence of his identity: it’s all about the kids.

Finding a Professional Compass

Professional identity development is transformative and occurs as a process rather than an outcome. One’s transforming process emerges as an attitudinal conceptualization of one’s role as a professional and sense of belonging within the professional community (Brott & Myers, 1999; Dong et al., 2017; Gibson et al., 2012; Prosek & Hurt, 2014). For the participant in this study, he negotiated what he had learned with what he was experiencing, which hearkens to what Mezirow (2012) saw as putting forth the effort to continuously “negotiate contested meanings” (p. 73). Purposeful weekly vloggings created opportunities in this case study for the individual to engage in critical self-reflection by describing what happened, questioning his thoughts, exploring his emotions, and creating his own meaning (Stedmon & Dallos, 2009). This was his mindsight (Siegel, 2010); he connected the meanings he found with his purpose. His self-authorship came through engaging in the roles and responsibilities as an intern and school counselor. Through his own efforts, he developed agency as the author of his professional identity development and found his professional compass through caring for others.

As we step back and holistically look at the findings, we ascribe value to the intern’s self-authorship (Kegan, 1994). The use of critical awareness promoted a sense of purpose to author his own narrative rather than taking on a prescribed or expected role (Kegan, 2000). For example, he criticized the standardized testing role for school counselors and then turned his criticism into a call for school counselor advocacy. In another example, when he was confronted by a teacher in a manner that made him feel “I wasn’t doing my job” (9.01), he gave notes to himself to remember the good he was doing and comments can be “constructive advice” (9.01). These are examples of his ability to reshape and redirect his inner experiences as a self-author of his own story in professional identity development. Vloggings scaffolded his critical awareness through weekly dialogs that created a place for him to inform his adaptability rather than conformity by adopting the status quo (Taylor & Elias, 2012).

Self-authorship is idiographic as a “blending of influences” (Brott & Myers, 1999, p. 343). In the current case, these influences included interacting with others and distinguishing himself as a school counselor. He was figuring it out as he was processing the ebb and flow of emotions and owning it as a school counselor who was connecting the dots...it’s all about the kids. As Clouder (2005) contended, professional identity development centers around caring for others. From the current case study, his professional compass was centered around caring for others: it’s all about the kids.

Limitations

The findings of this single case study should be interpreted with several limitations in mind. First, this study involved one participant. Although the single case study allowed for a more in-depth and iterative process of engagement, analysis, and interpretation, the findings from this study cannot be generalized. Further, the findings in this case study are heavily influenced by the demographics of the participant being a white male in his mid-20s with a commanding physical presence. Another intern in the same school setting may have a different experience and, therefore, report different critical incidents. Second, data collected through vloggings rely on self-reports of what the individual deemed to be a critical incident. The accuracy of what was recalled was not substantiated because the focus was on the subjectivity of perception from the individual’s perspective. These subjective perceptions were at the heart of the vloggings. However, what is a critical incident to one intern may not be critical to another.
Third, there is possible researcher bias because one of the researchers was the supervisor of the intern. However, the in-depth analysis procedures that included intentional researcher bracketing (Smith et al., 2009/2012) were critical from start to finish. Despite these limitations, the researchers’ use of the IPA approach represents a novel and meaningful contribution to school counselor education, adult learning, and graduate studies.

Implications and Future Research
This case study initiated an in-depth exploration of professional identity development for graduate students during internship experiences. The use of vloggings as a purposeful scaffolding activity shows promise as a critical self-reflective practice. With “limited research on emerging uses of video including video annotation and video-based journaling” (Corbin Frazier & Eick, 2015, p. 577), the current research fills a pressing gap (Parikh et al., 2012; Rich & Hannafin, 2009). This has implications in higher education and professional studies (e.g., counselor education, medical education, teacher education) when creating a transformative learning environment and engaging individuals in the professional identity development process.

Future research can explore vloggings through a dialogical lens where the intern and supervisor engage in discursive strategies to negotiate professional identity development. Supervisor responses to counselors’--in-training reflective journaling using email and vlogging exchanges may shed light on creating relational connections. Further, obtaining IRB approval to use the visual recording for data analysis will allow the researchers to explore the conveyance of emotion and non-verbal cues behind the verbal expressions.

The next step in this research agenda in using vloggings as an intentional self-reflective practice will be to use IPA with additional cases to allow new themes to emerge with each case and look for patterns across cases (Smith et al., 2012). The additional cases will begin with the other six participants from the same time period who have given consent to their archival data. Future research will be with subsequent groups of interns and using IPA to provide data from a longitudinal perspective. Consideration for using focus groups with these interns who are now new professionals could shed light on how one’s professional identity continues to evolve.

Conclusion
The researchers set out to explore how a school counseling intern experienced his professional identity through critical self-reflection. Using IPA allowed the researchers to explore a space between what the intern was doing and his process of becoming a professional. Utility for vloggings both as a critical self-reflective tool and as a data collection tool was established. However, it needs to be noted that the trust and level of engagement by participant 494 in the critical self-reflective process were paramount to the success of this research. For this participant, the personal reflexivity journey across 26 vloggings was a dynamic developmental process through the themes of figuring it out, processing the ebb and flow of emotions, and owning it. The super-ordinate theme that emerged from the analysis in this case study was his self-authored professional compass of connecting the dots...it’s all about the kids.

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