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INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE AS A FACTOR IN ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

A Dissertation

by

DAN W. REAGAN JR.

Submitted to the Graduate College of
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor or Philosophy

May 2020

Major Subject: Rehabilitation Counseling

INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE AS A FACTOR IN ETHICAL DECISION-MAKING

A Dissertation

by

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May 2020

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ABSTRACT

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The ability to resolve ethical situations are a central feature in counseling training. As the counseling profession has developed so have various codes of ethics to guide clinical practice. These codes have been intended to provide guidance in ethical decision making but the complexity of the field has makes it impractical for a given code to given situation. In response, multiple problem-solving models have been developed to provide guidance. This process has been dominated by models that assumes the modernistic premise that reason is the key to resolving ethical situations.

Despite the dominance of modernistic ethics in counseling there has been a growing development of postmodern thought. There has been increased understanding of the limitations of ethical codes and purely rational thinking in ethical decision-making. Part of this new paradigm is an appreciation for the role of affect and context in the decision-making process. A post-modern approach to counseling ethics seems to be increasingly accepted among persons working in the social service field but little research has been attempted to evaluate the implications of such a change in training and practice. This study attempted to explore possible relationships between individual personality traits, habituated coping strategies, and emotional intensity when assessing ethical dilemmas or situations. Participants (N=74) of this study were

asked to complete an online survey to determine personality traits, positive and negative problem-solving strategies, level of emotional intensity, and other demographic information.

Two regression analysis and a Pearson product-moment correlation procedure were used to analyze the collected data. No significant relationships were identified. The study concludes with an analysis of limitations and a discussion and important considerations for future research.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The counseling profession has experienced substantial transformations in the past few decades that have important implications for ethical practice. This transition can be characterized as a trend from modernism to postmodernism. Until recently, modernism, with its focus on universal truths that exist independent of the person and an emphasis on reason and personal agency has been the dominant epistemology in counseling (Lyddon, 1995). Its acceptance as the basis of ethical decision making has been largely unchallenged. The ethics of Piaget and Kohlberg reject or minimize individual, social, and contextual difference as a factor in discussion or moral behavior (Kohlberg, 1971). Kohlberg insisted that the introduction of such consideration would result in an unacceptable relativity. He makes the specific point that there is specific knowledge that must be acquired to be considered moral.

The past few decades have ushered in major social and technological change. An awareness of social inequality and injustice have served to highlight the ethical limitations of a modernist approach. A postmodern approach has emerged that challenges the assumptions of what were previously considered to be universal truths. In its place is the principle that

understanding (i.e., knowing the world) is constructed both individually and socially, rather than being found and mapped in the mind through reason. It promotes utilizing multiple ways of knowing that include intuition, emotion, as well as science and reason. A postmodern approach tends to emphasize subjective experience, limitations to what can be understood, and questions basic theoretical truths (Hansen, 2002).

A great deal of literature has been introduced that discusses the implications of this trend toward postmodernism. The constructed nature of understanding (Gergen, 2001; Cottone, 2001; Guterman & Rudes, 2008) and an ethical orientation towards relationship (Gergen, 2015) and connection have emerged as dominant themes in this discussion and highlight a clear distinction from traditional modern understanding. While a modern epistemology insists that there are truths "out there" to be found, postmodernism posits that objective truth only tells part of the story, and likely not the most important part (Haidt, 2001; Greene & Haidt, 2002).

Postmodernists underscore the importance of the subjective nature of understanding. Major social and technological changes in the past three decades brought attention to the limitations of a modern orientation toward ethical practices. By the end of the last century it became clear that ethical codes, based on traditional rational approaches "capsulated" dominant group values (Pedersen, 1997) and often portrayed other groups as deficient, deviant, or pathological (Jordan, 2000).

The inclusion of individual differences, if they are found to be significant, in any ethical framework would represent a challenge to many current ethical decision-making models. When discussing advances in understanding, especially related to ethical and moral understanding, Han (2014) noted that the rules of science are typically not followed. He notes that traditional theories are not immediately abandoned, even when latest information tends to weaken the core

principles of the theory. He proposes the use of a philosophy of science can be used to describe developing trends in understanding. He proposes that theory generally exist as a "core" of key principles and other "auxiliary hypothesis" that serve as a protective belt that both support the core and are supported by the core (Lakatos, 1970). New theory does not just replace the old theory, but advances understanding. Lakatos sees paradigm change as a slow process of the erosion of the protective belt. Over time old ways of view the world give way as new paradigm, with new assumptions, are introduced that improve the understanding of phenomena. This study will use the philosophy of science model to explore the relationship of individual personality traits to the processes used to describe ethical decision making.

Postmodern ethics and Professional Codes

Exploration of the postmodern view of counseling ethics is related to codes of ethics. Professional ethics and a counselor's ability to perform in an ethical manner are fundamental to the development of the counseling profession. The development of codes and standards serve two related but distinct purposes (Walden, Herlihy, & Ashton, 2003). First, the codes of the American Counseling Association (ACA) serve to legitimize counseling as a profession. Secondly, codes of ethics serve as a guide for sound practice (Foster & Black, 2007; Remley & Herlihy, 2016). While there is an obligation to promote client safety, there is also a distinct obligation to protect the profession by maintaining the highest ethical standards. These two priorities are central to one's identity as a professional counselor. Because of the dual obligations, both the counseling profession and the individual counselor continue to be subject to continued self-examination and reflection.

The ability to practice and enjoy the benefits of membership in counseling implies a "covenant" relationship with society that its members will act in expected ways and to avoid

acting in others (Ponton & Duba, 2009). To be granted a professional license represents a contractual relationship in which the organization enjoys the autonomy and benefits of membership but prioritizes the benefit of those who utilize counseling services. Ultimately the codes serve as a moral guide and less as moral rules or requirements (Wilson, Rubin, & Millard, 1991). The code of ethics is seen as a promise that the profession will attempt to provide excellence in all its professional interactions. The codes provide awareness and clarity of obligations to the client (Corey, Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2015). Currently this specific guidance can be illustrated in current clarifications about distance counseling and counselor values. These issues have received specific attention and express specific values espoused by the profession. Certain values and emphasis, such as social justice, diversity and a multicultural approach are embedded throughout the code.

A focus on the subjective nature of ethics is apparent in the past two American Counseling Association (ACA) Codes of Ethics (2005 and 2014) and illustrate the trend in the profession towards a postmodern understanding of the professional's ethical obligations. This focus is evident in the move from specific and universal rules to expressions of broad values that accommodate the multiple contexts in which counseling is practiced (Foster & Black, 2007). Beauchamp & Childress (1979), as well as Kitchener (1984) proposed that the profession would be better served by adopting general principles that could be adapted to specific social contexts and situations (Freeman, 2011). At present the code emphasizes six ethical principles (autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, fidelity and veracity) and these principles underlie all the standards (Rollins, Rubin, & Fischer, 1993). However, the focus of the codes continues to reflect an objective code or principle that exists outside of the professional or the specific context. In addition, ethical behavior is often defined by specific steps to resolve ethical

situations that arise. There is a risk, from this perspective, that ethical situations will be fitted to an ethical model or rule rather than the process of reflecting the specific culture and context of the person seeking help. Current literature seems to reflect a need to develop new tools to address these new realities. As these new tools are developed, they will also need to be incorporated into counseling training programs.

Going Beyond the Code of Counseling Ethics

Birrell and Bruns (2016) have suggested that a move towards aspirational ethics may require that the professional evaluate both the underlying assumptions of the code of ethics and understand the historic and cultural contexts in which they are embedded. They introduce the idea, that is also assumed in this current study, that the code continues to be functionally tied to a modern framework that continues to present an objective view to ethical practice, rather than the postmodern advances that are being adopted in other areas of counseling practice. They explain that the nature of codes reflects a modern epistemology. The authors explain that the development of ethical codes of ethics originated in 1803 when Thomas Percival published the first code of ethics for physicians (Ponton & Duba, 2009). Birrell and Bruns (2016) make the point that a move to a formal code of ethics moved the profession away from "character and oath" (p. 391) and changed the focus of ethical practice from internal characteristics to external characteristic (Ponton & Duba, 2009).

While those who adhere to a postmodern view do not promote the elimination of specific ethical codes, the codes are generally seen as limited. Those who developed the current code of ethics expressed understanding that the code was "a living document" that seeks to provide guidance in the face of change (Meyers, 2014). They also expressed that the code will not be able to cover all topics nor keep pace with the changes in technology and society. It primarily

highlights the specific values that prioritize and characterize the profession. Birrell and Bruns (2016) express concern that reliance on a professional code of ethics as the basis of ethical practice will be flawed.

A postmodern epistemology places more emphasis on the subjective nature of ethical responsibility. Jordan (2000) expressed her opinion that many of the traditional counseling theories where harmful when applied to groups outside of the dominant group. She further warned that these same beliefs were reflected in the code of ethics. Traditional understandings of the self, counseling theory, definition of problems in counseling, as well as other traditional understandings often portray certain groups of people as deviant or deficient because they do not align with the principles of the code. Based in feminist theory, she advocates that counseling and ethical practice be focused on building relationships and connections, as well as maintaining and strengthening these relationships through therapeutic authenticity and the development of mutual empathy.

Duffey (2016) also emphasized the importance of connection as an emerging factor in ethical practice. Within this context problems are viewed as arising from patterns of separateness. He notes that emotional pain resulting from exclusion, or even the anticipation of exclusion follows the same neural pathways as physical pain from injury. Duffey promotes a focus on theories that encourage the formation of professional relationships in counseling preparation and practice. By extension this would include ethical practice. Central to this focus in the inclusion of contextual, cultural, and strength-based paradigms in ethical models of EDM, the lack of which has been demonstrated to be a source of potential emotional pain (Miller in Comstock et al., 2008; Sadeghi, Fischer, & House, 2003). Duffey also acknowledged a lack of

literature that addresses supervisor relational behaviors (Ladany et al. in Duffey, 2016) which is a focus of this current study.

A postmodern orientation broadens the scope of the counseling profession but does so by placing the weight of ethical decision making increasingly on the individual practitioner (Freeman, 2011). The changes in the nature of ethical codes and the increasing complexity of the context in which counseling happens places greater demands on the professional to take personal responsibility, as well as develop and maintain competence needed to practice in these new counseling realities. The individual counselor will likely be judged less by the letter of the law and more by the spirit of the law (Remley & Herlihy, 2016). A new commitment to becoming a competent ethical counselor seems as important now as ever. With such an emphasis on the individual, this study seeks to understand to the role individual difference might play in this process, especially as it relates to new understanding of constructed nature of truth and the centrality of affective processes in ethical decision-making (EDM).

Statement of the Problem

A review of current counseling and ethical literature demonstrates a broad acceptance of postmodernism, both as a counseling theory as well as an emerging ethical framework. Changes in social structure and the rapid development of technology have highlighted the shortcomings of traditional modernistic models of ethical practice. It seems that a new ethical paradigm is emerging. While a trend towards postmodern ethics seems to be a better fit for the current multidimensional context, it also introduces questions and principles that are not considered from a modernistic perspective.

Ethics from a rationalist perspective have dominated counselor preparation and ethics training with a heavy emphasis on codes, laws and dilemmas. Most include ethical decision-

making models that provide logical and reasoned steps for making ethical judgments. While widely accepted these models are seen to be empirically unproven (Rogerson, Gottliab, Handelsman, Knapp, & Younggren, 2011). Willis (2008) contends that models based on rational principles overstate the reliability of cognition in ethical decision making (EDM). As such it tends to focus only on the objective nature of understanding while neglecting subjective experience and broader contextual factors. Based on the review of literature used in this study, traditional reason-focused approaches to ethical practice lends itself to the illusion of rationality that can facilitate a dominant group bias (Pedersen, 1997).

While a postmodern epistemology seems to be increasingly accepted, there seems to be considerable diversity of opinion, especially related to the nature of epistemology. While there is consensus that learning is not the mapping of an outside reality into the mind, but the result of an active constructive process, the nature of how this construction takes place is yet unsettled and the focus of debate (Rudes & Guterman, 2007). While current literature has a distinct tilt in the direction of social constructivism, there are some who suggest that an exclusion of the principles of constructivism significantly diminish the depth of insight that is possible if the two epistemologies can be integrated (Castello, 2016). Of interest to this study was the emphasis of constructivism as it is related to process of individual phenomenological understanding.

There seems to be an awareness developing of the importance of affective processes in EDM. Traditional ethical frameworks exclude subjective experience that are essential in managing the ethical situations inherent in counseling. A component of this subjective experience is the question of the role of individual difference in ethical practice. It has been identified as one of the central tensions that are currently the focus of discussion.

Social intuition theory has been a significant development in ethical literature but seems to have generated limited interest in counseling literature. Within the postmodern paradigm there is a greater focus on the affective process, as opposed to reason. During the past two decades, new discoveries have been made related to how ethical situations are processed. Greene and Haidt (2002) have been able to present considerable evidence that suggests that moral reasoning involves both rational and affective processes. Moreover, their research provides support for the idea that affective processes dominate this process. In addition, the importance of emotional regulation has been identified as a significant factor in EDM (Scekely & Miu, 2014).

Lastly, a notable change in epistemology has illuminated the complexity of ethical practice and questions many principles that have been presented as foundational in traditional modernistic ethics and moral understanding. One of these changes is the place of the individual in ethical decision making. Traditional understanding from Kohlberg's moral developmental theory rejects or minimizes the individual's influence on morals since they exist independent of the person (Kohlberg, 1971). Morality, from this perspective is based on conformity to these independent standards. The demands of these standards are universal irrespective of individual or societal differences.

While largely rejected from a modernistic understanding, there also seems to be little interest in the literature related to how individual differences might affect the constructive nature of understanding and its impact on the development of social intuition. Specifically, social constructivist theory often seems hostile to the idea that the characteristics specific to the individual might be a factor in these processes.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between individual differences and processes used in ethical decision making among individuals who work in rehabilitation, mental health, and other social service-related workers. Individual differences include differences in personality, years of experience, and level of education. The examination of personal difference is important as it might identify factors in ethical decision making that are not current the focus of attention in most ethical training programs. Based on literature a review it seems possible that these factors may be important because of their potential influence on two key factors that have been identified as important to ethical decision making, emotional regulation and emotional intensity.

While a detailed review of the implications of a move to a postmodern approach is beyond the scope of this study, three issues were addressed. A postmodern approach introduces the importance of context, the created nature of truth, and the priority of affective processes in ethical decision making. This study sought to understand the relationship, if one exists, between individual differences in personality traits and patterns of emotional regulation and emotional intensity. Trait theory proposes that individuals have, in differing levels or degrees, different traits or types that affect how the individual processes the world around them. In theory, these differences influence both how one perceives phenomenon and what processes are used to make sense of them. As an extension, individual differences might play a role in specific coping strategies that are developed to manage difficult social dilemmas.

Research Questions

Question #1: What is the effect of counselor/counselor-in-training personality traits on emotional intensity when responding to an ethical situation?

Question #2: What are the effects of counselor/counselor-in-training emotional regulation styles on emotional intensity when responding to an ethical situation?

Question #3 What is the relationship between personality factors and emotional regulation styles?

Importance

Ethical education is foundational and an integral part of a counselor's professional identity. As the profession moves to integrate a more context bound ethical framework, ethical understanding will likely become more system, developmental, and multidimensional. Present models, even with a move toward principle ethics, are inadequate to manage many situations that may surface in daily clinical practice. While the codes are frequently reviewed and revised, it seems unlikely that a rule-based ethical approach will ensure the aspirational goals that are also identified in the code.

Current trends toward postmodern ethics places greater expectations on the counselor to not only know the objective nature of the code, but to also integrate "the spirit behind the code and the principles on which the code rests" (Corey et al., 2015, p. 13) and develop an ethical identity, or even a moral character. This understanding will likely involve increased affective competencies that are not currently a feature of traditional ethical training. It is also reasonable to assume that this epistemology will require an appreciation of the developmental nature of ethical practice and will necessitate an understanding that ethical practice is infused in all areas

of professional practice (Ertmer & Newby, 1993; Rollins et al., 1993) As the profession trends toward an understanding of self and others in context, it could be argued that there is a need to consider how individual difference may affect the process that characterize this new approach.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Integrating Individual Difference as a Factor in Ethical Decision-Making (EDM)

The purpose of this literature review is to explore the possible linkage between the core assumptions of postmodernism and individual differences. As discussed in the introduction, counseling ethics has largely been guided by the assumptions of modernistic belief about the nature of truth. The notion that knowledge is constructed, as opposed to unchanging and unchallengeable, seems to invite a closer look as to how ethical decisions are made. A basic question throughout this review is how certain individual differences might influence this process.

This linkage will be developed through an understanding of the philosophy of science as presented by Han (2014). Han proposed that understanding is shaped, over time, through the development of ideas that support and are supported by the core assumptions of a given framework. The frameworks of modernism and postmodernism will be compared using the philosophy of science as a basis. The "hard core" assumptions, as well as the "protective belt" of each framework will be discussed, with an assumption that postmodernism provides a better foundation for profession counseling, especially when applied to ethical practice.

The review will also discuss basic hard-core assumptions of postmodernism, especially the constructed nature of understanding. This concept represents a major distinction from a modern understanding of the nature of truth and provides a foundation to discuss how individual difference may play a role in ethical decision making. The review concludes with a discussion of theories of individual differences in personality. The introduction of ethical expertise will also be discussed in the context of individual difference.

Philosophy of Science

According to Han (2014) the study of ethical and moral education does not lend itself to the natural sciences. A scientific approach assumes that the tenants of given framework should be easily testable, falsifiable, and refutable and morals and ethics do not meet this criterion. However, he also notes that, even research in the natural sciences, researchers often look for alternative explanations or methodological error, rather than rejection, when a given principle is found to be false. Because of this limitation, philosophers have developed a philosophy of science to explain the process of advances in understanding. This model can be used to explain both the weakening of modern moral understanding, as well as the growing support for a postmodern epistemology. Based on the philosophy of science developed by Lakatos (1970) Han describes how understanding is advanced through the development of theories to describe it. The major principles of Lakatos's philosophy of science are summarized in Table 1. Research programs for Modernism and Postmodernism are represented in Figures 2 and 3 respectively.

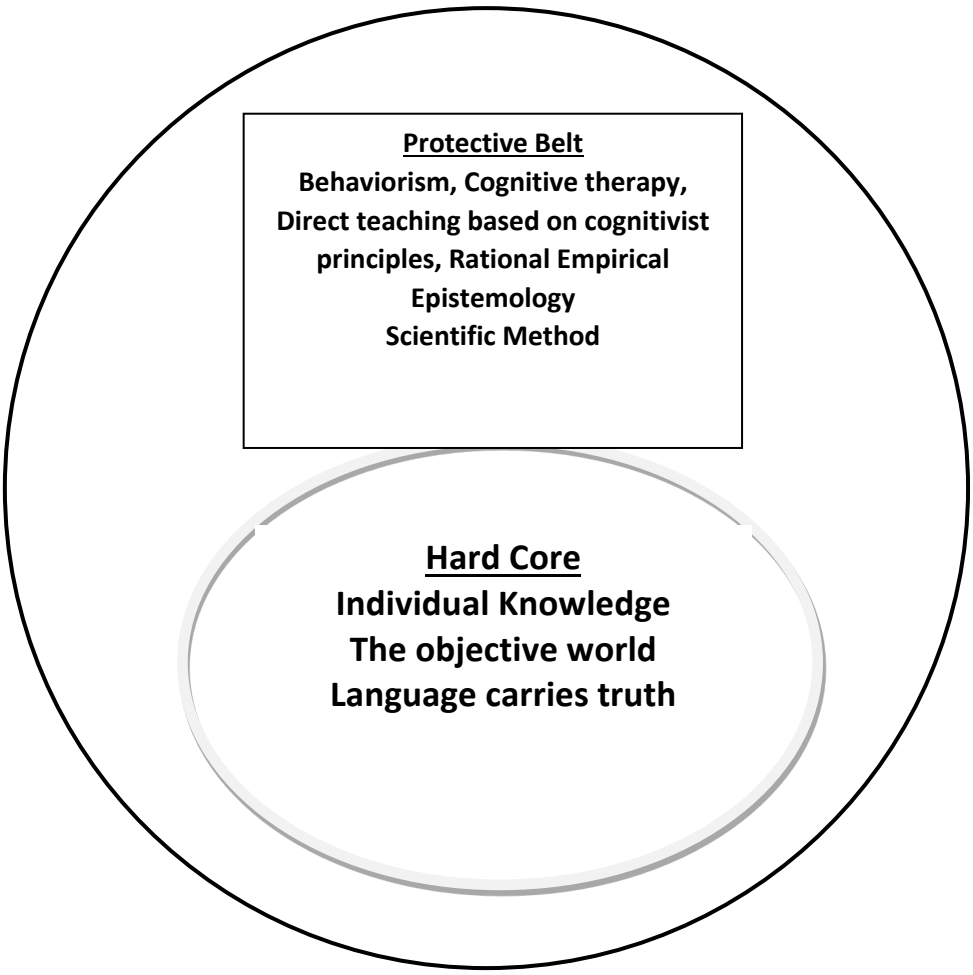
Table 1

Summary of Lakatos Philosophy of Science (Han, 2014)

- Old theories are not discarded unless the new framework can provide a better understanding of the phenomena being studied. Theory does not merely change, but advances.
- The research program can be changed and amended over time to better explain phenomena.
- If a research program encounters challenges for which it cannot cope (ie. Modernism's inability to adjust the changing social context) the hard core could be replaced or integrated by another.
- This process of change is gradual and happens through the corrosion of the protective belt
- The new hard core should explain phenomena better.
- It is possible for old theory to co-exist with newer.
- Though theories may be competing, they may, in fact, integrate and fill in on another's gaps.
- The ultimate test of validity is the outcome the theory is trying to produce.

Figure 1

Hard Core and Supportive Assumptions of Modernism ((Lyddon, 1995; Carr, 2008)



Hard Core Assumptions of Modernism

Gergen (2001) identified the three key features of modernism as individual knowledge, the objective world, and language as the carrier of truth. Each of these concepts carry with them the understanding that truth exists with or without the individual's understanding or awareness. The basic truths of the world are viewed as real and universal. Per modern epistemology the individual possesses both the potential of observation and reason to study the world. By using

these processes, the individual can understand these universal truths and map them into the mind. A commitment to reason results in development that is measured by the degree the individual understands and uses higher levels of cognition and the depth of one's knowledge in each area. Language is then, ultimately the passing of knowledge from the knower to the learner.

Hard Core Assumptions of Postmodernism

De Barbaro (2008) details postmodern principles and how they support the ethical nature of counseling. The first of these is pluralism. Postmodernism proposes that absolute understanding is impossible, and that individual understanding is subject to bias. Postmodernism embraces the idea that knowledge is multifaceted and is enhanced when multiple perspectives are considered. There seems to be a growing acceptance that the values, thoughts and perspectives of many groups who previously had no voice in the foundational meaning of traditional knowledge. Because of the pluralistic nature of postmodernism, understanding has the potential to be experienced and processed in a more expansive way.

In addition, DeBarbaro (2008) explains that a significant factor in postmodern understanding is the role of language. He presents language as the most significant source of reality construction. Not only is it a factor in the creation of reality, the ability to control the meaning of language is a source of power that can be used to exploit others. This is made clear by De Barbaro as he describes the language of therapy being only in the hands of the professional therapist, putting the therapist in a position of power over the client.

A third characteristic of postmodern therapy is its pragmatic nature. From a postmodern approach, therapy is not seen as corrective as much as it is a process to find acceptable alternatives. Results are not defined by a given theory or other objective standard, rather they can be judged based on how well they fit the situation the client identifies as a problem (Corey,

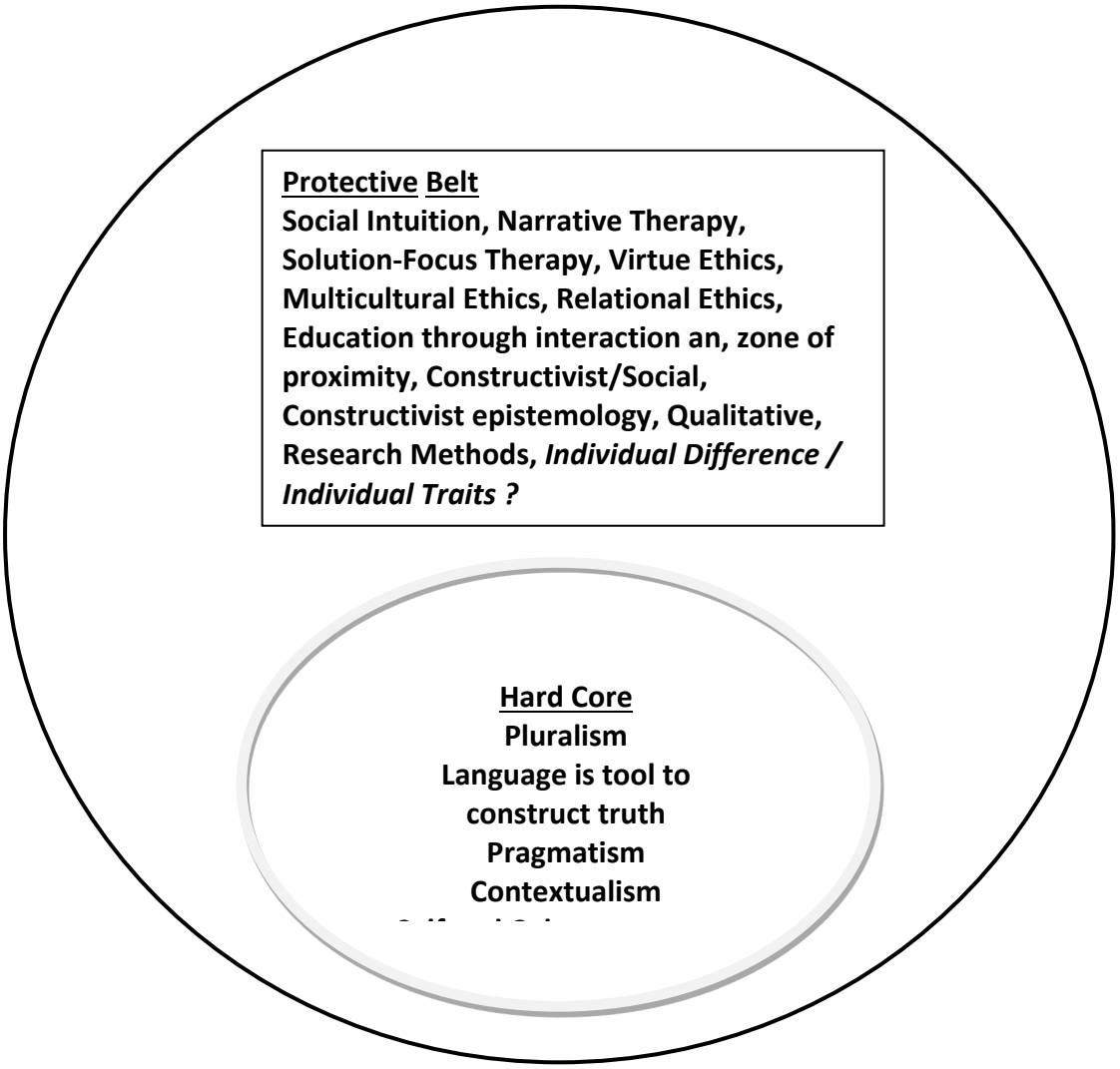
2016). This is often challenging from a modernistic view where counselors often overidentify with a given theoretical approach or cultural assumptions.

Another feature of postmodernism identified by De Barbaro (2008) is contextualism. In this approach understanding is always context driven and context bound (Willis, 2008). It is this principle that is frequently identified as a benefit of postmodern counseling because it focuses pathology on factors within the context and not always directly on the individual. As such, a disability is not seen as a problem if the environment to does not present barriers for the disabled person to encounter.

Lastly, postmodern therapy incorporates the understanding that truth is a narrative. This last principle is connected to the importance of language in the construction of reality. One's narrative is a frame of reference that gives meaning to life. The story of one's life is viewed as always being created in the context of others (Corey, 2016; Hansen, 2002). This concept has been especially powerful in its ability to broaden ethical practice to include individuals who have previously been excluded. From a postmodern perspective, there can be multiple narratives, each interacting with other narratives to create and even broader social narrative. This view also assumes the there is no inherent priority in one narrative over another. As such, traditional counseling interactions where the perception of the counselor as expert are questioned. Rather, the client is often viewed as the expert, since they are the only ones who have direct access to their own narrative. De Barbaro insists that "openness to the other is among the central premises of postmodern individual ethics" (2008, p.49).

Figure 2

Hard Core and Supportive Assumption of Post-Modernism (Jordan, 2000; Gergen, 2001; Cottone, 2001.



From modernism to postmodernism

There have been three very different philosophical systems that have been used throughout history, that describe the nature of truth. Each represents a different epistemology, or theory of knowledge and knowing. They include premodernism, modernism and postmodernism. Premodernism reflects an understanding that truth is through direct revelation (Hoffman, 2008). It relies on authority figures who serve to interpret this truth. Churches, kings or other sources were important sources of truth. An example of such understanding is the humor theory of the middle ages. The theory posited that health and wellness was based on a balance of humors in the body ("Medieval Medicine," n.d.). Per this theory, the body was composed of four humors and that a combination of diet, medicines and bloodletting could manage the humors. Religious belief was a primary authority and its dualistically inspired understanding framed much of the understanding of the period as evidenced by mental illness being framed as a spiritual problem or demonic possession. From the beginning, ethics can be seen to be a product of the dominant epistemic beliefs of the period.

Modernism can be viewed as a reaction to premodernism and promoted the belief that dogma was an insufficient method of understanding reality. In contrast, modernism proposed that truth must be discovered. Lyddon (1995) points out that a modernism is reflected from two perspectives on the nature of understanding that can be traced back to the views of Plato and Aristotle (Carr, 2008). Plato's version, referred to as rationalism, prioritizes reason in moral understanding and decision making (Denis & Wilson, 2016). The other reflects the teaching of Aristotle and is a more empirical approach that focuses on subjective experience and knowledge through the senses (Carr, 2008). Together these two approaches represent the two primary

focuses of the modern scientific approach. The nature of ethics, moral development and ethical decision-making has long been influenced by the tension of these two approaches.

Subsequently, the basic assumptions of the modern approach relying on rationalism and empiricism have been questioned in the last half century. A postmodern approach has emerged that challenges assumptions of what had previously been characterized as universal truths. Postmodernism calls into question assertions of objectivity. Changes in technology and social understanding have challenged the idea that truth and understanding exist outside of individual understanding and has promoted the principle that understanding (i.e., knowing the world) is constructed both individually (Maturana, 1999) and socially (Gergen & Gergen, 2011). It promotes utilizing multiple ways of knowing that include intuition, emotion, as well as science and reason. A postmodern approach tends to emphasize subjective experience, limitations to what can be understood, and questions basic theoretical truths (Hansen, 2002).

These changes have been evident in many recent counseling approaches and have challenged basic understandings that had gone unchallenged during the early development of the counseling profession. The postmodern counseling approach calls for consideration of voices that had previously been marginalized in traditional discussions about ethics and moral development. There has likewise been an appreciation of levels power between the client and the counselor (Kaiser, 1992). Hoffman (2008) emphasizes that this new epistemology often values the client's understanding of both how to define the reasons for participation in services as well as the direction the services should go. Consequently, the counselor is less likely to be seen in a privileged position. Moreover, there has been a growing appreciation of the role of ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic and other factors that underscore the importance of

acknowledging bias and power differential in the counseling relationship, especially as it affects professional ethics (Lee, 2013).

For most of its existence the counseling profession has adopted an overwhelmingly rationalistic epistemology (Willis, 2008). This approach generally proposed that understanding was a process of aligning oneself with the basic principles that exist in the world (Corey, 2016). Learning was generally seen as developmental with respect to cognitive skills and was demonstrated in stages. At the beginning of the last century, ethics and moral education were widely viewed as topics to be taught and was carried out through memorization or rules and use of the principles of reinforcement (Willis, 2008).

Recent studies have begun to question the efficacy of modern epistemology, especially a purely rationalist approach. These changes seem consistent with the philosophy of science model that has been presented. Traditional ethical decision-making (EDM) approaches have experienced a decline (Willis, 2008), which would be defined as a corrosion of the protective belt by Han (22014). Willis states that there were four significant reasons for this decline. The first is an increase in cultural pluralism. Second, early rational approaches were dismissed because they discounted the importance of culture and social factors as factors in moral development. Third, ethical principles were assumed to exist with or without the agreement of the individual. Lastly, there has been a growing awareness that the assumptions of rational ethics egregiously demonstrated a general bias against those who were not in the dominant social group. This bias was identified as being "encapsulated" in the earlier ethical codes (Pedersen, 1997). Increasingly groups who had little voice in the past are now able to contribute their understanding of morality and ethics which may vary from the dominant group, who have traditionally framed ethical discussion.

The last factor identified by Willis was a study that put into question the efficacy of moral teaching. He reports that trust in moral teaching was challenged by a study by Hartshorne and May in the late 1920s that found that moral teaching did not have an impact on moral behavior with those who were being taught. Recent neurological studies have also found that ethical behavior covaries more consistently based on affective factors rather than reason (Haidt, 2001). Ethics based on purely rational principles were practiced early in the last century and resulted in, what are now considered catastrophes (i.e. Nazism and the social and scientific acceptance of eugenics).

While Willis seems to lament the loss of traditional moral teaching his evaluation seems sound and provides a reasonable basis to understand a trend from modern to postmodern orientations in the profession. It seems that a single rational understanding of morals and ethics was found to be inadequate in the multiple contexts of the society in which it had been applied. Considering the growing awareness of the limitations of a modern intellectual framework, a move toward a postmodern approach has emerged. De Barbaro (2008) describes this trend as a movement that "questions the possibility and credibility of a comprehensive and coherent account of reality" (43). Whereas modernism marked by skepticism of the dogma of the premodern period, postmodernism can be characterized by an openness to multiple ways of understanding. A comparative summary of modernism and postmodernism are included in Table 2.

Table 2

Implications of Modernism and Postmodernism (Corey, 2016; De Barbaro, 2008; Cottone, 2001)

	Modernism	Postmodernism
View of Reality	Exists as a universal truth that exists with or without the individual's awareness; can be discovered	Is constructed by an individual or group through social interaction
Issues of Bias	Result of emotion and affective factors	Results from rejection or minimization of cultural and contextual factors
Issues of Power	Power over	Power with
Focus of problem/change	Defined by theory and clinical hypothesis	Defined by the client in the client's language
View of pathology	Deviations from normal; diagnostic categories	Attitudes and behaviors consistent with life experiences
View of culture and context	Influence is rejected or minimized	Central concept
View of autonomy	Central concept	Concept questioned
View of empathy	One-way, directed towards client	Two-way, develops as mutual quality
Role of theory	Reflects underlying universal truth	Reflects a paradigm; Serves as metaphor; application is context specific
Focus of ethical/moral training	Direct teaching and application of rules, laws and principles	Focused on development of ethical affective competence
Dilemmas	Logical application of rules, laws and principles	Resolution emerges from developmental characteristics of the counselor and the cultural contextual factors; consensus

Validity	Best fit based on objective standard	Best fit based on context
Therapeutic Goals	Theory driven; focus on independence and self-sufficiency	Person driven; focus on connection and context
Individual Differences	Influence is rejected or minimized	Not specifically addressed in EDM literature

Based on a review of current literature, postmodern trends are being integrated and are increasingly mainstream in the counseling profession. New counseling approaches, like solution-focused therapy and narrative therapy have been founded on a thoroughly postmodern approach to counseling where relationship and the client's understanding are central (Guterman, 2013). Problems are viewed as problems of adaptation to context rather than a weakness or illness in the individual. There is also a growing understanding that treatment is much more than a specific intervention. For example, recent changes in community mental health have called for service providers to adopt a "recovery model" that emphasizes the identification and focus on client goals, strengths and resources and not on an identified problem or diagnosis (Gehart, 2012). The client is the expert on the nature of their problem as well as the goals being pursued.

There is also a new emphasis of the subjective nature of understanding, especially a greater appreciation for affective processes, a growing realization of the socially constructed nature of understanding and a better understanding of the processes involved in EDM. These new advances help shape our understanding of the nature of what we know, and the processes related to how it is known. It also implies a new set of competencies that will need to be identified and developed by the practitioner.

Moreover, a postmodern framework expands the understanding that ethics is based on more than the application of reason and the use of professional codes. Radden & Sadler (2010) have also expressed the view that professional values are the product of personal dedication and not the requirements of an outside authority. They use the term "character ethics" to describe the development of both the individual's inner states as well as outward behavior. They argue that the affective processes are especially important in practice settings that do not submit to logical rules. Lee (2013) likewise expressed that clinical practice does not lend itself to rules that are used universally with each client. Instead, Radden & Sadler insist that practice be developed along the lines of virtue, which involve the development of cognitive flexibility that may lead to decisions and action that are contrary to traditional reason.

A postmodern ethical approach likely should acknowledge and integrate a multidisciplinary understanding. Modern counseling has interactions with multiple other disciplines and agencies that often have their own view of aspirational ethics. Counseling practice often interacts with professionals with backgrounds in medicine, social work, rehabilitation, business, education, as well as other fields. Experienced counselors will likely have to manage challenging ethical situations that are common to a social context. This may be especially challenging if the context involves competing ethical assumptions such as tensions between a recover model and medical model of client care (Davidson, O'Connell, Tondora, Stryon, & Kangas, 2006).

There seems to be a growing consensus in ethical literature that the aspirational nature of ethical practice extends even beyond the daily context of practice to broader social trends. Postmodernism is built on the premise that certain groups have historically been harmed by traditional ethical frameworks. As members of a profession there seems to be a growing

consensus that our ethical obligation extends to identifying and addressing sources of bias, injustice, stigma and other attitudinal barriers as they are encountered. For example, Rubin (1991) noted the systematic bias towards persons with disability. He points out that funding for income maintenance far exceeds funding for rehabilitation, suggesting a societal belief that a person with a disability is unlikely to fully participate in normal society and contributing to a general paternalism towards those with the disability.

Radden & Sadler (2010) underscore the importance of this new postmodern emphasis, especially considering the nature of current care delivery systems. A postmodern view will acknowledge that the individual counselor will interact with the client through multiple embedded systems, including the helping agency. Character traits are important to navigate the needs of the client with the often-competing needs of other organizations and social systems. They specifically identify a predisposition that enhances the role of morality as the factor that most succinctly distinguishes the professional counselor from a technical tradesman.

Importance of Non-Rational Processes in EDM

The trend toward a postmodern framework has increased interest in non-rational aspects to EDM. Specifically, the importance of affective processes has been recognized as a central feature. Corey et al. (2015) expressed the importance of recognizing the importance of non-rational factors saying,

> *"Ethical decision making is not purely a cognitive and linear process that follows clearly defined and predictable steps. Indeed, it is crucial to acknowledge that emotions play a part in how you make ethical decisions. As a practitioner, you're your feelings will likely influence how you interpret both your client's behavior and your own behavior. Furthermore, if you are uncomfortable with an ethical*

decision and do not adequately deal with this discomfort, it will certainly influence your future behavior with your client. Working through personal beliefs and values, motivations, feelings and actions are an integral part of working through an ethical concern" (p. 20).

As per the philosophy of science, this advancement does not necessarily imply the rejection of the previous or competing framework. Influenced by recent studies in neuropsychology, EDM is increasingly understood as a dual cognitive process that utilizes both rational and affective process (Greene & Haidt, 2002). Reason continues to be an important aspect of decision making, but its role and priority have been challenged in favor of affective and sociocultural processes. Bernard and Goodyear (2014) encourage counselor supervisors to recognize and consider these new findings from cognitive psychology in new counselor training. They point out that affective processes related to EDM are often absent is counselor training and preparation and they promote integrating these new understandings into EDM education. Rogerson, Gottlieb, Handelman, Knapp, and Younggren (2011) assert that models that have long dominated training "are empirically unproven and rely upon assumptions of rational, conscious, and quasi-legal reasoning" (p. 614). They contend ethical models that are built on dividing EDM into discrete steps that determine ethical outcomes fail to recognize the complexity of each ethical situation. Rogerson et al. (2011) argue that decision making would be improved by considering a broad array of non-rational factors. A summary of their thoughts has been included in Table 3.

Table 3

Importance of Non-Rational Processes in EDM (Rogerson et al. 2011; Hernandez, 2009)

- Without emotion, morality would not exist
- By ignoring intuition or suggesting that it can be removed from the process of EDM, current rational models are vulnerable to subjectivity, bias, and rationalization.
- It is unclear whether knowing what to do translates into ethical behavior.
- Actual behavior is affected by a range of factors including personal values and practical considerations.
- Contextual, interpersonal and intuitive factor are linked and influence the EDM processes.
- Decisions are more likely based on subjective experience rather than objective processes.
- Intuition can be exceedingly efficient, accurate and powerful in many situations.
- Because immediate affective responses are particularly potent, the way in which equivalent choices are framed can lead to very different decisions, which violates the rational assumption that the same situation should yield the same result. This is important because individuals usually passively accept the frame they are given
- Problems in EDM may result from mental shortcuts or heuristics.
- People demonstrate "bias blind spot" as they perceive bias in others but not themselves.
- Automatic emotions can influence judgment (i.e. individuals are often motivated to minimize regret, escape discomfort of uncertainty or conflict, avoid complex decisions, or avoid ambivalence.

Social Intuition, Dual-Processes and EDM

Jonathan Haidt (2001) was one of the first to question the central position of reason in EDM and moral development. His theory seems to provide biological support for the hard-core assumptions of postmodernism. He introduced the idea that EMD was, in fact a dual-process and that moral judgments are reached automatically through affective processes that are like perception or intuition. From this perspective reason is employed, if needed, to provide ex post facto to justify the decision and the processes that produced it. What is considered "reasoning" is usually a process of taking an unfamiliar perspective, activating new intuitions, and weighing the intuitions against one another (Rogerson, 2011).

Haidt (2001) provided several differ types of support for his theory. He initially conducted research that explored individuals' responses to social taboos. He used vignettes to describe behavior that is normally considered unethical or immoral, like consensual sex between siblings. He crafted the stories in such a way that typical "risks" were removed (i.e. the use of birth control and condoms) so that the only factor being judged was the behavior itself. He found that most participants expressed strong emotional reactions to the behavior and judged it to be wrong. However, the individuals were unable to develop a rational argument to support their objections. They were only able to express that they sensed the behavior was wrong. This "moral dumbfounding" was offered as support for his general theory.

Evidence for the social intuition theory was also offered by evaluating individuals who, due to injury or genetic deficit to the ventromedial area of the prefrontal cortex (VMPFC), an area just behind the bridge of the nose, resulted in loss of emotional responsiveness and consequent impairment of behavioral choices. This deficit was illustrated from the historical account of Phineas Gage (Damasio in Haidt, 2001). After having a stake accidentally driven through his

skull Phineas Gage developed a pattern of antisocial and disruptive behaviors. The damage to the VMPFC resulted in the loss of emotional responsiveness to and antisocial behavioral choices, while retaining his reasoning abilities. Persons with dysfunctional VMPFC reportedly maintain full knowledge of moral rules, social convention and can solve logical or mathematical problems. However, when faced with real social decisions they can perform disastrously, demonstrating poor judgment, indecisiveness, and irrational behavior (Haidt, 2001).

This general loss of affective processing represents a primary diagnostic criterion for anti-social personality type (DSM 5, 2013). The current version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manuel (DSM 5) describes this disorder as "a pervasive pattern of disregard for and violation of the rights of others. It can include a failure to conform to societal norms, deceit for personal gain, impulsivity, aggressiveness, recklessness, failure to accept responsibility, indifference towards others and lack of remorse. Jordan (2000) expressed her opinion the these "sociopathic" characteristics make these individuals poor candidates for relation-based therapy approaches because of "avoidance of authenticity and vulnerability that may be too entrenched and unyielding" (p. 20). The marked absence of functional affective processing seems to greatly reduce one's ability to act ethically or morally.

Support was further demonstrated through the development of function neuroimaging (*f*MRI) to study individual responses when asked to resolve scenarios involving the harm to one person to save a group of others (Greene & Haidt, 2002). In general, these studies have demonstrated that different areas of the brain are activated based on the type of ethical situation and emotional intensity triggered by the moral situation. These studies seem to suggest that situations that evoked higher levels of moral or emotional intensity are typically processed through regions of the brain associated with affect and those with lower intensity are decided using more intentional

reason. Using *f*MRI studies, Haidt and Greene were able to affirm the dual-processing nature of EDM.

Primacy of affective processes

As noted, Haidt (2001) demonstrated that the determination of right and wrong is principally driven by affect and intuition rather than deliberate reason. Haidt stated that social intuition could be compared to aesthetic judgment. He argued that the same type of processes used to make moral decisions are like those used to sense beauty and other nonrational judgments. He described social intuition as "evaluations of the actions or character of a person that are made with respect to a set of values held to be obligatory by a culture or subculture" (p. 817) and developed through the affective processes. These assessments are characterized as fast, effortless and often occur outside of the person's awareness that they are happening. Individuals are said to engage in countless judgments daily and may not involve rational processes. These might range from opinions on what another is wearing to reactions to a global event that involved major destruction or death. Intuitions involve judgments that engage cognitions about social beliefs and mores. These "affect-laden" intuitions arise in the context of specific cultural practices that are subject to "social criticism, ostracism, or other types of social learning mechanism" (Haidt, 2001).

According to Han (2014) the ultimate test of validity for an ethical framework is that resulting ethical practice results in "the production of moral behavioral outcomes." This was initially reported by Haidt (2001) who noted that moral behavior covaries with moral intuition more than moral reasoning. Later research has advanced the idea that moral and ethical judgment are influenced by factors other than reason when faced with a moral dilemma. For example, Tassy, Oulier, Mancini, and Wicker (2013a) were able to show that the number of

people benefiting from an ethical action was not as important a determinant as the closeness of the relationship of the decision maker to the potential victim of the decision. Additionally, Greene and Haidt (2002) claimed that ethical decisions were made based on personal and impersonal factors related to the presenting dilemma. In their research, if a dilemma involves one's direct personal involvement in the death of another (i.e. pushing someone in front of a train to save others down the track) they suggested that this would be followed by a deontological action. On the other hand, if the dilemma involved an action that would cause a death indirectly (i.e. diverting a train to another track to avoid others, but inadvertently killing someone on the other track) they suggested that this would more likely result in a utilitarian response. These examples provide support that judgment and choice of action seem to be influenced by the situational context in which the decision is made (Tassey, Oullier, Mancini, & Wicker, 2013).

Emotion, Moral Emotion, and EDM

Because reason has historically been framed from a dualistic point of view, some have equated affective process and emotion as the opposite of reason, specifically as "nonrational or irrational" and as dysfunctional with respect to EDM (Hernandez, 2009). Further affective processes have been judged to be of less value, primitive and have historically been viewed as antagonistic to logic and reason. Hernandez stresses that individuals are always in some mood and in some emotional state. As such, the world is seen through an emotional filter. She explains that emotions influence conduct and motivation as well as inhibiting or promoting actions that increase or decrease the well-being of the person or the community in which they live and interact. Emotion and affect are key cognitions in EDM (Garcia & Ostrosky-Solis, 2006; Hernandez, 2009). While not rational, they are said to be cognitions because they give us information that is used to make ethical decisions.

It is important to distinguish between emotion and moral emotions (Haidt, 2003) as both are key factors in EDM but in separate ways. As discussed earlier, research in psychopathology has suggested that emotions are a developmental prerequisite to acquiring the skills to make moral judgments (Prinz, 2006). Some (Gergen, 2010) have argued that the brain is wired, not for reason, but for social interaction. Gergen views the brain as a "cultural carrier" which seems consistent with Haidt's understanding that affect-laden intuition and the product of evolution and social interaction. Studies have found that the neural connections from the affective system to the cognitive system are stronger than the connections from the rational to the emotional (Ledoux in Hernandez, 2009). In the absence of social emotions and subsequent feelings it is unlikely that a system of morals would have ever emerged (Haidt, 2001).

Haidt also emphasized the importance of distinguishing general emotions and "moral emotions" in EDM. The role of emotion has been researched by assorted studies, of which not all would ascribe to the basic assumptions of social intuition and dual-process theory. In general, emotions have been shown to be a factor in EDM. Distinct types of emotion have been found to affect EDM in diverse ways. Stress, for example, has been found to increase the likelihood of deontological choices as opposed to utilitarian responses (Youssef et al., 2011). Another study by Kligyte, Connelly, Thiel, & Davenport (2013) explored the effect of anger and worry on EMD. Anger was found to increase the chance of unethical behavior, largely due to corresponding thoughts of surety of being right by the one who is angry. Worry, on the other hand was associated with increases in ethical behavior. Ambiguity was also seen as a factor in EDM (Kimmelman, 2012). This author found that when studies were being reviewed for authorization by an institutional review board (IRB) bias was found on the part of the board if

they feared that their decisions might be scrutinized by the public. The author noted that the result was "an attention bias" when reviewing proposals seeking approval.

The importance of emotion is also seen in clinical practice. Entry level counselors are often characterized the difficulty of emotional regulation when working with a complex case. This was demonstrated in study by De Stefano, Atkins, Noble, & Heath (2012). They demonstrated the importance of emotional awareness as student interns worked with individuals that self-harm. The authors found that the intensity of emotion affected both the treatment provided by the interns, as well as the supervisory relationship.

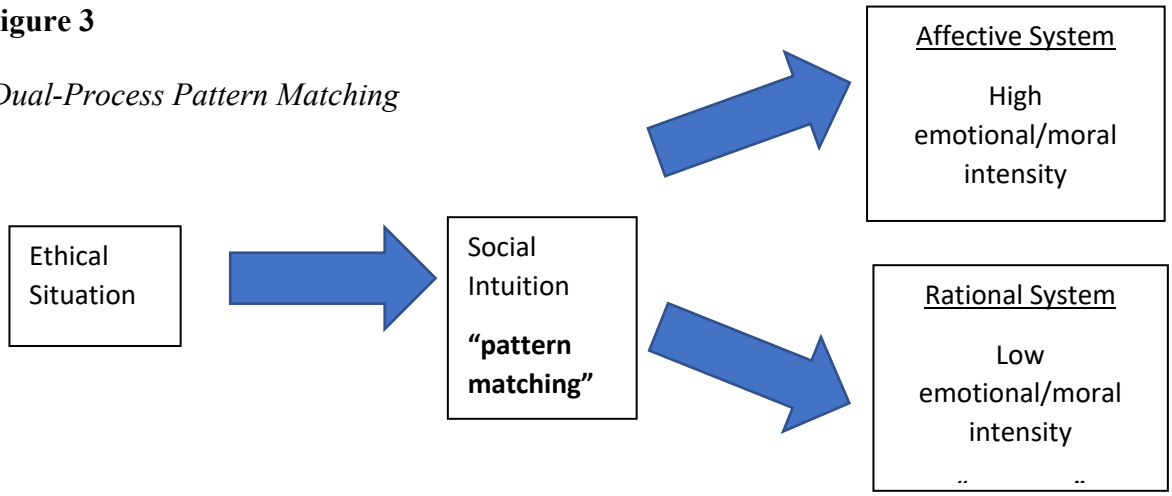
In describing social intuition theory, Haidt (2003) explains that ethical and moral situations induce moral emotions. These are feelings that are associated with, but not equal to other types of emotions, and are specifically the result of "affect-laden intuition." The distinction is made because moral emotions are linked to the interest of other individuals. These emotions inform the individual of moral salience, they facilitate deliberation, connect us with others and alert us when we may have acted immorally (Scekely & Miu, 2014). Scekely & Miu suggest that emotion allows the individual to prioritize the factors that are involved in ethical and moral factors that are part of conflict between varying opinions of what is right and proper.

Haidt's initial theory emphasized the centrality of social intuition in EDM. While current understanding sees EMD as an interaction of affective and rational processes, the primacy of EDM is emphatically focused on affective processes. These moral emotions are described as several types of emotions including self-conscious feelings (like shame, embarrassment, guilt), other condemning (like anger or disgust), and other suffering or other praising (like sympathy, compassion, gratitude, and awe).

Moral emotions are also characterized by the qualities of valence and arousal (Manfrinati, Lotto, Sarlo, Palomba, & Rumiati, 2013). Moral intensity is viewed as a result of these two factors and has been identified as an important factor in EDM (Cushman, Young, & Greene, 2010). Situations that produce high moral intensity are said to trigger an "alarm bell" reaction that serves to inform the individual that they are moving toward a significant deviation from a moral standard which is then processed through the affective system. Low intensity situations, on the other hand, are more likely to processed through a "currency like" process that occurs thought the rational system, usually using a cost analysis type approach to EDM. At low emotional intensity the rational system can engage to compare the pros and cons of available ethical options. The concept of moral emotions has been used to demonstrate how actions that result in the same consequence, like pushing someone in front of a train or turning a switch to change the directions of the train, result in the engagement of two distinct cognitive processes to resolve them. It is possible that the same ethical situation may result in two conflicting, but viable options, depending on the system used to process the situation.

Figure 3

Dual-Process Pattern Matching



This principle was illustrated by Feinberg, Willer, Antonenko, and John (2012). They found that by changing the way a question was asked could predict the moral processing pattern

used to resolve it. They a found that changing the wording in an ethical dilemma from "if it acceptable for a person to…. in order to" to a statement that reflected a more instrumental response like "is it acceptable for you to… in order to." Moral action and having to make a choice is associated with unpleasant feelings that a person may attempt to avoid.

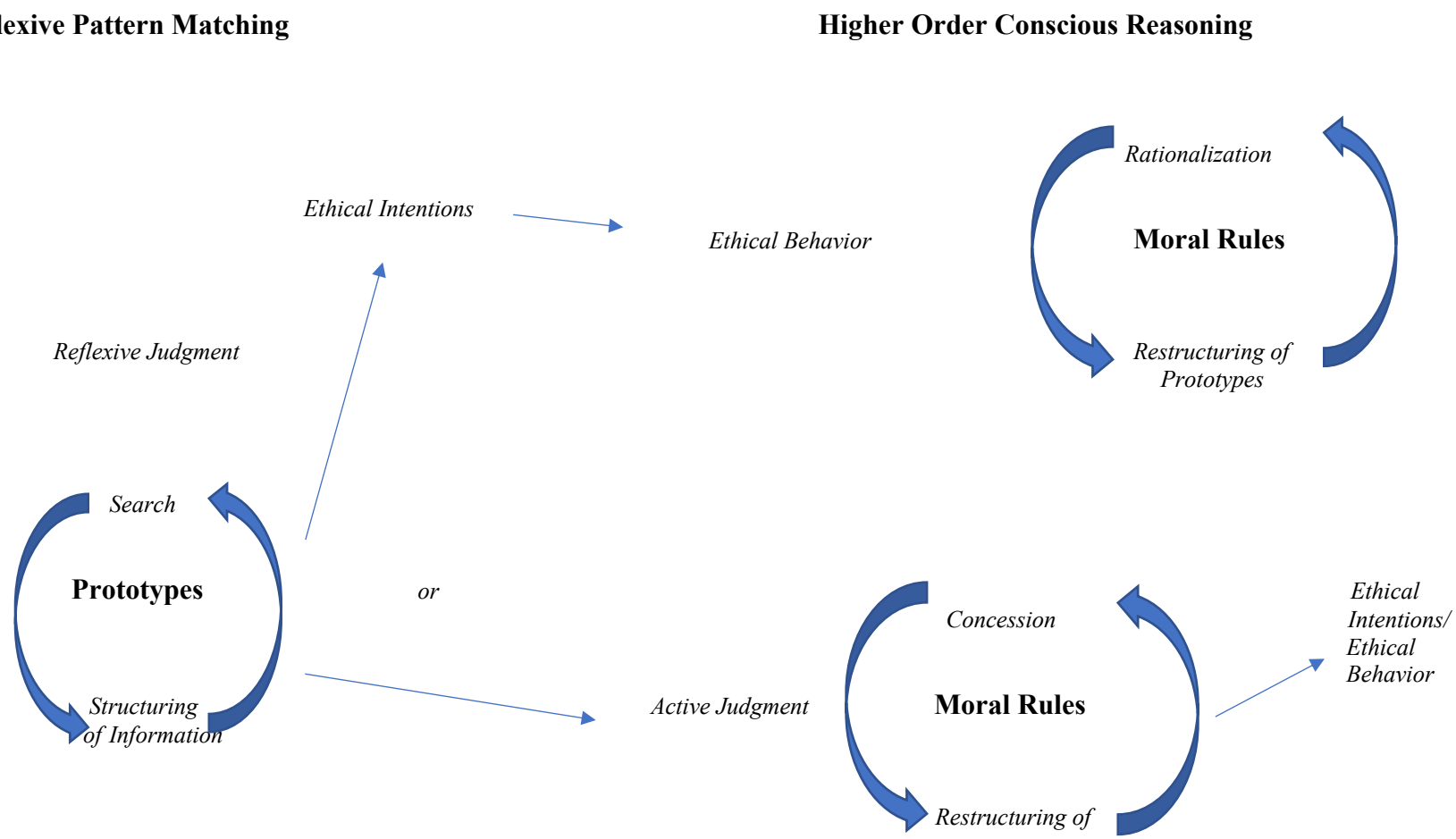
Dual-processes, one purpose

The dual-process model of moral decision making has been used to support both modernistic (Reynolds, 2006) and postmodern (Gergen, 2010) frameworks. In both views the affective and rational systems can be view as integrated and interactional. The model presented by Reynolds seems compatible with the assumptions inherent in principle ethics where reason dominates the process. Building on Haidt's model, Reynolds identifies affective processes as "system X" and rational processes as "system C." He identifies the primary brain structures in system X as the lateral temporal cortex, the amygdala, and the basal ganglia. Structures for system C include primarily the anterior cingulate, the prefrontal cortex, and the hippocampus.

Reynolds theorizes that the dual processes involved in ethical decision-making function through interaction. He views system X has having the primary role of pattern matching that resembles the social constructivist learning model developed by Piaget (Piaget, 1972) where understanding created through the processes of integration and accommodation. System C plays two important roles. The first is an analytical role. As the only system that is capable of rule-based reasoning, system X can apply rules in different contexts. The second role is an adaptive role which allows the individual to learn from experience. According to Reynold's model, decision making is generally guided through reflection and application of moral rules. See figure 4 below.

Figure 4

Reynold's neurocognitive model (Reynolds, 2006)



As previously expressed, the modern views of ethical decision making largely ignore factors outside of the individual. Theories that emphasize affective processes tend to emphasize the importance of developing a "thick and rich" understanding that goes beyond principle. With a greater understanding of the role of affective processes and associated moral emotions, the assumptions of reason's role have changed. While there was very little counseling related literature found that incorporates a dual-process model, it seems to provide a good biological foundation for constructionist and social constructionist ideas. A significant distinction between these approaches is the importance of the socially constructed nature of social intuition. Gergen (2010), for example, does not see reason as the foundation of ethical understanding. He views the function of the brain as directed primarily to support cultural process. It is seen less as a determinant of conduct.

From either of these two views, reason functions to regulate the affective system. Emotional regulation is a significant factor in EDM. While Reynolds explains that the rational process informs the affective system to develop prototypes, Campbell and Kumar (2012) contend that the affective system also informs the rational system through a process of "moral consistency." (Hansen, 2002; Greene et al. (2002) made clear that there is a growing appreciation for the complex interaction between affective processes and cognitive reasoning.

Constructed nature of truth

Epistemology describes understanding the nature of knowledge and to processes related to knowing (Hansen, 2002). Modern theories of education have focused on "mapping" of reality onto the mind of the learner. Behavioral and cognitive strategies are generally reductionist and when applied break down the truths that are presented into smaller concepts. There is a focus on

sequencing and pacing to help in the learning process. From a modern perspective, there tends to be a focus on learning objectives with less attention given to the individual learner.

Both constructivism and social constructivism have emerged as dominant theories about the nature of knowing. While these two concepts can be distinguished, they are intrinsically related (Castello, 2016). Both approaches adopt the same principle that "reality" is not an existing truth waiting to be discovered but is created through the process of construction. Each of these two constructs emphasize various aspects of what seems to be the same concept. They differ based on the emphasis placed on either the individual or the social context.

In the past few decades there has been a growing acceptance of a constructivist and social constructivist epistemology. As previously discussed, a trend toward postmodernism has resulted in suspicion of absolute truth and a growing consensus related to the socially constructed nature of what is accepted as knowledge (Hansen, 2002). These perspectives have provided an important postmodern view of consciousness and self-understanding. They seem to provide a perspective that is similar to gestalt psychology that posits that phenomenology consists of both micro and macro levels of understanding. An understanding of both are important to understand the whole. With this understanding, constructivist theory could be viewed as a micro view, whereas social constructivism would be illuminating the larger concept. A review of recent counseling literature seems to demonstrate general preference for the social constructivist concept as a model for the counseling profession. Each of these perspectives will be briefly discussed and then discussed in the context individual differences.

Autopoeisis and Constructivism

Humberto Maturana and his colleague Francisco Varela proposed a theory that was radically different than the rationalist theory of their time (Maturana & Varela, 1972).

Traditional theory about cognition usually posits that knowing is a process to acquire and use knowledge. Maturana and Varela introduced the idea that understanding was constructed by the individual through social interaction. Maturana's biological and Varela's cognitive theories introduced the idea that the nervous system developed, through the process of evolution, to collect knowledge about the environment and to use this knowledge to improve the chances of survival. In contrast to the modern view which insists that reality exists as a universal value outside of the person, Maturana and Varela proposed that reality is essentially constructed by the individual. They questioned both the nature of cognition and the role of the nervous system that was characteristic of the time.

Maturana created the term autopoiesis to describe what he considered to be the nature of any living system (Maturana & Varela, 1972). The quality of autopoiesis implies that living systems are always self-producing or self-organizing to maintain and renew themselves. Linda Beren (2013) extended this description to include transcendence as a quality of autopoiesis meaning the state of renewal transcends the self-organizing process, based on the nature of the system's unique characteristics, or differences. Fritjof Capra (from Beren, 2013) describes three key criteria for understanding the nature of autopoiesis. These include pattern, structure, and processes. While all three qualities are related, the entire system is organized to maintain the pattern.

Pattern is related to the configuration of the qualities that give a system an identity. Whether we can readily identify those qualities or not, the system is identified by those qualities and the lack of the quality would mean the system no longer existed. It is the configuration of relationships, or pattern of organization, that results in the system's identity. In explaining this process, Beren (2013) explains that a pattern is the central organizing system consisting of

unconscious “drivers” (p21) that maintain and hold the system together. As it applies to personality, values and beliefs are developed that are closely related to the core drivers. Processes evolve, that are based on the individual strengths, that are used to satisfy the needs of the core drivers. Lastly specific behaviors develop that both support the core driver and behaviors that address stressors that put the needs or the drivers at risk.

Patterns might be compared to a gestalt understanding of wholeness. The central principle of gestalt psychology is the belief that the mind creates a wholeness to which individual parts support. For example, mental health counseling can be considered a whole concept. It is composed of different professional groups who all have an identity that defines it as counseling, though its own development and history can be very diverse.

Structure, on the other hand is used to describe the physical components that embody the pattern. In Maturana’s (1988) research on the nature of color vision of frogs, he demonstrated that the frog’s brain does not process images directly but transforms them. This process has been compared to the process of recording sound onto a digital format. Maturana and Varela (1972) theorized that understanding is gained essentially in biological isolation, since the structure of our nervous system rarely has direct contact with the environment in which it interacts. It is the actual structures that introduce information from the environment. Based on this theory, each person is living system and the components of this system operate to maintain the essential nature of the system. For this study, an exploration of how our constructive realities might vary based on the different cognitive structures used to construct them. This is a central question being tested in this study is how differences in structure, like differences in personality, might be a factor in specific processes, like habituation toward a specific dilemma resolution

strategy. From this position the counselor will have an ethical obligation to recognize that the clinical realities they face are theoretically endless (Guterman, 2013).

In this study, individual difference is studied to explore its relationship to coping strategies that are engaged in ethical when resolving ethical dilemmas. If individuals present varying kinds and degrees of cognitive structures their experience with the same ethical situations may differ. For example, a story was told of a philanthropist who want to raise awareness and support to reduce hunger in Africa. The story goes that he was an excellent photographer and snapped pictures that provoked a deep sense of the despair of the people and the gravity of the need. He completed his work and began to show the pictures to various groups. One picture seemed especially heart breaking. It was a picture of a young boy, whose eyes expressed the hopelessness of the situation. Responding to this picture a member of the group asked the question, "what did you do?" The philanthropist began to explain the technicalities of angles and light but was interrupted by the same man who expressed "no, I mean what did you do about the boy." The philanthropist responded, "I didn't do anything. I only saw the picture."

Unlike rational traditionalists, Manturana & Varela (1972) challenge the basic assumption that objective knowledge can be assumed. They argue that, due to the closed nature of the nervous system, anything that is known is the product of self-reflection. The environment is said to be able to trigger processes in the system, but change will result because of the nature of the structure of that system, and not due to interaction with the environment. He identifies these triggers as perturbations. This is a basic principle in type theory. If a couple, one who has an extrovert orientation and the other introvert, receives an invitation to party they are likely to have two different responses. The first may be very energized and begins to prioritize the event,

trying to think of other events that might conflict and need to be changed. The person with an introvert orientation, on the other hand may begin to have questions emerge in their conscious such as how many people will be there? How long is will they have to stay? Who will be there? The same environmental trigger is seen to trigger different responses based on the underlying cognitive structure of each person. The ability of something in the environment to ever become a perturbation will depend on the needs and the structure of the system (Mingers, 1991).

Maturana and Varela (1972) was used the term "structural coupling" to explain how a system can adjust to the environment despite its independence from the environment. The theory explains that the structure has the capacity to change and organize itself around the environment. The system may be coupled with other systems in a way that each become a trigger for the other. Maturana explains this process as the basis of language and shared meaning and would seem to be a conceptual bridge between constructivism and social constructivism.

Maturana's (Maturana & Varela, 1972) own application and conclusions of his theory are complicated, have been considered controversial and outside the scope of this review. Some have used the term "radical constructivism" to describe his theory. Their theory basically implies that the nature of one's sense of self and how one understands the environment will be determined, not by someone explaining the environment or otherwise mapping a representation of that environment into the individual. Understanding is the result of the self-system in response to the triggers or "perturbations" in the environment. This can explain why different individuals can experience the same situation but not any in the same way. What is known is based on a reorganization of the system to adjust to the perturbation, based on its own autopoeisis. The individual changes due to interaction with the environment, but the individual also triggers change with other living systems with which it encounters in social interaction. In

this way, all understanding is said to be constructed through social interaction. As stated previously, a major focus of this study is to explore individual difference in personality as a factor in this process.

Language and communication are central to both constructivism and social constructivism. A central theme of postmodern ethics is the assumption of relationship and connection. Proponents of social constructivism have criticized constructivist as being "locked in a box" (Cottone, 2001). While they tend to reject constructivism on this basis, they do not seem to offer an alternative view of how this process functions. Based on a review of literature the idea of structural coupling seems to be a reasonable explanation if it is considered an evolutionary process. Despite being closed systems, people have devised ways to communicate and connect. A Newsweek article from 2008 ran a story of Senator John McCain's experience in captivity in Vietnam (McCain, 2008). The senator says that during captivity prisoners spent most of their time in isolation. He described the need that each prisoner to find ways to reach out, connect and communicate. A system of taps of the walls was developed to facilitate this communication. Through these taps the prisoners could trade information and provide support to one another. Through the course of human history symbols, tools and language have developed and become so integrated that they are largely unconscious.

Social Contructivism

Guterman (2008) distinguished between constructivist and social constructivist ways of creating meaning. He views constructivism as a model in which each person is essentially "trapped in a box" of their own experience creating individual meaning in isolation from the world. Conversely, social constructivism is viewed as a process that constructs meaning through the interaction of individuals though the use of language and argues that social constructivism is

better suited for the counseling profession. A significant reason provided by Guterman for the preference of a social constructivist position is its emphasis that social constructivism is its failure to assign pathology directly to the client. His point was demonstrated in a study examined counselor-in-training student's responses to questions based on the label "the mentally ill" versus "people with mental illness" (Granello & Gibbs, 2016). In this study, the authors found that trainee's tolerance toward persons with psychiatric disabilities was affected by the label used to describe them. This underscores the importance of current efforts to promote "person-first" language as an ethical concern.

Lyddon (1995) had previously made the same argument that placing the individual as the cause of pathology tends to lose sight of other social or contextual factors that may play a role in the problem. Lyddon accepted that schema is created at both the individual and social level but believes that a social based dynamic better account for how phenomena are understood. He expressed his thought that the primary source of knowledge is the capacity for imagination and creativity and that it is created primarily through the shared use of language, myth, metaphor, narrative, and other symbolic means (p.581). Thomas (1996) also expressed his belief in the centrality of context in understanding stating, "counselors need to understand the ways in which their client's problems arise from systemic forces within the political and economic structure and the extent to which problems in personal relations are reflections of broader political problems such as sexism, ageism, or racism, which are endemic to the system itself." (p.534).

Integration

Other literature seems to promote an integration of constructivism and social constructivism. Castello (2016) argues that each approach is based on the epistemological assumptions that reality is not revealed but constructed. Both Guterman (2008) and Lyddon

(1996) stress the importance of social constructivism and share the view that changing the focus of pathology from the individual to other outside factor facilitates counseling practice. However, Castello suggests that there is much understanding that is lost in the elimination of either perspective being discarded.

Castello (2016) makes the point that both positions focus on the use of language but says that language has two purposes. One is to represent reality. The other is to make sense of reality within the social context. He further makes the point that individuals differ in the degree language is used at from either perspective, at any given time.

The individual in EDM

From the position of a philosophy of science, this project is intended to build on and support a postmodern framework. While individual difference was specifically rejected as a factor in ethical decision making from a modern perspective, postmodern literature is mostly silent about the place of the individual in EDM. While it is acknowledged (Gergen, 2001) it is usually from the shadow of social constructivism. The purpose of this section is to suggest how the consideration of individual factors may support the hard-core assumptions of a postmodern framework, as well as adding to the axillary theories of social intuition, constructivism and social constructivism. The primary question of this study is whether individual differences in personality trait, as identified by the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II are associated with differences in levels of emotional intensity and resulting coping strategies to manage these feelings. Recent discoveries in cognitive neuroscience have found that affective processes have been identified as principal factors in EDM. Individual and social differences have been largely ignored or minimize in traditional approaches to ethical training. Trait theory (Keirsey, 1998;

Berens, 2013) introduces the idea that differences in perception and judgment may affect these areas.

More recent epistemologies seem to reject this premise and propose that truth is constructed through social interaction (Gergen & Gergen, 2011; Cottone, 2001; Guterman, 2007). While there is extensive literature that addresses social constructivism, the implications of these new understandings on the role of individual differences in EDM seems to be largely ignored in recent ethical theory development or research.

Rational for considering individual difference in EDM

With some notable exceptions (Narvaez, 2010) the place of the individual in ethical research seems largely ignored or overshadowed by sociocultural factors. In reviewing literature for this study, very few studies were found that focused on individual differences and none were found that addressed the effect of personality factors and EDM. Even with the assumption of the primacy of social interaction from a postmodern view, the importance of "personal domain" has been discussed as important since individuals bring their differences, constructed realities and histories with them into these social interactions (Wendt, Cheers, Francis, & Lonne, 2012). This current project is intended to introduce and begin a discussion of this component.

The introduction of feminist theory has provided needed perspective to humanize ethical practice. Gilligan's (1977) ground-breaking theory forcefully insisted that traditional ethics were in no way universal, but rather reflected a dominant group bias. What is more, the assumption of universal truth resulted in some groups as deviant or deficient because they did not fit the ethical model of the time (Vasquez & Eldridge, 1994). While arguing the importance of understanding

conveying the complex experiences of women, ethnic minorities, individuals with disabilities and those who differ based on gender, Vasquez and Eldridge caution against treating statistical group differences as categories asserting that "differences among individuals within any group is always greater than differences between groups" (pp. 9-10). They embrace the idea that understanding of these groups are better understood by focusing on the individual lives and experiences rather than understanding from statistical inference.

While classification of individuals into groups is a common feature from a modern perspective, a postmodern perspective difference is used to identify differences in processes, not merely to classify (Caine & Caine, 1990). Caine & Caine emphasized the importance of individual difference in education by bringing attention to the importance of individual physical brain structures in the learning process, specifically understanding how the brain works in learning. They identified multiple principles that are important in the learning process but emphasize that each brain if different and will manage these processes differently, based on the individual structure of that brain. In addition, they encourage educators to consider the way students learn in the education process and avoid teaching strategies that are "brain antagonistic."

Individual difference has been introduced as a crucial factor in education and may be a key factor in EDM, especially related to counseling development. As mentioned, Caine & Caine's theory suggest that an understanding of the nature of the learning brain, including the consideration of its complexity, its social nature, and the importance of patterning in the construction of meaning is essential. Of interest to this study are two principles that will be discussed in relation to constructivism and social constructivism. The first is that each brain is unique. An understanding of how individuals learn best will presumably improve learning.

Also, understanding is improved when learning is contextually embedded. It would seem helpful to integrate much of what is readily accepted in education to the development of counselors who can practice beyond codes and principles.

Lastly, recent decision-making models have acknowledged that, in spite of social-contextual factors that affect ethical intuition, it is the individual who is tasked to make ethical judgments. An exceptional integrative model is the Tarvydas integrative model (Cottone & Tarvydas, 2007). The model is a four-step model that considers considerations from principle, virtue, and relational ethics. Within these steps the importance of weighing blind spots and prejudices is identified as a significant factor. As will be discussed, failure to account for preferred styles of perception and processing of information are a type of blind spot, either through not noticing or discounting ethically valuable information.

Current applications of the postmodern approach within social services have identified individual difference as an important characteristic for quality care. Recent paradigm shifts in community mental health have called for a "recovery model" that emphasizes the identification of strengths and resources that are available to help an individual reach goals that they, themselves identify as important (Gehart, 2012). As an extension of the principle, it is suggested that counselors approach the practice of counseling, both from a socially constructive view of the profession, and also from the unique individual differences that each counselor takes into these encounters.

Typologies

Discussion of individual difference is generally related to the study of typologies. There have been several ways that have been used to distinguish these types. Many in the field of education have used adopted type strategies to improve teaching outcomes. Specifically, Gardener (2011) introduced the theory of "multiple intelligence" to underscores student strength in the learning process. Kolb (1974) suggested that learners would benefit if educational strategies would integrate students' identified "learning style." Likewise, cognitive style, decision-making styles, and various other learning styles have been introduced for consideration as well (Kozhevnikov, 2007).

This study will focus on differences in personality traits and their possible effect on EDM. Type systems are classification systems. Personality types are used to explain how individuals make sense of the world and provide a way to describe differing subjective perspectives (Berens, 2013). Personality type was chosen because it seems to align theoretically with the constructs of this study, namely that people differ in how they perceive the world and others (perception) and how they process these encounters (judgment). Beebe (2016) emphasizes that these assessments do not describe distinct types of people, they describe different processes that are used to make sense of the world.

Personality type assessments have been developed based on the work of Carl Jung (Beebe, 2016). Jung, being a student of Freud, based his theory from a psychodynamic understanding of how distinct factors of consciousness and unconsciousness affect the individual ego. For Jung, types represent types of consciousness or individual orientations used by the individual's ego to construct one's inner and outer reality. For Jung, the use of these traits were

important to individual in order to maximize functioning in the world and to have greater access to consciousness that emerges from the unconscious.

Jung originally identified four primary functions of consciousness, sensing, thinking, feeling and intuition. Thinking and feeling were viewed as rational processes. The dimension of feeling is not viewed as affect as much as a process that form "cognitive links" (Beebe, 2016, p. 147). Sensation and intuition are viewed as irrational process as the "deliver our hunches to us" (p.147). Jung's use of the use of the word "irrational" is better understood as "immediate and without mediation" rather than without reason (Pilard, 2015). This irrational process seems to foreshadow the identification of the affective cognitive processes by Haidt (2001).

Berens (2013) explains that most measures of personality trait are similar but differ in their underlying assumptions. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), for example assesses traits as polar opposites that see the cognitive qualities as competing. It functions as an "either, or" typology where each quality is its own separate class or category. The other approach is to view types as patterns, or "an organizing plan."

The central question of this study was whether or not individual differences, specifically personality traits, as defined by the Kiersey Temperament Sorter II (KTSII) are associated with differences in levels of emotional intensity, as well as the coping strategies that are used to help to manage these affective processes, when confronting moral dilemmas. While affect and social context have been largely ignored or minimized in modern ethical theory (Kohlberg, 1971), it is central to postmodern ethics. Recent discoveries in cognitive neuroscience have shown that affective processes are not only important, but "affect-laden intuitions" are proposed as the primary factor in EDM, with reason serving to provide post hoc support. Trait theory (Keirsey,

1998; Berens, 2013) introduces the idea that differences in perception and judgment may affect this process, as well as subsequent ethical and moral judgment.

Potential for individual differences to be used to develop expertise in ethical practice

As previously discussed, aspirational ethics from a postmodern perspective advances the idea that ethical decision-making move beyond the application of principle (Remley & Herlihy, 2016). An appreciation for individual difference would seem to be a key factor as counseling theory moves in a direction where the counselor becomes part of the client's narrative. Traditional counseling theory and practice that emphasized boundary, distance, autonomy and authority are changing and the counselor is both part of the change process as well as affected by this process. Factors of relationship, connection, shared power, authenticity are have emerged as principal issues in the therapeutic process and will likely require new areas of development to practice effectively. Consideration of type might be helpful when considering this development. For example, Scekely & Miu (2014) were able to demonstrate that differences in habituated responses in emotional regulation were related to specific types of resolutions used to resolve moral dilemmas. An understanding of type is this situation allows the counselor to address "blind spots" that may be present when a preferred coping strategy is used. An awareness of self in context will likely continue need to be addressed, as well as the impact of individual difference in this process.

It has been suggested that competency in any area is achieved through development of multiple "lines of development" that are associated with the competency (Wilber in Foster & Black, 2007). The assumption of individual difference might imply that individuals will experience these lines of development differently. Application of individual difference to

development of ethical competence might imply that development may not be a linear process and that progress among various lines of development might be affected by distinctive characteristics of the counselor. For example, if the lines of development for postmodern ethics included multicultural competence, the capacity for mutual empathy, and the development of reliable ethical intuition development through these lines will depend on the characteristics of the counselor. Development along the line mutual empathy may seem natural for those who are naturally social but may be a challenge to those who are not. In this way the experience of development, though moving in the same direction, will vary based on individual difference.

Narvaez (2010) proposed that individuals differ, not only in their commitment to ethical practice, but also in terms of developmental level. She describes three levels or stages of moral development that are used when under stress. The first level is defined as "bunker ethics" that operates on "security ethics." At this level decisions tend to be focused on self-interest, making empathy and compassion difficult. Narvaez expressed that a person at the novice, or bunker level would be more likely triggered the security ethic when under stress. This seems consistent with Staltenberg and Delworth's (1998) Integrated Developmental Model (IDM) of supervision that characterizes novice counselors who tend to be self-focused resulting in general feelings of anxiety and fear and requiring high levels of clinical supervision.

As the professional develops increased levels of expertise, they begin to demonstrate increased security, a stable sense of motivation, are able to balance empathy and objectivity, and demonstrate higher levels of authenticity (Hayes, Corey, & Moulton, 2003). Narvaez(2010) characterize expertise as "imagination ethics." At this level, the counselor has greater ability to adapt to social relationships and to "see beyond the immediate." It allows the professional to

envision alternative to what currently exists and make plans to move toward desired outcome (i.e. change the narrative).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between individual differences, the processes used in ethical decision making, and the level of emotional intensity experienced among individuals who work in rehabilitation, mental health, and other social service-related areas. Individual differences can include differences in personality, years of experience, and level of education or many other factors. Of interest to this study was the effect that differences in personality type and the processes used to manage ethical situations might have on the intensity of emotion experienced when resolving ethical situations.

Participant Recruitment and Sample Size

This survey study was intended to describe and explore the relationship of variables. Survey research is an approach that attempts to understand characteristics of a larger population from a given sample (Creswell, 2014). It is one of the most common methods used in social science research due to its feasibility, both in cost and time (Bellini & Rumrill, 1999). The current survey was developed and administered using an online survey program Qualtrics.

Qualtrics is a survey and data collection tool used for facilitating the creation, distribution, and analysis of surveys. (http://its.georgiasouthern.edu/lts/other-services/qualtrics/)

The study utilized a quantitative approach that incorporates a correlational design. A correlational design is used to examine relationships between two or more variables. It used a cross-sectional sample that will be gathered over a relatively brief period. This approach does not attempt to manipulate the variables in the study in any way. The general framework of the investigation assumed a social constructivist epistemology.

Site and Participation Selection

This study attempted to recruit individuals who work, or who are preparing to work, in rehabilitation, mental health, education, and/or other social service settings. A mixed sampling method, using chain sampling, opportunistic sampling and convenience sampling was used (Creswell, 2013). The focus of the sampling methods was chosen to obtain the greatest number of participants within the time constraints of this study. Chain sampling is a strategy that will use existing professional contacts to identify others who may be willing to participate in this project. Likewise, opportunistic sampling was used to take advantage of unexpected contacts that may occur during the data gathering phase of this study. Both chain sampling and opportunistic sampling were used by making intentional contact with professional colleagues, as well as seeking opportunities to promote participation in local continuing education workshops. Lastly, convenience sampling was used.

Power analysis was used to determine a sample size of 75. It is derived from a consideration of an α level of .05, a β level of .80, and an effect size of .80 (Soper, 2020). Power analysis provides a basis for determining a sample size large enough to avoid type II errors of failing to reject a null hypothesis when it is false.

Data Collection Procedures

An electronic version of the survey was developed and included an introductory page that was to be read prior to starting the instrument. This introduction provided brief information about the nature of the study, the number of questions, the amount of time needed to complete the responses, and issues related to confidentiality. Participants were asked to complete the responses and then check off a statement as to whether they would allow their responses included in the study. An affirmation was considered consent for the study.

Electronic data wassecured in the password protected network at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. No identifying data was collected and no attempt to contact participants will be made. A specific numeric specifier was used to separate participants and did not include information that could be tied back to the participant.

Variables and Instrumentation

The first independent variable (numerical) to be used was personality traits as measured by the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II (KTSII) (Keirsey, 1998). The instrument results in a categorical variable that is based on the four dimensions of personality that are measured (Introvert/Extrovert, Intuiting/Sensing, Thinking/Feeling, and Judging and Perceiving) , resulting in 16 scores that theoretically describe how an individual perceives and processes information about the world around them. Per Keirsey's conceptualization of personality type, these 16 scores are further categorized into the four personality types of Artisan (ESTP, ISFP, ISTP, ESFP), Guardian (ESTJ, ISFJ, ISTJ, ESFJ), Idealist (ENFJ, INFP, INFJ, ENFP), and Rational

(ENTJ, INTP, INTJ, ENTP). Allan Chapman (2017) provides a simplified matrix to describe the basic differences between each type. This summary is provided in Table 4.

Table 4

Keirsey Temperament Sorter II Personalities

Artisan	Guardians	Idealist	Rational
ESTP	ESTJ	ENFJ	ENTJ
ISTP	ISTJ	INFJ	INTJ
ESFP	ESFJ	ENFP	ENTP
ISFP	ISFJ	INFP	INTP

E = Extrovert, I = Introvert, S = Sensing, N = Intuition, F = Feeling, T = Thinking, P = Perceiving and J = Judging

Table 5

Keirsey's Four Personality Types

Artisan Says what is, Does what works	**Rationalist** Says what's possible, Does what works
Guardian Says what is, Does what's right	**Idealist** Says what's possible, Does what's right

Chapman (2017)

The KTSII attempts to measure the same variable as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) but varies from the MBTI on the underlying assumptions of its use, as was described earlier in this study (Berens, 2013). The predecessor, the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (KTS)

had been completed by more than 6 million people (August 2003 figure) (Dodd & Bayne, 2007). Internal reliability for the subscales were found to be E-I .78, S-N .79, T-F .70, and J-P .73 and are considered "adequate for research" (p. 80). For this study the internal reliability, Cronbach's alphas for the subscales were as follows: E-I .77, S-N .50, T-F. 58, and J-P .67. A limitation of the KTSII is a high instance of even scores that failed to fully indicate type. Six individual trait scores or sensing, intuiting, thinking, feeling, judging, and perceiving will be used as predictor variables for this study. Introvert and extrovert scales were not used because they were not viewed as significant factors in defining personality type (Keisey, 1998).

A separate analysis was conducted using coping strategies as the predictor variable. The Cognitive Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ) is an instrument that is designed to describe how individuals use emotional regulation to manage difficult situations. This instrument is described as a "multidimensional questionnaire constructed to identify the emotion regulation strategies (or cognitive coping strategies) someone uses after having experienced negative events or situations" (Garnefski & Kraaij, 2015, para. 1). This instrument yields a numeric score that corresponds with distinct types of habituated coping strategies used when facing a dilemma. The strategies identified are self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocus, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective, catastrophizing, and blaming others. Strategies of rumination, self-blame, catastrophizing, have been shown to be related to reports of emotional problems (anxiety and depression) (Garnefski & Kraaif, 2007). Measures of reliability were found to be acceptably high with none of the Cronbach's αs were below .75. Initial subscales ranged from .75 to .86 and .75 to .87 when followed up. Test-retest reliability was found to be adequate to good after one year with values ranging from .24 and .42.

For this study, two numeric scores were compiled from the scores that are rendered in the CERQ and were labeled as positive coping strategies and negative coping strategies. They are considered as positive and negative based on the general assumptions of Cognitive Behavioral theory that certain thinking patterns are positive because they tend to promote more satisfying emotional states or negative because of their association with feeling so distress (Beck, 2011). A positive coping score resulted from a summation of scores on acceptance, positive refocus, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, and putting into perspective. Negative coping scores were considered the sum of the scores for self-blame, rumination, catastrophizing, and blaming others. For this research, the Cronbach's alpha for the CERQ scale was .73.

The dependent variable (numeric) is emotional intensity which will be considered a self-report, Likert scale response that is intended to measure perceptions of emotional intensity that would be experienced in response to several ethical dilemmas or situations. As a Likert scale the resulting variable will be numerical score (1 = no emotional intensity in the least; 2 = would result in minimal level of emotional intensity; 3 = would result in mild level of emotional intensity; 4 = would result in moderate level of emotional intensity; 5 = would result in moderately high level of emotional intensity; 6 = would result in high level of emotional intensity; and 7 = would result in extreme emotional intensity). Respondents were provided a definition of emotional intensity (an intuition that there is an ethical situation that needs to be addressed) and then asked to rate the level of emotional intensity resulting from having to resolve the following situations:

- You are working with a person who is a different gender than you and some aspect of the person's gender is brought up as a clinical issue or problem.
- You are working with someone whose political views are different that yours and some aspect of their political affiliation or belief is brought up as a clinical issue or problem.

- You are working with someone who discloses that they are involved in human trafficking.
- You are working with someone who discloses that they have been having thoughts of suicide by shooting themselves. The individual says that he has a gun that belongs to his brother in the home.
- You are working with someone whose family says has been increasingly symptomatic. He reportedly has been talking to himself, has been paranoid, a believes his mother is trying to poison him. When asked, the client says he is tired of his mediation and will be OK if everyone would leave him alone. He says marijuana is all he needs to treat his symptoms. He denies problems.
- You are working with someone who says that she has discovered that her brother-in-law has been downloading child pornography.
- You discover that a friend and co-worker from your agency has been dating a client with whom you are providing services.
- A client with whom you are providing services informs you that his wife has started providing babysitting services for your supervisor.

The Cronbach's alpha for the EI scale for this study was .82

Research Questions

Question #1: What is the effect of counselor/counselor-in-training personality traits on emotional intensity when responding to an ethical situation?

H_0: There is no relationship between personality trait scores on KTSII and scores for emotional intensity.

Question #2: What are the effects of counselor/counselor-in-training emotional regulation styles on emotional intensity when responding to an ethical situation?

H_0: There is no relationship between summed scores from the CERQ for positive and negative coping strategies and reported levels of emotional intensity.

Question #3 What is the relationship between personality factors and emotional regulation styles?

H_o: There is no relationship between KTSII scores of intuition, sensing, thinking, feeling, judging perceiving and combined CERQ scores for positive and negative coping.

Data analysis procedures

Research Questions 1 and 2.

Multiple regression was used to evaluate both research questions. Multiple regression is a parametric procedure that will permit several measures of individual difference to be measured in one omnibus test (Warner, 2013). The assumptions of this method include independent observations, absence of multiple collinearity, absence of outliers, homoscedasticity, and linearity and will be addressed in course of the research.

Research Question 3.

A Pearson product-moment correlation test (Pearson *r*) was used to evaluate the relationship between each of the predictor variables in the study. Correlation is a statistical analysis used to relationships between two variables (Rovai, Baker, & Ponton, 2014). The procedure is intended to identify the strength and directions of any combination of variables in the study

Summary including bracketing

All analysis was conducted using SPSS, version 25 software. The primary researcher has been a licensed professional counselor since 1997 with specific interest in counselor preparation

and ethics. He has practiced as a counselor in various settings including academics, private practice, and community mental health. He is currently working with a mobile crisis outreach team, whose primary focus is responding to acute mental health crisis.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND SUMMARY

The goal of this study was to evaluate relationships that may exist between individual differences, coping strategies, and emotional intensity. The study utilized a non-experimental, correlational design. An online survey was used for data collection. A series of regression studies were used to evaluate the relationship between the independent variables that are associated with personality traits in the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II (KTSII) and coping strategies that are identified through the Cognitive Emotional Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ) with scores of emotion intensity. The independent variables related to the KTS II include scores for intuition, sensing, thinking, feeling, judging, and perceiving. Independent variable related to the CERQ include self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocus, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective, catastrophizing, and blaming others.

Data was collected until an appropriate sample size could be obtained, which was about 7 months. This process was slower than anticipated. A mixed sampling method, using chain sampling, opportunistic sampling and convenience sampling was used.

The study also presents a summary of demographic characteristics of the study participants, the results of a correlation matrix using the Pearson Product Moment correlation, and a series of multiple regressions using stepwise methods of regression. To better understand

the relationship between individual factor of personality, coping strategies, and emotional intensity, the following research questions were used:

Question #1: What is the effect of counselor/counselor-in-training personality traits on emotional intensity when responding to an ethical situation?

Question #2: What are the effects of counselor/counselor-in-training emotional regulation styles on emotional intensity when responding to an ethical situation?

Question #3 What is the relationship between personality factors and emotional regulation styles?

To evaluate and answer these questions a quantitative research methodology was used to study these relationships. The first section will initially discuss the demographics and characteristics of the participants in the study. The next section will present data to answer the first two research questions concerning individual difference in personality, coping strategies, and emotional intensity using a series of multiple regressions to evaluate possible relationships. The last section will discuss the data of the Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficients.

Demographics

IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 25 (SPSS) was used to compile and compute the following data. There were 99 responses to participate in survey, but 25 respondents did not complete the survey. 74 surveys were considered for analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

Participants who responded ranged in age from 18 to 87. Table 5 presents the frequency and percentages for age.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistic: Age

	Frequency	*Percent*
18-29	*14*	*18.9*
30-39	*17*	*23.0*
40-49	*7*	*9.5*
50-59	*16*	*21.6*
60-87	*20*	*27.0*
Total	*74*	*100*

63.5% (N=47) identified as female, 32.4% (N=24) as male, and 4.2% (N=3) as other, or did not respond. Table 6 presents the frequency and percentages for gender identification.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistic: Gender

	Frequency	*Percent*
Female	*47*	*63.5*
Male	*24*	*32.4*
Other, no response	*3*	*4.2*
Total	*74*	*100*

The participants represented several fields of service including rehabilitation, faith-based, agency, private practice, student and other. Table 7 summarizes frequency of fields of services that were reported.

Table 8

Descriptive Statistic: Field of Service

	Frequency	*Percent*
Rehabilitation	*13*	*17.6*
Mental Health	*18*	*24.3*
Education	*12*	*16.2*
Substance Abuse	*8*	*10.8*
Other Social Services	*2*	*2.7*
Other non-Social Services	*21*	*28.4*
Total	*74*	*100*

Participants identified working in 6 work settings. These included non-profit, faith-based, agency, private practice, student, and other. These frequencies are included in Table 8 below:

Table 9

Descriptive Statistic: Work Setting

	Frequency	*Percent*
Non-profit	*15*	*20.3*
Faith-based	*1*	*21.6*
Agency	*15*	*20.3*
Private practice	*5*	*6.8*
Student	*7*	*9.5*
Other	*31*	*41.9*
Total	*74*	*100*

Participants were also asked to identify the primary license or certificate, if any, that they primarily use in their current positions. Those who responded included Licensed Social Workers, Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselors, Certified Rehabilitation Counselors, Qualified Mental Health Professionals, and Other license or certificate, and no license or certificate. Table 9 summarizes responses for identified license or certificate.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistic: License

	Frequency	*Percent*
Licensed Social Worker	*2*	*2.7*
Licensed Professional Counselor	*8*	*10.8*
Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor	*6*	*8.1*
Certified Rehabilitation Counselor	*1*	*1.4*
Qualified Mental Health Professional	*9*	*12.2*
Other License or Certificate	*11*	*15.3*
No License or Certificate	*35*	*47.3*
Missing/Did not respond	*2*	*2.7*
Total	*74*	*100*

Lastly, four different personality types were identified in the study. Based on theory previously discussed, each participant was placed in a specific personality type group based on their scores on the KTS II. Each personality type differs with respect to how they receive and process information in making decisions. Table 10 provides frequencies for these groups.

Table 11

Descriptive Statistics: Personality Type

	Frequency	*Percent*
Intuitive Feeler	*6*	*8.1*
Intuitive Thinker	*3*	*4.1*
Sensing Judger	*55*	*74.4*
Sensing Perceiver	*10*	*13.5*
Total	*74*	*100*

Variables

In the first multiple regression analysis, the predictor variables were the total scores for each dimension of personality measured on the KTS II – Intuiting (X1), Sensing (X2), Thinking (X3), Feeling (X4), Judging (X5), Perceiving (X6). The criterion variable, Emotional Intensity (Y), consisted of the combined scores from participant responses to perceived stress that they might experience if faced with various clinical situations.

The second multiple regression analysis included predictor variables were the result of combining all scores associated with positive coping strategies (X1) and those that were associated with negative coping strategies (X2). Again, the criterion variable was Emotional Intensity. Table11 provides descriptive statistics including the mean and standard deviation of N=74 participant.

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics for Identified Variables

	N	*Mean*	*Std. Deviation*
Positive Coping Skills	*74*	*61.73*	*12.83*
Negative Coping Skills	*74*	*34.00*	*9.07*
Sensing	*74*	*13.43*	*3.21*
Intuiting	*74*	*6.57*	*3.21*
Thinking	*74*	*9.28*	*4.17*
Feeling	*74*	*10.72*	*4.17*
Judging	*74*	*13.73*	*3.75*
Perceiving	*74*	*6.27*	*3.75*
Emotional Intensity	*74*	*21.92*	*4.97*

Research Question #3: Pearson product moment correlations analysis

A Pearson Product Moment correlation analysis was used to evaluate relationships between the variables in the study to answer research question 3 Is there a relationship between personality traits identified by scores on the KTSII (intuition, sensing, thinking, feeling, judgment, perception), coping strategies identified by the CERQ (self-blame, acceptance, rumination, positive refocus, refocus on planning, positive reappraisal, putting into perspective, catastrophizing, and blaming others)? A correlation is a summary of the linear relationship between any two variables. Table 12 shows the results of these individual correlations. While there are significant relationships found within the variables associated with personality type, the analysis did not identify any significant relationship between variables related to personality traits, coping strategies, and emotional intensity.

Table 13

Correlation Matrix: Personality Traits and Coping Styles

	Positive Coping	*Negative Coping*	*Sensing*	*Intuiting*	*Thinking*	*Feeling*	*Judging*	*Perceiving*	*Emotional Intensity*
Positive Coping				-					
Negative Coping	*.228*								
Sensing	*.074*	*-.213*							
Intuiting	*-.074*	*.213*	*-1.00***						
Thinking	*-1.32*	*-.160*	*.264**	*-.264**					
Feeling	*.132*	*.160*	*-.264**	*.264**	*-1.00***				
Judging	*-.025*	*.012*	*.411***	*-.411***	*.357***	*-.357***			
Perceiving	*.025*	*-.012*	*-.411***	*.411***	*-.357*	*.357***	*-1.00*		
Emotional Intensity	*-.068*	*.133*	*-.042*	*.042*	*-.168*	*.168*	*.154*	*-.154*	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

Research Questions #1 and #2: Multiple Regression Analysis

Testing of Assumptions

Several assumptions are essential and must be tested when using a multiple regression analysis. Violation of these assumptions have the potential to result in Type I or Type II errors. First, multiple linear regression requires the relationship between the independent and dependent variables to be linear. Likewise, a multiple regression analysis assumes that each variable is independent and there must be evidence of homoscedasticity, in which the variances in all y distributions are equal. Lastly there must be an absence of strong correlations between the predictor variables, or collinearity (Kachigan,1991).

The linearity assumption was tested with scatterplots which showed no evidence of a curvilinear relationship. Tests for collinearity were also performed to ensure that each variable are providing unique information to the analysis. Tables 13 and 14 summarize the results of checks for collinearity. The analysis identifies tolerance that is the proportion of one variable that is not accounted for by another. Normally the variable is dropped if less that the cutoff level. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) reflects the presence or absence of multicollinearity. No problems with multicollinearity were identified.

Table 14

Collinearity Statistics – Positive Coping and Negative Coping

	Tolerance	*VIF*
Positive Coping	*.948*	*1.055*
Negative Coping	*.948*	*1.055*

a. *Dependent Variable: Emotional Intensity*

Table 15

Collinearity Statistics – Intuiting, Feeling, Perceiving

	Tolerance	*VIF*
Intuiting	*.816*	*1.226*
Feeling	*.856*	*1.169*
Perceiving	*.765*	*1.308*

a. *Dependent Variable: Emotional Intensity*

b. *Excluded Variables: Sensing, Thinking, Judging*

Testing of the Research Model

A regression analysis is used to assess the nature of relationships between predictor variables and a dependent variable with the goals of explaining how well the predictor variable can predict changes in outcomes in the dependent variable. In multiple regression analysis the study is also used to assess the relative importance of each predictor value on the outcome (Kachigan, 1991). Two full/simultaneous multiple regression studies were conducted using IBM SPSS, version 25. Variable for both personality traits and coping strategies were entered separately as independent variables and the score for emotional intensity was used in each as the dependent variable. A full/simultaneous multiple regression was used to assess the overall regression of emotional intensity on personality traits and coping styles. The results of these regressions will be discussed in this section. Tables 11 and 12 provide model summaries for each of the two analysis. Overall, neither model was able to predict changes in emotional intensity.

Coping Style predictors

After entering data for the first regression analysis, there was no relationship between the individual personality factors and emotional intensity. Positive or negative coping strategies do **not account for any variance in emotional intensity. In regression analysis 1, F(3,70) = 2.24, p>** .05.

Personality traits as predictors

The second regression study also failed to show any relationship between positive and negative coping strategies and emotional intensity. Study 2 resulted in F(2.71) = 1.02, p > .05.

Table 16

Summary of Regression Analysis: Positive and Negative Coping

Model	*R*	*R Square*	*Adjusted R Square*	*Std. Error of Estimate*	*R Square Change*	*F Change*	*df 1*	*df 2*	*Sig. F Change*	*Durbin - Watson*
1a	*.167 b*	*.028*	*.000*	*4.967*	*.028*	*1.016*	*2*	*71*	*.367*	*1.37*

a. *Dependent Variable: Emotional Intensity*

b. *Predictors: (Constant) Negative Coping, Positive Coping*

Table 17

Summary of Regression Analysis: Personality Traits

Model	*R*	*R Square*	*Adjusted R Square*	*Std. Error of Estimate*	*R Square Change*	*F Change*	*df 1*	*df 2*	*Sig. F Change*	*Durbin - Watson*
2a	*.2996c*	*.088*	*.048*	*4.846*	*.088*	*2.239*	*3*	*70*	*.091*	*1.277*

a. *Dependent Variable: Emotional Intensity*

b. *Predictors: (Constant) Perceiving, Feeling, Intuiting*

c. *Excluded Variables: Sensing, Thinking, Judging*

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This Research in Relation to Past Research

This research began with the work of Greene et al. (2001) who presented ethical dilemmas to people in a magnetic resonating image machine that maps neurophysiological functions of the brain. The researchers were able to capture the relationship between the conflict of the dilemma and the emotional response of the research participant. Ethical dilemmas have an emotional component. Greene and Haidt (2002) summed this relationship between ethics and emotions concluding that moral judgment is more a matter of emotion and affective intuition than deliberate reasoning. Other researcher have explored measuring emotions and decision-making via self-report (Maffioletti & Santoni, 2019). The current research proceeded to measure counselors and counselors-in-training emotional intensity when presented a counseling ethical dilemma via the Emotional Intensity instrument. However, this research like similar research endeavors in measuring emotions via self-report failed. The measure was unable to reliably assess the emotional intensity of research participants in relation to the ethical dilemma. Decision-making is an emotional process and for some situations the emotions can be measured. For the participants in this research that was not possible.

The issue of emotional intensity was a central feature of this research and attempts to develop an instrument to measure this phenomenon was not found. While Greene and Haight (2002) were able to measure the effects of moral intensity and valance, their research did not measure levels of emotional intensity per se. Cushman and Greene (2012) raised the concern that sound ethical decisions will depend on the ability to manage the often-conflicting demands of the rational and affective cognitive styles. They further suggested that individual thinking styles and personality traits are associated with distinct neural signatures associated with utilitarian considerations. The hope of identifying specific counseling topics used to measure emotional intensity was grounded in the principle that individual differences are important. Actually identifying triggers to emotional intensity proved to be challenging. The initial literature review included a review of articles that discussed counselor perception of significant ethical issues (Tarvydas & Barros-Bailey, 2010). Other articles were also consulted related to factors that seem to trigger emotional intensity. As noted in the literature review, Haight had identified two central features of ethical situations that trigger emotional intensity, valance and arousal (Haight, 2001). Several factor seemed to affect valence and arousal, including the direct involvement of the decision-maker to the resolution Feinberg, Willer, Antonenko, and John (2012) and the closeness of the person who would be affected to the decision-maker (Tassey, Oullier, Mancini, & Wicker, 2013). These insights were used in the development of the ethical situations that were included in the study. Further research into counselor ethical dilemmas and emotions needs to occur.

Keirsey (1998) established research into personality traits. His work has been used extensively. Dodd and Bayne (2007) have done extensive research using the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II. The research has investigated personality and counselor orientation.

Counselor personality traits have a relationship with the type of counseling theory they use. Furthermore, Mills (2006) applied the Keirsey Temperament Sorter II to ethical decision making by educational administrators. A scenario was proposed and how the four main personality types would process the ethical dilemma were explored. Each personality would have a much different outcome for the scenario. The main concept reviewed is that each administrator must know their personality and their embedded ethical decision-making process. They are challenged to be self-reflective and seek all alternatives to processing the dilemma not just their own.

This research recognized the past research and applications (Dodd & Bayne, 2007; Mill, 2006) considering personality and its influence on resolving ethical dilemmas. Whereas, these concepts and past research have been more helpful. The current research did not achieve the connection between personality and emotional intensity generated by ethical conflict found in dilemmas for counselors. However, future research may reveal a more sensitive or capture a more complex process of ethical decision making.

Limitations

Several issues have been identified that may have affected the usefulness of this study. The first issue has been a concern since the study was proposed, which is the question of how to measure emotional intensity. In previous studies involving this concept (Haight, 2001) responses were recorded using function MRI to observe how participants responded to different ethical dilemmas. No such technology was available for this study and the method that was used may have not been effective in measuring the phenomena. Participants in this study were asked to imagine the intensity of their feelings rather than being able to record them directly. There is a concern that what was measured was a cognitive process, or valence, about the ethical dilemmas presented and not an affective process as was intended. While valence is a recognized aspect of

ethical decision-making, it is theoretically processed differently than emotional intensity (Manfrinati, Lotto, Sarlo, Palomba, & Rumiati, 2013).

Another concern involved the sample that responded to the study. The intention of the study was to better understand how personality difference might affect emotional intensity since emotional intensity has been documented to affect the way individuals respond to different types of ethical dilemmas. The participants in this study were over-represented by a single personality type (SJ) at 74.4%. The other sensing type (SP) were the second largest group at 13.5%. Only 12.2% of the sample were identified as intuitive types. As a result, the sample lacked the diversity of type that was hoped for.

Another problem that was encountered during the study involved data collection. The number of individuals needed for the study, based on power analysis, was 75 (Soper, 2020). Recruiting that number of individuals was more difficult that envisioned when the project was first developed. Multiple individuals indicated their willingness to participate, based on email addresses collected but the majority did not follow through and start the online survey. For those who did start the survey 25 of 99 did not complete enough of the questions to make their participation valid. The survey itself was likely longer and took more effort to complete than would have been desired as well.

Implications

The results of this study conclude that neither personality traits as defined by the KTS II nor cumulative scores from the CERQ were predictors of emotion intensity. As such they cannot be used to predict levels of emotional intensity experienced while resolving the ethical dilemmas used in the study.

Consideration for Research

The issue of diversity has been a major topic of discussion and research in the past decade and more. An understanding of the uniqueness of everyone who use counseling services continues to be a central area of counselor training. Even from a larger perspective, the counseling encounter is shaped by the alliance of the individuals involved, specifically the individual counselor and the individual client. Though the result of this study was not found to be significant, there seems to be a scarcity of study related non-rational aspects of ethical decision-making, and the continued consensus around the importance of affective processes, would justify continued study in the area.

The basic questions that were proposed in this study seem to be left unresolved and inconclusive. Due to the overwhelming over-representation of participants with sensing personality types, it could be argued that the study might be repeated with at stratified sampling method. Because of this problem in the sample the central question in the study, of individual difference, could not be addressed.

The study might also follow previous studies that have studies emotional intensity, that used "kill to save" dilemmas to invoke higher feelings of emotional intensity. In addition, there seems to be limited literature related to the concept of emotional intensity. Being able to better define this term and develop assessments to measure it would be an important area of study as well. As was mentioned earlier, high levels of emotional intensity have been demonstrated to change the specific mental processes used to resolve ethical situations, with highly intensive scenarios resulting more self-serving strategies to resolve them (Haight, 2001).

The over-representation of sensing personality types among professionals in human services fields may reflect to understand the implications if counselors are indeed drawn from

this limited personality type. Specially, if sensing individuals tend to focus on sensory information in their interactions with others, what implications would this have if they are working with clients or interns whose primary orientation is more intuitive. This processing bias would likely affect the clinical interactions and may lead to the helping professional to make the intervention fit the preference.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The intent of this study was to study the relationship individual differences in personality traits and coping strategies might have with ethical decision-making emotional intensity. A central motivation in the selection of this topic was its relevance to the emergence of affective processes as a factor in ethical decision-making. The second focus was to identify areas that may need to be addressed in future counselor education. Lastly there is little research that has been conducted that address questions that arise from a shift from a modernistic view of ethics to one focus on a postmodern understanding.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between specific personality traits, as measured by the KTS II and emotional intensity?
2. Is there a relationship between scores that were combined scores for positive coping strategies and negative coping strategies and emotional intensity?
3. Are there pairwise correlations between the variables involve in the study?

In summary, while there were significant problems that may have affected the present study, there was no relationship found between personality traits, coping strategies, and emotional intensity. Further study is likely needed to better understand the processes involved in decision-making, especially considering a move to a postmodern understanding of the subject.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Dan William Reagan Jr. currently works as a Licensed Professional Counselor. While he has been involved in both academic counseling and private practice, he has worked primarily in community mental health. He completed a B.A. in Sociology from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (formerly Pan American University) in 1982. He also completed a M.Div. from New Orleans Baptist Seminary in 1985 and a M.Ed. from the University of Louisiana at Monroe (formerly Northeast Louisiana University) in 1996. In May 2020 he earned a PhD in Rehabilitation Counseling from The University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley. He has been a Licensed Professional Counselor since 1997. He currently resides at 1301 S. 16th Avenue in Edinburg, Texas.