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Mentoring Novice School Counselors: A Grounded Theory

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Abstract

A qualitative grounded theory study was conducted to examine the perceptions and needs of eight novice school counselors beginning their first or second year. An emergent model (i.e., *starting over, relying on previous knowledge and experiences, gaining/learning new knowledge and experiences, integrating previous and new knowledge and experiences, and looking forward*) describing the mentoring process in relation to novice school counselors is presented. Recommendations are offered to enhance county or district student services or counseling programs, school counselor mentors, and school counselor education programs. In conclusion, suggestions are offered for future researchers.

Keywords: novice school counselor, induction process, grounded theory

** Please note that data used in this study were collected to satisfy dissertation requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas, where co-authors served as dissertation committee members.

In the 21st century, school counselors are encouraged by the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) to follow the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012) and implement a data-driven comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP). Indeed, the implementation of a CSCP can have positive impacts on students in the areas of academic, career, and social/personal development (Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Lapan, Whitcomb, & Aleman, 2012). However, novice school counselors transitioning from academic preparation programs to the school setting may experience challenges during their early years adjusting to their districts' defined role of the school counselor. Although mentoring has proven to be an invaluable resource in a variety of fields, such as education, nursing, and business (Allemann, Cochran, Doverspike, & Newman, 1984; Conway, 2006; Kilburg, 2007; Smith, 2007, Wang, Tomlinson, & Noe, 2010), to assist in the transition process, a formal mentoring program may or may not be a part of a novice school counselor's induction into the profession (Loveless, 2010; Milsom & Kayler, 2008, Schmidt, Weaver, & Aldridge, 2001).

Currently, a scarcity of research exists related to the role of novice school counselors as they transition from graduate school counselor training programs into becoming full-time school counselors (Black, Suarez, & Medina, 2004; Milsom & Kayler, 2008). A comprehensive search of the literature led to 11 articles and/or dissertations that addressed novice school counselors and mentoring. Only five of these sources took place within the last 10 years.

The first article, by Matthes (1992), described the induction of novice school counselors as being a "sink or swim" process (p. 248). He examined the experiences of 40 new school counselors during their first year in the profession. The novice school counselors were often the only counselors in the building and were supervised by their building principal. These participants described challenges of a) limited resources for consultation and referrals, b) limited secretarial support, c) expectations to assume the same responsibilities as experienced counselors, d) and 77% lacked a mentor. Similarly, Stickel and Trimmer's (1994) analyses of the end of the year reflective journaling by a novice elementary school counselor yielded information on the professional development of this novice elementary counselor that included the importance of mentoring. Finally, during the 1990s, Peace (1995) developed the Counselor Mentor Education program to provide two semesters of training for mentor school counselors. This pilot program provided additional professional growth for the mentor and a comprehensive induction program for the mentees.

During the next decade, contributions were made by five authors on the topic of mentoring relative to novice school counselors. First, Armstrong, Balkin, Long, and Caldwell (2006) examined the significance of implementing a formal mentoring program for 16 first-year school counselors. Mentees found that having a mentor helped in alleviating the overwhelming feelings they sometimes experienced. They also attributed having a mentor and attending monthly meetings, with their mentors and other mentee, as instrumental in their induction process. Lastly, the importance of experienced school counselors' modeling skills was helpful in improving their counseling skills.

Next, Desmond (2009) examined the mentoring experiences of novice school counselors without prior teaching experience, which yielded several themes. Challenges found included being in different buildings, a desire for the mentee to be cautious, and obstacles faced in the mentoring relationship. During the process, the mentors and

mentees noticed that their relationship moved from mentor/mentee to a more collegiate relationship. A definition of mentor including trainee, coach, and advocate was used as the descriptors for this relationship. An additional benefit was the contribution to professional development for both the mentor and the mentee.

Third, Loveless (2010) examined the novice school counselors' perceptions of a formal mentoring program. Six first-year elementary level school counselors' had overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the program as a whole and found it to be an effective way to assist in the induction process. Their participation in the program provided them with positive perceptions regarding training, resources, support, impact, and effectiveness.

Fourth, Milsom and Kayler (2008) conducted a study in which seven high school, middle, and elementary-level school counselors participated in the use of journaling during their first year in the profession. In the absence of a formal mentoring program, themes of mentoring and support by other counselors or school personnel were identified. Fifth, and finally, Schmidt et al. (2001) conducted a study looking at novices with one to five years of experience as school counselors. The purpose of the study was to examine the match between the counselors' actual responsibilities and their preparation program training. In absence of formal mentors, the novice school counselors relied on experienced school counselors in the district and counselor supervisors from their preservice programs to serve as mentors. The authors believed that the lack of mentoring/assistance provided to school counselors during their first years could lead to school counselors leaving the field prematurely.

Novice school counselors enter the profession after completing a master's degree in counseling and complying with any additional requirements set by their respective states. Presumably, they are eager to embark upon their next career stage. However, transitioning from counselor education programs to fulfill the role of the 21st century school counselor can be a daunting task (Desmond, West, & Bubenzer, 2007). Experienced mentors who are familiar with the ASCA National Model (2012) can play a vital role in this transition period. Information obtained regarding the experiences and needs of novice school counselors entering the profession can provide stakeholders with additional knowledge relevant to district guidance and counseling or student services personnel, experienced school counselors who serve as mentors, counselor education programs, and the profession of school counseling. Therefore, research conducted relative to the mentoring needs and experiences of novice school counselors entering the profession was conducted in order to enhance the paucity of research directed toward the topic.

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of novice school counselor participants entering the profession in order to develop a theory that explains the induction process. The following two research questions were the basis for this study: 1) What are the perceptions and experiences of novice school counselors entering the school counseling profession and the role that mentoring plays in the induction process? 2) What perceptions and experiences of novice school counselors inform the development of an updated mentoring model?

Method

Employing a grounded theory qualitative research method to develop a model that addresses a phenomenon has been utilized with increased frequency in the field of professional school counseling. Several researchers have utilized a grounded theory approach in their respective studies, which include administrators and school counselors who worked at the elementary, middle, and high school levels (Amatea & Clark, 2005); school counselors' roles in serving chronically ill students (Hamlet, Gergar, & Schaefer, 2011); successful comprehensive developmental school counseling program implementation by school counselors (Scarborough & Luke, 2008); and social justice strategies that can assist school counselor advocates in making systemic changes within their school counseling programs (Singh, Urbano, Haston, & McMahan, 2010). Therefore, the use of grounded theory in this study to explore the experiences and needs of novice school counselors entering the profession and to develop a substantive model of the mentoring process is supported by the literature.

Participants

For this study, participants were chosen on the criteria established for this study, which included being a current school counselor in their first or second year in the profession. Participants were eight novice school counselors working in large school districts in Southeast Texas. Seven participants were female and one participant was male with ages ranging from 32–47. Six participants self-identified as African American and one as White. All participants worked in a public school setting—two at the high school level and the other six at the elementary school level. Seven participants had completed the Texas State Board of Education school counselor requirements (i.e., hold a master's degree, complete a preparation program, have at least 2 years of teaching experience, and pass the Texas Examinations of Educator Standards), and one participant was completing her final semester of her preparation program. Participants' student caseloads ranged from 308 (high school level) to 950 (elementary level). As school counselors, five participants were in their first year and three participants were in their second year. In regards to school location, five participants identified their school as being in a suburban area, two in an inner city area, and one in a suburban/inner city area.

Instrumentation

Participants completed a demographic questionnaire consisting of nine questions. In addition, participants chose an alias/pseudonym to be used during the interview process and the reporting of data and results. Inquiries on the questionnaire included indicating the participants' gender, age, years of experience, ethnicity master's degree major, current school level, school district's location, number of current student caseload, and the ethnic identity percentage of their current caseload.

The second instrument used for this study was a written short-answer document. The participants were asked to provide their definition of mentoring and the characteristics of an experienced school counselor. This information was used to understand the participants' definition of both mentoring and an experienced school counselor. Obtaining this information allowed the researchers to evaluate further their perceptions and lived experiences.

A semi-structured interview protocol was the third instrument used in this study. The semi-structured interview protocol was developed based on information obtained from the literature, experts in the field of school counseling and qualitative research, and the primary researcher's previous experience as a mentor of novice school counselors. This instrument, asking the participants the grand tour questions (Patton, 1990), allowed participants to share in their own words information regarding their lived experiences around the topic of mentoring.

Data Collection

Following the receipt of approval of the study from the Institutional Review Board, participants met with the interviewer. At this time, the purpose of this study and the grounded theory research methodology were described. Participants were then asked if they had any questions. After all questions were answered and the participants indicated they felt comfortable, they were asked to choose an individual pseudonym (that was used throughout the interview) and to complete the demographic and written short-answer questionnaire. The interviews lasted from 35–60 minutes.

A two-step process was used to identify participants for this study. First, an e-mail was sent to the directors or student services personnel of guidance and counseling programs in 12 large (student population over 30,000) school districts located in Southeast Texas. Large districts were chosen in order to increase the potential that the school counselors would service diverse populations, whereas smaller school districts may not have provided the desired student diversity. The e-mail explained the purpose of the study and asked that the directors forward the e-mail along with the attached participant request letter to school counselors that met the criteria. Additionally, the request letter provided contact information, and interested school counselors were asked to contact the primary researcher directly. Secondly, after receiving emails from a total of eight participants showing interest in participating in the study, the primary researcher contacted each one by e-mail to schedule a convenient date, time, and place to conduct the semi structured interviews. Once an agreed upon time and location was determined, the primary researcher met the participants and completed the interviews. The participants' choices included community libraries (five), the primary researcher's home (one), the participants' home (one), and Skype (one).

Data Analysis

Each taped interview was submitted electronically to a transcriber and was transcribed verbatim. Once transcribed, each transcription was verified for accuracy. Corrections to the transcribed interviews were made when needed. Additionally, participants were sent a copy of the transcribed interview to review for accuracy. Subsequently, accurate written transcriptions allowed for detailed back and forth reading of the data. This is a required component in analyzing qualitative data (Polkinghorne, 2005).

Charmaz (2006) recommended that researchers look for actions in each segment rather than applying preexisting categories to the data. Therefore, responses were read line by line and coded with words that reflected action. Initial or open coding was conducted by remaining close to the data, utilizing action verbs to describe the participants' words, and conducting a detailed back and forth reading of the data.

Charmaz (2006) described this as a coauthored process between the researcher and the participants.

Beginning with the first interview, sampling, data collection, and data analysis took place in which data were separated, sorted, and synthesized through qualitative coding. Data saturation was met after the sixth interview; however, two additional interviews were conducted to provide the inclusion of the only male participant and the only school counselor in her second full year in the profession. The researchers wanted to explore whether the last two participants would provide discrepant data (Charmaz, 2006). Coding continued with information gathered from the subsequent seven interviews. This allowed for definitions of what was happening to emerge from the data and to begin making meaning of the collected data (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) noted that qualitative coding moves beyond concrete statements to analytic interpretations. Our use of codes during the data analysis generated the core of the analysis results. From this core, these codes were integrated into theoretical concepts. Therefore, coding was a pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data.

The next phase of the analytic process included the use of selected or focused coding to analyze large segments of data. Searching for the most significant and/or frequent codes during this process enabled the researchers to sift through large amounts of data. Comparing data to data involved moving back and forth to develop focused codes. As Polkinghorne (2005) contended, "the research process is an iterative one, moving from collection of data to analysis and back until the description is comprehensive" (p. 140).

Because the constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) was used, theoretical coding and memo writing, rather than axial coding, were utilized. Theoretical coding followed focused coding and allowed for the specification of possible relationships between categories developed into focused coding. Utilizing theoretical codes also allowed for the development of an analytic story that has coherence. In addition, the skillful use of theoretical codes moved an analytical story into a theoretical direction (Charmaz, 2006).

After the conceptual analysis was thoroughly researched, a substantive theory emerged that explained the process of novice professional school counselors entering a new profession. The purpose of this grounded theory study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of beginning school counselors entering the profession and the role that mentoring played in their induction process. Data gained from their experiences were used to develop a substantive theory upon which an updated mentoring model was created to address the participants' particular needs.

Trustworthiness

Researchers are a part of the topics they study, and they immerse themselves in the people they study (Charmaz, 2006). The primary researcher was a former mentor to four new school counselors, the designer of the data collection instruments, and the researcher conducting the interviews and analyzing the data, and held an opinion concerning mentoring beginning school counselors. The second researcher was an expert in the field of school counseling (i.e., former school counselor, professor of school counseling courses, and researcher in the field of school counseling), and the third

researcher was an expert in the field of qualitative research (i.e., professor of qualitative research courses, researcher in the field of school counseling qualitative studies). Therefore, trustworthiness was addressed.

The following seven strategies (i.e., member checking, rich and thick descriptions, bracketing, addressing divergent information, reflexive journaling, data triangulation, and an audit trail) were used to provide trustworthiness and address researcher bias (Charmaz, 2006; Farber, 2006; Maxwell, 2005).

First, in order to conduct member checking, participants were e-mailed both their verbatim transcribed interview and the interpretation of their responses. This opportunity not only gave the participants an opportunity to confirm or deny the interpretation, but it also served to identify researcher biases or misunderstandings (Maxwell, 2005). Next, rich, thick descriptions, including the participants' responses, were included in the results in order to provide the reader with in-depth information regarding the participants' lived experiences. Discrepant information was also included to highlight alternate viewpoints of the constructed theory. Addressing discrepant information enables the researcher to determine if saturation has been met or to offer an explanation for varying experiences (Charmaz, 2006).

Reflexive journaling was utilized by the primary researcher in an effort to control for possible bias that could influence the data analysis. Bracketing of existing beliefs and assumptions was done by reflecting on existing thoughts before and after conducting each interview (Creswell, 2008). The purpose was to obtain an open and neutral stance regarding the unique experience of each participant.

Additionally, to further ensure trustworthiness, data triangulation was accomplished through the use of a demographic questionnaire, written short-answer instrument, transcribed semi-structured interviews, and observation notes (Maxwell, 2005). Also, the primary researcher's immersion in and staying close to the data served as additional credibility.

Lastly, an audit trail was used to provide further trustworthiness. Beginning with the first interview, all information (transcripts, observation notes, reflexive journal, codes [i.e., initial, focused, and theoretical], categories and themes, and the emergent model) was systematically documented and shared with an external auditor, the second researcher. This procedure allowed the auditor to ascertain whether the findings were accurate and supported by the data.

Results

This study was conducted in a state that requires school counselors to have at least 2 years of teaching experience. Desmond (2005) conducted a study in a state that certifies school counselors without prior teaching experience, but does require mentoring for those novice school counselors. The mentoring relationship provided some benefits to both the mentors and the mentees. Desmond (2009) suggested that schools could include a formal mentoring program for those school counselors entering the profession without teaching experience.

All of the novice school counselors in this study were former teachers with teaching experience. However, in their new position, *assistance required* was the major theoretical concept that emerged from the data. This theme was evidenced beginning with

the first interview and was continued throughout subsequent interviews. Several factors (e.g., the school level in which they worked, the number of programs they coordinated, their previous experience) contributed to the type and amount of assistance each participant needed.

A theoretical model (Appendix A), describing the induction process of beginning school counselors in their first or second year, was the result of this study. The induction process consisted of five stages a) *starting over*, b) *relying on previous knowledge/ experiences*, c) *gaining/learning new knowledge and experiences*, d) *integrating previous and new knowledge*, and e) *looking forward.*

Starting Over

With regard to *starting over*, participants described the phenomenon of feeling confident in their former roles (i.e., classroom teacher, program coordinator) and the uncomfortableness of their new position. Stephanie, a first-year elementary counselor, described her *starting over* experience, "It's like starting a new job; I don't know what I was thinking because it was really a challenge. I had to learn everything from scratch." Susan, also a first-year elementary counselor, shared, "Everything was new. It was like starting over because in my 12th year [as a teacher], I was on it." However, in the school counselor's position, she added, "When I walked in . . . I felt so uncomfortable."

Relying on Previous Knowledge/Experiences

The strategy of *relying on previous knowledge/experiences* emerged as the second phase of the induction process. Several participants shared how they relied on their previous experience as teachers or coordinators of programs to assist them in fulfilling their roles early on. Leatrice, a first-year elementary counselor, when discussing the programs she was assigned to coordinate in her new role stated,

> I was already doing that [Section 504] because I was in another program. So, some things it's like I had an advantage that some people [other novice school counselors] didn't. And, even with the RtI process . . . I did RtI with the dyslexia program, and also, I worked kind of really, really close with other counselors and kind of helped them because they were new to the district. So, I already had hands-on [experience].

Alise and Alpha, two former teachers of students with special needs, shared how their teaching experience helped them in their new role as school counselors. First, Alise shared,

> So, I was pretty self-efficient as a Special Ed [education] teacher. I did pretty much everything for the students . . . the counseling part, the career guidance part, even just making sure that they had what they need as far as their transcript and their schedules.

The previous skills she learned assisted her in fulfilling those duties with her assigned 10th-grade student caseload. Second, Alpha shared, "I understand the educational process and I understand pretty much what I needed to know with credits . . . you see coming from my previous teaching position, I understood documenting everything."

Gaining/Learning New Knowledge and Experiences

In addition to the concept of *relying on previous knowledge/experiences*, the theme of *learning/gaining new knowledge and experiences* emerged. All of the participants discussed the district training they received as providing essential information in fulfilling their new roles as school counselors. Alise explained,

> The trainings that I do go to pertain specifically to what I have to do on campus—for example, dealing with ESL [English as a second language]. . . . So, a large part of my time was spent going to different trainings and just kind of asking questions and observing.

Lynn added,

> Probably the biggest change during my first year was just a lot of training, just getting used to the different systems, for example, learning how to do [Section] 504. It was something I saw in my internship and really didn't have involvement in it.

Lynn echoed, "I had trainings . . . which was actually pretty good because I got the training that I needed, that was appropriate."

All eight participants discussed the one-on-one training they received from a variety of individuals as being helpful in *learning/gaining new knowledge and experiences*. Stephanie was completing her last semester in her master's counseling program and met with her practicum supervisor. She explained,

> I met with her once a week . . . she was always very helpful and if I had a student who was having an issue and I needed some advice, she was the one I would call and she would help me.

Leatrice contacted the necessary persons to assist her with the programs she coordinated. She described the initiative she took to receive the assistance she needed, "So, I just made it my business . . . really made an assertive effort throughout the year . . . but I'll normally call the district, or maybe a coordinator, because I prefer it that way".

Many of the participants described the challenges they experienced handling the paperwork, computer work, and preparation that accompanied the job of school counselor. Again, they discussed *learning/gaining new knowledge and experiences*. Susan stated,

> And to be honest, it's a lot of paperwork that you have to do and they're expecting you to do it right off the bat . . . right now I think I am an expert . . . if someone asked me about [Section] 504, I'm on it.

Carolina described how her mentor assisted her with learning how to complete the paperwork, "She does help me a lot, too, especially with . . . the paperwork . . . she would be . . . available . . . It's too many papers that I need to fill in . . . I think that I will never finish it."

Learning/gaining new knowledge/experiences was furthered discussed by the participants in the area of providing student services (i.e., guidance curriculum, responsive services, individual planning, and system support). The participants described the assistance needed in *learning/gaining new knowledge and experiences* in this area. Stephanie shared, "I had a supervisor and she was sort of like a mentor to me . . . she

gave me ideas for guidance lessons." Leatrice received assistance in the form of teacher consultation from the school's assigned licensed specialist in school psychology (LSSP). She shared, "So, she works with the teacher. She'll sit with me, and I'll tell her what's going on, and she'll provide intervention strategies and help teachers with that."

Integrating Previous and New Knowledge

The fourth theme that emerged from the perceptions and lived experiences of the beginning school counselors was *integrating previous and new knowledge*. This phase of the induction process described the novice school counselors settling into their campus defined roles and responsibilities and the resolve they experienced. Alise's comments pointed to the resignation that her role as a high school counselor would be spent juggling many responsibilities that would not leave the time she needed to spend with students and parents in monitoring students' successes, goals, and career aspirations. She shared,

> And there's . . . there is really nothing you can do about it . . . so you go back and alter your plan . . . I'm at a point where I won't be able to meet with every parent . . . so now I have to go back through my criticals [failing students] . . . so you're at a point where you have to just work with them and meet all of them . . . I really don't have the time because I've got these kids.

Lynn's comments regarding role changes that took place in her second year further illustrate the theme of settling into their campus defined roles and responsibilities and the resolve the participants accepted. She described, "I think that's where the major difference comes in . . . how the district defines. Yes, on paper we are defined as a counselor, but in the theoretical sense of it, you don't see it as being that at times."

Looking Forward

Lastly, the phase of *looking forward* emerged from the data as the participants discussed planning for next year and feeling confident in aspects of their new roles. Lisa, when discussing the end of her second year, spoke of *looking forward* to her third year,

> They're very supportive, family-oriented. I think that's what kept me going . . . the administrators, my principal and my assistant principal, and looking forward to the next school year being able to, hopefully, take the school in a new direction.

Conversely, Carolina presented discrepant data related to her self-confidence. She did, however, refer to *looking forward* to changing some aspects of her role the next school year. She explained, so I'm kind of fighting to have the counseling program in my school and not [be] a second AP [assistant principal]." Finally, Alpha discussed confident feelings as he shared plans for rearranging his office. He stated,

> I just had to change, it was just change, it was a fresh start, so I'm really excited about just going into it. I feel, I guess I'm more confident now going into it than I was starting . . . so with my experience . . . my confidence is up . . . and I guess that's pretty much what's going on.

The participants' words regarding their perception and lived experiences led to the development of a substantive theory that explains the five-stage induction process of first- and second-year school counselors entering the profession. The process involves

five-stages in which participants moved from completing their first or second challenging year to anticipating a smoother next year.

Discussion

Novice school counselors needing assistance during their first or second year in the profession is to be expected and is supported by the literature on mentoring new school counselors. For example, in a qualitative study conducted by Desmond (2005), several themes that revealed effective means of providing assistance to novice counselors emerged, such as mentors providing support to mentees by a) showing the mentee procedures of the job, b) being a resource for the mentee to access, and c) passing on knowledge/experience to the mentee. Likewise, Loveless (2010) found that mentees cited mentor support through consultation and question and answer forums as highly effective.

The analysis of the data led to a substantive theory explaining a five-stage induction process. The stages of (a) *starting over*, (b) *relying on previous knowledge and experiences*, (c) *gaining/learning new knowledge and experiences,* (d) *integrating new knowledge and experiences*, and (e) *looking forward* were evidenced.

The participants' new role as a school counselor brought about mixed feelings and shook their confidence immediately. These feelings and experiences coincide with the "sink or swim" term coined by Matthes (1992) to describe the experiences of new school counselors entering the field. Receiving mentoring assistance can assist in this unsettling time by providing much needed assistance.

This finding is very important to preparation programs in particular. School counselor preparation programs can continue to provide the necessary education and training in order to equip students with the knowledge and experiences (e.g., practicum, internship) while infusing information about additional responsibilities school counselors may encounter in their day to day work (e.g., scheduling, coordinating programs). One participant in particular noted how the development and sharing of guidance curriculums from her preparation program enabled her to feel confident in her presentation of classroom guidance lessons. Similar confidence can be experienced when students are given an opportunity to research and present information about coordinating state mandated testing, dyslexia programs, etc. to their classmates.

Participants described the need to learn and integrate new information and experiences in order to perform their new roles as school counselors. This is usually provided at district staff development sessions. However, this can be overwhelming to the new school counselor. One participant noted that in the month of October, due to required district trainings, she was only in her building full-time five days. A mentor, during regular scheduled meetings with the mentee, could assist by discussing such topics as pacing oneself, prioritizing time, and focusing on organizational skills. This could possibly assist the mentee in managing the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and experiences while carrying out their responsibilities as school counselors. This information was found to be helpful to Alpha as his fellow counselors explained to him that he would not be able to accomplish all of his daily responsibilities and encouraged him to realize that fact and to pace himself accordingly.

This phase of the induction process, as described by the participants, was marked by a sense of resolve as they settled into their campus defined roles. Additionally, the

participants were able to experience a sense of satisfaction during this time. One participant's description of this period as a "lovely experience [of] chaoticness" alludes to that satisfaction in the midst of non-routine events.

As the new school counselors ended their first and second years in the profession, they begin to reflect on their experiences and look forward to the next school year. Participants described how they would incorporate their gained knowledge and experiences and use them to move forward in their role as school counselors. Some participants noted a discrepancy between their ideal role and their actual role. However, the new counselors resigned to accept those discrepancies and perform the roles and responsibilities set before them.

Limitations

Information gained from the findings of this study can be utilized to further the research on mentoring in the school counseling profession; however, there are some limitations. One limitation to note is that the participants were limited to novice school counselors who met the criteria, agreed to participate, and were employed in the southern part of the United States. Additionally, the data gained were from the participants' self-reports regarding their lived experiences.

In order to capture the lived experiences of participants entering the school counseling profession in their first or second year, a grounded theory methodology was used. The findings are limited to participants working in large school districts with demographics similar to participants in this study.

Implication for Practice

Information gained from the lived experiences of the eight participants led to the grounded theory of the Novice School Counselors Induction Process. This process can provide valuable information to members of the counseling profession (e.g., school counselor preparation programs, coordinators of school district counseling programs, and experienced school counselors serving as mentors).

Mentoring programs can be implemented in all school districts that do not currently have programs in place. Experienced school counselors can be provided training to address the needs of new school counselors entering the profession. The mentoring model developed, in response to the needs of the new counselors in this study, can be implemented to serve as a guideline for mentors to follow. This model can be adapted to meet the unique needs of individual counselors to assist in a smoother transition from school counselor preparation programs to the field of work. For example, one of the participants identified having things written down (i.e., School Counselor Handbook) in order to refer to policies and procedures that are specific to the school district as a desired tool to reference. Additionally, several participants expressed the desire and benefit of meeting with individuals one-on-one to explain and demonstrate necessary information (e.g., computer programs, auditing folders).

Although not ideal, national and state organization can offer national and statewide mentoring programs to new school counselors in the absence of district level mentoring programs. Experienced school counselors can mentor beginning school counselors through the use of electronic communication (e.g., Skype, FaceTime, telephone) when location of the mentor and mentee prevent face-to-face time.

Additionally, ASCA and state counseling organizations can elicit proposals for conference presentations, and research and best practices articles for journal and newsletter publication on the topic of mentoring to address the gap in literature.

Specifically, school counselor preparation programs can continue to offer knowledge and training on the ASCA and state models to ensure that their students have a clear understanding of the role of the 21st century school counselor. Professors can also encourage students to join ASCA and their state school counseling organization in order to expand their knowledge of the profession.

Additionally, professors from school counseling departments can partner with local school districts in order to conduct research on the topic of mentoring to address the gap on this topic. Lastly, professors can provide training on the topic of mentoring for experienced school counselors.

Recommendations for Further Research

The development of a grounded theory on the induction process of new school counselors in this study adds to the body of research on the topic of mentoring. Further research could include both quantitative and mixed methods studies conducted on this important topic. Additional research could focus on the topic of the differences between mentoring and supervision for school counselors.

This research took place in the southern part of the United States and the participants were employed in large school districts. Additional research could be conducted in other parts of the United States and include novice school counselors from small and medium school districts. Lastly, there was only one male participant. Future research could elicit the participation of more males.

Conclusion

There is limited research on the mentoring needs of novice school counselors entering the profession. A qualitative study on the perceptions and experiences of novice school counselors was conducted. Eight participants shared their lived experiences of entering the field as a beginning school counselor. A substantive theory on the induction process of first- and second-year novice school counselors entering the profession emerged.

Assistance needed was the overarching theme. As the new school counselors moved through the induction process, they experienced feelings of (a) *starting over,* (b) *relying on previous knowledge and experiences,* (c) *gaining/learning new knowledge and experiences*, (d) *integrating new knowledge and experiences,* and (e) *looking forward*.

Experienced school counselors serving as mentors can utilize information obtained from this induction process to provide assistance to beginning school counselors. School counselor educators can incorporate aspects of the findings into their courses to further equip future school counselors for the role of professional school counselor.

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APPENDIX A
Novice School Counselor Induction Process