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The Role of Mentoring in the Induction Experiences of Novice School Counselors: A Phenomenological Study

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The Role of Mentoring in the Induction Experiences of Novice School Counselors

A Phenomenological Study

Kelsey Nugent

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Abstract

As novice school counselors [NSCs] begin their careers, they transition from receiving supervision in their preparation programs to being on their own. This transition, or induction period, can be fraught with challenges as there are often discrepancies between the anticipated and actual role of school counselors. To extend and enrich the school counseling program, it has been recommended by numerous studies that continued supportive relationships, such as mentoring, can help first year school counselors transition into their profession. Mentoring is a way to help guide novices towards success, as it emphasizes an ongoing guiding and caring relationship between a mentor and a mentee. Through semi-structured interviews, this phenomenological study explores experiences and perceptions of Washington State novice school counselors in connection to their formal and informal mentoring relationships. The NSCs in this study identified a need to grow into their positions and accessed formal and informal mentoring supports to help them navigate their first years as school counselors. These mentoring supports provided consultation, collaboration, counseling, and technical support. While these themes of mentoring support and the lived experiences of the participating NSCs are not generalizable to all NSCs, they align with results of other studies. In combination with these previous studies' findings, recommendations are provided for supporting NSCs during their induction period.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of Problem

School counselors are vital members of the educational team, working with students to focus on their academic growth, social and emotional development, and career preparation (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012). The role of school counselor has been evolving over the past few decades, with increasing expectations of roles and responsibilities (ASCA, 2012; Dollarhide & Lemberger-Truelove, 2018; Erford, 2016; Thompson, 2012). School counseling preparation programs attempt to prepare school counselors for these increasing demands through experiential practicums and internships. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) requires a minimum of 600 hours of field experience and weekly supervision to help guide those experiences (CACREP, 2016). Throughout their field experiences, school counseling students receive ongoing clinical supervision to help them align their practice with the ASCA National Model, state models for school counseling, and ethical guidelines (ASCA, 2016; Dollarhide & Lemberger-Truelove, 2018; Erford, 2016).

Clinical supervision is "a social process involving immersion in the professional culture through which the novice learns mores, attitudes, values, modes of thinking, and strategies for problem solving that are embedded in that culture, thereby acquiring a professional identity" (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006, p. 242). Clinical supervision overlaps with mentoring, with both supporting school counselors towards developing a professional identity through a mentoring model. Often, the main differing feature is who provides the support: mentoring typically comes from a colleague or a peer, while supervision is provided by a higher ranking individual and usually involves an evaluation component (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006).

Upon graduation from a school counseling program, however, such favorable supports throughout the students' preparation program end abruptly (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Matthes, 1992; Peace, 1995). To extend and enrich the school counseling program, it has been recommended by numerous studies that continued supportive relationships, such as mentoring, for first year school counselors will help ease their transition into their profession (Armstrong, et al., 2006; Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Desmond et al., 2007; Matthes, 1992; Peace, 1995; Stickel & Trimmer, 1994; VanZandt & Perry, 1992). Other similar fields provide or require formal mentoring or supervision: first year teachers are frequently paired with mentor teachers (Bullough, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Plecki et al., 2017) and mental health counselors seeking licensure in Washington State must complete a minimum of 100 hours postgraduate supervision for 3200 hours of postgraduate supervised experience (RCW 18.225.090, 2013). This is similar to the mandated postgraduate experiences for mental health counselors in the surrounding states of California (BPC 4980.43, 2018), Oregon (OAR 833-030-0021, n.d.), and Idaho **(**Section 54-3405A, 2012).

Although it is the ethical responsibility of school counselors to "provide support, consultation and mentoring to professionals in need of assistance" (ASCA, 2016, B.2.f), very few formal mentoring programs exist for entry-level school counselors (Johnson et al., 2017; Milsom & Kayler, 2008). Novice school counselors (NSCs) enter the profession all alone (Boyd & Walker, 1975; Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Matthes, 1992; Milsom & Kayler, 2008). Studies (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2006; Desmond et al., 2007; Johnson, 2012; Johnson et al., 2017; Loveless, 2010) have proposed mentoring models for NSCs, and yet, such models and formalized mentoring programs are rarely used to support NSCs (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Loveless, 2010; Milsom & Kayler, 2008; Peace, 1995).

Research around the topic of mentoring for NSCs is lacking. A search for the keywords of 'mentor' and 'school counselor' in the main databases of ERIC via EBSCOHost, Education Source, Academic Search Complete, PsychINFO, Psychology & Behavioral Sciences Collection, and JSTOR only turned up 14 studies that explored this topic (Armstrong et al., 2006; Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Desmond, 2009; Desmond et al., 2007; Ganser, 1992; Johnson, 2012; Johnson et al., 2017; Loveless, 2010; Milsom & Kayler, 2008; Milsom & McCormick, 2015; Peace, 1995; Schmidt et al., 2001; VanZandt & Perry, 1992). This lack of research is problematic because it holds back the development of research-based practices for supporting NSCs. In conjunction to this paucity of research, these studies are mostly qualitative in nature, not generalizable, and potentially out-of-date with the ever-changing world of K-12 education.

Because supervision and mentoring have many overlapping components in school counseling (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006), this search was extended to include the keywords of 'supervision' and 'school counselor'. Due to the excess of research in the last 5 years, articles from 2014-2019 were evaluated to contribute to this review of literature. Articles pertaining to supervision of novice school counselors were included.

Purpose of Study

Research dating back from nearly 30 years ago has unequivocally supported mentoring programs which would help NSCs succeed personally and professionally (Matthes, 1992; VanZandt & Perry, 1992). "A novice's initial influence and identifications have important consequences for that person's career development" (Peace, 1995, p. 178). Unfortunately, practice has not always followed research and NSC mentoring programs continue to be rare or nonexistent (Bass et al., 2013; Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Johnson et al., 2017; Milsom & Kayler,

2008). Because it would be an enormous undertaking to research the reasons for the lack of mentoring for novice school counselors, my research looks at another aspect of mentorship.

Given my location and experiences, my interest is focused on the experiences of NSCs in Washington State. Expectations for school counselors can vary from state to state. I explored the perceptions and experiences of Washington State NSCs in connection to their formal and informal mentoring relationships based on a phenomenological approach through semi-structured interviews.

Definitions

The definitions provided below pertain to the interests of this study.

School Counselor

A school counselor is a certificated professional who works within the K-12 school system to help support the academic, social-emotional, and career growth of students (ASCA, 2012). In the state of Washington, school counselors must obtain an Educational Staff Associate (ESA) certification by completing either a master's degree in counseling or completion of any state approved certification program (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [OSPI], 2018).

Novice School Counselor [NSC]

The term *novice school counselor* or *novice counselor* has been used by eminent studies to refer to a school counselor who has just begun in their role as a school counselor (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Matthes, 1992). For the purposes of this study, a novice school counselor is a school counselor who is in their first 2 years of working in schools.

Induction

The induction process is the method in which novice educators, including NSCs, are introduced into their new role and associated responsibilities. Induction may include a formalized program, mentoring, or training, but may also be informal and not have a set structure (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Matthes, 1992).

Mentoring

Mentoring is an "intense interpersonal exchange" (Schwiebert, 2000, p. 3) between a more experienced individual in a career field and a novice in that field. Support, guidance, and feedback are provided to assist the novice towards personal and professional growth (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Kramm, 1985; Young & Wright, 2001). For the purposes of this study, *formal* mentoring indicates the mentor and mentee are part of a formalized mentoring program, while *informal* mentoring indicates the mentoring relationship has developed outside of a formalized program. When neither formal or informal is indicated, mentoring will reference a formal mentoring program.

Mentor

A mentor is an individual with experience in a field, who shares their knowledge and guidance to help a novice or a less experienced individual to grow in their field of work or study (Schwiebert, 2000; Young & Wright, 2001). A mentor may be a currently practicing school counselor or a former school counselor who is now employed as a mentor. In this study, the term *mentor* will be used to describe both formal and informal mentors.

Mentee

A mentee is a novice or a less experienced individual who is being supported by and receiving guidance from a mentor (Schwiebert, 2000; Young & Wright 2001). In this study, the

term *mentee* will be used when a NSC is participating in a formalized mentoring program. Otherwise, the term novice school counselor (NSC) will be used.

Research Questions

1. What is the lived experience of mentoring, formal or informal, for Washington State NSCs during their first few years working as school counselors?
2. How do Washington State NSCs perceive they are utilizing mentoring relationships?

Methods

This study explored how NSCs were supported by others through mentoring relationships as they navigated their first several years as school counselors. This qualitative study took a transcendental phenomenological approach through semi-structured interviews with NSCs who had completed at least 1 year in a school setting. A phenomenological approach seeks to understand an event or experience at a deeper level through the gathering of rich and descriptive data (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018). As research is limited in this area, this study adds to the conversation about what mentoring, whether formal or informal, looks like for NSCs in Washington State.

Participants were identified through a convenience sample. A request for participants was emailed to the Washington School Counselor Association (WSCA), directors of school counseling in Washington public school districts, and school counseling preparation programs in Washington state. Eleven school counselors who were completing their first, second, or third year of school counseling were interviewed.

A semi-structured interview protocol was developed based on previous studies (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Johnson, 2012) and the recommendations of Moustakas (1994). To address potential researcher bias and ensure valid findings, five strategies were used: (a) bracketing and

reflective journaling, (b) member checking, (c) rich, thick descriptions, (d) external auditing, and (e) peer reviewing (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018). These strategies are further explored in the third chapter of this study.

The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and themed using Colaizzi's (1978) phenomenological method. The transcripts were reviewed several times by me and a post-doctoral individual to initially determine overall feelings, and then to identify significant phrases and sentences that represented these overall feelings. From these phrases and sentences, meanings were determined and clustered into themes. These themes were validated through participant checking; any new and relevant data received through this feedback request was included in the results (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Theoretical Lens

Since qualitative research relies heavily on the perspective of the researchers, it is important to note the theoretical underpinnings of the researcher.

Learner-Centered

In examining the mentoring relationships, this study considered the learning processes of the participating NSCs. Because of the nature of mentoring, this learning is approached within a learner-centered modality (Brock, 1999; Brott & Myers,1999; Newton et al., 1994; Milsom & Kayler, 2008; Vierstraete, 2005). A formal learner-centered curriculum focuses on the individual's personal growth and development over time (Ellis, 2004; Parkay et al., 2010). While NSCs are no longer receiving formal curriculum, they continue to learn informally. As NSCs develop over the course of their first year with the goal of improving their own work, they focus on their own needs and gaps (Armstrong et al., 2006; Milsom & Kayler, 2008). Since each school is its own environment with a variety of different factors at play (e.g., size, ethnic

backgrounds, socio-economic status), no two NSCs' learning experiences will be the same, and thus their learning will be individualized in tandem with their personal needs.

In a formal learner-centered environment, the teacher acts as a facilitator to learning; they are not only focusing on a set of objectives to cover, but also assisting the learner as they navigate their interests (Ellis, 2004; Parkay et al., 2010). For NSCs, mentors can act as their facilitators. Formal mentoring programs for school counselors have included mentor trainings to help their mentors take on the role of facilitators or guides (Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992). By seeking out informal mentoring, NSCs are searching for individuals to help facilitate and guide their learning (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Milsom & Kayler, 2008).

This study proceeds with the assumption that all mentoring relationships are established with the NSCs growth in mind. It is assumed that the mentoring focuses on the needs of the NSCs and will change based on the development of the NSCs and their experiences.

Constructivism

Upon entry into the professional world, NSCs are experiencing true constructivist learning. Constructivist learning is an active learning process, in which the learner builds new ideas based on their prior knowledge combined with new experiences (Bruner, 1977). It is based on the principles that (a) knowledge is actively gained through experiences and that (b) cognition and metacognition are adaptive and ongoing (Bruner, 1977; Ellis, 2004; Parkay et al., 2010). While discussion on constructivism is typically focused on formal learning environments, the theory of constructivism learning can apply beyond formalized education (Parkay et al., 2010).

As NSCs navigate their first several years in schools on their own, they experience the intricacies of the 'real world' of education in a new way. While they have completed an academic program and internship designed to prepare them for their new jobs, there are infinite

multifaceted and unknown situations that are unforeseen during their formal education. A constructivist recognizes this complexity and encourages the learner to engage and embrace new experiences with the goal of growing and developing (Bruner, 1977).

Mentoring relationships are rooted in this notion of constructivism learning. The nature of the relationship grows from a need for support in continued learning and personal growth (Schwiebert, 2000). A mentor actively engages with the mentee in metacognitive discussion and activities to encourage such growth and learning (Peace, 1995; Schwiebert, 2000). While outside the scope of this study, a reciprocity exists in mentoring relationships. Mentors also find themselves growing and learning from mentoring relationships (Desmond et al., 2007; Schwiebert, 2000), further supporting the constructivist foundation of mentoring relationships.

This study stems from the assumption that learning does not end upon graduation or completion of a school counseling program. Rather, a constructivist perspective is taken that learning will continue throughout the course of one's professional career.

Discrimination Supervision Framework

Based on the above theoretical lenses, a framework for supervisory relationships is included below. In a mentoring or supervisory relationship, the mentor/supervisor should approach the relationship from a theoretical perspective to help support the mentee or NSC (Gallo, 2013). In the 14 identified studies, no one mentoring theoretical framework has been agreed upon. With this in mind, the discrimination supervision framework is presented for consideration, as it closely aligns with the mentor/mentee relationship and does not include an evaluation component.

The discrimination model of supervision helps supervisors to identify various approaches to supervision through the overlap of focus areas and the roles of the supervisor (Aasheim, 2012;

Bernard, 1979). Three focus areas are presented in the discrimination model: intervention/ process, conceptualization, and personalization (Bernard, 1979). Intervention/process focuses on the skills and behaviors of the counselor that may impact their work with clients. Conceptualization focuses on how the counselor is thinking about the work with clients, both during their session and in between sessions. Finally, personalization focuses on how the counselor is integrating theories and skills into their personal practice.

In working with these three focus areas, the supervisor considers what they are observing or hearing from the counselor and decides where to focus. The supervisor then selects an appropriate role to take on, depending on the level of the counselor (Aasheim, 2012; Bernard, 1979). The discrimination model presents three roles for the supervisor: teacher, counselor, and consultant (Bernard, 1979, Luke & Bernard, 2006). In the teacher role, the supervisor engages in more direct instruction and feedback on an identified area. In the counselor role, the supervisor is working to support the personal needs of the counselor, with the hope that this will help the counselor to naturally develop. In the consultant role, the supervisor is working under the assumption that the counselor has reached a level where they can recognize and express their own needs. While one counselor may need direct feedback and instruction on their observable actions, another counselor may be more advanced and would only need the supervisor as a consultant or resource for how they think about the session (Aasheim, 2012; Bernard, 1979; Luke & Bernard, 2006)).

In using this model, the mentor approaches their support of the mentee from both the learner-centered and constructivist perspectives. The mentor seeks to understand where the mentee is in their learning process by examining the three focus areas in comparison to their conversations with the mentee (Bernard, 1979). By targeting a focus area, the mentor aims to

provide continued learning for the mentee. The mentor also recognizes that the mentee's learning and growth has no end, but can be scaffolded and ongoing (Aasheim, 2012; Bernard, 1979). By providing for movement from the teacher and counselor roles into the consultant role for the mentor, the discriminant supervision framework encourages the mentee to continue their growth and learning (Bernard, 1979).

Assumptions

This research study moves forward with multiple assumptions. With learner-centered (Ellis, 2004; Parkay et al., 2010) and constructivist (Bruner, 1977) perspectives, it is assumed that all NSCs will experience some form of mentoring during their induction process. This mentoring may be minute or widespread in its impact on the NSCs' first several years, but some form of mentoring will be present for all NSCs.

Because the participants were volunteers and self-selected to be interviewed, the assumption is that their self-reporting was honest and accurate to what they felt and experienced. As the researcher, I assume that a relationship developed through the semi-structured interview process to engage with the participants, put them at ease, and allow a safe space for them to tell their stories.

Finally, because this is a subject that I am excited about and have personally experienced, there is an assumption that I have bracketed myself to prevent my own experiences from impacting the semi-structured interviews and the findings. I journaled regularly and debriefed with my team to prevent my own experiences from biasing the findings of the study. My bracketing is explored further in the Methodology section.

Limitations

Due to the sheer size of the population of NSCs in Washington State and the nature of qualitative research, this study is limited in nature. As all research is restricted to a set of participants, this study will be limited to the experiences of voluntary participants. This study is not generalizable to all NSCs and their experiences with mentoring in their first year of school counseling. Rather, in the vein of phenomenological research, this study will find themes of these experiences and provide rich and thick descriptions of these themes to provide more knowledge to the field. Additional limitations of this study are addressed more extensively in the Discussion section.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter examines the role and expectations for school counselors in Washington State and the general induction process of NSCs, with the intention of laying a foundation for understanding the expectations and experiences of NSCs. Following this examination, a closer look at potential challenges in the induction process are presented, along with how the K-12 teaching profession has attempted to address these concerns through mentoring. Mentoring within clinical supervision is also evaluated. Finally, the limited number of studies on how formal and informal mentoring have been implemented with NSCs are evaluated and considered for insights on how this research study was conducted.

The Role of School Counselors

The role of school counselor has grown and developed over time. Initially, the role focused on vocational guidance with the goal of preparing students for the world of work but has now expanded to include best-practice and evidence-based supports for the academic performance and achievement needs of students (ASCA, 2012; Erford, 2016; Thompson, 2012).

American School Counselor Association's National Model

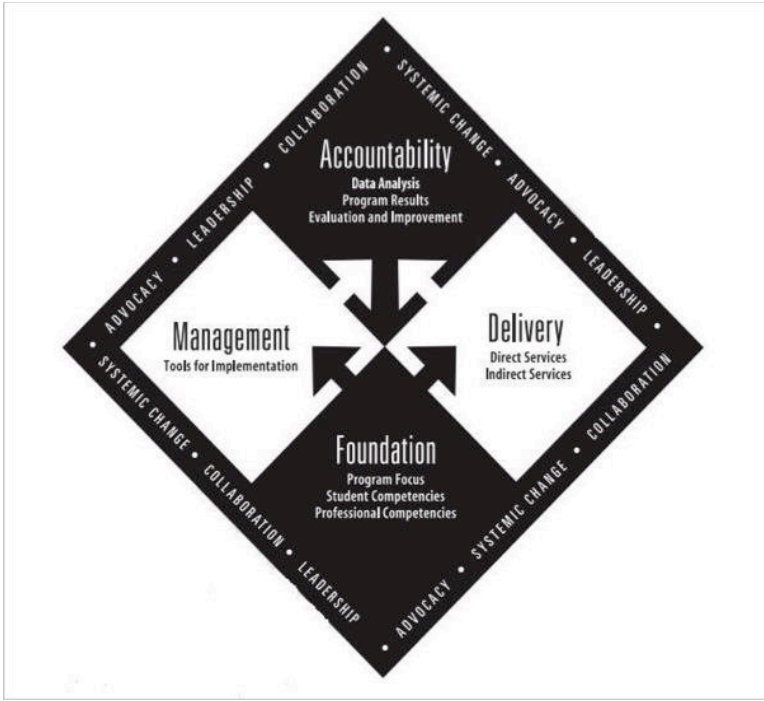
The American School Counselor Association presents a comprehensive approach to school counseling in the ASCA National Model (2012). *Comprehensive* indicates that the needs of all students are being met, not solely targeting the students who are experiencing the most intense or most visible challenges (ASCA, 2012; Erford, 2016; Thompson, 2012). Historically, school counselors' focus was solely to help students prepare for their post-high school career or college plans (ASCA, 2012; Erford, 2016). This focus has now shifted to focus on three areas of development for students: academic, personal/social, and career (Erford, 2016). In 2019, ASCA changed their National Model. While terminology was adjusted, the same underlying principles

remained. For the purposes of this study, the 2012 ASCA National Model will be explored and referenced because it is the model that participants in this study were trained with.

The ASCA National Model (2012) is an ongoing cycle of developing and growing an evidence-based counseling program (see Figure 1). The 2012 ASCA National Model begins with a foundation, in which school counselors identify their beliefs and philosophy, and use those to develop a mission and vision statement that aligns with their beliefs and the school's mission. The foundation influences how the delivery and management systems are planned and implemented. In the delivery system, school counselors provide best-practice direct and indirect services to students. Examples of direct services include the presentation of guidance curriculum to students in large groups, leading of small groups on more focused topics, and finally individual student planning and responsive services. Examples of indirect services involve collaborating with families and school staff, consulting with support staff, and other general system supports for the entire school (ASCA, 2012). The management system helps to guide and track the delivery system through action plans, calendars, data collection, and advisory council. Finally, in the accountability system, the school counselors examine their data and results and complete evaluations and program audits to determine what goals have been met, what adjustments need to be made, and how the counseling program can improve to better serve the students. This, in turn, is reflected in any necessary changes to the foundation. The goal of this reflective cycle is to continually improve the comprehensive counseling program to support all students toward academic, personal/social, and career success (ASCA, 2012; Dollarhide & Lemberger-Truelove, 2018; Erford, 2016; Thompson, 2012).

Figure 1

ASCA National Model



Note. Reprinted from ASCA, 2012, p.vi.

The ASCA National Model (2012) has three underlying themes of advocacy, leadership, and collaboration, all aimed at systemic change (Dollarhide & Lemberger-Truelove, 2018; Erford, 2016; Thompson, 2012). The theme of advocacy encourages school counselors to speak up for policies and practices that will provide all students with a pathway to academic success, aiming to eliminate systemic barriers that stand in the way of student achievement. The theme of leadership asks school counselors to be leaders in the school by challenging the status quo. The theme of collaboration urges school counselors to partner with families, educators, community members, and other stakeholders to work towards eliminating barriers to student success. In the model, school counselors should embody these three themes to bring about systemic change that

will promote and ensure that all students have academic, personal/social, and career success (ASCA, 2012).

Washington State Comprehensive School Counseling and Guidance Program

Washington State's governing educational office, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), has worked in conjunction with WSCA to develop the Washington State Comprehensive School Counseling and Guidance Program Model (WA Model). This model is a melding of the ASCA National Model (2012) and a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) that is specifically applied in the delivery system (OSPI, 2017).

In the WA Model's delivery system, school counselors address the three developmental domains of academic, career, and social/emotional through three tiers of increasingly intensive support. Tier 1 is prevention oriented and aims to provide all students with guidance curriculum and evidence-based services; at this tier, universal supports are provided to all students. Tier 2 interventions focus on a smaller set of identified students who need more targeted services and supports; OSPI identifies that Tier 2 supports will be provided to about 20% of the student population with higher needs. Tier 3 interventions are provided to a limited number of students (between 5-10%) with high needs who require intensive supports that likely necessitate partnering with other school supports or community agencies (OSPI, 2017).

The ASCA National (2012) and WA Models demonstrate a thoughtful departure from the traditionally-held expectations for school counselors (Thompson, 2012). Based on this model, school counselors in Washington state entering the field should be learning about implementing a comprehensive school counseling program as a part of their preparation programs (ASCA, 2012; OSPI, 2017).

School Counselor Preparation Process

An individual seeking to be a school counselor in Washington State must complete either a master's degree in counseling or a state approved certification program (OSPI, 2018). Washington state preparation programs incorporate the ASCA National Model and the WA Model into their curriculum, as they are recognized as best practices (ASCA, 2012; OSPI, 2017). Individuals should exit their programs with an extensive knowledge and understanding of comprehensive school counseling and its implementation (ASCA, 2012; OSPI, 2017).

Washington State school counselor preparation programs seek to prepare school counselors through experiential supervised fieldwork for the challenges they will face as a school counselor. At the time of this study, there were eight active school counselor preparation programs approved by the Professional Educator Standards Board (PESB) in the state of Washington (Central Washington University, n.d.; Heritage University, n.d.; PESB, n.d.; Saint Martin's University, n.d.). Of these graduate programs, five are accredited by CACREP and one is pending accreditation (CACREP, n.d.; University of Puget Sound, n.d.). CACREP requires a minimum of 600 hours of field experience and supervision to provide school counseling students with hands-on experiences that put their learning into action (CACREP, 2016). The two remaining schools also require extensive practicum experiences and internships, combined with formal supervision (City University, n.d.; Whitworth University, n.d.). These school-based experiences help students actively learn through school and community engagement (Thompson, 2012).

Despite this extensive preparation, there remains a gap between school counselor preparation programs and the actual role of the school counselor (Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992). Well-prepared, yet novice school counselors experience

challenges in their transition from student to professional due to aspects of the role that cannot be taught within the constructs of a graduate program (Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Matthes, 1992). These aspects are discussed below.

Development of Professional Identity

Brott and Myers (1999) proposed a theory of the development of professional identity for school counselors through a grounded theory approach. They purport that there are three categories that influence the self-conceptualization of the school counselor: experiences, counselors, and essentials. The *experiences* category recognizes that a school counselor's role is conceptualized through the lens of experience. Because NSCs have limited experiences as a school counselor, mostly through their internships, their experiences are likely low. The second category, *counselors*, indicates that how a school counselor's role is conceptualized is influenced by the other providers at their school; if work is shared or if the school counselor is the only one at their school, the perception of their role can change significantly. The final category of *essentials* indicates the developmental needs and issues of their school, along with the directives and expectations of the school administrators. The professional identity of school counselors may differ greatly as a result of the categorical priorities and needs of the building in which they are employed (Brott & Meyers, 1999).

According to Brott and Myers (1999), these three categories are then processed by school counselors through four phases of structuring, interacting, distinguishing, and evolving. The first phase of *structuring* is the most essential, as it is the time when school counselors begin to define their role through combining their training and the directives that they receive at their school. Because the directives may not be aligned with their perceived role for school counselors, internal conflict or challenges may arise for the NSCs (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Blake, 2020;

Brott & Myers, 1999). As NSCs navigate their first several years and are given more directives to reconcile with their previously perceived role, they may continuously cycle back through this structuring phase (Brott & Myers, 1999).

As the NSCs identify the *what* and the *how* of their jobs, they move into the *interacting* phase. School counselors identify how to maneuver hinderances to their role and recognize the limits of their services in this phase. From there, NSCs move into the *distinguishing* phase, where school counselors are able to advocate for their work and begin to assert their professional responsibility. In the final phase, *evolving*, school counselors are learning on the job from the challenges they face and are developing a guiding focus for their practice (Brott & Myers, 1999).

Brott and Myers (1999) assert that mentoring provides opportunities for NSCs to check their assumptions and progress through these phases. Mentoring can guide conversations about the challenges NSCs face as they develop their professional identity. Although 20 years old, this theory of development of professional identity provides some structure to understanding how school counselors may grow in their role and identify within schools that is consistent with more recent studies (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Johnson et al., 2017; Loveless, 2010; Milsom & McCormick, 2015).

School Counselor Induction Process

When NSCs enter the schools as new professionals, they are expected take on the full role of school counselor from the first day on the job (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Blake, 2020; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992):

> Education is one of the few professions in this society in which novice members are expected to assume the same responsibilities as experienced members of the profession…

> Novice counselors are expected to perform as seasoned veterans from their first day. (Matthes, 1992, p. 245)

Despite this expectation, the reality is that NSCs do not have the experience and knowledge of their more experienced colleagues. The first year is often an induction period, during which NSCs navigate scenarios and challenges not previously experienced. Jackson et al. (2002) describe this first year as the time when the school counselor's role becomes internally conceptualized, beyond their graduate training. This induction period is a time for NSCs to understand the inner workings of their school and to identify their role and function within that system (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Matthes, 1992). Ideally, the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012) and WA Framework (OSPI, 2017) are key components of the NSC's work within their school.

Most NSCs will participate in some form of an induction process, formal or informal, their first year (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992). Bickmore and Curry (2013) suggest the induction would ideally include an initial orientation, ongoing professional development, mentoring, adjusted workload for both the NSC and the mentor school counselor, formalized opportunities for collaboration, and ongoing conversations with administrators to help the NSC transition smoothly into their school. Similarly, Nelson (2018) identifies experiential learning, administrative support, professional development, mentoring, and advocacy as essential components for successful NSCs. Each of these elements provides the NSC with opportunities to assimilate and establish themselves; building a stronger foundation can help the NSC to better understand and serve their student population (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Matthes, 1992; Stickel & Trimmer, 1994). A NSC's induction process may include all, some, or few of the aforementioned components.

While the induction process' purpose has been purported to be integral to the establishment of the NSC within the school (Jackson et al., 2002), it appears to be primarily informally provided by many schools (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992). Through interviews with principals, Bickmore and Curry (2013) found that the induction process for NSCs was oftentimes an afterthought. Although it was recognized by the principals that NSCs were entering with fewer skills because of their inexperience, principals did not plan for formalized induction supports. Most often, principals expressed assumptions that veteran school counselors at their school or in the district would provide the necessary support, but did not report the allocation of resources (e.g., mentor training or reduced workload) to assist in the induction process. Furthermore, the induction for their NSCs was not evidence-based; principals assumed mentoring was effective but did not gather data to determine if additional supports were necessary (Bickmore & Curry, 2013).

Matthes' (1992) seminal study asked 40 school counselors in Iowa about the supports they received during their first year. Upon examining six vignettes, the novice counselors identified if they had encountered a similar situation in their first year as a school counselor, and if so, who had provided the greatest assistance in addressing the situation. Principals were the most frequently identified source of support/assistance. Counselors in rural settings were most likely to not receive any help or assistance when confronted with a situation in which they needed support. While figures and statistical analysis were not presented to support these results, Matthes concludes that "the unique contributions counselors might make are diminished by the professional isolation, given that their primary source of support was administrators" (1992, p. 248). Despite being conducted before the development of the ASCA National Model (2012), it

is worth considering this study and its results, as they bring a different perspective to the findings of Bickmore and Curry (2013).

Both the Matthes (1992) and Bickmore and Curry (2013) studies were qualitative studies, which prevent extrapolation of their findings to the general population. However, their studies present similar patterns of informal, unplanned induction supports provided to NSCs identified in other qualitative studies (Jackson et al., 2002; Milsom & Kayler, 2008). This brings about a quandary to consider: it appears that NSCs feel like they are eventually finding success in their work (Curry & Bickmore, 2013), but how are they getting there? How are NSCs getting the supports that they need to grow and be successful?

Expected Versus Actual Role

In addition to the induction challenges discussed above, NSCs encounter a gap between what they have learned in their preparation programs and the expectations of their schools (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Blake, 2020; Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Goodman-Scott, 2015; Zagelbaum et al., 2014). NSCs often enter the profession with ASCA National Model (2012) aligned competencies, but without the guidance of mentors or supervisors who are familiar with the ASCA National Model (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002).

Researchers (e.g., Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Jackson et al., 2002) state that principals have antiquated expectations for school counselors that are not in alignment with the knowledge and skill sets that are emphasized in the ASCA National Model (2012). "The principals' perceptions of immediate needs superseded services novices were prepared to deliver (i.e., college and career curriculum). A prominent need [for novices] was the accountability pressures felt by principals" (Bickmore & Curry, 2013, p. 134). NSCs are expected to take on managerial and logistical roles by their principals, rather than prevention-

based curriculum and guidance that they have been trained to provide (Bickmore & Curry; Goodman-Scott, 2015; Zagelbaum et al., 2014). Furthermore, Bickmore and Curry (2013) report that the administrators in their study did not fully understand the ASCA National Model (2012) and the role it presents for school counselors. Blake (2020) asserts that the school counselor role is often ambiguous which leads to the assignment of non-counselor duties. If administrators do not understand the proactive role that school counselors are prepared to fill, they cannot utilize them in that capacity.

In the first chapter of *Professional School Counseling: Best Practices for Working in the Schools,* Rosemary A. Thompson (2012) discusses the conflict between differing expectations for school counselors. Principals are most often the supervisors for school counselors, and are the ones who direct their work. If principals understand the comprehensive role that school counselors are trained to take on in a school, then they can utilize the training of the school counselor, which would make for a smoother transition into the profession for NSCs (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Thompson, 2012). By asking school counselors to focus on the managerial or logistical tasks, principals may create a more challenging transition for NSCs by expecting them to complete tasks that they have not been trained for (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Blake, 2020; Thompson, 2012). Role confusion for NSCs is likely, given the conflict between the building administrators' priorities and the priorities identified during their graduate training (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Brott & Myers, 1999; Jackson et al., 2002; Thompson, 2012).

Mentoring as a Potential Solution

The pathway to success in a profession, such as school counseling, is not always easily identified or found. Mentoring could be considered as a way to help guide novices towards success, as it emphasizes an ongoing guiding and caring relationship between a mentor and a

protégé (McLain, 2019; Schwiebert, 2000; Young & Wright, 2001). "Mentoring is a clear example of using lessons from the past to improve contemporary practice" (Vierstraete, 2005, p. 383). The mentor is an individual who is knowledgeable and skilled in the field. The protégé or mentee is an inexperienced novice who needs assistance to be successful. The mentoring relationship is an "integrated approach to advising, coaching, and nurturing" (Young & Wright, 2001, p. 203).

Young and Wright (2001) identify a good mentor as being accepting and trusting of their protégé's developmental process, sensitive to the protégé's needs, skilled at providing support, and able to model continuous learning. The mentor does not simply have the advanced knowledge and skill set, but is also committed to helping novices progress and grow (Schwiebert, 2000; Young & Wright, 2001).

A productive mentoring relationship also depends on the mentee or protégé. The protégé cannot solely depend upon the mentor to guide them, but must also be an active participant in the relationship with their own set of qualities and responsibilities (Schwiebert, 2000; Young & Wright, 2001). A mentee or protégé should respect and trust their mentor, show initiative and resourcefulness, be committed and willing to learn, and be open to honest feedback (Young & Wright, 2001).

Young and Wright (2001) created a methodology to help establish a successful informal mentoring relationship. Initially, the protégé should examine why they need a mentor and what they hope to gain out of the mentoring relationship. After this self-reflection, the protégé should search for a mentor who they believe will meet their needs and then ascertain if the identified person will agree to be their mentor. In the final step, the mentoring pair establish expectations

and ground rules for the mentoring relationship, including individual expectations and goals (Young & Wright, 2001).

It is also important to note non-examples of mentoring relationships. Young and Wright (2001) point out that mentoring relationships are not intended to be friendships; while they will have a friendly component to them, the success of the relationship does not depend on a friendship. They also assert that mentoring relationships are not intended to provide counseling or advising on personal issues or issues unrelated to their professional field (Young & Wright, 2001). The goal of mentoring is to support a mentee towards success and professional growth and does not necessitate the development of personal relationships (Schwiebert, 2000).

The Role of Mentoring in the Induction Process

Johnson (2012) explored the experiences of NSCs in Texas with mentoring in their induction process through a grounded theory approach. Her resulting theory is one potential approach to supporting mentees through a scaffolded mentoring program, similar to Brott and Myers' (1999) theory of development for professional counselors.

The eight participating NSCs in the study had varying experiences with mentors, ranging from seeking out an experienced school counselor as an informal mentor to being assigned a mentor through a district-supported and district-advised program (Johnson, 2012). School counseling certification in Texas requires at least two years of teaching experience (ASCA, 2019), which all participating NSCs had (Johnson, 2012). However, the participants did not all experience the same type of mentoring. Similar themes across the different types of mentoring allowed for a more robust theory that is representative of both formal and informal mentoring. However, the potential differences between the forms of mentoring were not addressed within the study or the theory.

Based on her findings, Johnson (2012) proposed a mentoring model for school counselors which includes a theoretical five-stage induction process for novice school counselors entering the profession. The five stages were (a) starting over, (b) relying on previous knowledge and experiences, (c) learning and gaining new knowledge and experiences, (d) integrating previous and new knowledge, and (e) looking forward and planning for next year.

In the *starting over* stage, the NSCs experienced feelings of frustration and discomfort in starting from scratch, differing from the ease that they had felt as experienced teachers (Johnson, 2012). To help them navigate some of these challenges, NSCs shared that they would *rely on previous knowledge,* Johnson's second stage. In taking on some of the roles of school counselor, the NSCs were able to rely on their previous experiences as teachers to help them to coordinate 504 Plans, document appropriately, create schedules for students, and provide career guidance. Furthermore, the NSCs discussed relying on their college preparation programs and internships, which assisted in planning a counseling program and helping to understand the computer information systems (Johnson, 2012).

In the third stage of *learning and gaining new knowledge and experiences*, the NSCs reported relying on assistance from different school staff to help them understand and fulfill their new roles (Johnson, 2012). School psychologists, social workers, and intervention specialists were all identified in providing guidance to NSCs in how to handle situations and help to support the students. Most district and local trainings were identified as being helpful in providing new information about how to perform expected duties. Some NSCs expressed feeling overwhelmed by the number of trainings they had to attend in order to learn about their jobs. Also in this stage, NSCs identified one-on-one assistance that they received from others, including any assigned mentors. This assistance came from formal mentors, experienced counselors, district

coordinators, department heads, and administrators, and ranged from assistance in answering seemingly trivial questions to coordinating programs for students. All eight of the participants identified one-on-one assistance as "a valuable way to obtain and learn new information" (Johnson, 2012, p. 85).

In the fourth stage of *integrating previous and new knowledge*, the NSCs identified the tension between their expected role and their actual role at their schools. In aiming to implement the ASCA National Model (2012) and Texas Counseling Model (2004), many of the NSCs expressed resignation that they would not be able to reach the ideals as prescribed by these models. From these realizations, most of the NSCs recognized the need to set realistic goals and be forgiving of themselves if they could not complete all of their goals. These reflections lead into the fifth stage of *looking forward and planning for next year*. "As the school year ended, they expressed feelings of confidence and positive outlooks" (Johnson, 2012, p. 102). The NSCs provided insights into their plans for a more effective counseling program and learning from their challenges and mistakes (Johnson, 2012).

With these stages in mind, Johnson (2012) proposed a school counseling mentoring model with five phases to correlate with the stages of induction: (a) introduction, (b) skills assessment, (c) skills development, (d) skills coalescent, and (e) conclusion. The *introduction* phase is when the mentoring relationship is established and aims to set a warm and supportive foundation for their work together. The *skills assessment* phase invites the mentor and mentee to formally and informally assess the skills of the mentee to identify which skills to focus on. In this phase, Johnson also asserts that the mentor should be assessing their own skills as a mentor.

The *skills development* phase is where the work happens. Both the mentee and mentor engage in activities to improve their skills. The mentor seeks to provide opportunities for the

mentee to learn and grow, while still feeling supported. In the *skills coalescent* phase, the newly acquired skill sets are integrated with previous knowledge and skills; the mentee is decreasingly dependent on the mentor for support. The final phase, *conclusion*, is when the mentee and mentor end their formal relationship and redefine it for the future. While their formal mentoring relationship may end, they may choose to continue in a supportive professional relationship (Johnson, 2012).

Johnson (2012) asserts that these phases are not necessarily linear in nature. Depending on the needs of the mentee, mentoring relationships may progress through these phases in varying orders. Furthermore, she indicates that mentors must self-reflect and self-assess to establish a strong mentoring relationship. Johnson concludes that providing research-based mentor training for mentors is highly recommended. Based on her findings, she also recommends that mentoring relationships be assigned for 2 years to allow time for the mentee's continued progression (Johnson, 2012).

Johnson (2012) demonstrated exceptional trustworthiness throughout her study by using seven strategies: (a) member checking, (b) rich and thick descriptions, (c) bracketing, (d) addressing divergent information, (e) reflexive journaling, (f) data triangulation, and (g) an audit trail. However, limitations of this study were not included.

Of initial concern is the sample size; for a grounded theory study, it is recommended to have at least 20-30 participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018), but the sample size could be much larger to allow for theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2014). This study only had eight participants and claimed that theoretical saturation was reached after analyzing five interviews (Johnson, 2012). Charmaz (2014) warns against "invoking the term 'saturation' uncritically" (p. 129), especially if the findings appear to be common or expected. Johnson's findings aligned with the

findings of many other studies speaking positively about mentoring for NSCs (Armstrong et al., 2006; Desmond et al., 2007; Desmond, 2009; Loveless, 2010; Milsom & McCormick, 2015; Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992). Rather, she may have fallen into the trap of assuming saturation after only five interviews instead of seeking to further explore these stages and phases.

Charmaz (2014) also recommends that interview questions for grounded theory studies should focus on how individuals experience the process and identifying steps in the process. Johnson's (2012) questions, rather, focused on exploring the general and mentoring experiences of NSCs. It may be that the questions naturally led to discussing the process and steps. However, because the interviews were semi-structured and follow-up questions were developed based on participant responses, the readers were not privy to how the conversations progressed.

Ultimately, Johnson (2012) provides important data to contribute to the conversation around mentoring for NSCs. While her grounded theory may be shaky based on her sample size, the rich and thick descriptions and unbiased presentation provide overwhelmingly positive perspectives of mentoring.

Similarly, McLain (2019) proposed a model for a mentor academy for school counselors, which would provide NSCs with induction and mentoring support. Induction supports would be initiated through a two-day conference, in which introductory presentations about the profession would be provided. McLain also proposed that NSCs are linked with a mentor at the conference, and the mentoring relationship is encouraged throughout the first year. While McLain (2019) did not provide any implementation data to support this model, it is founded on similar research that this current study and Johnson (2012) explored.

Mentoring in the Teaching Field

The gap between preparation programs and the real world has also been recognized and addressed in the field of teaching. Teachers have an established history of formalized mentoring programs, dating back to the 1960s (Bullough, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Vierstraete, 2005; Zembytska, 2016). Beginning in the 1990s, mentoring for new teachers has quickly grown into a regular expectation for incoming teachers in the United States (Bullough, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Plecki et al., 2017; Vierstraete, 2005). Mentoring has become such a dominant form of teacher induction that the terms are often used interchangeably (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

A quality teacher-mentoring program is not standardized, but rather has some core components that adapt to the needs of the mentee, along with consideration for the mentor, administration team, and the school environment (Bullough, 2012; Vierstraete, 2005). The core components, as asserted by Vierstraete (2005), focus mostly on the attributes of those involved, rather than steps or procedural components. Mentors should be "accepting of the beginning teacher, skilled at providing instructional support, and also effective in different interpersonal contexts" (Vierstraete, 2005, p. 385). Mentors also counsel, guide, and help the mentee to develop on personal and professional fronts (Bullough, 2012; Vierstraete, 2005).

Prior to the establishment of the mentoring relationship, a localized needs assessment should be conducted by the administrator or mentor to determine what the needs of the novice teacher are (Brock, 1999; Gordon, 1991; Newton et al., 1994; Vierstraete, 2005). The purpose of this assessment is to determine how to best support the novice teacher and should be repeated throughout the mentoring relationship to continuously support the mentee's needs (Brock, 1999; Gordon, 1991; Newton et al., 1994; Vierstraete, 2005). Administrators should be involved in the

development of the mentoring program, regularly evaluating its success and adjusting as necessary (Newton et al., 1994; Vierstraete, 2005). Mentoring should supplement the new teacher's developing relationship with their administrators, not replace it (Vierstraete, 2005).

Bullough (2012) asserts that the mentoring for new teachers should move towards support and accountability in the mentoring process. While the above, quality mentoring program is ideal, the reality is that "mentees are entirely dependent on the good will of their mentors, chosen by their principals, for whatever they receive of benefit from the relationship" (Bullough, 2012, p. 61).

Data has demonstrated that teacher mentoring programs are successful in helping new teachers transition into the profession (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Zembytska, 2016). Due to the growth of teacher mentoring programs, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) sought to examine the empirical studies that have evaluated the effectiveness of teacher mentoring programs. They found the empirical studies focused on three areas of outcomes: teacher satisfaction, teacher competence, and student academic performance. In the five studies examining teacher satisfaction that Ingersoll and Strong deemed to be valid, statistically significant findings indicated that mentoring programs had a positive effect on teacher satisfaction and teacher retention. Through collecting and evaluating observational data, four out of the five studies reported positive effects of mentoring on the teaching practices of beginning teachers. The fifth study reported ambiguous findings (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

In the examination of four studies that sought to examine the impact of mentoring on student academic growth, Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that three of the four studies reported a positive correlation between the amount of mentoring for teachers and the achievement gains for students, with the fourth study reporting mixed results of positive

correlations and no correlations. Ingersoll and Strong recognized the limitations of the findings specifically in this outcome area, as a causal relationship between teacher mentoring and student academic achievement cannot be assumed.

Overall, while these results are positive, it is challenging to draw general conclusions to apply to all mentoring programs because the content, duration, and delivery of the mentoring programs vary so greatly (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). However, with these generally positive results, the education field appears to be relying more and more on mentoring programs as part of the induction process for new teachers (Bullough, 2012; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011).

Mentoring for Beginning Teachers in Washington State

Washington State provides teacher mentor programs, seeking to help novice teachers ease into the profession. The state offers Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) grants to districts to provide support for beginning teacher induction. In focusing on retention and mobility, the BEST grant program aims to identify ways to keep beginning teachers in the field through providing them with supports during the often challenging first year. The BEST grants began in the 2009-2010 school year and have been provided to a range of 7 to 71 school districts in the state, depending on the year (Plecki et al., 2017).

The BEST grants do not prescribe a specific mentoring program or design; however, the BEST grant recipients should include the following components in their mentoring program: (a) well-trained, carefully selected mentors, (b) an instructional orientation for the beginning teacher, (c) a classroom set-up visit with the mentor prior to the first day of school, (d) on-going professional learning for beginning teachers, (e) formative observations with written feedback, (f) release time for beginning teachers to observe accomplished teachers, (g) on-going

professional learning for mentors, (h) job description and compensation for mentors, and (i) a stakeholders' team to evaluate and support the induction program (Plecki et al., 2017).

Plecki et al. (2017) sought to evaluate the impact that the BEST grant was having on retention and mobility of first year teachers. They conducted a longitudinal analysis of whether beginning teachers were staying at their schools or in their districts in year-by-year and five-year increments to try to answer the question: "What variables consistently explain beginning teachers' retention and mobility outcomes in Washington state?". Statistically significant findings indicated that beginning teachers in BEST districts were less likely to exit the teaching workforce one year later, in comparison to non-BEST districts. In examining the 2009-2010 beginning teaching cohort, BEST was found to be a significant, negative predictor of beginning teachers exiting the field and of moving to a new district for the next school year.

While these findings are promising, Plecki et al. (2017) acknowledge that varying levels of induction supports, both in BEST-funded districts and non-BEST-funded districts, can place limitations on these findings. Furthermore, Plecki et al. point out that approximately two-thirds of BEST-funded districts were not able to provide all of the components that were recommended. This limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the data comparisons, as differences in induction programming between the BEST-funded districts and non-BEST-funded districts may not be as great as initially suggested. Therefore, differences between retention rates cannot be directly attributed to the BEST-funded programming (Plecki et al., 2017).

The BEST grant is not limited to beginning teachers, as it aims to support all beginning educators and has been extended to include school counselors in the past. (M. Yoshida, personal communication, August 16, 2018). However, there were no school districts offering mentoring to NSCs through the BEST grant in the 2018-2019 school year (M. Yoshida, personal

communication, August 16, 2018). No data has been evaluated and published focusing on the BEST-funded support of NSCs in Washington state.

Formal Mentoring for Novice School Counselors

While mentoring programs may typically target beginning teachers, this does not preclude mentoring programs for NSCs. Formal mentoring programs have been designed and implemented for NSCs (Armstrong et al., 2006; Desmond et al., 2007; Desmond, 2009; Loveless, 2010; Milsom & McCormick, 2015; Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992). Following are details and analyses of mentoring programs for NSCs that have implemented and evaluated, presented in order of publication.

A Mentoring Project for New School Counselors

The concerns around how to assist school counselors entering the profession is not a new concern; in 1989, educators in the state of Maine identified and responded to the issue of school counselors struggling to navigate their first year in the field (VanZandt & Perry, 1992). A large group of school counselors was identified as working in isolated environments, such as elementary schools or small school districts, and the authors felt that they were "thrust into situations in which they must professionally assert their independence and maturity, yet privately admit their insecurities and their needs for a support network" (VanZandt & Perry, 1992, p. 158). Because of this need, the Maine School Counselor Association, the University of Southern Maine, and the Maine Department of Education and Cultural Services collaborated to develop a statewide mentoring program for NSCs (VanZandt & Perry, 1992).

In the first two phases of the mentoring program, experienced school counselors were invited to participate in mentoring training, which covered self-awareness, developmental theory for novice counselors, and mentoring roles. Thirty-six mentors volunteered and completed the

training. In the 1989-1990 school year, 28 NSCs were paired with 23 of the mentors. It was not indicated how these NSCs were selected or how representative they were of the population of NSCs in Maine; this could be all of the NSCs in the state or a smaller group that volunteered to participate. Addressing the sampling procedure is necessary, as it can change the interpretation of findings. If the participants were only a smaller group of the NSCs in Maine who volunteered to be mentees, then perhaps the findings are skewed towards the positive because of an unidentified inclination towards mentoring (VanZandt & Perry, 1992).

In the final phase, the researchers surveyed the mentors and participating NSCs six months after their initial pairing through a mail survey and follow-up telephone interview; their findings were sparsely reported. While only providing overall feedback on the program, the findings indicated that those who participated found it worthwhile, with the only criticisms of the program focused on the challenges of geographic matching (VanZandt & Perry, 1992). As discussed above, the interpretation of this data cannot be taken at face value. If the participating NSCs volunteered to be mentees, there may have been an initial positive bias towards mentoring, which could explain the positive feedback. If the participating NSCs were required to participate in the mentoring program, then the findings may be more valid and representative of NSCs as a whole.

Despite a lack of in-depth methodology, limited data in the study, and questionable conclusions, the program is presented as beneficial to both NSCs and mentors. Participants indicated that it was worthwhile; on a Likert-style rating scale (1 = *not worthwhile* to 5 = *very worthwhile*), mentees rated the program a mean of 4.5 and mentors rated the program a mean of 4.7. Participants also felt the program was worth recreating across the country, especially in

potentially isolated locations, such as rural school districts or elementary schools (VanZandt & Perry, 1992).

Although this study is nearly three decades old, it is the first published study to develop and evaluate a statewide mentoring program for NSCs (VanZandt & Perry, 1992). This evaluation of the program signifies the conversation about mentoring for NSCs was occurring, documenting the existence and perceived successes of a state-wide mentoring program. However, despite these reported successes 30 years ago, the Maine School Counselor Association (MESCA) indicated that they do not currently have a counselor-specific mentoring program for NSCs (MESCA, personal communication, August 23, 2018).

A Developmental School Counselor Mentor Preparation Program

In order to have a successful mentoring program, Peace (1995) argues that mentors must have extensive training to prepare them for their new role as mentors. Because providing NSCs with support in their early experiences is imperative for initial and continued success in the field, Peace (1995) introduces a model for training mentors: the developmental Counselor Mentor Education program.

The Counselor Mentor Education Program was a 15-week long course that promoted higher levels of thinking and problem solving through classroom learning, field-based practice, readings, and journal assignments. The participating mentors were 12 experienced school counselors from three school districts in North Carolina. Mentors were trained in establishing helping relationships, reviewing effective counseling behaviors and skills, learning about the Cycle of Assistance, and discussing developmental stage theory for adult learners. Following this course, the mentors had a practicum experience with a school-counselor-in-training seeking

to grow through mentoring. The mentors were able to practice giving supervision and feedback to their mentees while under supervision themselves (Peace, 1995).

Through qualitative feedback about the program, Peace (1995) asserted that this mentor training model assisted mentors to grow in their counseling skills and mentoring skills. Additional evidence was provided to suggest that the group process in the mentor training was helpful and a great resource. The author argued that more planning and focus on the training and support of mentors can better prepare them for the important role of mentoring NSCs (Peace, 1995).

While the arguments for formalized mentor training have been echoed in other studies (Armstrong et al., 2006; Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Ganser, 1992; Loveless, 2010; Milsom & Kayler, 2008; Milsom & McCormick, 2015), the conclusions in this study should be taken cautiously. Peace (1995) did not discuss a methodology to the gathering of her qualitative feedback. Poignant quotes were provided in support of each component, but the reader is left unaware of how these quotes were selected. These quotes could be representative of the feelings of the participating mentors or could be highlighting only the positive responses and ignoring critical quotes. As with all qualitative studies, the findings are not generalizable and cannot be assumed to hold true with other populations or groups.

This program also presents concerns about the commitment and resources required by the mentors and supporting districts. A 15-week training program would take over one third of the typical school year. Because of the high levels of involvement that this training requires, it would appear that a mentor may be partially or fully pulled away from their role as a school counselor to fully participate in this training. Furthermore, to provide such extensive training

would likely be costly to participating districts. To try to mediate these costs, it could be of value to explore if the training can be condensed while still producing similar results.

With these concerns aside, Peace (1995) does present a potential model for the training of school counseling mentors. Furthermore, as following studies conclude, mentoring programs appear to be more successful when the mentors receive some type of formalized training (Armstrong et al., 2006; Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Milsom & Kayler, 2008; Milsom & McCormick, 2015). Peace (1995) provides potential considerations for how these training programs can be designed. Of further interest, at the time of publication, the North Carolina School Counselor Association does offer optional mentoring to NSCs (North Carolina School Counselor Association, n.d.). It appears that the mentoring program initiated with Peace's mentor training continues to support NSCs to this day in North Carolina.

Mentoring Program for First-Year Elementary School Counselors

Armstrong et al. (2006) worked with a large, urban school district to examine the issue of low retention of school counselors in the district's elementary schools. To attempt to increase their retention of NSCs, the district created a mentoring program and required all entering elementary school counselors to participate. This mentoring program consisted of monthly groups of NSCs, along with individual meetings and site visits. Four mentors worked with 41 NSCs.

In a qualitative study of this mentoring program, Armstrong et al. (2006) observed group sessions and conducted interviews with 16 of the mentees. The 16 participating mentees were recommended by their mentors, creating a potential for bias. The authors attempted to reduce bias by asking for participants who could provide rich information and by not sharing the interview questions with the mentors. However, the recommended mentees may have been

selected because they were perceived to be more likely to give favorable reports about the mentoring program. This also may contribute to the absence of any negative or neutral statements on the mentoring program reported in the study.

The findings were separated by the setting of the support; results and analysis were presented on the group experience and the individual meetings. Due to the solitary nature of the work of school counselors at elementary schools, the NSCs reported a great appreciation for the camaraderie and opportunity to share and relate with each other's experiences in the group. The group also provided an opportunity for collaboration and problem solving. The NSCs were thankful for the opportunity to share resources and ask questions of each other (Armstrong et al., 2006).

NSCs reported a high level of appreciation for the accessibility and high responsiveness of their mentors; the mentees felt that they could easily reach their mentor to discuss urgent issues. In unfamiliar situations, mentees found modeling to be an effective mentoring strategy, both with regards to situations, such as classroom guidance, and in navigating district procedures and protocols. Mentees also expressed gratitude for having someone to express their frustrations to; mentors could provide non-judgmental feedback to the mentees in a safe and solution-focused setting. Overall, the mentees reported their mentors brought a wealth of knowledge and relevant resources to the relationship (Armstrong et al., 2006).

Many mentees reported that the mentoring program also helped to build their self-confidence in their role as a school counselor. Most mentees shared concerns about burnout and expressed feelings of being overwhelmed in their first year as school counselors. Mentoring support helped to minimize these concerns and increase job satisfaction. All participants made

recommendations for continuing the mentoring program, especially to support isolated school counselors (Armstrong et al., 2006).

Armstrong et al. (2006) made recommendations for counselor educators and school districts to become more familiar with the developmental difficulties of NSCs to better support them through the induction process. If more attention is placed "on early developmental challenges of school counselors, they may be better prepared for the multi-faceted role they are expected to assume" (Armstrong et al., 2006, p. 16). Furthermore, based on the positive reporting in their study, Armstrong et al. (2006) recommend the continuation and development of mentoring programs for NSCs. While these findings must be considered cautiously based on the sampling procedure, they do indicate a positive impact of mentoring on NSCs' induction experience.

Mentoring NSCs Without Teaching Experience

Desmond et al. (2007) assert that previous teaching experience contributes to the school counselor's knowledge about school learning environments; school counselors with no teaching experience may be lacking in this area. Through a collective case study, the authors conducted interviews with two mentoring-pairs of school counselors, each consisting of one veteran school counselor with more than 5 years of counseling experience and one NSC with no prior teaching experience. These pairs had been meeting as part of a district-mandated mentoring program during the first year of the mentee's employment. The authors sought to learn "how does mentoring help NSCs without a teaching background transition into the school environment?".

The authors identified *themes grouped by school environment*, such as procedural learning and assimilating into school culture, and *themes grouped by the profession of school counseling*, such as the benefits of mentoring and motivations for engaging in mentoring. All

participants identified a need to be open to learning. The mentors expressed that they learned new strategies and took on new perspectives following their mentoring experience. From these findings, the authors suggested that NSCs are entering their first year with a gap in procedural knowledge, despite graduating with extensive theoretical knowledge. Some of these gaps could be addressed by having access to a mentor. A mentor became a resource for procedural questions and provided supervision to help the NSCs transition into the field (Desmond et al., 2007).

With a collective case study design, Desmond et al. (2007) explicitly stated their intent to contribute to the dialogue of mentoring and school counseling, while not generalizing their findings. They suggested that mentors can greatly impact the roles that the NSC takes on within the school and what their counseling program may look like. While the authors recognized that both mentor pairs were part of a district-mandated mentoring program, they concluded that a beneficial experience may occur despite initial mentee motivations. Ultimately, they presented mentoring as a potential way to increase support and decrease isolation for NSCs. The authors suggested that more research could focus on the benefits for mentees, mentors, schools, students, and counseling programs (Desmond et al., 2007).

Limitations of this study were not discussed by the authors. The selection process was not addressed and could have a considerable impact on the findings. If participation was voluntary, participants would be more likely to have extreme views or feelings to share on the research topic (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The positive and beneficial findings could be explained by a voluntary selection process. The questions presented to participants were not included. Questions focused on the identified themes could have led participants towards certain responses. Finally, the role of the researchers within the study was not addressed. Because

qualitative data collection and analysis are so dependent on the perspectives of the researchers, it is important that any biases or perspectives be addressed (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Desmond et al. (2007) did not bracket their own perspectives within this study, potentially impacting the validity of their findings.

Further Examining Mentoring Relationships of Professional School Counselors

Desmond (2009) continued with the collective case study presented in Desmond et al. (2007) to examine the sub-questions of "What are the motivations for engaging in a mentoring relationship? What was satisfying or dissatisfying about mentoring?" (p. 3).

In the interviews, Desmond identified five themes to address these sub-questions: (a) challenges to mentoring, (b) collegial relationships, (c) definition of mentoring, (d) modeling for mentee, and (e) supporting the mentee. In addressing the theme *definition of mentoring*, the participants were asked directly to define mentoring. All four participants provided varying definitions of mentoring. One mentee focused on the building of the relationship, while the other mentee focused on the process of learning. One mentor focused on the development of the mentee, and the other mentor focused on the responsibility of both parties in the relationship (Desmond, 2009).

The most common identified challenge to mentoring was scheduling times to meet (Desmond, 2009). All participants identified that their relationships grew from a mentor-mentee relationship into a collegial relationship, where they felt comfortable going to each other with questions or concerns. All participants identified *modeling for the mentee* as an effective method for learning, as it allowed the mentee opportunities to observe a different way to approach a situation that they may not have known how to address. This was similar to the findings in

Armstrong et al. (2006) and Milsom and McCormick (2015), which identified modeling as a preferred method for learning.

Additionally, the theme of *supporting the mentee* as a goal for the mentoring relationship was identified and discussed (Desmond, 2009). Similar to the findings of VanZandt and Perry (1992), it was helpful for the mentees to just know that they had a support system in place to seek guidance and reassurance.

Desmond (2009) recognized that these findings should not be extrapolated to all mentoring relationships and are not representative of all mentoring relationships. Desmond "wishes to recognize that there are other views pertinent to the issue of school counseling and mentoring that were not captured in this research study" (2009, p. 7). Additionally, this study had similar limitations in sampling and trustworthiness to Desmond et al. (2007) as it was taken from the same data. However, there was some universality to these findings that make them valuable to include, as they aligned with the findings of previous studies of mentoring relationships for NSCs (Armstrong et al., 2006, Milsom & McCormick, 2015; VanZandt & Perry, 1992).

Perceptions of a Mentoring and Induction Program

Loveless (2010) conducted an examination of a formal mentoring program for elementary school counselors new to a school district in Georgia. The mentoring program had 11 mentees and three mentors. Of the 11 mentees, seven were NSCs and four were experienced school counselors who were new to the district. Six of the 11 were selected by mentor recommendation to participate in the study. Additional demographic information was not reported. The mentors led monthly group mentoring meetings and provided individual support

to mentees as needed. The mentees also received a new counselor handbook which included technical and procedural information about a counselor's role in the district (Loveless, 2010).

To gather data, Loveless (2010) conducted semi-structured interviews with the six participants, observed them in the classroom, and examined the procedural documents. She reported finding overwhelming positive results in support of this mentoring program. Mentees reported appreciating the sharing of resources and modeling from the mentors. The group process was described by participants as allowing for networking opportunities, peer support, consultation, and increased motivation. Participating mentees recommended extending the program to last for two years because it was so helpful: "There was a feeling that we weren't ready to be weaned, so to speak … from this experience because it was so nurturing" (p. 31). Loveless (2010) concluded that this program supported faster adaption and higher productivity for school counselors, and ultimately improved results for students.

Loveless (2010) adequately addressed the limitations of her study, such as a small sample size and possible bias in favor of the program within the selected participants, due to their selection process. She also acknowledged a personal bias in support of mentoring, as a former mentor herself.

However, the reader was not privy to information about the mentors. The preparation and other expectations for mentors could impact how the mentoring program performed and the conclusions of this study. It was not disclosed whether or not the mentors participated in a training program to prepare them for this role. If mentors were not formally trained, it would be of interest to know how they prepared to lead such a seemingly successful program. Moreover, Loveless (2010) did not address if mentoring was their only role or if they were also current school counselors in the district. If the mentors were serving both as mentors and school

counselors, their time was divided, and they may have had less time to support a mentee. However, if their sole role was to mentor the incoming school counselors, the positive results could be attributed to the amount of time the mentors had to dedicate to the mentees.

It may be of interest to consider how these results might compare to a similar program at the middle school or high school level. By nature of the system, the elementary school counselor is typically more isolated (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006; Jackson et al., 2002) and possibly more in need of a program like this. The isolating nature of elementary school may have contributed to the high levels of appreciation for this mentoring program. This same program may not be reported as successful if provided to middle or high school counselors, because they often have a team of counselors who can provide some of these supports on site.

Another important result of this study is the positive feedback from the experienced mentees who were new to the district (Loveless, 2010). Since experienced school counselors reported the mentoring program to be valuable when entering the district, it is worth considering how valuable this type of support is to all levels of school counselors when they are entering a new system and learning new procedural expectations. Perhaps this type of support is needed for all incoming school counselors, no matter their experience. Again, examining this through the lens of the elementary school system versus the middle or high school level would be important. The experienced mentees might feel more isolated at the elementary school level, whereas experienced school counselors entering in a middle school or high school might receive more informal induction supports from their counseling teams.

A Mentoring Approach for Experienced School Counselors

Milsom and McCormick (2015) conducted an action research project in which four experienced school counselors were selected from a group of volunteers to participate in

mentoring relationships with Milsom. The mentoring focused on the accountability component of the ASCA National Model (2012); the collection, analysis, and presentation of data to evaluate school counseling programs. The participating school counselors, with experience ranging between 5 and 19 years in the field, did not feel confident implementing an accountability system in their work. Through individual meetings and email correspondence over the course of 3 months, Milsom tailored her mentoring supports to model, encourage, and challenge the mentees to develop and analyze their own needs assessment (Milson & McCormick, 2015).

In surveys, the mentees reported an increase in their self-efficacy and attitudes about accountability and its use in school counseling (Milsom & McCormick, 2015). Milsom recognized that this positive growth could be inflated since the mentees were mentored by the author and may have wanted to paint her work in a positive light. However, Milsom also reported from her notes and observations that all four school counselors had a noticeable positive growth in their perceivable self-efficacy and attitudes about accountability. The authors made efforts to triangulate the data through collecting various forms of data and bracket their own perspectives to ensure unbiased and valid findings. These strategies demonstrated trustworthiness in the study.

Milsom and McCormick (2015) concluded that mentoring can help experienced school counselors to grow in their skill sets and confidence to use these skills. Many school counselors have knowledge from their training or professional development, but struggle in the implementation due to low self-efficacy or uncertainty of how to proceed. The authors found that the implementation process can be encouraged and supported through a mentoring relationship that includes modeling.

Interestingly, this study's mentees were experienced school counselors, not NSCs. The study reinforces a belief that experienced school counselors still need support in implementing the ASCA National Model (Milsom & McCormick, 2015). Although one of the participating school counselors received their training prior to the creation of the ASCA National Model in 2003 (ASCA, 2012), three of them began their school counseling careers after 2003 and were most likely trained in the ASCA National Model. This hints at the challenges to implementing a comprehensive model; school counselors with 5-19 years of experience might struggle in its full implementation. If experienced school counselors are having difficulties with this, it is very likely that NSCs are facing more challenges in the implementation of the ASCA National Model as they are still learning how to navigate their role (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992).

As numerous authors have pointed out, the first few years are foundational years for school counselors (Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992). If experienced school counselors benefit from mentoring to help them meet current role expectations, then it would follow that NSCs who have no experience in the field may also benefit from this type of assistance.

Summary

Although the studies of formalized mentoring for NSCs are sparse and spread over the past three decades, there are similar themes that have been found across multiple studies. Formal mentoring programs provided the opportunity for the NSC to consult with a mentor or other NSCs as NSCs encountered concerns, crises, or challenging situations (Armstrong et al., 2006; Desmond, 2009; Loveless, 2010; Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992). Mentors modeling specific skills or situations (Desmond, 2009; Loveless, 2010; Milsom & McCormick, 2015) and

providing supports on procedural aspects of the job (Loveless, 2010; Milsom & McCormick, 2015) were specifically identified as positive forms of support. Having this readily available support helped to minimize the NSC's concerns about being overwhelmed as they entered the profession (Armstrong et al., 2006; Milsom & McCormick, 2015).

Despite some challenges to trustworthiness, all of these studies reported that NSCs found the mentoring process to be supportive and helpful in increasing their sense of job-satisfaction and self-efficacy (Armstrong et al., 2006; Desmond, 2009; Desmond et al., 2007; Milsom & McCormick, 2015; Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992). Furthermore, they all recommended that formalized mentoring programs should continue in some capacity for NSCs (Armstrong et al., 2006; Desmond, 2009; Desmond et al., 2007; Milsom & McCormick, 2015; Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992). Accompanying this recommendation, three studies suggest that mentor preparation programs could provide even better induction supports (Milsom & McCormick, 2015; Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992).

Based on the findings of these ungeneralizable studies, it appears that mentoring for NSCs has a foundation of supportive research. Because identifying information is left out of these studies, I am unable to investigate further to determine if the mentoring programs continue to exist, except where noted. It would be interesting to assess formalized mentoring for NSCs via a longitudinal study, similar to the BEST study (Plecki et al., 2017). Simply put, more current research is necessary to explore and determine the impact of formal mentoring on NSCs.

Novice School Counselors Seeking Out Informal Mentoring

When formal mentoring programs are not available, NSCs may seek out their own forms of mentoring to help support their induction process (Bass et al., 2013; Curry & Bickford, 2012; Curry & Bickford, 2013; Johnson, 2012; Milsom & Kayler, 2008). Following are details and

evaluations of how NSCs are seeking out informal supports when formalized mentoring is not provided.

Informal Support and Mentoring for First-Year School Counselors

Milsom and Kayler (2008) sought to learn more about the induction experiences of NSCs to better inform future practices through a qualitative study of seven NSCs. The NSCs completed weekly journals focused on provided prompts or other pressing issues. All of the participating NSCs reported seeking out informal mentoring during their first year. Through a thematic analysis of the journals, Milsom and Kayler identified two themes pertaining to how others were helping the NSCs: mentoring and support.

The authors distinguished between mentoring and support based on the interactions between the NSC and the other individual. Mentoring involved and relied upon the expertise and higher rank of the other participant, while support experiences did not depend on the sharing of that expertise. The mentoring relationships appeared to be more consulting in nature; the NSC unsure about how to proceed and relying on the expertise of the other individual to assist. In support relationships, NSCs reported receiving positive feedback from colleagues, generating solutions in collaboration with colleagues, and having a safe space to vent and be emotionally vulnerable. Through the mentoring relationships, the NSCs' reported growth in their knowledge and skill sets, while the support relationships reportedly assisted in perceived personal or emotional growth (Milsom & Kayler, 2008).

In Milsom and Kayler's study (2008), as in all qualitative studies, it is important to remember that findings are not generalizable and only represent those participating in the study. The participants were provided with weekly prompts that focused on mentoring and supports that the NSCs were (or were not) receiving. These prompts could have increased the participants'

awareness of seeking out assistance from others; their experiences with mentoring could have increased because they were being reminded of it on a weekly basis. The authors did not discuss if they conducted member checking to confirm their interpretations of the participants' journals. However, despite these concerns, the findings are consistent with following studies; NSCs reported positive feelings and growth as a result of their informal mentoring relationships.

One may wonder: if informal mentoring appears to be working, why invest in formal mentoring for counselors when there are so many other needs in schools? Milsom and Kayler (2008) address this contemplation by pointing out that it is unfair to expect that any school counselor with experience is able and willing to take additional time out of their already busy day to mentor a NSC. Formal mentors receive training to prepare them to support and mentor a NSC (Armstrong et al., 2006; Desmond et al., 2007; Desmond, 2009; Milsom & McCormick, 2015; Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992). However, when formal mentoring is not available, informal mentoring can provide much needed guidance as NSCs learn to navigate their new profession.

Milsom and Kayler (2008) recommend that districts consider the above quandary when setting up mentoring opportunities for incoming educators. If formalized mentoring is not available for NSCs, they recommend that other opportunities are provided to try to encourage informal mentoring and support. For example, districts could create time for district-wide counselor meetings to allow for consultation, collaboration, and bonding between all school counselors. Through building relationships between colleagues, the authors assert that NSCs will be supported in their induction process (Milsom & Kayler, 2008).

School Counseling Induction and the Importance of Mattering

Curry and Bickmore (2012) focused on the concept of mattering as it connects to NSCs and their induction into the profession. They identified mattering as a sense that one is important in the world and, with regards to this study, in their role at school. Through a qualitative study, Curry and Bickmore (2012) used a constructivist paradigm to identify themes that contributed or did not contribute to the mattering of seven NSCs. The authors demonstrated trustworthiness of their findings through bracketing themselves, triangulating their data, and conducting member checking to confirm their findings.

As discussed previously, school counselors try to implement ASCA best practices within schools that still ask school counselors to perform non-counseling related tasks. Curry and Bickmore (2012) asserted that this leads to occupational stress, which has been demonstrated to negatively correlate with career satisfaction and commitment to the field. They suspected that NSCs may feel this stress more intensely due to the potential for role-confusion. Upon entering the field, NSCs not only experience normal personal and occupational stress from their new job, but they also must learn a new system of procedures and protocols. With this in mind, mattering may look different for each NSC.

Multiple themes were identified in support of mattering for NSCs. Informal mentoring from other counselors on the counseling team was identified as a subtheme to increase mattering, specifically *importance mattering*, or the belief one has that others are invested in their future. This informal mentoring allowed NSCs opportunities to ask questions and get support from experienced school counselors (Curry & Bickmore, 2012).

Since no formal mentoring was arranged, all of the participating NSCs reported that the responsibility for seeking out mentoring support was placed on them. For NSCs in a school with

experienced school counselors, they had to initiate a mentoring-like relationship. For NSCs with no other school counselors at their school, they had to actively find an experienced school counselor at another school to provide support. The participants reported feeling overlooked and unimportant by their district because of this lack of a connection (Curry & Bickmore, 2012).

In addition to identifying themes that contributed to a sense of mattering, the authors also identified missing induction elements that contributed to NSC's perceptions of not mattering (Curry & Bickmore, 2012). The issues that appeared to contribute most to this lowered sense of mattering were a lack of formalized mentoring and a lack of counselor-focused orientation (Curry & Bickmore, 2012). Because of this lack of supports, the participating NSCs were held responsible for their own induction process. They had to first identify what they needed to know and then seek out assistance from those who could help them get that information. The authors found this process as a whole, and informal mentoring specifically to be inefficient and ineffective because of the inconsistency and the burden placed on the NSCs to speak up for themselves. Although potentially inefficient or ineffective, it appears that these informal mentoring relationships still met needs of the participating NSCs since they independently sought them out. This is indicative of the high levels of need for mentoring supports for NSCs (Curry & Bickmore, 2012).

Curry and Bickmore (2012) recommended, based on their limited findings, that formalized mentoring programs become integrated in the induction programming for NSCs. While they recognized that their findings were not generalizable due to the nature of their study, their findings do appear to follow in the patterns of other similar studies. The authors cited the paucity of the research around this subject as a challenge and recommended the induction of NSCs, especially with regards to mattering, be investigated further (Curry & Bickmore, 2012).

Further Exploration of the Induction Period through Metaphors

Curry and Bickmore (2013) utilized the same interviews from their 2012 study to analyze the NSCs' thoughts and feelings about the induction process, paying specific attention to metaphors. The NSCs in this study did not have a formal induction process or formal mentoring. To demonstrate trustworthiness, Curry and Bickmore (2013) again conducted member checking and bracketed their own perceptions throughout the analysis process. The authors also sought to fully understand and contextualize the metaphors before analyzing them; metaphors taken out of context could mean something entirely different. From interviews with seven NSCs, three themes of metaphors emerged regarding their perception of the induction process: being overwhelmed, struggling, and stabilizing (Curry & Bickmore, 2013).

The metaphor of being "fed to the wolves" represented the theme of being overwhelmed. NSCs used metaphors to emphasize their struggles with lack of systematic support, the dissonance between their job expectations and realities, and overwhelming stress. A second metaphor of "keeping my head above water" was used to describe a feeling of struggling. NSCs frequently referenced the sense of being alone and having to figure things out for themselves, along with frustrations around inconsistent or unstructured induction elements. The participating NSCs did not have formal mentoring, but many sought out informal mentors. Despite these supports, the NSCs reported that the mentoring could have been more helpful if their mentors had received a formal mentor training. The final theme was represented by the metaphor "I'm on the right track". Novice school counselors used this metaphor to indicate accomplishment, belonging, collegiality, and to identify positive induction elements, such as formalized and informal administrative supports (Curry & Bickmore, 2013).

The analysis of the metaphors indicated that most participating NSCs were able to progress from feeling overwhelmed to feeling stable in their role (Curry & Bickmore, 2013). Many sought out informal or other unintentional supports to assist them through this progression. Curry and Bickmore (2013) noted that the identified positive aspects of the induction process were mostly unplanned. They asserted that with more planning, intentionality, and reflection on the needs of NSCs, the induction process can be more supportive of the transition into the profession.

Summary

All three of these studies included an examination of informal mentoring for NSCs. They all suggested that NSCs experienced feelings of being overwhelmed in their first year and actively sought out some form of informal mentoring supports as a way to deal with these feelings and experiences (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Milsom & Kayler, 2008). Placing this additional burden on NSCs of seeking out their own mentors is inefficient and seems counterintuitive when they are already struggling with feeling overwhelmed (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Curry & Bickmore, 2013). School counselors who become the informal mentors may also feel burdened by taking on this role, as it is an additional task for them to take on without preparation, supports, and understanding of the additional time commitment that this requires (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Milsom & Kayler, 2008). All three of these studies recommended a move to formal mentoring or, at a minimum, more intentionality in the induction or mentoring supports provided to NSCs (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Milsom & Kayler, 2008).

Implications

The above studies appear to suggest mentoring as a potential solution to the problem of a challenging induction process for NSCs. When a formal mentoring program has been implemented, it has resulted in positive reports of progression and growth for the NSCs. Similarly, teacher mentoring programs purport positive results for participating novice teachers. When no formal mentoring programs are available for NSCs, it appears that they are seeking out informal supports from other experienced school professionals to help them navigate through their induction process (Bass et al., 2013; Curry & Bickford, 2012; Curry & Bickford, 2013; Johnson, 2012; Milsom & Kayler, 2008).

There are clearly challenges to entering the profession of school counseling. Based on the recommendations for future research, I sought to examine this phenomenon further by exploring what mentoring, whether formal or informal, looks like for NSCs in Washington State. Are NSCs experiencing this same need for mentoring and seeking out informal mentors? How are they navigating their induction process and what types of supports are they seeking out? These questions guided the research in this dissertation.

Chapter 3: Methods

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, knowledge exists about the experiences of NSCs with mentoring, however few formalized mentoring programs have been implemented and researched. Given my location and personal experiences, my interest was focused on the experiences of NSCs in Washington State. At the time of this research, there were no state-supported, formalized mentoring programs specifically for NSCs in Washington State (M. Yoshida, personal communication, August 16, 2018). However, based on the analysis of the literature, it appears that both formal and informal mentoring has a positive impact on the induction experiences of NSCs (e.g., Armstrong et al., 2006; Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Desmond, 2009; Desmond et al., 2007; Johnson, 2012; Loveless, 2010; Milsom & Kayler, 2008; Milsom & McCormick, 2015; Schmidt et al., 2001; VanZandt & Perry, 1992).

To better understand what kinds of mentoring, both formal and informal, is taking place in Washington State, this study used a qualitative approach to explore and gather a detailed understanding of these informal mentoring experiences for NSCs. In this chapter, I present the research methods design and rationale. I also discuss my role as the researcher, along with the selection of participants, instrumentation, and research procedures.

In my study, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the lived experience of mentoring, formal or informal, for Washington State NSCs during their first several years of working as school counselors?
2. How do Washington State NSCs perceive they are utilizing mentoring relationships?

Research Design and Rationale

Because the research around the topic for mentoring of NSCs is limited and dated, I chose to explore what is currently being experienced by NSCs through qualitative research.

Qualitative research seeks to "make the world visible" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017, p. 3) through the interpretation of data gathered in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Qualitative researchers examine the meaning that people give to their experiences or phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). Qualitative research allowed me to get a complex and detailed understanding about how NSCs received supports during their induction period. I perceived this to be an important first step, prior to conducting any further research on mentoring of NSCs. We must know what is happening before attempting to measure it in any meaningful way.

For this study, I selected a phenomenological methodology. Phenomenological studies seek to find common meaning in shared experiences, specifically to determine *what* was experienced and *how* it was experienced (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Other forms of qualitative studies were considered, but did not fit the needs of this study. Narrative methodology focuses on exploring the life stories of an individual (Creswell & Poth, 2018); it was not appropriate since my focus was on the lived experiences of many individuals over a shorter span of time. Similarly, case study methodology details one or several cases, but does not focus on lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since the desired participants in my study did not necessarily share a culture, ethnography methodology was not fitting for my study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Finally, since I only sought to understand the lived experiences of NSCs, and did not seek to develop a theory through research, grounded theory methodology would have been inappropriate for this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

More specifically, this study used a transcendental phenomenological approach to uncover the shared meaning of NSCs' experiences of mentoring. A phenomenological study examines what was the experience for each individual, how it was experienced, and combines

the two to provide an overall essence of the phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The transcendental phenomenological approach asserts that the researcher should suspend their previous experiences and knowledge with the lived experience as they are gathering and analyzing data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994; Peoples, 2021). This is done through a process called bracketing, which will be discussed later in this chapter. By consciously putting aside my own judgements, I demonstrated intentionality by thinking about my own thinking (Husserl, 1970; Peoples, 2021). This metacognition is foundational to transcendental phenomenology, by helping the researcher to come to know something more clearly (Husserl, 1970; Peoples, 2021). Because this study sought to determine what NSCs are experiencing and how they are experiencing it, outside of my own experiences, the transcendental phenomenological approach fit the study's purpose.

Researcher Role

Because of the interpretive nature of qualitative research, the researcher is instrumental in the collection and evaluation of the data; they are often immersed in the data, with hopes of understanding the world in a different way (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). As the researcher is integral to the findings, it is important to note the researcher's role and how it may impact the findings.

As a professional school counselor, I have my own experiences with the induction period and informal mentors. I am a school counselor at the high school level, and relied on supports from co-counselors and other staff in my building to navigate my first year as a school counselor. To ensure that my experiences did not impact my interpretation of the data, I bracketed my experiences prior to interviews and data analysis by reflecting and journaling about them. Bracketing asks the researcher to recognize their own experiences and use those reflections as a

way to suspend personal judgements during the data analysis process (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Moustakas, 1994).

Furthermore, it is important for the researcher to recognize any personal or professional relationships with the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peoples, 2021). I worked as an adjunct professor at a university in the pacific northwest and taught three of the participants at the beginning of their school counselor preparation program. Another one of the participants completed her internship with my colleague. At the time of the study, I did not have any professorial or supervisory relationships with any of the NSCs interviewed. These prior relationships were directly addressed before the interviews to ensure that power-differentials did not exist and would not impact the data collected.

Sampling Procedures

Moustakas (1994) indicates that participants should have an in-depth experience with the phenomena studied and an ability to describe or share about their experience. With a learner-centered and constructivist perspective and because NSCs are inherently novices, it is assumed that all NSCs will experience some form of mentoring during their induction process. Under this assumption, the population was all NSCs in Washington State. Due to the difficulties in identifying the entire population of NSCs in Washington State, participants were identified through a convenience sample.

Permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) from the university where the study was conducted was obtained prior to data collection (see Appendix A). Informed consent for participation informed potential participating NSCs of the goals of the study, potential risks of involvement, and the level of commitment necessary. Prior to participation, signatures were collected from participants indicating their consent and understanding of confidentiality.

Participants' names were changed, and other identifying information, such as district or school name, were adjusted prior to the coding and theming process to reduce risk of identification.

To identify potential participants, a request was made to the Washington School Counselor Association (WSCA), school counseling graduate programs in Washington State, and district counseling administrators to share an introductory email with potential participants (see Appendices B & C). Potential participants completed an initial online survey indicating their interest in participating. NSCs wishing to not participate simply disregarded the email or letter they received.

Inherently, participation in research includes some level of risk and it is up to the researcher to recognize and mitigate this risk (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The induction period can be a tumultuous time for NSCs (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992); reflection on these experiences could cause or increase stress for the participating NSCs. In the semi-structured interviewing process, I took caution to not exacerbate any existing stress by adjusting my questioning style and the questions asked. Additionally, a list of counseling resources was available for participants upon request.

There are also benefits to participating in research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, participants were provided with an opportunity to reflect on their induction period and to note their own growth and development. It also allowed for a level of appreciation for those who have helped or mentored them along the way. Furthermore, their stories will help to grow the research body around mentoring for NSCs. To encourage involvement, each participant received a $20 gift card upon completion of the interview.

Participants

Research has documented that school counselors may continue with their feelings of inadequacy or uncertainty throughout the first two or three years in the role; the induction period is not limited to their first year (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992). To gather a wide variety of lived experiences, I decided to open the participant pool to NSCs within their first three years of school counseling. However, our interviews focused primarily on reflections and recollections from their first year of school counseling. Participants were required to be in their first three years of being a school counselor in a school in Washington State. Through the sampling procedures, 11 participants identified an interest in participating in this study. All 11 interested participants met the criteria, and were invited to participate. Creswell and Poth (2018) recognize a large range for number of participants, from 1 to 325, but recommend between 3 to 10 participants (Dukes, 1984 as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018) for phenomenological studies. Demographic data on the participants are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Level	Received Formal Mentoring?	District	Years Total
1 – Allison	Female	38	High School	No	A	2
2 – Becca	Female	48	Elementary School	No	B	1
3 – Christine	Female	36	P-8 Private	No	C (Private)	2
4 – Elizabeth	Female	28	Elementary School[a]	Yes 1st year only	D: 1 year E: 2 years	3
5 – Francine	Female	26	Elementary School[a]	Yes 2nd year only	D: 1 year F: 1 year	2
6 – Therese	Female	37	Middle School	No	G	1
7 – Gwen	Female	29	Elementary School	Yes 2 years	F	2
8 – Davenport	Female	41	Middle School	No	F	1
9 – Hillary	Female	25	Elementary School	Yes	F	1
10 – Ingrid	Female	27	Elementary School	Yes 1st year only	E	3
11 – Jennifer	Female	27	Elementary School	Yes 1st year only	F	3

[a] Changed schools after first year

Instrumentation

Initial demographic data was gathered through a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). The demographic questionnaire included gender, age, school counseling experience (years as a school counselor), school level of employment (elementary, middle, and high school), educational background and route to certification, previous experience in K-12 education, whether they participated in a formal mentoring program, and the opportunity to select a preferred pseudonym. The demographic questionnaire was created to gather participant information that could allow readers to determine if the findings of the study could be applicable to their particular setting.

Further data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews, while demonstrating consistency, can be too rigid and prevent the gathering of important details

or rich and thick descriptions. Unstructured interviews may allow for tangential discussions to overtake the interview and may lack consistency between interviews. A semi-structured interview allows for constraints on the conversations through guiding questions and potential follow-up questions, while also opening up opportunities for rich and thick descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Farber, 2006). While a semi-structured interview may open up the conversation beyond the scope of the research questions, it also allows the interviewer to be flexible in gathering additional details or exploring topics further as needed.

The interview questions were developed based on a review of the literature on mentoring NSCs. The semi-structured interviews were guided by two broad and general questions, as recommended by Moustakas (1994): (1) What were your experiences of being supported by others during your first year of being a school counselor? and (2) What impacted these experiences during your first year as a school counselor? These questions were adjusted based on external auditing feedback to invite conversation about all supports they received, and not focused exclusively on a preconceived idea of what mentoring entailed. Both of these questions were covered during the interviews but not necessarily presented in a particular order.

To assist in further discussion, four additional follow-up questions based on previously discussed studies (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Johnson, 2012) were developed:

1. What was challenging for you during your first year of being a school counselor?
2. As you were experiencing these challenges, how did you seek help or assistance?
3. Who or what helped you face these challenges?
4. Based on your experiences, what advice would you give to a new school counselor entering the profession?

These questions allowed opportunities for the participants to reflect on significant experiences they had in their induction period and how they navigated them, as well as the supports that they may have received throughout their induction period. Clarification on the difference between formal and informal mentoring supports was also provided during the semi-structured interviews to encourage conversation about all mentoring received, not solely formal mentoring.

In conjunction with semi-structured interviews, Farber (2006) recognized interviewers as instruments in a qualitative study, as they impact the collection of data through the interview process. Interviewers establish the safe space for participants to share their experiences and perceptions. Without this safe environment to fully share, the data collected may not fully represent the participants' true thoughts and feelings. Because of their extensive training in counseling skills, counselors are identified by Farber (2006) as having the skills to effectively conduct interviews. My training and experience as a school counselor have prepared me to effectively create a safe environment for participants to share their stories in.

Data Collection

After obtaining permission to conduct the study from the Institutional Review Board (Appendix A), I began collecting data. Through the previously described sampling procedures, 11 potential participants were identified, and demographic data was collected through an electronic questionnaire. I contacted each through email to schedule a convenient date and time to conduct the semi-structured interview. Participants engaged in the semi-structured interview with the researcher (see Appendix E), either in person or via an online video-chat, depending on the preference, location, and availability of the participant. The interviews were video and audio

recorded to allow for a review of the spoken and visual engagements. The interviews lasted between 45-80 minutes.

Prior to beginning the interviews, I shared with participants the purpose of my study and the methodology that I would be using to interpret their interviews. Participants were informed of any potential risks and benefits to participating in the study, as described earlier. They were also informed of security measures implemented to ensure that any identifying information remained confidential. Specifically, all interview recordings and transcriptions were password-protected and any identifying information was changed in the transcription process to protect the identity of the participants as detailed in my informed consent letter (Appendix F). Informed consent was obtained electronically prior to the interview, and again verbally at the beginning of the interview.

During and following the interview, I took observational notes to add to the data. Nonverbal interactions may not be caught in a transcript, such as facial expressions, silence, or tone of voice, and are valuable data to examine (Farber, 2006). Observational notes were added to the transcripts to be examined during the data analysis process.

Data Analysis

Denzin and Lincoln (2017) compare a qualitative researcher to a quilt maker; through their analysis of the data, they bring together individual stories to highlight common themes and patterns. "The quilter stitches, edits, and puts slices of reality together. This process creates and brings psychological and emotional unity to an interpretive experience" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017, p. 7). Phenomenological data analysis is akin to quilting; over the course of analyzing the data, the researcher may return to other pieces of data to compare, search for additional themes, or even gather additional data in order to create a cohesive piece. After the semi-structured

interviews were complete, I transcribed the content, removed any identifying information, and examined the data for themes, using the procedure discussed below.

The transcripts were initially read several times to determine overall feelings and then to identify significant phrases and sentences that represented the overall feelings and experiences of the NSCs (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018). These significant statements were then examined by a peer reviewer for confirmation of significance and meaning. The peer reviewer was a post-doctoral individual who has been trained in qualitative research through their own course work and had previous experience as a school counselor. We each took detailed notes as we progressed through the data analysis process. The peer reviewer also bracketed during their data analysis process, reflecting on their previous experiences as a NSC and how that may impact their interpretations of the interviews.

After coding the initial interview, we convened to compare notations and agree upon a codebook to develop intercoder agreement. While it cannot be expected that we would reach complete agreement, this initial shared agreement on coding served as a guide. As we progressed through each interview, we compared notes on the significant statements and discussed any discrepancies between our theming and coding. Per the recommendation of Creswell and Poth (2018), we reached at least 80% agreement on the significant statements.

Significant statements were labeled as describing either the what or how of the lived experience (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The significant statements were grouped into broader clusters or themes (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018). These themes were informed by my deepened understanding of each participant's description of their lived experience. Themes were again examined by a peer reviewer, and suggestions or differing interpretations were again discussed and resolved.

These significant statements and overall themes were further validated through checking them with the participants to confirm meaning; participants were emailed their transcribed interview, significant statements, and overall themes. Feedback was requested, but voluntary. Seven participants replied and confirmed the interpretation of their interviews. Had any new and relevant data been received through this feedback request, it would have been included in the results (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Reliability and Validity

To address potential researcher bias and ensure valid findings, five strategies were used: (a) bracketing and reflective journaling, (b) member checking, (c) rich, thick descriptions, (d) external auditing, and (e) peer reviewing (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend that a minimum of three strategies be conducted in order to ensure validity and reliability of the study. This study exceeds the recommended number of strategies in an effort to establish trustworthiness. A description of the strategies will follow.

Bracketing

A potential threat to the validity of the findings is my own personal experiences and perspectives, which may skew my interpretations of others' experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I have experienced the challenges of being a NSC and seeking out supports, and I have provided informal mentoring for other NSCs in my building. In order to be as transparent as possible about my background and experiences, as well as to try to hold them in perspective, I bracketed, or held separate, my personal understandings about mentoring of NSCs through reflective journaling. Prior to beginning this dissertation process, I journaled about my perspectives and experiences, both as a NSC and as an informal mentor.

Through this process, I examined and thought about my personal biases or judgements with regards to mentoring NSCs. It became clear that I had experienced some struggles navigating the induction period and had been frustrated and hesitant about needing to find my own mentors. I had strong feelings about providing informal mentoring support to others when they began their school counseling journey. These thoughts were noted with the intention of maintaining a neutral perspective on the experiences of the participants. Following are excerpts from my journal:

"In my first year as a school counselor, I felt like I had so many moments where I was unsure of what to do. As an intern and a practicum student, I had felt fairly confident and like I had a good grasp of what was expected of me. I knew I still had work to do, but in the realm of counseling and supporting my small caseload, I felt competent. But upon entering the real world as an actual school counselor, there were many days and moments where I asked myself: 'What am I supposed to do next?' This question would come up around smaller things, like speaking with a teacher about a student, and around bigger things, like creating a presentation to the 9th grade classes to help them transition to high school."

"In these moments where I felt completely lost or overwhelmed, I found that I would turn to my more-experienced colleagues for guidance and assistance. I felt like I bugged them incessantly, often with trivial questions that I couldn't have possibly learned in grad school ('How do I complete a PE waiver?', 'Where do I find test scores for students?', 'What kinds of counseling resources does our school and district offer?'). Of the four other counselors at my school, only one was a NSC, so I would regularly ask the other three for their thoughts. I often felt badly about bugging them and tried to spread my questions, so that I wasn't interrupting

them incessantly. I don't know how I would have survived that first year without their patience and support."

I continued this journaling process after each interview, and as I coded and themed the data, with the purpose of trying to remain neutral in what I was hearing, asking, and interpreting (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This process of journaling helped to make my own perspectives visible, so that they did not interfere with the coding and theming processes.

As part of the data analysis procedure, a peer reviewer also examined the data, as previously discussed. Since the peer reviewer has experience as a NSC as well, they also bracketed themselves throughout the coding and theming process. In our debriefing conversations, I would highlight areas where I needed to bracket myself and the peer reviewer reflected similar areas.

Member Checking

Another potential threat to the validity of the findings is the misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the data (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Member checking allows the participants an opportunity to confirm the data they provided and examine the interpretation of the data. This step is considered to be of utmost importance to establish credibility in the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 as cited in Creswell and Poth, 2018).

To address this, I reached out to each participant after the data analysis for their interview was complete. Participants received a copy of their interview transcript, the significant statements, and overall themes. They were invited to review this information and to clarify any misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

Seven participants responded and confirmed the accuracy of the interpretation of their experiences and perceptions. One requested that her previous experiences of working in schools

be highlighted, since she perceived that it had contributed to her experience of receiving mentoring supports as a NSC. The other six validated the interpretation of their statements and did not have additional feedback to provide.

Rich, Thick Descriptions

Qualitative research calls for rich, thick descriptions to allow the consumers of the research to fully understand the experiences of the participants, as well as to make their own informed decisions about the resulting themes (Colaizzi, 1978; Creswell & Poth, 2018). In providing rich, thick descriptions, both from the data and in describing a theme, I allowed the reader to examine the transferability of the findings to other situations (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Rich, thick descriptions allow the complexity of the lived experience to be further understood by the reader.

The evidence of the lived experiences is provided in the words of the participants, which can be shared with the reader through direct quotes. Throughout the interview process, I actively sought out rich, thick descriptions, asking participants to expand upon thoughts and provide details to help me better understand their experiences. In the interviews, I provided participants with ample wait time to process and answer the question at hand. Furthermore, I encouraged more details to emerge by asking follow-up questions or for further details about their experience.

External Auditing

To ensure the reliability of the findings, I consulted with two individuals who have been trained in qualitative research through their own course work regarding the process of the study. One was a post-doctoral individual with a PhD in Counselor Education, who later served as a

peer reviewer. The second was an individual with a Master's degree in School Counseling and 5 years of experience in the field.

For this study, the external auditors assessed the data analysis procedure through consulting conversations and providing me with feedback. They offered suggestions about adjusting the follow-up questions for the semi-structured interviews, so that I might better target the information I was seeking. Furthermore, the post-doctoral individual examined the final themes to determine whether they accurately represented the data; they confirmed the validity of the findings. Finally, this individual provided me with "the opportunity for catharsis by sympathetically listening to [my] feelings" (p. 263) which Creswell and Poth (2018) cite as valuable in the debriefing process.

Peer Reviewing

As previously discussed, a peer reviewer was involved during the data analysis stage as an external check to increase the validity of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) suggest that these individuals should seek to keep the researcher honest by "[asking] hard questions about meanings and interpretations" (p. 263). In this study, the peer reviewer examined the data and confirmed significance and meaning in the theming process. The peer reviewer was a post-doctoral individual who had been trained in qualitative research through their own course work and had previous experience as a school counselor. After coding the initial interview, we convened to compare notations and agree upon a codebook to develop intercoder agreement. While it cannot be expected that we would reach complete agreement, this initial shared agreement on coding served as a guide. As we progressed through each interview, we compared notes on the significant statements and discussed any discrepancies between our

theming and coding. Per the recommendation of Creswell and Poth (2018), we reached at least 80% agreement on the significant statements.

Summary

Because NSCs in Washington State do not experience a uniform mentoring program during their induction year, it is of interest to learn more about what their experiences are with mentoring. Previous studies (Armstrong et al., 2006; Desmond, 2009; Loveless, 2010; Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992) have demonstrated that NSCs who participate in a formalized mentoring program report positively about their experiences and the support they receive to assist with their transition. Other studies (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Milsom & Kayler, 2008) have indicated that NSCs who do not participate in a formal mentoring program will seek out their own forms of mentors or supports to help guide them through their first year.

Phenomenological studies allow for researchers to gather data from the lived experiences of individuals who are experiencing the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The intent of this study was to learn more about what NSCs in Washington State were experiencing with regards to the supports or mentoring that they received in their first couple years on the job. The findings of this study are not intended to be generalizable to the population of NSCs in Washington State. Rather, this study will highlight and investigate the experiences of NSCs and their lived experiences with receiving mentoring support during their induction period. The following chapter describes the interviews and themes uncovered through the data analysis process.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of my phenomenological study was to learn more about the lived experiences of NSCs with regards to formal and informal mentoring supports that they received. In this chapter, I present the research findings from 11 semi-structured interviews with NSCs in response to the following research questions:

1. What is the lived experience of mentoring, formal or informal, for Washington State NSCs during their first several years working as school counselors?
2. How do Washington State NSCs perceive they are utilizing mentoring relationships?

Demographic Information

Eleven NSCs in their first, second, or third year in the profession agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews for this study. Prior to the interviews, demographic data was collected from each participant through a questionnaire. Demographic data is outlined in a table in Chapter 3 to provide readers with related information that may further inform their interpretation of the data.

Participant #1 – Allison

Allison is a 38-year-old female school counselor working at the high school level in District A. Prior to becoming a school counselor, Allison worked as a substitute teacher for one semester. She also worked as a substitute school counselor for a month and a half in a different district before being hired for a school counseling position at her current school. Allison did not start at her current school until the end of September, so missed a lot of the beginning of the year transitions and trainings. Her district did not provide a formal mentoring program for NSCs, so Allison relied heavily on her co-counselors to show her the ropes. Allison recollected,

"Basically, the challenge was learning everything." At the time of the interview, Allison was completing her second year as a school counselor.

Participant #2 – Becca

Becca is a 48-year-old female school counselor working at the elementary school level in District B. Before becoming a school counselor, Becca worked in the business world and coached high school sports for 25 years. When Becca decided to return to school to become a school counselor, she also worked as a paraprofessional for two years at the same elementary school where she is now a school counselor. Becca's district did not provide a formal mentoring program for NSCs. However, Becca felt that she had strong working relationships at her school because of her previously established connections, which assisted her in navigating her new role as a school counselor. At the time of the interview, Becca was completing her first year as a school counselor.

Participant #3 – Christine

Christine is a 36-year-old female school counselor working at a private, world-language immersion P-8 school. Prior to becoming a school counselor, she coached high school lacrosse for six years, worked as a middle and high school youth pastor for five years, and worked as a high school substitute teacher for three years. At the time of this interview, Christine was completing her second year as a school counselor. Christine's school had not had a school counselor prior to hiring her, so she felt one of the biggest challenges she faced was developing a comprehensive school counseling program. Her school did not provide any formal mentoring, since her role was new. Christine reported initially feeling isolated in her role and having to seek out her own supports outside of the school to help her navigate her first two years.

Participant #4 – Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a 28-year-old female school counselor working at the elementary school level in District E. At the time of this interview, Elizabeth was completing her third year as a school counselor. Elizabeth worked as an elementary school counselor for one year in District D, and was paired with an experienced school counselor through a formal mentoring program. While she described the experience as great, Elizabeth recognized that her mentor also was working as a full-time school counselor, so she was hesitant to disturb her mentor too much. In between her first and second years, Elizabeth transitioned to a new school counseling position in District E as a long-term substitute at an elementary school. District E has a formal mentoring program for new school staff in their first and second years. Since she was a leave-replacement, she was not matched with a mentor in her second year, but she speculates that she might have been provided one if she had not been a leave-replacement. In her third year, she was hired as a full-time school counselor at the same elementary school, but not matched with a mentor.

Participant #5 – Francine

Francine is a 26-year-old female school counselor working at the elementary school level in District F. At the time of this interview, Francine was completing her second year as a school counselor. Francine worked as an elementary school counselor for one year in District D; she did not receive any formal mentoring. Citing a lack of support and resources, Francine began to look for a new school counseling position and moved to District F in her second year. She was paired with a formal mentor through a district-wide new teacher support program, which included NSCs. Francine received personalized support from a consulting teacher, whose sole job was to provide mentoring to 10-15 new teachers and school counselors. Although Francine's consulting teacher was a former fourth-grade teacher and had no background experience in

school counseling, Francine found her to be incredibly helpful with general support and district-specific procedures.

Participant #6 – Therese

Therese is a 37-year-old female school counselor working at the middle school level in District G. At the time of this interview, Therese was completing her first year as a school counselor. Therese's district did not provide formal mentoring for NSCs, so Therese relied heavily on support and guidance from her co-counselor to learn how to navigate her job. Before becoming a school counselor, Therese worked in a high school college and career center for 10 years and as a high school wrestling coach for 10 years. Therese felt that these experiences in knowing how to navigate a school and establish connections with students helped her to have a smoother first year.

Participant #7 – Gwen

Gwen is a 29-year-old female school counselor working at the elementary school level in District F. Prior to her role as a school counselor, Gwen worked for three years as an AmeriCorps volunteer in elementary and middle schools; she felt like this gave her a foundation for working at schools that others might not have had. At the time of this interview, Gwen was completing her second year as a school counselor. Gwen's district had a mentoring program for new school staff and she was connected with a consulting teacher for two years. Gwen was very impressed and enthused about being paired with a consulting teacher, whose sole responsibility was to provide mentoring for new district staff. Gwen felt that she made the most of the opportunity; "It's like the resources are there and you need to advocate for yourself. I asked a lot of questions, I thought she was helpful."

Participant #8 – Davenport

Davenport is a 41-year-old female school counselor working at the middle school level in District F. She had some previous experience in volunteering at elementary and middle schools, and her internship was completed at a small, alternative K-12 school. She felt like these experiences, while valuable, were vastly different from her new role as a school counselor at a comprehensive, large middle school. Davenport was not connected with a formal mentor through her district, so she heavily relied on the three other counselors in her building to help her ease into her role. At the time of this interview, Davenport was completing her first year as a school counselor. Due to the size and expansion of her middle school, a new middle school was forming and she was hired for the following year as a school counselor at the newly created middle school.

Participant #9 – Hillary

Hillary is a 25-year-old female school counselor working at the elementary school level in District F. At the time of this interview, Hillary was completing her first year as a school counselor. Hillary was connected with a consulting teacher mentor through her district; the consulting teacher did not teach, but was focused only on mentoring. Her mentor had over 20 years of experience as a classroom teacher, but also had experience mentoring school counselors through her role as a consulting teacher. Hillary felt very supported by her school administrative team and school, and she recognized that her mentor would have helped her to advocate for her role if they had not been so supportive and understanding. In addition to the individual mentoring, the district also held events throughout the year for new staff to connect and collaborate. Hillary regularly consulted with other NSCs in her district through a group chat that they set up after one of these district events.

Participant #10 – Ingrid

Ingrid is a 27-year-old female school counselor working at the elementary school level in District E. Before becoming a school counselor, Ingrid had extensive experience in the school setting and working with youth; she had training to be a teacher, along with experience as a paraeducator, behavior specialist, and teacher's assistant. At the time of this interview, Ingrid was completing her third year as a school counselor. Ingrid was paired with a mentor by her district for her first year. Her mentor was a seasoned school counselor, with five years of experience in the district, but who was also working full time as a school counselor at another school in the district. In addition to the mentorship, Ingrid's district provided new school staff with a manual of policies and procedures, which Ingrid found helpful in navigating her first few years.

Participant #11 – Jennifer

Jennifer is a 27-year-old female school counselor working at the elementary school level in District F. At the time of this interview, Jennifer was completing her third year as a school counselor. Jennifer was paired with a consulting teacher mentor by her district for her first two years. While this consulting teacher was a full-time mentor, Jennifer felt like her mentor did not have extensive knowledge in school counseling; Jennifer expressed that she felt like the mentoring program was not necessarily geared towards what she needed. Jennifer felt like she also relied on connections with her school staff and other counselors in the district to help her make it through her first few years.

Mentoring Relationship – Experiences

The first research question inquired about how NSCs experienced mentoring supports. This section will provide data on what mentoring relationships looked like by focusing on the

formal and informal mentoring experiences of the NSCs interviewed. The findings in response to question one are also summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Lived Experiences of Mentoring for NSCs

Type of Mentoring	Lived Experience
Formal Mentoring	Consulting teachers as formal mentors
	Working counselors as formal mentors
Informal Mentoring	Feelings of isolation
	Feelings of being a burden
	Other counselors as informal mentors
	Administrators as informal mentors
	Teachers and school staff as informal mentors
	Other informal mentors

Formal Mentoring – Experiences

Six of the 11 participants (Elizabeth, Francine, Gwen, Hillary, Ingrid, and Jennifer) were matched up with a mentor through some sort of formal mentoring program established by their district. Two out of the six mentors (Elizabeth and Ingrid's mentors) were experienced school counselors in the district who were paid a stipend to take on a mentee in addition to their school counseling duties. The other four mentors (Francine, Gwen, Hillary, and Jennifer's mentors) were titled *consulting teachers* and were former teachers who solely focused on mentoring new staff in the district. All four of these consulting teachers were in District F. Of these six NSCs, four received mentoring for one year (Elizabeth, Francine, Ingrid, and Jennifer), one received mentoring for two years (Gwen), and one will receive mentoring for two years, but had only completed her first year (Hillary).

Consulting Teachers as Mentors. While receiving formal mentoring, there was a range of how often the NSCs met with their mentors. The consulting teachers met with their mentees

more regularly, ranging from every week to once a month, most likely because they did not have other duties to tend to. The NSCs with consulting teachers expressed gratitude about having someone to consult with regularly and not feel burdensome to them. Jennifer expressed appreciation, stating, "I never felt alone, so I would say that the new teacher support program really helped in that sense. You felt like you had somebody to go to." Francine also reflected, "That support has been in place all year … They are just available for what you need."

Being welcomed to their new job with these structures in place led the NSCs with formal mentors to feel fortunate and grateful. Gwen exclaimed:

> I wish all counselors had that because I feel, when I think through everything and I think about first going into my district, I was like, "This exists?!? This is so nice!" I wish other counselors had the opportunities that I had. Because I know this is not the norm at all.

Francine explained, "I was just blown away. Not only that level of actual support, but I also felt like I had a comradery."

Several of the NSCs with consulting teachers expressed some concern about their mentor not fully knowing or understanding the role of a school counselor. For example, Jennifer shared:

> And I do a lot of teaching in the classroom, so for that aspect, it was helpful. But after that, it was like, there were things about setting up your classroom space. And it was like "Well I don't have a classroom" there are things that don't apply to me and aren't things that I'm actually dealing with. It would have been more helpful if I had a counselor that could mentor me and we could just consult. Like "Hey I have this situation that didn't come up earlier" because every day is different. Just different ways to bounce ideas off and collaborate. I feel like that would have been more helpful to me than the new teacher support program.

Similarly, Gwen stated, “Could she help me on the counseling side? No. But that’s where I would reach out to other counselors in the district and ask my questions.” Francine’s consulting teacher recognized her own limitations, since she had no counseling background:

> She was very respectful of the fact that, “I understand your role, but I can never fully understand what a counselor’s experience is like.” She would try to learn from me. In the spring, when she was getting ready to transition me out, she was talking to me a lot about, “How can a counselor use the mentor? What did you find helpful? What could we do differently for counselors because you guys are in a unique role?”

Because their consulting teachers had plenty of expertise in teaching, the NSCs regularly consulted with them for ways to improve their classroom guidance. Gwen explained:

> She would come in and she would observe my classroom lessons. Then she would tell me things I did well and things that I could work on. I thought that was helpful for me because that was what I identified as something that I really needed to work on…. I recognize I don’t have the creativity or vision to see things. The fact that someone can just be like: “I noticed this, keep doing this, maybe change it to this,” I will automatically switch to it. I was very open to feedback. It was really helpful that I got that because I felt like I needed it.

Other NSCs also utilized their consulting teacher’s knowledge in this area; Jennifer shared, “She would observe me in the classroom and give me feedback and tips and things like that. That was so so helpful.” Similarly, Hillary stated: “She was a great tool for helping me learn the classroom management piece of counseling and delivering lessons and helped me deliver lessons … She was instrumental in my growth as a counselor.”

Francine recollected a similar experience:

> There was one point where I was looking for … a certain type of engagement strategy. I scheduled an appointment and she came and brought all of her resources. We talked about what I was looking for. She helped me figure out how to put it into my lesson.

Furthermore, NSCs with consulting teachers expressed that their consulting teacher would use their network of resources and connections to find answers for counseling-related questions. Gwen explained, "If she didn't know the answer … she would reach out to another counselor in the district who has been there for a while that had the same question once, so then I could contact them." Jennifer expressed similar sentiments: "She was very helpful for not being a counselor … If she didn't know the answer, she would ask other counselors in the district or hook me up with other people that I could go talk to or observe."

In addition to the formal mentoring program, the NSCs also attended professional development trainings throughout the year as a part of their mentorship program. Some of the trainings were not counselor-focused, and were met with mixed-reviews. Francine shared:

> I guess that would be the only negative thing was that often stuff would be more focused on teachers, obviously. But I still felt like I walked away with good stuff, and I always felt like it was worth my time to be there.

Jennifer described her experience with some of the trainings:

> I felt like a lot of things didn't apply to me, or, not that it was a waste of my time … but when I would take time to go do the new teacher support program training, it wasn't necessarily geared toward what I needed.

Some of their trainings, however, were counselor focused. Hillary was invited to a district training just for elementary school counselors:

> They had an evening where they invited all of us to come and just have a round table together and that was really nice that they thought about us and the fact that we needed something a little different than the teachers.

Gwen recollected a time when she felt a need for a counselor-focused training that had not been provided:

> I spoke with my consulting teacher and let her know that I needed more information [about 504 Plans] … And the other new counselors felt the same way so then we all came together to kind of list our complaints so [our consulting teachers] could advocate for us to get more resources on 504s.

Francine reflected on her experience:

> In addition to the new hire training that they had for us before school started … I got to spend at least a day and a half/two days working just with other elementary new counselors. We got to spend a bunch of time working together. They brought in some of the other elementary counselors who have been in the district for a while. They had a welcome thing for us. They brought a bunch of resources, "Here are some books. Here are the things for small groups. Here's what we love to do. Here's the curriculum that we use in this district." And we got to sit down with them for hours and ask questions.

These professional developments allowed them to build connections with other NSCs in their district. Hillary shared:

> Part of our mentorship program connects you with other new counselors, so we created a group chat on messenger so we connected through that … It would be very frequent that counselors would be [messaging] back and forth … whether it's on resources for books or how to handle a particular situation.

Francine also felt a sense of comradery from the connections she built with other NSCs; "I got that support system of the other five counselors. We have a group text now and we all text each other. We go to happy hour together … The [summer trainings] made all the difference."

Overall, the NSCs with consulting teachers had consistent mentoring that they generally found to be helpful. When they deemed the mentoring or training did not pertain to them, the NSCs either made the best of it and tried to apply it to their role as a school counselor or advocated for their own needs to receive the supports they needed.

Working Counselors as Mentors. Ingrid and Elizabeth both received formal mentoring from mentors who were also working as full-time counselors in their respective districts. Both of their mentoring programs seemed to have less rigorous expectations of the mentors than the previously described consulting teachers. Neither Ingrid nor Elizabeth indicated that there was any formal curriculum or expectations placed on the mentors. The formal mentoring interactions were provided as-needed for the mentee; mentors appeared to be more on-call, rather than formally integrated in the first years on the job.

Ingrid's mentor met with her at the beginning of the school year to provide support transitioning into the district:

> We have a lot of policies and procedures that we need to follow in our district, which is appropriate, but is just a lot. We kind of mapped out what I should be doing in the month and would decide those kinds of things.

Ingrid also described her mentor as her "go-to person … It was nice because I would go with questions and be like 'Hey, can we meet at this time?' or 'Can we have a phone collaboration at this time?' and she would help to answer those questions." Ingrid especially appreciated the logistical support that she received from her mentor:

> How do I deal with certain situations, specifically because there are certain ways that we are supposed to do things, like the logistical forms. Here's this policy and you have to go through these steps and here's the form and you send it to this person. I felt like, … as a new counselor, it is hard to make sure that you are doing everything right, legally.

Elizabeth expressed gratitude for her mentor; "I felt lucky to have her as a resource and she was really helpful … We did have a set time, every quarter, that we did meet in person, so that was nice." However, Elizabeth also shared a sense of isolation, despite having an assigned mentor:

> Most of my day-to-day figuring out was on my own. Sometimes I would call, but I think maybe I called two or three times the whole year. … Even though she was just a phone call away, I ended up not calling as much.

Elizabeth expanded on these feelings, indicating that she felt split because she knew that her mentor also had a full-time job as a school counselor, but had signed up to provide mentoring support:

> She was really open to coming into my school to help me, talking about different students or difficult topics. But also, since she was working full time, I knew that she also would have to get excused from school by her administrator ... I think it being official kind of made it feel like it was okay to take her time and ask her. And she was definitely really on board, too. She was open. I think I could have used her more, but I was also wanting to respect her time and not take too much.

Despite having formal mentoring in place, Ingrid and Elizabeth focused their interviews more on the other ways that they found supports in their first years on the job. The other supports will be discussed further in future sections.

Informal Mentoring – Experiences

All NSCs reported on informal mentoring in their interviews, even those who had formal mentoring provided for them. Francine emphasized the importance of finding supports, which was echoed by many of the other NSCs; "Seeking out support is crucial because there's questions that come up all the time and it's important to have somebody you know actually will answer your emails and be available and you won't feel like a bother to them."

Many of the NSCs expressed the importance of feeling comfortable to seek out supports and ask questions. Therese emphasized:

> Being able to acknowledge that I don't know what I'm doing, so if you want me to do this, I need a little bit of training. Knowing what you're going to expect when you walk in. You'll find your rhythm after that. But that first month is really important that you're communicating with the people you work with and your admin what your expectations are and what the goals of the building are.

She also reflected on the importance of asking for help:

> I definitely have no problem asking questions. As a counselor, you hold a lot of responsibility in your hands and you have to really remember that this is a kid's life. With that in mind, I have no problem asking questions. I would rather ask a question and do it right, then act like I know it and totally mess something up.

Similarly, Elizabeth advised:

> Just ask questions even though it could be something you can figure out. Maybe it would take three times as long. Ask questions, especially if people are saying "You can ask me questions." Yeah. I wish I asked more questions early on, but sometimes it's a pride thing or I don't want to bother people or I'll figure it out.

Davenport stated similar sentiments:

> I would advise [NSCs] to get to know the other counselors that they are working with and not be afraid to ask questions. That's kind of an obvious one, I think, but I need to say that because I think some people may try to wing it or do whatever. But it's easier to just ask a question than to try to figure it out by yourself sometimes.

Gwen also reflected, "I had a lot of questions. Because I feel like you can ask as many questions as you need to, but things are going to pop up that you don't think to ask."

Feelings of Isolation. Most of the elementary school counselors expressed feelings of isolation during their first years. Jennifer noted:

> I don't have anybody else at my school who is in my role. I would say that first and foremost was the biggest challenge, is that you are kind of alone. You don't have a colleague to ask questions unless you call or email.

Ingrid also felt alone in determining what her role should look like in her building:

> I was fresh out of school and so I think what was hard was how was I supposed to know or even, other than from the monthly district elementary school counselor meetings. But I felt like at the building level, since I was by myself, there wasn't really … guidance from my district.

After bumping into some former graduate school classmates at a counselor conference, Christine reflected on her feelings of isolation at a private school:

> I've been frustrated. I've been intrigued. I've felt isolated …. I was kind of feeling like "Oh my gosh! I'm having a way harder year than you guys." And that made me feel alone and question how did I get so entrenched? I mean there is so much you get when

> you are talking with someone and they are like 'Me too' versus 'That didn't happen to me. That's not happening.'

Gwen was hesitant to be an elementary school counselor, because she anticipated the isolation of being the only school counselor in her building and knew her desire to have co-counselor supports; "At the beginning, I felt really alone. I had wanted to be a middle school counselor so I could have that collaboration and another person doing my job."

Burdensome Feelings. Although many NSCs recognized the importance of seeking out supports, they often felt like a burden, interrupting others. Francine reflected on her first year as a school counselor:

> And then once I got to know people, I, quite honestly, I felt like I was bothering people or I wouldn't hear back or people would be like "Oh you should talk to this person about that …" I never really knew who to go to with my questions. I never had a specific person who said, "email me, contact me, and if I'm not the person, I'll connect you …" and it was really intimidating, as a brand-new counselor. I was in a pretty high needs school, high needs district.

Elizabeth expressed similar hesitations:

> I think in being new to any school or any building, there are always going to be questions … I think asking people, even if they are like "Oh yeah, ask me any time! Let me know." I still feel hesitant or bad about bothering people.

Allison tried to be less bothersome by dividing her questions amongst her co-counselors, so that she was not interrupting one constantly; "I was apologetic: 'I'm sorry, I have another question.' trying to balance it out going back and forth between their offices." Davenport took a similar approach with her co-counselors:

> One of the counselors was kind of, well she's the department head, so she's the one I kind of went to first off when I had questions. But she would never tell me that it was a dumb question or whatever, it was always "Let me talk to you about that." Or if she didn't know, she would help me figure out who to ask to find out and things like that. The other two counselors were the same. And it was great having three of them, I could take turns (laughs) so I wasn't always going to the same person all the time.

Therese also recognized the additional work that supporting a NSC placed on other school staff. She invited the school psychologist and education specialist to 504 meetings, but "once I felt like I had my feet underneath me, I didn't invite them anymore. They have so much on their plate already and they were doing me a huge favor, just doing that."

Other Counselors as Informal Mentors. One of the main sources of informal mentoring came from other counselors in their building or in their district. NSCs in a building with other counselors listed their co-counselors as their primary source of support. Davenport spoke about her co-counselors:

> First off, they are very friendly, so I felt very comfortable going and talking to them about any topic. I didn't feel like they were stiff or removed or standoffish or anything like that. They were just very welcoming and I think having people who were just excited that you were going to work with them and everything is really a great feeling and help ease the transition a lot … That was really great. I really can't imagine being thrown into this job on my own and being the only one in the school and not having proper training. I would just be drowning. I don't know how I would have done it.

Therese expressed similar gratitude for the support she received from her co-counselor:

> She's been so great about either shadowing me or giving me an example first and then walk you through it. She does really great constructive criticism. If she wants some things done of if she sees a couple of times I've met with kids or you know, maybe the way I said something, she'll pull me back and say, "I get where you're coming from, but here's another approach." And then she would explain to me why she's telling me that. Not just "You're wrong and I'm right, but here's what I learned from my experiences."

Allison also experienced supports from her co-counselors:

> Because there were so many counselors, there was always someone I could go ask. Even though it wasn't a full-on mentoring program, I felt like [two of my co-counselors], in particular, took me under their wing … They were the greatest source of help for me.

Outside of the building, NSCs also relied on supports from other school counselors in their districts. This was most frequently accessed by NSCs through district-wide counselor meetings. Ingrid recollected:

> We have elementary counselor meetings once a month … We always have a time for collaboration, where we can talk about issues we are facing or what are people's thoughts about this or research about this … I think what is nice is that people who are by themselves are able to collaborate.

In both of her districts, Elizabeth experienced counselor teaming at the district level. In District D, she felt that the weekly district counselor meetings were led by a fellow-counselor and were more focused on technical aspects of the job, such as what they were expected to implement or district happenings. In District E, monthly district counselor meetings were led by a district counselor director. Elizabeth reflected that "a more comfortable relationship between

counselors to call each other if there are any questions" was nurtured by the counseling director in District E.

When Hillary was looking for better ways to support the highly capable students in her building, she found that "It was really easy to find the information that I needed. In our district, we have a lot of counselors who deal with highly capable students, so I could talk with them." Similarly, Jennifer recalled:

> I was actually the only one who was brand new to counseling [that year]. I had a couple of [counselors in the district] reach out to me, which was really nice, and say "Hey, if you need anything, I'm just down the street. Give me a call anytime." … I took advantage of that.

However, this was not always the case. While district-led counselor meetings were frequently available, they were not always the most efficient way to receive support. Allison reflected on receiving limited support from other school counselors in her district:

> I'd say there was support [at the district level] … We did have, every month and a half or so, all of the secondary counselors would get together for a meeting and do professional development or something like that …, but the stuff that I needed information about was so day-to-day, that my colleagues were really the ones that were giving the most information to me.

Other NSCs found supports through outside groups of counselors. Since Christine worked at a private school, she shared that her supports in-building were fairly limited. She was able to connect with a group of counselors outside of her building:

> A woman I met at grad school invited me to her monthly consult with her other Catholic school counselors. And I was like, "Anything I can get, I'll take it." Because we're not

> like public schools, we don't have PD days together. I'm kind of a lone ranger in my world. I meet with other school counselors, monthly pretty much, to be supported and a lot of them are much older than me and older in their careers, so they can empathize and they're like "Oh yeah, when I was younger in the professions … I was struggling with this too."

Becca also shared about a counselor collaboration group open to any school counselors in the area:

> We meet about three times a year and define the purpose of our group, and then, ahead of time, give ideas as far as what people might want support in. There's generally a purposeful education piece for all of us and then we'll breakout into our elementary, middle, and high school cohorts and problem solve and share ideas within that.

Administrators as Informal Mentors. Most of the NSCs discussed how the administrators in their building played a part in their induction period. Gwen shared that she appreciated the support she received from her principal, and "wished that [meetings with her principal] happened more often." Administrators also provided technical support to NSCs. Allison reflected:

> [My assistant principal] was helpful in that role, as far as, letting me know about policies and how to respond when this type of situation. Less on the social/emotional side and more on the administrative, like if a kid was to have a different teacher, there's a protocol and policies, steps that we have to take.

Some of the support from the administrators seemed to develop from their perceived understanding of the role of a school counselor. Becca shared, "I'm really blessed in the sense that my principal has her school counseling credentials and so she has a lot of insight into [the

challenges of a first year school counselor]." Elizabeth expressed a similar positive regard for her relationship with her principal:

> Someone having my back in the school, especially as a first-year counselor, was my principal. He and I had a really good working relationship … He was really helpful as a support … I don't think that it's like that in all buildings. He knew what his counselor's job was and had worked with other counselors who were good in their job.

Hillary also felt like her administrative team's support stemmed from their understanding of her role; "Our relationship was really easy from the beginning. There weren't any issues where I felt like my scope of practice was being impeded because a principal or vice principal didn't have the knowledge of what I did."

Ingrid reflected on the differences that she experienced between two different principals in her first and second years. In her first year, she remembered:

> I feel like I had collaboration with my administrators, but I think it was more like, "Hey I'm doing this" letting them know, rather than collaboratively making choices about how I'm supporting students. I feel like now, our team is our admin, the PBIS facilitator, our psych, and myself. We are making conscious choices about how we are providing social skills instruction, like who is doing what tier and being a lot more systemic.

Some of the NSCs collaborated with administrators in their building, as a means to learning more about their role as a school counselor. As a new person in the building, Jennifer reflected:

> My vice-principal is actually a huge help. He was also new to being a vice-principal and to the school … I connected with the people who were new in the building too, because they were like, "Oh, I see how this works, or I'm not so certain about that" and you

> know, we could be like, "Oh, you might want to change this." We've really worked as a team to … I feel like he and I are … we're bringing in the principal as far as trying to change things. We're looking at it from a fresh set of eyes.

Davenport also used collaboration as a means to receive support:

> I had this one assistant principal who had all of this background knowledge and then I had the actual principal who is a very supportive person and he trusted that we could be a professional. I didn't feel like I was micromanaged. I didn't feel like I was being second guessed. I just felt supported in general and if I did have questions, I could just come forward. I kind of learned to pick which admin to talk to depending on which situation it was. And depending on who was available, so I really think having more people to access is really helpful.

Teachers and School Staff as Informal Mentors. NSCs also identified other staff in their building as informal supports to help them navigate their first few years as school counselors. Francine emphasized the support she received from all staff in the building during her first year as a school counselor, and beyond:

> It's the most supportive environment and you really feel like everybody is working together as a team in the best interest of that kid. Teachers included, SPED included, admin included. And it's such a great feeling to know that I can be a piece to making a difference for this kid, but it's not all on me …. I feel like I've learned so much from the people I work with. There are some really smart, wise people, and I am grateful that they have a lot of experiences, so I can soak up what they've got.

Hillary expressed a similar experience in her building; "I was fortunate that I felt listened to by my administration and that I felt that my profession was cared about within my school. People

would come to me, instead of me having to seek them out." She specifically reflected on a few people who supported her development. When she was learning more about her role as a 504 coordinator, she received assistance from the school psychologist:

> We have a school psychologist who was really helpful in guiding me. She also connected me with a counselor in the district who she felt was, and I also agree, an excellent example of a 504 coordinator, so I asked them a lot of questions [about 504s] and very soon I got the hang of it on my own.

When she was developing her classroom management strategies:

> I had the benefit that teachers understood [my classroom management challenges] and they would stay in the classroom so they could also benefit from my instruction and work it in throughout the school year, what I'm talking about. And they could also help me with classroom management.

Elizabeth discussed the value she saw in developing strong relationships with teachers in her building:

> I know this past year, I saw one of the teachers crying and I was just like, "Hey, are you okay? Do you need anything?" and she didn't really need anything at the time, but like six months later, she told me, "You know that was really impactful and I'm really glad that you noticed to even say something." I think even small things can make a really big difference in building relationships. Not just to have good working relationships, but just genuinely, as people. We're all people, doing a job, and let's care about each other and not just get our job done.

Furthermore, Elizabeth reflected on how developing relationships with teachers in her school helped her to grow as a school counselor and as a person:

> And the SPED teacher there was amazing. Like we just talked about life and we talked about faith, too. We just talked a lot about everything, related to work or not. And I think it just felt nice to know, to have someone who liked me and cared about me … Even though she wasn't a counselor, it was really good to learn from her.

Similarly, Becca used her prior experiences and relationships with para-educators in her building to help her work to better support her students:

> When I look back and think about being a para and how it's helped me in my job today. Number one, I think it's forging relationships. I have a really great relationship with all of our paras just because we worked together and I think seeing the value of their lens of the school and the interactions they provide for our students. Sometimes they're the ones that get the closest with our kids, depending on what their jobs are.

Other Informal Mentors. Some of the NSCs also identified supports outside of those previously named. While these were less frequently identified, they still merit mention due to the perceived invaluable support they provided.

Professional counseling organizations were identified by two NSCs in their interviews as providing supports. Becca shared:

> They always encourage you to be a part of ASCA and ACA … I really appreciate those, when I get the email or magazine because there's always something in there that's a valuable support as well, or confirmation, or open my eyes to a new way. I think, for me, it's just finding new ways to stay on top of the school counseling profession, specifically elementary school.

Hillary also experienced support from a professional organization at a conference she attended:

> The [Washington School Counselor Association] annual conference had a seminar that provided excellent information, background knowledge of students who are in [highly capable programs], what their mind is like, and how they are different … it came at the right time frame for the conference. I started realizing that I needed to meet their needs in a different way, and so it was all very serendipitous.

Three NSCs identified the need for personal supports for themselves, to help them process the emotions that accompany the job. Elizabeth shared, "something else that still does and has been a big impact is having my husband to talk with about what's going on. Like not with student information, but just being able to talk about the things that are difficult." Likewise, Christine reflected, "I need to find my own people." Becca also articulated:

> I feel like finding somebody, whether it's once a month or once every couple of months, that I can go to that is a counselor of some sort, just to process and maybe even to have a little bit of supervision myself.

Mentoring Relationship – Perceptions

The second research question asks about how the NSCs perceived the supports they received. This section answers this question by exploring the types of mentoring supports the NSCs discussed in their interviews. Through the theming process, four themes of support emerged: consultation, collaboration, counseling, and technical support. NSCs reported needing and engaging with supports through these four modalities. The findings in response to question two are also summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Perceptions of Mentoring Experiences for NSCs

Theme	Perception
Consultation	Preparation
	On-call consultation
	Observation and feedback
	Observing others
	Group consultation
	Resource pooling
Collaboration	Role understanding
	Growth opportunities
	Building confidence
	Student-centered
	Improving efficiency
Counseling	Recognizing the need
	Listening
	Processing
	Growing
Technical Support	Policies and procedures
	Basic employment questions
	504 Plans
	Student scheduling
	Lacking technical support

Consultation

As they discussed the supports that they received from others, the NSCs highlighted their consulting relationships. Consulting is when an individual asks for guidance or help to navigate a situation (ASCA, 2016). Consultation was the most frequently mentioned type of support that NSCs discussed in their interviews. From the interviews, six types of consulting were identified: preparation, on-call consultation, observation and feedback, observing others, group consultation, and resource pooling.

Preparation. As NSCs were preparing or looking ahead to situations that they may encounter, they engaged in conversations with their mentors about how they should navigate these situations. These types of conversations were classified as preparation consulting because

of the forethought that the NSCs were giving to the challenges they might encounter and seeking out growth.

These preparatory conversations were described by six of the NSCs. Gwen frequently talked with her consulting teacher about counselor role expectations:

> It was just great to bounce off ideas or sometimes I would use her, being like "Is this something that I'm supposed to be doing?" For example, I got tested on a couple of things … "Oh, this teacher needs to go somewhere, can you watch this class?" "NOO!" (laughs) and it was like "Hey consulting teacher, is this something in my job description?" And she was like "Absolutely not" and so I was able to contact my principal and be like "I spoke with some people in the district and this is something that I am not comfortable with or supposed to do." I was able to use her as an advocate in certain areas so I could say "No that's not my job, I'm not doing that." That was really helpful because I would be like "I think I'm right, but I'm not sure" and I could ask someone.

With no formal mentor provided, Becca asked her principal for guidance and supervision in her role:

> [My principal] has provided me with direction, but not to the point where she says, "now this is what you're going to do," but she will share ideas, like, "This is important. And we're seeing this there, so we'll probably need this here." type of thing.

Hillary also accessed other school staff as mentors, such as her school psychologist and another school counselor:

> When I first walked in and I talked with the school psychologist, she said, "You're new, have you done a 504 before? Do you have much familiarity?" And I said, "I know what it

> is but I don't really know the process," so she connected me with [another school counselor] to help me out, who she felt was, and I also agree, an excellent example of a 504 coordinator, so I asked them a lot of questions and very soon I got the hang of it on my own. I did feel like I was given plenty of resources to jump start that.

Additionally, Hillary described situations when she conferred with her consulting teacher about strategies she could be using:

> I would think to myself 'How can I deliver this lesson to a kindergarten audience in the best way so that they will be captivated the whole time and not get distracted?' and that's where my mentor came in. She was like "Alright, this is what you do with a kindergarten classroom."

Francine also utilized her consulting teacher to come up with strategies to use in her classroom guidance lessons:

> Like there was one point where I was looking for, I forget what it was, but I was looking for a certain type of engagement strategy. I scheduled an appointment and she came and brought all of her resources, we talked about what I was looking for, she helped me figure out how to put it into my lesson.

Therese was appreciative that she could consult with her co-counselor when looking at different strategies or approaches to her work:

> She does really great constructive criticism. If she wants some things done of if she sees a couple of times I've met with kids or you know, maybe the way I said something, she'll pull me back and say, "I get where you're coming from, but here's another approach." And then she would explain to me why she's telling me that. Not just "You're wrong and I'm right, but here's what I learned from my experiences." And that right there is huge.

Furthermore, Therese described the supervisory-type approach that her co-counselor took when providing suggestions:

> [My co-counselor] sat me down right away and was like, "Look, I'm going to give you lots of feedback. I want you to grow to be the best counselor you can be. You have a lot of talent, but we're going to need to refine some things." And that was from the get-go. She always approached it with like, "Here's what you did really good. Here's what needs work."

Therese concluded by reflecting on how valuable this type of consulting had been to her:

> What kind of groups do you have? I don't even know what kind of groups we should have. If I didn't have my co-counselor, I don't know. How do I figure that out? And there's not enough time in the day to read textbooks. I can buy all of the textbooks, but there's not enough time to read them all.

Because Christine was the only counselor at her private school, she sought this type of support outside of her school building:

> I went to a workshop recently where I met another leader in the independent school world. She was able to give me a crash-course … what I might be up against and how I might become an ally versus someone that they are going to be in conflict with and it was very helpful to be listened to and not have the weight of 'this is my colleague and I'm leaning on her to explain her culture.' But to have another person who can be like, "Why don't you try this?" or "Tell me this?" or "Yeah, that makes sense because [they] think this." It was really helpful to just have a network.

On-Call Consultation. Most of the NSCs described situations where they needed more immediate advice or support to handle an unfamiliar situation. They identified on-call support

from their mentors as being helpful in these situations. On-call consulting differed from preparation consulting because of the immediacy connected with their need for guidance, rather than planning ahead. Eight of the NSCs discussed the on-call consulting that they accessed in their first several years. Elizabeth explained the importance of this type of support for her:

> I think [it was important] trying to figure out early who is going to help you and who is open to helping you. And sometimes it's not even a counselor, especially at the elementary level, where you don't have any other counselors to meet with. So even if it's a teacher or anyone in the building that is ahead of you and is in the education field. It's helpful to know insider information, even like, what's behind the scenes happening in district or different things that you might not know about the building or the way teachers work. Just having that inside scoop helps. Trying to find someone that you can connect to and can help you quickly in the building.

Jennifer echoed that sentiment and the value in finding people in her school building to ask for help in urgent situations. She reflected:

> I ran into stuff that I had never seen before, and I was like 'HELP' and just like asking for help too. Like don't be afraid to reach out and to ask what you might think is something obvious that you should know how to do. Just ask. Because you're not going to know how to do everything.

Ingrid also felt grateful for the on-call supports she received from her mentor; "In my first year, it was really nice because I would reach out to my mentor who because my go-to person."

When Gwen started at her elementary school, she recognized early on that she would not be able to plan ahead for everything that would come up. She utilized her principal's knowledge regularly for on-call consulting:

> I feel like along the way and through that year, I had a lot of questions. Because I feel like you can ask as many questions as you need to, but things are going to pop up that you don't think to ask. The first few weeks were just me going back to my principal's office and being like "I don't know what to do" or "I don't know how to do this" and I just kind of asked her … But the meeting with my principal was kind of just relying on me to reach out to my principal to say "Hey, this is something that I need to do. I have questions on A, B, and C."

Elizabeth also went to her principal for this type of consultation. She described a situation in which she was unsure of what to do next:

> Some things that I would still go to [my principal], just there was a really messy CPS situation, and he helped me with that. I would go to him and say, "This is what's going on and how do I…? I'm trying this," and just going to him with that. Even though he is not a counselor, he was able to really give guidance on that and even talk with the CPS supervisor because it got really messy. He definitely knew that realm, I could tell that he knew the school counseling role and job and was a really, really big help.

Davenport found that she appreciated having multiple administrators available when she needed immediate consultation: "I kind of learned to pick which admin to talk to depending on which situation it was. And depending on who was available, so I really think having more people to access is really helpful."

Francine received on-call support from her consulting teacher when she was planning for her upcoming classroom guidance lesson:

> I was like "I want to do a name game to meet my new kindergarteners" so I shot her a quick email and I was like "Hey! I'm looking for quick games to learn the names of my new kids." And like five minutes later, she emails back and is like "Oh, let me email my kindergarten teachers on my caseload and see if they have ideas" … I heard back from each of those teachers, each of them had sent her their ideas and I was like "This is great!"

Other NSCs described receiving this type of on-call support from school counselors that they had developed relationships with. Francine met other school counselors at her summer induction training. She explained:

> I was just blown away. Not only that level of actual support, but I also felt like I had a comradery. I had three mentors, I felt, those three experienced counselors who came and met with us and worked with us. They've been my point of contact throughout the year. Always answer my questions quickly.

Davenport reflected on how much she utilized her co-counselors for their knowledge and experience when she got stuck:

> I was lucky to come into a school and the counselors who were already here are really amazing and were very friendly and helpful and I relied exclusively on them for the most part to show me the ropes and how things go here. And they were always very welcoming. I never felt like I couldn't ask a question or get clarification on something.

Therese relied on relationships that she had developed, prior to becoming a school counselor; “Because of my ten years, I had connections so I could call other counselors I had worked with at other schools and say, ‘Hey. I got this going on. What did you do for this?’”

Christine reflected her need to find other supports that she could use for on-call consultation, since she felt isolated at her school:

> I need to find my own people. Even last week, I met with my old supervisor from my old internship ... He had his systems down to a T. I am keeping him on hand and I reach out to him when I have a question. Like if some sticky stuff with kids comes up.

Becca echoed this need to find people that she could trust and reach out to when she needed immediate consultation; “I think it’s mostly calling on my school counselors for supports. Trying first in district, and if nobody can answer my question, then reaching out to our counselor collaboration people.”

Observation and Feedback. Four NSCs reported their mentors would observe them and provide explicit feedback on their observations. The NSCs who spoke about this identified it as especially helpful because it allowed them to reflect and grow with concrete feedback. Hillary shared that her consulting teacher did this repeatedly throughout their time together:

> She would also go into the classroom with me and watch me deliver lessons and take notes. And she did that in various ways. She would take notes on exactly what I was doing and have me look at it afterwards or she would videotape me so that I could see it afterwards and she would also give me advice on how I could have better structured the lesson to meet the needs of the particular classroom I was in.

Hillary reflected on this type of support:

> I appreciated having her in the classroom and putting eyes on how I'm delivering classroom lesson and giving me ways that I can better manage a classroom or better deliver the lesson in ways that meet the needs of my students.

Gwen had similar ongoing observations set up with her consulting teacher:

> She would come in and she would observe my classroom lessons. Then she would tell me things I did well and things that I could work on. And I thought that was helpful for me because that was what I identified as something that I really needed to work on.

Additionally, Gwen would seek out feedback from teachers at her school after delivering classroom guidance:

> I just kind of let everyone know that I'm really open to feedback so they just give it to me (laughs). Like I'll be like "I need some feedback" and they will be like "Hey, that lesson went really well." I think I just have a good school climate to where I can try things and change them a million times and people are open to the fact and are like "I'm just glad you are here."

She reflected that receiving feedback after a guidance lesson was a valuable part of her growth process:

> I recognize I don't have the creativity or vision to see things elsewhere. The fact that someone can just be like "I noticed this, keep doing this, maybe change it to this" I will automatically switch it. I was very open to feedback. It was really helpful that I got that because I felt like I needed it.

Francine also had her consulting teacher observe her and identify how she could grow or improve:

> They would come every single week in the fall and observe us. I got to choose how I used her. I didn't have a strong background in my grad program with classroom lessons. Since she was a teacher, I was like "Come and observe me and give me some feedback." She would come and observe me, and she would send me a full … She would type up a summary of my lesson going over what I had said, what we did, her feedback, the engagement strategies she saw.

Francine appreciated this opportunity to grow; "I think the classroom lesson observing was so helpful and was so huge. Because I felt like I was back in my internship where I had a mentor giving me feedback each week and that was so cool."

Therese did not have a formal mentor, but utilized the support that informal mentors offered her by having them observe her and provide her with feedback. One of the areas that she felt unprepared for was developing 504 Plans. She invited her building's Education Specialist and School Psychologist to observe her leading a few 504 meetings with families.

> I think I was better prepared in some areas and not as prepared and others which is why having an Ed Specialist and a School Psych there was really helpful because then they were able to suggest things which kind of got the ball rolling. They sat in on that one for-sure and then I invited them to a couple more and then once I felt like I had my feet underneath me, I didn't invite them anymore.

Additionally, Therese asked her co-counselor to observe her and provide her feedback to help her improve:

> The first couple of months that I was there [my co-counselor] really shadowed me a lot. Not shadowed in the sense that she followed me around, but like, if I had to do something, like for example the 504, she would say "Okay, you have to do a 504. Here

> are the things that you need to know." And then she would be there, but I would be the one doing it. And then she would pull be back afterward and be like: "You did this, this, this, this right and the next time you should do this." Or if I was working with a kid, she would say, "Okay, maybe you need to be a little bit more sympathetic. Here's how I would have approached it."

Observing Others. In addition to having mentors observe them, NSCs also identified that observing others was a helpful form of consultation. Six NSCs described situations in which they were provided an opportunity to observe others and learn from how they dealt with situations. Becca reflected that, "Any time I have an opportunity to be with one of our other counselors, when they are working with a student, which isn't very often … I love that, because I always learn from them."

Similarly, Therese appreciated the times that she was able to learn about a new skill set from her co-counselor by observing her in action and then trying it out herself.

> She did a lot of mediations in the middle school. And she said, "Oh you're going to do a mediation" and I probably panicked and gave her a look like … and so she had me sit in with her while she was in mediation. She did the first two by her. She led them and I just listened. And then the third one, she kicked stuff to me and then, pretty soon, I was doing it by myself. That was really huge.

Elizabeth worked closely with a SPED teacher in her building and reflected on how helpful it was to be able to observe her:

> The SPED teacher there was amazing. She was just so good at her job and working with students that were behavior challenges. That was helpful to learn, especially as a first-year counselor, and being called into different situations like that. Just watching her do

> her job and learning just from watching and also starting to do. Even though she wasn't a counselor, it was really good to learn from her.

When Hillary was trying to learn about better ways to engage with highly capable students, she reached out to their teachers. Hillary recollected, "I worked with teachers and observed their classrooms to better understand what their needs were, which is what I do in many of our general education classes. I loved being able to learn more about those students." Hillary's consulting teacher also supported her being able to observe others; "She also arranged for me to see other counselors with more experience in our district, and get tools from them."

Francine's mentoring program also provided opportunities for her to observe other counselors in her district, which she greatly appreciated.

> I got to leave my building and go shadow some of those experienced counselors. One day was fully set up by them and it was in the morning we went to a whole group thing with all of the new teachers. It was one of those training events and in the afternoon, you went out to buildings. If you were a fourth grade teacher, you got to go shadow a fourth grade teacher. If you were a counselor, you got to go shadow a counselor. And then another time, I was looking for how to structure my small groups and organize them. and she said, "Why don't you go observe this counselor? She might be open to have you see it." She set that up for me specifically for what I needed. I got to go, I got approved from my principal, and I got to go in the morning and see her run two groups. It was great that they not only facilitated it, but I could seek it out if I wanted to. It was very much like "What do you need from us? Ask us what resources you need. What experiences you need." It has been awesome.

Gwen had a similar opportunity and was intentional about making time to observe others:

> Just trying to remember "there are things in my building and I need to be there, but also I'm still learning and always going to be and I need to see other things." I need to go talk with other counselors and learn what they are doing and see what their buildings look like.

Group Consultation. In addition to reaching out to individuals for consultation, the NSCs also spoke about reaching out to groups of counselors for consultation. They used their groups for both preparation and on-call consultations. Christine explained how she found outside supports, since she didn't feel that she had supports in building that could provide on-call consultation. She actively participated in a counselor group:

> We reach out via email whenever we have a question and we try to get back to each other as soon as we can because we recognize that we work in a fast-paced job. And have a consult and not have ethical or legal ramifications for our decisions.

Becca shared about a counselor group that she had joined that provide all types of consultation to the participating school counselors:

> It just open to any school counselors in our area that want to come. We meet about three times a year and define the purpose of our group and then, ahead of time, give ideas as far as what people might want support in …We discuss everything. It can be as simple or specific as, "I have this student and this is what we see and this is what we've tried and does anybody have any other ideas?" But it can also be a curriculum that they want to implement or a problem that they see within their school. It also can encompass "What do us as school counselors want to bring to our communities and how can we grow things outside of our schools as well?" It's super cool – They do a great job with it.

Other NSCs described scenarios in which they utilized a group of school counselors in their district. Jennifer was unsure about the roles and responsibilities that she had been given at her school and utilized her school counselor group to help her gain more clarity:

> My first year, because I really felt that it was wrong to be on the schedule for the amount of time that I was on it, so I reached out to all of the other counselors in the district and I asked people what they were doing and what their plans looked like. How many lessons they were teaching a year. … My first year, I taught 600 and something lessons throughout that year. And other counselors were doing like 300, so it was like, "Okay I'm doing double what you are doing."

In her first year, Hillary relied on other NSCs and school counselors in her district, who she was able to connect with through email:

> Part of our mentorship program connects you with other new counselors, so we created a group chat on messenger so we connected through that. I could connect through that avenue. Also, all of the elementary through high school counselors in our district are part of an email chain. It would be very frequent that counselors would be emailing back and forth in the elementary school pool for questions and answers, whether it's on resources for books or how to handle a particular student.

Resource Pooling. Similar to group consultation, NSCs also participated in resource pooling. They joined groups of counselors who shared resources and consulted with each other on what worked well for them. Jennifer shared how she heavily relied on resource pooling with other counselors in her district:

> I took advantage of the fact that we had a thread through email that we could just email every single counselor and no shame in being "Hey I'm new, I don't know how to do

this, can you send me these things." Honestly, if we didn't have the internet, I don't know what the heck I would have done … We have a page where we share all of our resources. You just can literally click on every single link. Like if it's an individual problem, we have links on everything, from divorce to LGBTQ to suicide to self-harm. Like all of these things, if you ran into any situation you would be able to find an article or someway to point you in the right direction.

Gwen shared how helpful it was to have access to resources that she may not need now, but could find helpful in the future:

I think it's been helpful for me because even if I'm not asking the question, it's probably stuff I would need to know anyways. People will ask about certain resources and I will instantly download what they send. I am gathering a lot of resources through other people's questions. Now it's like, oh do you have a template on kids that aren't honest, and I probably do because of the 50 emails we sent this year. It's really helpful to have resources and things to try. Also, feedback on certain resources so that we don't have to buy them and they suck. We'll be like "What's a good book on autism?" And people will respond that this one wasn't good, but this one was. Other people's opinions have been really great.

Francine started her year off by participating in a new school counselor support program:

That set the tone right away. I got to spend at least a day and a half/two days working just with other new elementary school counselors. We got to spend a bunch of time working together. They brought in some of the other elementary counselors who have been in the district for a while. They had a welcome thing for us. They brought a bunch of resources, "Here are some books. Here are the things for small groups. Here's what we

> love to do. Here's the curriculum that we use in this district." And we got to sit down with them for hours and ask questions.

As the year continued on, she continued to participate in district-led, group consulting activities for new school staff:

> They promised a bunch of ideas. We practiced things together. We had some time to lesson plan and practice putting them in. And some of those events were geared more towards teachers because that's the vast majority of what their population is, but I always felt like I walked away with good stuff because I do a lot of classroom lessons.

Gwen felt similar supports from her fellow school counselors at their district-led meetings and through email:

> We have our elementary school counseling meetings where we all come together a few times a year and talk about certain resources that are really helpful or some systems that we use. We also email each other a lot, being like "Hey I have this student who has an issue with attendance, does anyone have a template on that?" and then everyone will respond.

Becca experienced resource pooling through her school counselor group.

> You know every time I go, I learn something new. Whether it was something that was brought by the facilitator of the collaboration or another counselor brought in. I've never walked away without thinking, "That's so cool and so worth the time."

She described how she was starting to feel comfortable providing answers, instead of just asking questions:

> I think towards the end, I have started to feel more comfortable sharing. But at the beginning, it was really deer in the headlights. It was like "This is how I was taught in school, but how does it work in the real world?"

Becca also experienced resource pooling through professional associations and described how she valued the knowledge they shared:

> I really appreciate [ASCA and ACA], when I get the email or magazine because there's always something in there that's a valuable support as well, or confirmation, or open my eyes to a new way. I think, for me, it's just finding new ways to stay on top of the school counseling profession, specifically elementary school.

Summary. The six types of identified consultation have overlapping aspects. Preparation and on-call consultation appeared to be two overarching themes, into which the other types of consulting could fall. For example, Therese experienced both preparation consultation and observing others as she observed her co-counselors facilitate mediations. She recognized that she would likely need to lead mediations in the future, so observing her co-counselor provided her with information that could help her learn how. However, Elizabeth experienced on-call consultation and observing others when she had to report a messy situation to CPS and needed immediate assistance; her principal stepped in to assist and she was able to observe how he handled things and learn for the next time she would interact with CPS. As the most identified perceived form of assistance, it appears that consulting is a crucial part of the mentoring relationship.

Collaboration

The NSCs also focused on collaboration as a form of support that they received during their first several years. While consultation is one person asking for help from another,

collaboration is two or more people working together towards a common good (ASCA, 2016). For these NSCs, collaboration existed at a variety of different levels: within a school building, a district, or an outside group. Becca listed off all of the different ways that she was able to collaborate in her first year:

> Well I'm really blessed in the sense that my principal has her school counseling credentials and so she has a lot of insight into those things. We also have a middle school counselor and high school counselor and there's a strong support there. We also have a school-based mental health counselor that comes into our school and serves our kids, K-12. She's a great resource as well. And then within our area, we have a counselor collaboration for school counselors that wish to participate in that. That's also a really huge support system and network.

Reflecting on the district collaboration she participated in, Ingrid shared a sentiment that was shared by the other NSCs:

> We always have a time for collaboration, where we can talk about issues that we are facing or what are people's thoughts about this or research about this … I think what is nice is that people who are by themselves are able to collaborate.

When discussing collaboration, the NSCs highlighted how collaboration benefited both their own development and their school. Collaboration provided opportunities for the NSCs to better understand their role, learn new things, and grow in confidence. Collaboration also helped the NSCs' schools by being student-centered and by striving to improve efficiency.

Role Understanding. As NSCs began their first school year, many of them shared the challenge of understanding the scope of their role and responsibilities. Collaboration provided

an opportunity for them to define their role within the school building. Francine shared a conversation she had with her principal, that helped her to understand her role:

> [My principal] was like, "I really want to schedule a time to do the Principal-Counselor ASCA contract with you that helps to break down how much time you spend doing what." And she was great. She was like "I've never done this with a counselor before, but I think this would be a really great way for us to sit down and plan out and discuss how we want you to spend your time." And it was great because it opened up a lot of conversations about how does she want to use me and where does she want me focusing on. And she is great also because she really trusts me. Like she wants to know what I've doing, but she's not going to dictate it or push me on, "You need to do this." She trusts me as a professional and is behind what I'm doing, which is great.

Gwen also reflected on a collaboration experience with other new school counselors in her district that helped her to shape what she should be doing in her building:

> They hired six new elementary school counselors at the same time. We were all learning at the same time, so like, "Hey, these six people are new! Help them out!" (laughs) because we all didn't know anything. It wasn't like I was the only one. I collaborated a lot with the new ones to ask, "Are you doing this? Does this happen to you? Does this make sense to you? Are you going through this?" and that was really helpful. Or they would ask me the same questions.

Because her building had a plethora of support staff, Ingrid had a similar experience of trying to determine what her role would look like in her building. She found that collaborating with other support staff helped her to identify her responsibilities:

> I really had to change what I thought an elementary counselor does. I felt like what was nice is that I had to lean on my colleagues and figure out what the expectations were and it felt like once I figured out how things were, I think it really shaped, like "Okay, if this is not part of me, then what other things can I fill the buckets in?"

At her first school, however, Ingrid reflected on how collaboration with administration helped to maintain her role expectations, while still working towards the betterment of students:

> We would just work together really well. They would support a student until I was free to support the student and vice versa. While I wouldn't handle, I never went outside the scope of my responsibilities, like I never disciplined a student and a student never felt like they were in trouble when I walked up. However, I would be able to take notes and pass that information along to the principals so that they had some idea what to talk about.

As their understanding of their role grew, NSCs began to utilize collaboration to focus their role within a comprehensive counseling model. Jennifer struggled with her role expectations at first, which were heavily weighted in classroom guidance, and utilized collaboration to press back on those expectations:

> As I slowly built relationships with staff members, I would slowly start to share, "Hey, I don't know if you know this, but I'm the only counselor. And our district does this, and this is what other counselors do." I would start to explain what I'm trained in and what I can offer. The more that I connected with people and the more that I shared, the more that people say, "Oh wow, you're really valuable in this" or "I need you for this." Or I would start getting more phone calls asking to see these kids or pull these kids or do a small group…I think it is defining the counselor role, is what I was trying to do.

At her second school, Ingrid reflected that an established collaboration system has helped her to better understand her role and focus:

> I think in terms of collaboration now, what I like is that we have profiles. It's kind of like tiered interventions and its nice because I have certain tiers that I'm responsible for and then the responsibility shifts. It's nice to have because it's really clear what I'm doing to support kids.

Growth Opportunities. In addition to learning about their role, NSCs saw collaboration as an opportunity to learn from others. Collaboration typically provided them with opportunities to learn from others' experiences and take different perspectives into consideration. Francine shared:

> It's great having that collaboration in place and I really don't have any complaints because everyone has just been fantastic and I feel like I've learned so much from the people I work with. There are some really smart, wise people. And I am grateful that they have a lot of experiences, so I can soak up what they've got.

Ingrid felt similarly about the mentoring program she participated in; "Our mentor program is amazing. She and a team of others put together events for everyone in the district to connect with one another and learn from each other."

Gwen was explicit from the beginning that she saw collaboration as a way to grow, especially as the only counselor in the building:

> When I interviewed for this position, I definitely wanted to be like, I'm here to collaborate. I need a team that it going to work with me that will allow me to do my work. I was looking for a school where I could do that … I was trying to get away from

> having to be by myself, so I think during my interview, I made it known that I want to grow and am open to it and I need people to back me up so I can do a great job.

Therese felt that her collaboration with her administrators has helped her to learn and grow because they were willing to listen to her ideas and build upon them:

> [My principal is] really great and open about hearing things. And then our assistant principal is the same way. It's really nice to be able to be able to just walk in there and be like "I have this idea. Here's my vision for it. Here's why I think we should do it. What do you think?" and then they'll help reframe it. It's been really great there because in previous places, I've felt like I was stifled. Like I have an idea and it was like "No we can't do that." or "I don't want to hear it." or "You're not right." But with them, it's like, "That's a great idea, but let's tweak it." Or "I see where you're coming from with that or I like where you're coming from, but it's not going to work here, so how can we make it different?" And so that was really huge, I felt like I was able to grow a lot more.

Ingrid collaborated with teachers in her building to ensure that her classroom guidance lessons went smoothly: "Teachers understood that they would stay in the classroom so they could also benefit from my instruction and work it in throughout the school year, what I'm talking about. And they could also help me with classroom management."

Building Confidence. Collaboration helped the NSCs to build up their confidence around their role and responsibilities. The NSCs had opportunities to see themselves as valuable members of the team; they were able to contribute, instead of just observe. Davenport spoke about collaborating with her administrators:

> I feel like they appreciate the role of school counselor. I feel like they value what we do and they understand it can be difficult and I think that they appreciated being able to

> come and bounce ideas off of us as well. Since I'm a first-year person, I didn't feel like I knew what I was doing. It's kind of nice to have someone come and ask for your option and trust and value that.

Elizabeth also felt that her collaboration with administrators helped her to feel more confident in the work that she was doing. She would work with her principal on programs or projects; "When teachers gave me a hard time or wouldn't sign up for the schedule I gave them, just different things, he would firmly let them know that you need to respond back. He was really helpful as a support."

Elizabeth and Allison both shared experiences with counselor collaboration where they were able to help others, instead of just asking for help. They reflected that being able to contribute has felt encouraging. Elizabeth mused:

> Now I'm more on the helping end. It's kind of funny because it hasn't been that long. But it's been fun too. Because it's now like, "Oh yeah. I know this. And I can help with this." So even though its nothing formal, it's been helpful.

Allison shared:

> I felt like we really are a team, even though we are working individually… They were always saying, "If you have any questions about anything…" And if they remembered anything, "Oh, she probably needs to know this" they would stop by and say "Hey, just wanted to let you know: blah blah blah because this is probably going to come up." It was probably more me reaching out to them because I'm the one who had a million questions, but then they also started coming to me for information and support, which felt nice to be able to help them out.

Student-Centered. While collaboration was mostly described as how it helped the NSCs, they also discussed how it helped their schools. Some of the NSCs' experiences of collaboration focused on students and how to support them. Francine shared how she perceived the team of educators at her school were all working together towards the best interests of the students:

> It's the most supportive environment and you really feel like everybody is working together as a team in the best interest of that kid. Teachers included, SPED included, admin … It's such a great feeling to know that I can be a piece to making a different for this kid, but it's not all on me. And it's not possible for some of these really high needs kids without everybody's support. It's great having that collaboration in place.

Christine expressed similar sentiments about the team at her school and the importance of coming together for the kids:

> There's a component of staff working together and respecting each other's time and having time and space to be proactive versus reactive and making a commitment that no matter what happens, we're going to slog through that together. When the end of the school year comes, like right now, we can go, "We really made a difference in some of our students, who we knew at the beginning of the year would need ongoing support."

As a new member of the team and school, multiple NSCs recognized that other school staff had established relationships with students. They identified that collaborating would ultimately benefit the students the most. Davenport shared an experience when she collaborated to help a student return to school after a crisis; "I checked in with the health room secretary because the girl would go in there quite a bit. I got some information from her. She actually knew the girl was back before I did."

When developing 504 Plans, Therese discussed how she collaborated with teachers to determine the most appropriate accommodations for the student:

> Since I was new to the school, I didn't know these kids and so if it was a 7th and 8th grader, [the teachers] usually knew who the kid was and would be able to come in and say well this works or this didn't. When we do the 504s, we have the all the teachers of the kid are usually there. That was helpful too. And then also talking to the teachers after the fact, to follow up on how the kid is doing.

Although she had worked at her school for a few years before becoming a school counselor there, Becca also collaborated with school staff with the focus on students.

> I have a really great relationship with all of our paras just because we worked together and I think seeing the value of their lens of the school and the interactions they provide for our students. Sometimes they're the ones that get the closest with our kids, depending on what their jobs are ... And I think for sure that definitely helps me in my job today because I have an open line of communication already and they already feel comfortable coming in and saying "Hey, could you peek in on this kiddo? He didn't look so good this morning," or "Look – Something is going on with them…" I think it's definitely helped as far as having a pulse on our kids. Just communicating with staff to make sure we are doing the best we can to meet everybody's needs.

However, NSCs did not perceive that they could always collaborate with everyone in their building. Davenport expressed the importance of who she collaborated with; she was selective about which administrator to collaborate with in certain situations:

> We had one AP who, the one who has all the experience, I would consider him … I don't want to say he is jaded but he just assumes every kid is lying to him in general. When

> we've had certain instances come up that I feel an admin should step in, he was like, "Well what do you want me to do about it?" … And so that was a little frustrating, and they had it split up by alpha and grade level and things like that, so that would direct part of it, but on some sensitive types of things, I would defer to the female admin because I felt like she would understand more, I guess, and be a little more sympathetic, if that makes sense.

Improving Efficiency. Some of the NSCs also identified a desire for improving efficiency through collaboration. As a new person to the building, two NSCs spoke about how they were able to bring a new perspective to each of their schools. Davenport spoke about her school's needs survey, which had been done the same way for a while:

> They did their needs survey and I was able to come in with a new fresh set of eyes and kind of help pair it down a bit, and say, "Well do we really need this question and can we get rid of something to make it shorter and make it easier for kids to take? What is the purpose of asking that?" Trying to streamline it a little bit … Given the way our school is at, things had been done a certain way for a long time and trying to change that is difficult, but I think if you can get the other counselors and admin to understand perspective and see where you're trying to go, that you can definitely make a change.

Jennifer also used collaboration as a means to improve systems in her building. She reflected:

> I connected with the people who were new in the building too, because they were like "Oh, I see how this works, or I'm not so certain about that," and we could be like, "Oh, you might want to change this," and so we've really worked as a team to… we're

> bringing in the principal as far as trying to change things. We're looking at it from a fresh set of eyes … It's valuable having a new set of eyes to look at what your system is.

Davenport also wished for the opportunity to collaborate with fresh eyes outside of her building on a regular basis:

> I wish we had had a time when we could just meet with other middle school counselors and just talk about what works in your building, because I feel like the way that registration is done varies from building to building. The way electives are done varies from building to building. The alpha versus grade level is different. It would be great to just have time to talk about what does this look like at your school, what have you found to be effective or most efficient. Because I do feel like there's a lot of good information out there that we just don't know about, and it just hasn't been shared or communicated to us. I would like to see more collaboration at the district level... It would be better if we could talk to other people at different schools and say, "Have you tried this yet, and what did you find to be the most effective?"

Summary. While collaboration had many benefits to offer the NSCs and the schools, it also came with challenges. Effective collaboration requires a working relationship, which can be challenging to cultivate, especially for new staff members. Elizabeth articulated:

> We learned a lot how to work with kids and students, but not as much how to have a really good working relationship with the adults that you work with. Something big I learned in my work was that if a teacher is really resistant to you, it's going to be really hard to reach her students. So having good relationships there.

Additionally, she noted the importance of "trying to have as good of a working relationship with [school staff] and kind of figuring out their style and how they tick and what works."

However, the interviews revealed that the NSCs sought out ways to develop those working relationships and collaborate within and outside of their schools. Collaboration was identified as a means of learning for the NSCs, while also directly benefiting students and schools.

Counseling

Another theme that emerged for most of the NSCs was the use of counseling-like supports. The NSCs normalized the struggles that school counselors face in their first year and linked it to the importance of self-care. Jennifer explained:

> I think as counselors, we often get a little bit into that mode of wanting to make sure everyone is okay, but really we have to take care of ourselves and know our limits… And to know that everyone worries their first year and it's not abnormal and you are just working through it just like everybody else.

Becca emphasized:

> It is important to give yourself grace. I think we, as school counselors, naturally are going to have a lot of great words for somebody else that is struggling, and so I think it's important to take a moment when we're struggling and take a breath and remind ourselves that we're human too. Struggle is natural. And I think to reach out. Because you can really feel isolated at times and kind of on an island. So just building a relationship with other school counselors or other people who can support you through your progress I think is really important.

None of the NSCs discussed participating in licensed mental-health counseling; because of this, counseling will refer to informal counseling supports unless otherwise specified. Most of the NSCs referenced ways that they valued counseling conversations with mentors. In the

interviews, the NSCs acknowledged their own need for this type of support, discussed it as an opportunity for growth, and emphasized the value of having someone to listen to them and help them process.

Recognizing the Need. Four of the NSCs acknowledged their need for ongoing personal support. Becca recognized the stressors that she was facing as a NSC and had resolved to seek out formal counseling, moving forward;

> I really feel like finding somebody, whether it's once a month or once every couple of months, that I can go to that is a counselor of some sort, just to process. Just for those times when issues with my students brings up things for me. Just holding myself accountable and making sure that I'm doing the best job that I can for the kids.

Christine shared how she wished that she had developed more of a personal support network from her graduate school program. Recognizing that they would likely be experiencing similar things in their first year, she would have liked to have others to lean on for support. She advised:

> Because also, I think you carry around the guilt about not doing it right or not doing enough or not getting to that student and then having that practice. Because it's so easy to have a sedentary lifestyle and carry your stress home with you. Having a network – Get your cohort to commit to giving you their personal email and having some kind of network because you're going to need it. That will help you a lot, I think.

Francine discussed how she wished that she had sought out personal supports at her first school. She advised other school counselors:

> Early on, getting connected with counselors in the district and finding those people who will be supportive. Like I think I could have, in my first district, tried a bit harder to find

> a person who would support me and be available, I just didn't connect with somebody who I felt like really was my person. But I, think I could have if I had reached out a bit more and tried a bit more … I think seeking out that kind of support is crucial because, you know, it's important to have somebody you know actually will answer your emails and be available and you won't feel like a bother to them.

At her second school, Francine was able to access personal supports with her consulting teacher. At the end of their year together, Francine acknowledged her ongoing need for someone to connect with;

> And my mentor said, "Please book me and still schedule appointments with me. I'm happy to still support you." I feel like she's someone that I could still shoot an email to and she'd help me out even though she's no longer formally mine.

Gwen had a similar conversation with her consulting teacher at the end of their time together. She also felt a need for the ongoing personal support, despite the program ending. She recalled:

> I had my last meeting with her and I was like, "I think it's funny how you think that I'm just not going to talk to you anymore." She was like, "No, no, no. You can still contact me, you're just not on my caseload." I was like "Oh okay, because I'm not going to not email you anymore." (laughs) But yeah, she said that I can still, if I need to meet up with her during a lunch, she is happy to see me still. I thought that was pretty cool.

Listening. Five of the NSCs specifically discussed how having someone to simply listen to their struggles was helpful. They identified that they often needed to just get things off of their chests, since the job comes with so many emotionally heavy situations.

Gwen identified that one of the greatest things that her consulting teacher offered her was a listening ear:

> She would come see me at least once a month or I could have lunch with her or something like that. When you are a counselor and you are listening to everybody, it's really nice to have someone to talk to about your stuff. Just the fact that I had someone listening to me so I could get out my thoughts and put it into something was really helpful.

Therese reflected on the emotional support that her co-counselor had offered her through challenging times. She advised other school counselors to find someone trustworthy who will simply listen to what they are going through;

> It's hard, they don't teach you. … I mean you talk about abuse in your programs, but when you actually see it, when you see the kid and his bruises are so bad from a belt that you need to bring in a forensic police officer, you know, that's sits with you. They don't talk about that in grad school. They talk about self-care, but they don't talk about the fact that that will sit with you and you need to find a way to get that out, whether its crying on your own, or talking with a spouse or friend or co-worker because that's the kind of stuff that will haunt you … They don't teach you any of that in your program, and you really need to have good supports because on those hard days, you have to be able to have someone to reach out to.

Elizabeth felt similarly and recognized the support that her husband had provided her in her first few years by simply listening to what was going on for her;

> I think something else that still does and has been a big impact is having my husband to talk with about what's going on. Like not with student information, but just being able to

> talk about the things that are difficult. Just to have someone outside of work life that can hear what I'm going through, even though he might not exactly know my job, I know I can get support from him and help from him. And rely on him, so I think that's a big, big thing for counselors, whether that's a spouse or friend or someone, I think that's good to have.

Christine and Francine shared that they received counseling support from groups of school counselors who were not in their building. Christine connected with a group of experienced school counselors who were willing to listen to her frustrations;

> I meet with other school counselors, monthly pretty much, to be supported and a lot of them are much older than me and older in their careers, so they can empathize and they're like, "Oh yeah, when I was younger in the professions … I was struggling with this too."

Francine connected with a group of new school counselors in her district who were able to empathize and listen to her struggles because they were facing similar issues; "I've got that support system of the other five counselors. We have a group text now and we all text each other. We go to happy hour together. Those August days to build these relationships made all the difference."

Processing. In addition to having someone there to just listen, the NSCs also sought out counseling supports to help them process some of the challenges that they experienced. They appreciated having someone there to reflect and problem solve challenges. Hillary's consulting teacher helped her in this way; "She would meet with me and individually we would talk abstractly about challenges that I was having in the classroom." Francine also used her

consulting teacher to help her process challenges; “Honestly, often, we just sit and talk about a difficult student and talk about what we should do.”

Elizabeth shared about a relationship she had cultivated with one of the SPED teachers at her school, and how they had become close enough for her to feel comfortable having counseling conversations. “We just talked about life and we talked about faith, too. We just talked a lot about everything, related to work or not. I think it just felt nice to have someone who liked me and cared about me.” This SPED teacher helped her to process and reflect on the school culture; “Sometimes when difficult things happened between staff or between myself and staff, she’d get it. She’s like, ‘No… That’s not just you.’ Or things like that, just reassuring, things like that. And that was really good.”

Francine had opportunities through her new staff support program to process some of her struggles with other new school counselors.

> They had an evening where they invited all of us to come and just have a round table together. That was really nice that they thought about us and the fact that we needed something a little different than the teachers.

Growth. When they were seeking out counseling supports, some of the NSCs focused beyond processing, to their personal growth. Jennifer would talk with her consulting teacher about her ongoing growth; “We’d sit down and I would have goals, or not goals … kind of like goals, things that I was working on. We would discuss them and how I was doing or how I was improving.” She found these counseling conversations to help her identify areas that she could improve in and set goals for herself to do so.

Therese had similar conversations with her administrators. They encouraged self-reflection and welcomed counseling conversations, focused on her improvement.

> With my principal, we'd talk, "Okay where do you feel like you need to improve?" Self-reflection is huge. So being able to come back and say, "I need to do this, this, and this" and he would even agree or disagree. If he agreed, he would give his reasons for it and it was good to see it from the other side. If he disagreed, he would give his reasons for it, and I could be like, "Okay, I'm being hard on myself." Having that open relationship has been huge and I feel super supported to grow and learn.

Summary. Because the first few years for NSCs can be fraught with challenges and uncertainty, the NSCs reported in their interviews that they felt a need for counseling supports from their mentors. They did not always feel comfortable seeking out these counseling supports. However, when they did, the counseling was focused on listening, processing, and growing.

Technical Support

The final type of support that most of the NSCs discussed was technical support. This support sometimes came from a mentor and sometimes was provided by the district at-large. Technical support helps NSCs to understand policies and procedures. Specifically, support was needed for employment questions, 504 monitoring, and student scheduling. The discussion about technical support was split, as many NSCs expressed frustration that they did not receive sufficient technical support. Because this perception of the lacking technical support came up so frequently, it will also be explored.

Policies and Procedures. Every district has their own policies and procedures. When school counselors begin their job in a new district, they will have to learn that district's policies and procedures. Four of the NSCs explained how they learned more about this in their district and buildings. Ingrid's district provided her with a binder that mapped it all out;

> I think what was helpful was that we have a lot of policies and procedures that we need to follow in our district, which is appropriate, but is just a lot … They give you a binder that has all of the policies and procedures. I remember in my first year, my mentor and I went through that. Here's the form for this, here's the form for that. What is nice is that everyone has that binder in our district. My mentor can be like, "Oh look at this tab," and point out a new CPS or new suicide procedure. She could say, "Go to this page" and could walk me through it.

Francine also received a guide to procedures in her building, which was surprising to her; "They gave us a resource packet with here's how we schedule things. Here's how we write letters to parents. Basically, a guide for all that we need to know for our first year. I was just blown away." Her consulting teacher also helped her to navigate this; "She was a fourth-grade teacher, but she still was incredibly helpful to me, just giving me support, like what procedures are in the district, what to do for this."

Therese received a lot of technical support from her co-counselor. She provided the example of the procedure of making a CPS report:

> How do you make a CPS report? They don't teach you that or what the form looks like or where do you call. Each district has a different procedure. The forms are pretty similar. It is kind of a standard form, but the procedure is different. But just filling out the form. Like I, the first time I had to do that, I was like, "I don't know what the heck I am doing." And thankfully, my co-counselor was there to save the day and was like, "Here's what we need to do." And knowing that you should call in the morning, and not the afternoon. Because if you call in the afternoon, you may never get through.

Allison also relied heavily on her co-counselors to navigate building policies and procedures during her first year;

> I was running to everyone's office, back and forth all day. Like a parent would call and ask a question and I would say, "Umm … Let me put you on hold for just one second. Let me go find out." Or a student would come and ask and, "I'm not sure, let me find out and I'll get back to you." It was a lot of "I don't knows" and then having to ask everybody.

She also identified her assistant principal as providing a lot of help as she learned how to navigate her job:

> [My assistant principal] was helpful in that role as far as, letting me know about policies and how to respond with this type of situation. Less on the social/emotional side and more on the administrative. Like if a kid was to have a different teacher, there's a protocol and policies, steps that we have to take.

Technical support for procedures also helped NSCs to plan for their year. Ingrid identified that district procedures guided what she should be focusing on each month. She worked with her mentor to learn what she should be focusing on; "We have a lot of policies and procedures that we need to follow in our district, which is appropriate, but is just a lot. We mapped out what I should be doing in the month based on the district." Therese identified that building procedures helped her to understand how she should be planning out what to accomplish each month as well:

> My co-counselor called me right away and said, "Here's where we're at. This is what needs to happen." And then my admin called and said the same thing. It was easy because I was like, "Okay, here is my focus." I could plan the rest of August. I met with

> them one more time before the school year started to figure out what's my focus after that. She was able to tell me, "After this, we need to get on our 504s. You need to schedule whatever needs to be scheduled. You need to make copies of this."

Basic Employment Questions. Two of the NSCs discussed how they accessed technical support to help with basic employment questions. Both Gwen and Francine used their consulting teachers to figure out what paperwork they needed to complete. Gwen shared:

> I used my mentor a lot to ask about questions about when I get paid or what paperwork I need to turn in. Because that was really tricky … Like paperwork for healthcare or where to turn in this form that I didn't know that we had to turn in. If she didn't know the answer and couldn't help me, then she would find somebody else. Because I had a question about when are you supposed to renew your certificate. Like it used to be five years and now its two so I just had to go get that done. But I know the process and the website isn't easy on the eyes all the time, so then I reached out to her and she was able to contact some counselors that had to just gone through that so that I knew what to do.

Francine echoed this; "Even, when I had questions about HR or payroll, I could just shoot her an email and she would give me the information and they were so responsive and great."

504 Plans. Another area where support was needed was in the development and maintenance of 504 Plans. Because 504 Plans are legal documents, there are procedures and guidelines that should be followed. Additionally, most districts use computer systems to manage their 504 Plans; the 504 coordinator needs to be able to navigate their computer system. Gwen shared her frustration of not knowing what she should be doing as a 504 monitor. She reached out to others in her district for assistance;

> I was thrown in the mix and then they were like, "Oh yeah, and you're a 504 monitor too." And I was like, "Cool! I've never seen a 504 in my life, so that's alright … Oh! These kids need these accommodations or you could sue us. That's great. I wish I knew what to do with them?" … I just wanted someone to be there that I could ask "Is this right? Is this correct?" I reached out to different people in the district, and I asked someone to come in and show me how to navigate IEP Online. I had to reach out for what I needed, but I got it done. I kind of know more on what I am supposed to do now.

Therese was also stressed about not knowing how to develop a 504 Plan. She received support from others in her building on how to develop and manage 504 Plans;

> [My co-counselor] connected me with our Ed Specialist, who is like our department head for special education, and school psych. My first 504 meeting, they both agreed to come to make sure the accommodations that were being suggested by the parent or what I made up was worded right or was something that could be done in the Middle School level or just in the school day in general. Then she helped me go through the actual online format, like you need to fill in this this this this and how to submit it. And so that was really helpful because, in grad school, we talk about how to write a 504 and what should be in some of the accommodations. But there's no actual training on a program and so when you're going into your first meeting with parents, you don't want to look like an idiot because you don't know. And I was totally freaking out about it.

Student Scheduling. Another technical aspect, mostly at the middle and high schools, is building student schedules. Not only do school counselors need to understand policies and procedures around class placement, but they also need to know how to navigate their district's

student information system to build the schedules. Allison relied heavily on her co-counselors to learn about scheduling in her building. She shared:

> I had to learn the course offerings. I had to learn about the IB program and the IB diploma and they have their own specific course and different math sequences. And then juniors and seniors can do Running Start or they can go to the local skills center, so I had to learn how to get kids signed up for that, what are the course offerings, what are the steps … I basically jumped in, like cannonballed, into high school counseling. A lot of the day to day stuff was a struggle and I bugged my colleagues a lot with questions.

Davenport expressed similar feelings of being overwhelmed while trying to navigate her scheduling system, because she did not receive the necessary formal training for it; "Luckily, because it's such a big school, there were three other counselors here and so I relied heavily on them to basically show me the ropes, although none of them were ever formally trained either on Skyward."

Lacking Technical Support. While the reporting on the other themes did not explore how technical support was lacking, it will be explored here because so many of the NSCs devoted part of their interview to explaining how frustrating it was to not have enough technical support. The implications and recommendations for this will be explored further in the discussion in the next chapter.

Five of the NSCs shared their frustrations on not receiving sufficient technical support. Elizabeth explained how the role of school counselor involved technical aspects that were not covered in school counseling preparation programs; she wished her district had trainings "not just learning how to do different school counseling things, but also just learning different

systems as part of the district. How things work and processes, that would have been helpful." She shared about an early, frustrating experience:

> I had people available to me that I could call, but I remember even that was unclear. I called someone that I thought I was supposed to call for basic logistical questions about how to log in to this or if that's not working. And I learned later that apparently that she's really high up in the district. But I think even things like that, like I didn't really even know the chain of who to go to for help, so that was hard.

Francine felt upset at the lack of direction or support for these technical parts of the job:

> Not only in the expectations of the job that I would have liked the mentorship and support, but also silly things like procedural stuff: where's the paperwork for this, what do I do if I make a CPS call, or if I need to fill out this form. Often I felt like it was later I would find out what I was supposed to do, like once the situation had happened. Or somebody else would talk about the situation at an elementary counselor meeting and I, being the only new school counselor, would kind of be over in the corner being like, "Oh! Umm. I don't have a copy of that form and it would be great to have that resource or information."

Christine was disappointed with how little guidance for technical aspects of the job was in place at her private school;

> I thought I would have these systems already. I thought I would be part of a bigger district. Or I will have my superintendent, well not your superintendent, but somebody else to call. Or that I will have a flow chart. But now I'm in this space and I'm like, "Oh those things aren't there."

Davenport received some training, but did not feel that it was sufficient or helpful for the tasks that she had to complete as a school counselor. She shared:

> One thing that I find is very lacking as far as any kind of training on Skyward or scheduling in general. It's not something that's covered in grad school at all and then I didn't have to do scheduling at my internship and so I really just didn't have any training on Skyward at all. They had a one-hour Skyward training, but it was geared towards teachers and they had a different worksheet for everybody else. We were lumped in with school psychologists, speech pathologists, and everybody who was not a teacher. It wasn't really applicable as far as my day to day experience is like, using the system, especially at the beginning.

Therese was grateful to have learned the policies and procedures from her previous years working in her district. However, she empathized with others who were new to her district and were struggling to navigate it:

> Every district is different. The policies and bureaucracies are different. Having ten years at the high school level and seeing all of that and learning all of the intricacies of that made it really easy for me this year. Thankfully I stayed in the same district, so I knew a lot of the stuff. But most of the counselors aren't going to get that. In our program, we are taught, this is how education functions. And each district has a different focus and you have to know who to contact in the district and who to not tick off in the district (laughs) and who is expecting what and what they are looking for and everything is different. There is no manual for this.

Summary. Technical support of NSCs focuses on their understanding of district and building policies and procedures. Because it cannot be fully taught in school counselor

preparation programs, the NSCs shared that they had to heavily rely on others in their district to learn about these technical aspects. NSCs described situations in which they received technical support to learn about policies and procedures, employment issues, 504 Plans, and student scheduling. However, almost half of the NSCs shared their perception that an insufficient amount of technical support was provided.

Overall Summary

This chapter explored the experiences and perceptions of the mentoring supports of 11 NSCs throughout their first few years as school counselors. The NSCs who participated in formal mentoring programs received mentoring from consulting teachers or working school counselors. All NSCs reported receiving informal mentoring; they described experiences of informal mentoring with other school counselors, administrators, teachers, school staff, and other mentors. The NSCs also reported feelings of isolation and being a burden as being hurdles in their mentoring relationships.

As the NSCs described how they perceived these mentoring supports, four themes of support were identified: consultation, collaboration, counseling, and technical support. Consultation took on many forms; preparation, on-call consultation, being observed, observing others, group consultation, and resource pooling. Collaboration had multiple goals; role understanding, growth, and building confidence, which benefitted the NSCs while also being student-centered and working toward improving efficiency. Counseling provided NSCs the opportunity to be heard, to process, and to grow. Finally, technical support helped NSCs to understand the policies and procedures, especially around employment questions, 504 Plans, and student scheduling.

The following chapter discusses the implications and significance of these findings to the school counseling induction process.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The previous chapter presented the findings from 11 semi-structured interviews with NSCs about their lived experiences with regards to formal and informal mentoring supports they received. In the following discussion, themes drawn from the interviews will be compared and contrasted with findings from other studies to create a deeper understanding of the experiences of NSCs, with regards to mentoring.

Summary

Upon entering the profession, school counselors may face a difficult transition from their preparation programs into their new role as professionals (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992). During their induction period, NSCs must figure out how to navigate their schools while putting into practice all of their professional knowledge (Bickmore & Curry; Matthes; Stickel & Trimmer, 1994). Previous qualitative studies have demonstrated that mentoring can help NSCs as they enter the profession (Armstrong et al., 2006; Desmond et al., 2007; Desmond, 2009; Loveless, 2010; Milsom & McCormick, 2015; Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992).

This phenomenological study explored how 11 NSCs experienced mentoring during their induction period. Through semi-structured interviews, the study answered two questions: (1) What is the lived experience of mentoring, formal or informal, for Washington State NSCs during their first several years working as school counselors? And (2) how do Washington State NSCs perceive they are utilizing mentoring relationships? Findings for the first question focused on aspects of the mentoring supports that contributed to both formal and informal mentoring relationships, including NSCs' feelings about mentoring and who they received support from. In

response to the second question, four themes were identified to describe how NSCs utilized their mentors: consultation, collaboration, counseling, and technical support.

With this data, I explore potential implications of the findings. Although this is a qualitative study and the data is not generalizable, the findings align with previous studies and add to the support for mentoring for NSCs. With this in mind, implications and recommendations for future practices are explored. Suggestions for future research and areas of study are also provided.

Research Question One

The first research question asked: What is the lived experience of mentoring, formal or informal, for Washington State NSCs during their first several years of working as school counselors? The participating NSCs experienced formal and informal mentoring. As a group, they expressed overcoming feelings of isolation and as if they were a burden. The technical data from their interviews were shared previously, and are discussed further in this chapter.

Feelings of Isolation

In their interviews, many of the NSCs identified initial feelings of isolation as they began their new jobs. This feeling was predominantly expressed by NSCs who were the only school counselors in their buildings. They felt alone in their first few years when they were in the most need of support (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Matthes, 1992). The NSCs identified mentoring supports as a way to feel less isolated, especially if they were the only school counselors in their buildings. The feeling that they had someone to turn to for a variety of different types of support was reassuring.

Formal Mentoring. All of the participating NSCs who received formal mentoring were at the elementary school level and were the only school counselors at their schools. For those

with formal mentors, there was an overall feeling of not being alone in navigating their first few years. Despite being the only school counselors in their buildings, they had someone assigned to them to turn to in times of need. As many of the NSCs with formal mentoring discussed, it was perceived as a relief to have someone identified as their go-to person. Elizabeth shared, "I think for me, it was nice to know this is someone assigned or someone who I know I can go to for questions." The NSCs were reassured to have an identified support person; they did not feel alone.

Informal Mentoring. The NSCs who did not receive formal mentoring reported grappling with feelings of isolation and finding their own ways to overcome them. This was especially challenging for those who were the only school counselors in their buildings. Christine reflected on how isolated she felt in her first year at a private school:

> In some ways, it was really isolating last year with the places that I was in with my admin … And I think I was young and a newbie school counselor so it was difficult for me to know: "Do I need to step out? Do I have the okay to tell my boss that this isn't my job?" Or like: "Hey, I have some concerns…" or whatever. And also, we don't have resources that the public school would when you get into some situations, like you can call and the resource officer or social worker. But here, we're kind of it.

Those who had additional counselors in their building also reported feeling isolated. Allison shared that at her high school, she felt alone sometimes. When asked who has provided her with support, she replied:

> No one [except for my co-counselors]. Not because they weren't supportive people. It's just because our job is such a niche, such a unique set of skills. Everyone was very kind and welcoming, but it wasn't like, the stuff that I needed support with was counselor

> specific duties. They were nice and helpful if I had questions, but it wasn't the same type of support.

Similarly, Francine shared about feeling isolated despite having a supportive co-counselor. However, she also reflected about how much more isolated and uncomfortable she would have felt if she was in a school with no other school counselors:

> There is no one to rely on. I don't know any elementary school counselors. What would I have done? I would have had to make connections through other connections and then it would have been awkward because I'm calling someone I don't know that I was referred to by somebody else.

These frustrations around feelings of isolation were seemingly addressed by the NSCs themselves, who sought out their own supports. For some, such as Christine, it was connecting with an outside group of school counselors. For others, such as Allison and Francine, it was connecting with co-counselors.

Implications. Although the feelings of isolation were present for most of the NSCs, they appear more problematic in the interviews of NSCs with no formal mentoring. Having an identified mentor seemed to provide a peace of mind that one is not alone in the process, even as the sole counselor in a building. As Milsom and Kayler (2008) highlight, informal mentoring can also provide this type of guidance as NSCs learn to navigate their new profession. However, as Francine described, seeking out mentoring supports for oneself can feel uncomfortable and awkward. Curry and Bickmore (2012) confirm this experience, noting that the NSCs in their study reported feeling overlooked and unimportant to their district because of the lack of connections available to them.

Feelings of Being a Burden

NSCs who received formal mentoring and informal mentoring both reported feeling like a burden. Those who received formal mentoring seemed to overcome these feelings, while those with informal mentoring may have allowed these feelings to interfere with fully accessing informal mentoring supports.

Formal Mentoring. A theme regularly highlighted by the NSCs who participated in formal mentoring programs was a decrease in feeling like an inconvenience to their formal mentors. The NSCs identified that having someone assigned to them helped them to feel more comfortable asking for help without worrying about how this would interrupt their mentors' other work. The NSCs with consulting teachers did not report feeling bothersome to their mentors; rather they reported how they continuously utilized the supports provided by their consulting teachers. Gwen talked about how regularly accessed her consulting teacher for answers to questions:

> I feel like along the way and through that year, I had a lot of questions. Because I feel like you can ask as many questions as you need to, but things are going to pop up that you don't think to ask … Honestly, I feel like I reached out the most. It's like the resources are there and you need to advocate for yourself. I asked a lot of questions, I thought she was helpful.

The NSCs with working school counselor mentors did report being hesitant to reach out, but also recognized that their mentors had planned to assist NSCs as part of their role, so it felt more acceptable to interrupt them with questions or concerns. Elizabeth reflected on struggling with these concerns about being an interruption to her mentor:

> I think it being official kind of made it feel like it was okay to take her time and ask her. And she was definitely really on board, too. She was open. I think I could have used her more, but I was also wanting to respect her time and not take too much. I think it being official, I didn't have to worry about it as much, worrying if I'm too much of a burden or if it's not something okay if I could ask.

Having a formal mentor appeared to open the channels to access help. While feelings of encumbrance were not explicitly shared in any studies, Desmond (2009) discusses the theme of supporting the mentee; simply having someone there to support them was identified by the NSCs as a satisfying aspect of the formal mentoring relationship. The mentees found it helpful to know that they had a support system in place to seek guidance and reassurance, relieving some of the discomfort around asking for help.

Informal Mentoring. While discussing the informal mentoring and supports received, NSCs indicated that they felt bothersome to those who were providing the support. It was evident that concern regarding being a burden impacted NSCs from accessing mentoring as needed or desired. This aligns with the findings of Curry and Bickmore (2012; 2013) that show informal mentoring is less effective because of the encumbrance placed on the NSC to seek out supports and to speak up and ask for help.

Francine and Elizabeth both had experiences of working in a district with no formal mentoring and a district with formal mentoring. When reflecting on finding supports in their districts with no formal mentoring, they shared feelings of intimidation and being a bother that prevented them from fully reaching out. Francine shared:

> I had no idea who my district supervisor was. I never really heard from school counselors in the district until we had meetings where we all were together. And then

> once I got to know people, I, quite honestly, I felt like I was bothering people or I wouldn't hear back or people would be like, "Oh you should talk to this person about that…" I never really knew who to go to with my questions. I never had a specific person who said, "Email me, contact me, and if I'm not the person, I'll connect you…" and it was really intimidating, as a brand-new counselor.

Similarly, Elizabeth reflected, "I wish I asked more questions early on, but sometimes it's a pride thing or I don't want to bother people or I'll figure it out."

Both Francine and Elizabeth had the opportunity to compare their experiences between districts and mentoring supports. With two different experiences, their reflections seem especially poignant to consider. As NSCs with no formal mentoring, they reported feeling more hesitant and reluctant to reach out for supports than as NSCs with formal mentoring. Other NSCs without formal mentoring echoed these hesitations to asking for help, citing burdensome feelings as the main reason. Similarly, Curry and Bickmore (2012) assert that informal mentoring is inefficient because of this responsibility placed on NSCs to speak up for themselves.

Implications. Comparing the negative feelings associated with formal and informal mentoring provides insights to potential benefits of formal mentoring programs. As Curry and Bickmore (2012) identify, NSCs that are not provided formal mentoring within their districts are left with the task of self-identifying a mentor in order to receive support. Furthermore, the NSCs interviewed in this study identified the value of having supports already identified for them as they entered the job; Francine reflected how having someone reach out initially would have been appreciated:

> I think having the district person reach out right away and introducing themselves, "I'm going to be your person available at the district. Here's my role. Here's what I do. Do you have any questions as you're getting started?" … I think in any district, you can find at least one person who is willing to be that person who is available. I think just having people right away would just be so nice, even just sending one email like: "Hi. Welcome. Let me know if you have any questions." That's like bare minimum, but would be nice.

It appears that removing that first step of having to self-identify a mentor could support the NSCs' induction process by reducing the barrier of feeling like an inconvenience to others (Curry & Bickmore, 2012). The initial provision of connections within the building and district would allow for NSCs to easily access supports, without having to hesitate or worry about how they might be bothering their mentors.

Seeking Out Supports

As the NSCs navigated their first few years as school counselors, all reported seeking out their own mentoring support, although this looked different for each, depending on the existing mentoring supports and the make-up of their school communities. However, each of them reported perceived gaps in their ability to perform their jobs and found ways to fill those gaps through support from others.

Formal Mentoring. In their first few years of school counseling, six out of 11 NSCs received formal mentoring, set up by their school districts as part of their induction program for new employees. Four of the NSCs had consulting teachers as mentors; two of the NSCs had working counselors as mentors. Similar to findings in previous studies (Armstrong et al., 2006; Desmond, 2009; Desmond et al., 2007; Milsom & McCormick, 2015; Peace, 1995; VanZandt & Perry, 1992), all six of the NSCs spoke positively about their formal mentoring experiences, with

feelings ranging from gratitude to excitement. Although it appears that the formal mentoring supports were positively regarded, all six of these NSCs also discussed informal supports that they sought out during their induction process.

For many of these NSCs, it appeared that there were job-specific tasks that they needed additional assistance with. The NSCs with consulting teachers reported that there were hurdles that their consulting teacher could not help with because of a lack of counseling experience. For example, Gwen shared, "Could [my consulting teacher] help me on the counseling side? No. But that's where I could reach out to other counselors in the district and ask my questions." No previous studies were identified with non-school counselor mentors. However, NSCs needing mentors with counseling knowledge aligns with previous studies that highlight the importance of passing along counselor-specific knowledge during the induction period (Loveless, 2010; Milsom & McCormick, 2015). The NSCs interviewed indicated that they sought out others to provide this knowledge when it was not included as part of their formal mentoring program.

Challenges to accessibility to mentors was also an issue for NSCs receiving formal mentoring, causing them to seek out additional informal mentors. While the consulting teachers appeared to be available at all times, the working school counselor mentors were not always available due to their own professional responsibilities as school counselors. Elizabeth shared:

> Since she was working full time, I knew that she also would have to get excused from school by her administrator. It kind of depends on the person who is your mentor and how much they are willing to help, and also their building administrator allowing them to go during the school day.

Additionally hindered by burdensome feelings, Ingrid and Elizabeth did not feel like they had open access to their mentors. Armstrong et al. (2006) and Desmond (2009) discuss the

importance of accessibility of mentors. High responsiveness was valued by their participants. However, NSCs also identified scheduling times to meet with working school counselor mentors as the biggest challenge to their mentoring relationship. Despite having formal mentoring in place, Ingrid and Elizabeth focused their interviews more on other ways that they found support in their first several years. When accessibility was low, they sought out informal supports elsewhere.

Informal Mentoring. Milsom and Kayler (2008) suggest that where formal mentoring is not provided, informal mentoring supports will suffice to help NSCs navigate their first several years. As previously stated, all of the participating NSCs discussed seeking out informal mentoring supports during their induction period. These supports were mostly other school counselors or school staff.

For NSCs with other counselors in their school buildings, the co-counselor was the most reported and relied upon informal mentor. Allison heavily relied on the other counselors in her building; "There were so many counselors, there was always someone I could go ask. Even though it wasn't a full-on mentoring program, I felt like [they] took me under their wing... They were the greatest source of help for me." Co-counselors were presented as especially helpful because of their intimate knowledge of the school policies and procedures, experience as a school counselor, and high accessibility. Co-counselors could easily observe and provide feedback, model, consult, and collaborate with the NSCs.

When NSCs did not have another counselor in the building, they often reported relying on other pre-established groups of counselors for support. For some NSCs, their district hosted regular counselor meetings that provided these connections. Other NSCs, such as Christine and Becca, found outside groups of school counselors that met regularly to provide each other with

supports. Finding other school counselors to rely on for consulting and other supports was important to the NSCs with no co-counselors. Curry and Bickmore (2012) reported similar findings from their interviews; NSCs relied on co-counselors when available and sought out other school counselors when they did not have any co-counselors to turn to.

Administrators were among the other supports that NSCs sought out, and the most commonly mentioned non-counselor support. Some studies suggest a disconnect between principals' understanding of the role of the school counselor and the prescribed comprehensive role of the school counselor (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Matthes 1992). While some NSCs in this study found this to be true, others found that collaboration with their admin led to their own role understanding and growth.

Implications. Interestingly, all NSCs reported seeking out their own informal supports. These findings align with previous studies that suggest that NSCs will find their own mentors if formal mentors are not provided (Curry & Bickmore, 2012; Curry & Bickmore, 2013; Milsom & Kayler, 2008). However, it also suggests that NSCs will seek out mentoring supports to fill gaps that they feel their formal mentoring is not providing to them, such as counseling-specific knowledge or accessibility of support.

Discussion

Knowing that NSCs will likely seek out their own mentoring supports, the question arises: if informal mentoring appears to be working, why invest in formal mentoring for school counselors? The findings in this study suggest that informal mentoring, while helpful, is inefficient and places an additional responsibility on NSCs who are already overwhelmed with navigating their induction period.

With informal mentoring, the responsibility is placed on the NSC to determine specifically what they do not know and then to seek out others to assist with those deficiencies (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes 1992). Previous studies show the induction period as a tumultuous time for the NSC, with a gap between the role and what they felt prepared for (Bickmore & Curry; Matthes). Similarly, the NSCs in this study expressed having so much to learn in their first couple of years. As Gwen indicated, she did not know what she did not know:

> My first year, it was just trying to figure out everything because it was the first time that I was in that district in the counseling role and I just had to be a sponge and soak up everything. That's when it was challenging, just because I didn't know anything about the particular school that I was going to be at or what I should be planning for.

Similarly, Allison felt like she was just barely staying afloat in her first year: "Basically, the challenge was learning everything … I was trying to keep my head above water, mostly." With these feelings of having to learn it all, it took them time to identify their skill and knowledge gaps. Often times, they did not know that they had a gap until the situation came up or after reviewing with a colleague. Francine described a situation in her first year,

> Often, I felt like it was later I would find out what I was supposed to do, like once the situation had happened. Or somebody else would talk about the situation at an elementary counselor meeting and I, being the only new school counselor, would kind of be over in the corner being like, "Oh! Umm. I don't have a copy of that form and it would be great to have that resource or information."

Waiting on the NSCs to identify what skill and knowledge gaps they have, especially around procedural knowledge, is inefficient. Curry and Bickmore (2012) had similar findings highlighting the inefficiency of informal mentoring.

Furthermore, counting on NSCs to seek out their own mentoring supports places additional work on them during a time when they are already overwhelmed, as well as on the informal mentors. Milsom and Kayler (2008) discuss the burden that is placed on informal mentors, often working school counselors, who have numerous other duties to attend to besides providing mentoring support. The NSCs in this study expressed worries about being an inconvenience, which have been previously discussed. They also reported that accessibility and having a pre-identified support relieved anxiety about reaching out. Formal mentoring appeared to relieve some of the unease around bothering others.

Many of the NSCs with formal mentors indicated that they wished this for other NSCs who were entering the field. Francine shared, "I know I am probably unique in this experience and I don't know if other school districts have this, but it really has just been amazing to be a part of and I wish more schools have it." Gwen expressed similar sentiments:

> I wish all counselors had that because I feel, when I think through everything and I think about first going into my district, I was like "This exists?!?! This is so nice." I wish other counselors had the opportunities that I had. Because I know this is not the norm at all.

Ingrid appreciated the formal supports provided to her:

> I worry about how different people's experiences are and I think that once we're done with grad school, it's just like "Okay, try your best." And I don't know what that will look like if there aren't supports in their district.

Davenport did not participate in a formal mentoring program, but saw others in her district receive mentoring supports and wished for those types of supports:

> My district offered for teachers a mentorship program, where if it's your first year, they will automatically pair you with a mentor who is going to come in and check on you (I don't know how often) and a district person would come and do that. They did not offer that for school counselors at all. We didn't have that same program that they talked about that seemed really great and would be really helpful but didn't exist for my role.

Formal mentoring helped to make the learning during the induction process more efficient and accessible. Furthermore, it appeared to mitigate the amount of support that NSCs had to seek elsewhere. While this study is not generalizable, these findings indicate the benefits to providing formal mentoring to NSCs were recognized and appreciated by the NSCs as they learned to navigate their new role.

Research Question Two

The second research question asked: How do Washington State NSCs perceive they are utilizing mentoring relationships? This question examined the ways that NSCs engaged with their mentors and supports. Four themes arose from the interviews: consultation, collaboration, counseling, and technical support. These themes were explored in the findings section and their implications will be discussed further here.

Alignment with Theoretical Models

These four themes align with theoretical models that consider school counselor development. In their theory of school counselor professional identity development, Brott and Myers (1999) identified three categories that influence the self-conceptualization of the school counselor: experiences, counselors, and essentials. These correspond with the themes of

consulting, collaboration, and technical support, respectively. Experiences refers to what the NSC has previously experienced and feels competent in; consulting on gaps in their knowledge and skills helped to expand the experiences of the NSCs and contributed to a stronger sense of self-conceptualization. The counselors category refers to how their sense of their role is influenced by other staff members; through collaboration, the NSCs revealed that they felt more confident and had a better understanding of their own role in their building. Finally, the essentials refers to the specific needs and issues of their school building; as NSCs come to learn more about their schools, especially the technical aspects of how they function, they are better able to navigate the policies and procedures. Through the lens of Brott and Myers' (1999) research, these themes of consultation, collaboration, and technical support contribute to the NSCs development of professional identity.

Similarly, the findings of this study align with part of the discrimination supervision framework (Aasheim, 2012). Although this is intended for supervision of counselors in training, it seems to parallel their mentoring experiences during the induction process. Aasheim (2012) describes three roles of a supervisor: teacher, counselor, and consultant. These three roles align with consultation, counseling, and collaboration, respectively. In the teacher role, the supervisor engages in more direct instruction and feedback on an identified area; in the consultation theme, the mentor acted similarly, providing NSCs with direct feedback and consultation on specific areas. The counselor role works to support the personal needs of the intern, in hopes that it will help the counselor's development; similarly, the counselor theme provided an opportunity for the NSC to share about difficult situations, process, and grow. In the consultant role, the supervisor recognizes a level of independence in the intern, and is almost supporting them as a colleague

rather than a supervisor; the collaboration theme provided a similar type of support, with the focus being less directive and more conversational.

Implications. In the discrimination supervision framework, the supervisor actively adjusts their own role based on the needs of the intern (Aasheim, 2012). This role can fluctuate throughout their time together, depending on the growth of the intern and the focus area. In this study, the NSCs indicated that they sought out different support people for different mentoring needs. The NSCs appeared to understand that one person could not provide all the types of support that they needed. Rather, they relied on various people for different supports, sometimes within the same theme. It seems that the NSCs instinctively recognized the need to have mentors who could act in various roles to support their growth.

As schools and districts consider how to better support their NSCs, they may want to keep these theoretical models in mind. Even if they do not have a formal mentoring program, they can consider how they are organizing their systems to provide opportunities for consultation, collaboration, counseling, and technical supports. For example, districts could be intentional about their district-wide counselor meetings and helping to develop connections between counselors at different schools for future consultation. Schools could create a policies and procedures manual to present to NSCs to provide technical support.

If districts do have formal mentoring programs, they could consider how they are preparing their mentors for the role. District or mentor preparation programs could provide professional development opportunities for mentors to ensure that they have skills and knowledge to provide consultation, collaboration, counseling, and technical support to their mentees. It would stand to reason that a mentor who was well prepared across all four themes may reduce the number of informal supports needed.

Counseling

Throughout their interviews, NSCs described a need to take care of their own mental well-being and finding others who could support them work towards this goal. They made recommendations for others to do the same, recognizing the potential for school counselors to push through or ignore their own stress. Jennifer emphasized:

> I think as counselors, we often get a little bit into that mode of wanting to make sure everyone is okay, but really we have to take care of ourselves and know our limits… And to know that everyone worries their first year and it's not abnormal and you are just working through it just like everybody else.

Armstrong et al. (2006) had similar findings as they examined formal mentoring supports; mentees expressed gratitude for having someone to express their frustrations to and receive non-judgmental feedback. Milsom and Kayler (2008) explored informal emotional supports for NSCs, finding that they appreciated having a safe space to vent and be emotionally vulnerable. This assisted in perceived personal or emotional growth for the NSCs (Milsom & Kayler, 2008).

In this study, NSCs identified both formal and informal mentors as providing counseling support. Some of the informal mentors were actually personal relationships formed prior to the NSCs entering the field, such as spouses. Others providing counseling support were collegial relationships outside of their school building or district. One NSC, Becca, recognized that she may need to go beyond these relationships, suggesting that she would seek out mental health counseling in the near future to help her process.

Implications. The NSCs identified a need for seeking out supports to tend to the emotional aspects of their jobs. Schools may want to consider this as they are identifying ways to support NSCs. In a formal mentoring program, counseling supports could be developed or

nurtured by providing mentors with training on how to emotionally support mentees. For counseling supports beyond formal mentoring, districts could provide opportunities for staff to connect on personal levels through social events. They can also ensure that all staff know how to access mental health counseling resources.

School counselor preparation programs could also emphasize habits of self-care to help establish the practice before school counselors are entering the field. The author reflects, personally, on how counseling was emphasized as a part of her school counselor preparation program; self-care was frequently discussed and practiced as a part of the course work.

Technical Support

In the results section, technical support was identified as an area that was especially lacking during the induction period. Several NSCs voiced a desire and need for more technical supports throughout their first couple years. The consulting teachers, although they had no previous experience as school counselors, were seemingly able to provide effective technical supports to their mentees. The NSCs were able to make use of their consulting teachers in learning how to navigate their schools and districts. Although consulting teachers may not have had the background counseling experience, they did have an in-depth understanding of district protocols and procedures which the NSCs needed to know. This seems to mirror the assertions of Desmond et al. (2007); while NSCs are entering the field with extensive theoretical knowledge, they may have a gap in procedural knowledge. Consulting teachers appeared to have been so highly valued by the NSCs because they were able to help fill these gaps in procedural knowledge, specific to their district.

The working school counselor mentors were perceived as helpful in both counseling-related concerns and in gaining procedural knowledge. However, although the working school

counselor mentors had counseling-related expertise, both Ingrid and Elizabeth reported turning to them most often for assistance with procedural knowledge. This again seems to fall in line with the assertions of Desmond et al. (2007) that NSCs are prepared with theoretical knowledge and counseling-related skills, but are unprepared for the policies and procedures of their district. Although Ingrid and Elizabeth had access to mentors with counseling experience, they reported asking for more assistance with procedural knowledge and tasks.

Loveless (2010) and Milsom and McCormick (2015) explored the value of mentoring for veteran counselors, finding that mentoring could help experienced counselors navigate a new district or new strategies even though they were experienced in the field. In her interview, Francine shared a similar experience; she had not received formal mentoring during her first year as a school counselor but received formal mentoring in her second year as a school counselor in a new district. Although she already had one year of experience, she found that the mentoring provided by her consulting teacher was invaluable and helped her to quickly learn the procedural pieces about her district.

For NSCs with no formal mentoring, the technical supports were inconsistently provided by a variety of people. While the NSCs with formal mentoring seemed to have a go-to person for technical supports, the NSCs with no formal mentoring supports had to seek out others who could help them navigate the technical aspects of their jobs. Interestingly, the five NSCs who shared frustrations of not having enough technical supports did not participate in formal mentoring. Elizabeth and Francine, although they received formal mentoring in one of their districts, expressed not receiving enough technical supports in the district with no formal mentoring.

Implications. This identified lack of supports presents an opportunity for districts and schools to consider how they are informing new staff members about the policies, procedures, and other technical aspects of their jobs. For school counselors, these technical aspects are not taught in preparation programs because they are frequently school-specific. Different schools will use different student information systems, tracking systems, and other procedures. The onus seems to fall on the districts and schools to provide this knowledge to their NSCs. As districts consider how to support NSCs, it may be of value to consider how this technical knowledge is being presented: (a) Will a training or manual be provided? And (b) Who should the NSC contact if they need assistance? Formal mentoring is one potential solution to this issue, as the NSCs in this study highlighted.

Limitations

With all of these implications and considerations, it is important to note the limitations of this study. Qualitative studies are not intended to be generalizable. As such, the findings in this study should not be generalized to a greater population. However, since the findings in this study often aligned with previous studies or models, as noted in the discussions, some recommendations have been made based on the data.

Participants in this study are not representative of the NSC population in Washington state. Due to the voluntary nature of participation, the self-selection aspect introduces the potential for bias. In the invitation for participation, the goal of learning more about mentoring relationships was expressed. School counselors who did not perceive themselves to have mentoring relationships, whether formal or informal, may have chosen not to participate because they perceived they would not have anything to contribute. Furthermore, NSCs with extreme

experiences with mentoring, positive or negative, may have felt more engaged with the topic and been more likely to volunteer.

Another limitation was the variation between preparation programs of the participating NSCs. Collectively, the participants attended eight different school counselor preparation programs. With varying backgrounds and program expectations, they were likely entering the profession with different areas of focus and experiences of supervision. This could have impacted the participating NSCs' perceptions of the mentoring and support received, as they were not all starting with the same preparation program. A NSC who received close supervision throughout their internship may expect the same high-level of support upon entering the field, whereas a NSC who's supervisor had a hands-off approach may be grateful for any supports they receive. Similarities in participants' perceptions does not imply that the participants received the same levels of support. As we could not know all the details about the participant's preparation programs, it is not within the scope of this study to determine how the programs may have impacted their perceptions of the mentoring support they received.

Additionally, all of the participants in this study were female. While it is likely that an overwhelming percentage of school counselors in Washington state are female, due to the high percentage of females in helping professions in the United States (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.), this is not representative of the NSCs in Washington State. It is important to note that male NSCs may have a different experience of mentoring, as gender could impact how they navigate their first couple years in the profession (Croft et al., 2015). It is a limitation that male voices were not included in this study.

Another limitation of this study is that racial identity was not collected from participants. Vargas et al. (2021) recognize that race can play a crucial role in the mentoring process,

especially when the mentee is a person of color and the mentor is white. They assert that "culturally mismatched mentor–mentee relationships are likely to remain the norm" for people of color (p. 1048), and therefore the racial tension or barriers that may be in the way for mentees should be addressed. However, because the racial identity of participating NSCs and their support people was not collected, it is not within the scope of this study to identify the role that race played in the mentoring relationships.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews only allow for researchers to gather data on the participants' perceptions and recollections. Their representations should not be treated as fact, but rather as an understanding of their lived experiences. Because data was gathered through one interview, this provides a brief snapshot in time of what they recalled from their first several years. Furthermore, because data was gathered at the end of the school year, NSCs may have a different mindset and perception of their own experiences. They may be feeling relief to have made it through the year; they may be feeling despair from all they dealt with during the year. Their feelings likely tinted their perceptions of their experiences.

Recommendations for Further Research

The nature of semi-structured interviews allows for participants to open up conversations beyond the scope of the research topic. With these additional conversations, the data, and the limitations in mind, there are multiple opportunities to expand and further explore the impact of mentoring on NSCs. Some suggestions for further research are explored below.

Retention

Since NSCs in this study sought out informal mentoring, even when formal mentoring was provided, one could compare and contrast the feelings of NSCs receiving different types of mentoring supports. What are the benefits of providing formal mentoring versus having NSCs

seek it out themselves? What are the impacts on feeling valued as an employee? For teachers in Washington state, statistically significant findings indicated that beginning teachers who were provided formal mentoring were less likely to exit the teaching workforce one year later, in comparison to teachers without formal mentoring (Plecki et al., 2017). No data has been collected for NSCs receiving formal mentoring with regards to retention.

Curry and Bickmore (2012) explored the concept of mattering as it connects to NSCs and their induction into the profession. They discuss importance mattering, which is the belief that others are invested in their future, and could be tied to retention. Some of the NSCs in this study discussed a belief that mentoring could help to increase feelings of mattering and retention. Jennifer spoke about burn-out and the importance of supports for NSCs:

> We are here to support everyone else, but we need to find ways to support ourselves. Because there is teacher burn out, but there is also counselor burn out and there are also people who are doing counseling who might not even necessarily realize that they are burned out, but not might be as effective at what they're doing. That kills me when I see that they need support and we're not able to get that to them.

Ingrid worried about a friend who was a NSC in another district and had not received any formal mentoring:

> She is leaving the school and has only been there one year and is going to another school. I think that is discouraging for people in their first or second year who don't have any support … That worries me about a lot of other districts. I worry about how different people's experiences are and I think that once we're done with grad school, it's just like, "Okay, try your best." And I don't know what that will look like if there aren't supports in their district.

Francine reflected on her own experiences with this, since she started in a district with no formal mentoring and moved to a district with formal mentoring:

> A big factor of why I was applying to other districts was I felt, in the long term, "I don't feel supported here. I don't feel like I have what I need to be reaching my full potential and to be doing the best I can as a school counselor." And I know that district had a huge issue with that. They had a high turnover in that district. There's a lot of different factors comparing [my first and second] districts. You can't just attribute the mentor program for everything. But I do think that it's a factor, having gone through it. That's kind of at the root of it, [my second district] is being very intentional about making sure the people they hire stick around.

These comments along with the research of Plecki et al. (2017), acknowledge that mentoring could be a factor in retention for NSCs. As formal mentoring programs for NSC grow, it would be interesting to compare retention data to identify how it impacts whether NSCs stay in their district, look for jobs in other districts, or leave the field entirely.

Additional Mentoring Supports

In their interviews, NSCs shared information about mentoring support that they perceived to be missing, such as technical supports. While this was slightly explored in the data and discussion pertaining to technical supports, it would be interesting to learn more about what types of mentoring support is desired by NSCs. Additionally, the differences in number of offerings between elementary, middle, and high schools is an area for further exploration.

Although not all elementary school NSCs interviewed had formal mentoring, all of the formal mentors were provided to elementary school NSCs. Because there is typically only one elementary school counselor assigned per school, it may be that the formal mentoring was highly

prized because it addressed their feelings of isolation. Since middle school and high school counselors often have co-counselors to support them during the induction period, it would be interesting to learn more about formal mentoring for middle and high school NSCs. Is it being provided to them, and if so, what are their experiences and perceptions of the support? How does this compare to the experiences of elementary school NSCs?

Preparation Programs

To help garner conversations in the interviews about who NSCs sought help from, the researcher also asked about what challenges they faced; where were their skill and knowledge gaps. While not an initial part of the research, this leads to another potential conversation about ways to fully prepare for the role of school counselor. Christine hinted that she was not able to experience everything she would have liked during her internship, so she did not feel fully prepared for the job:

> I was shielded from the hardest things in [my internship]. I had great supervisors, but they were stressed out and busy because that's the job. They weren't going to let me, you know … Those most sensitive things that you need to observe and learn, are not the meetings that lowly interns go to.

She expressed feelings of encumbering her internship supervisor, which she perceived as hindering her access to a variety of learning experiences. Do feelings of being a burden or isolation, expressed by NSCs, also exist for school counseling interns? If so, how do these feelings interact with their learning experiences? How are school counseling preparation programs working with interns to help them overcome these feelings to have a fuller learning experience?

Conclusion

As NSCs enter their role as professional school counselors, they do not feel fully prepared, in part because of the nuances to the job that depend on the district, grade level, school culture, and expectations (Bickmore & Curry, 2012; Matthes, 1992; Peace, 1995). The NSCs in this study identified a need to grow into their positions and accessed formal and informal mentoring supports to help them navigate their first several years as school counselors. These mentoring supports were accessed through identified themes of consultation, collaboration, counseling, and technical support.

While these themes of mentoring support and the lived experiences of the participating NSCs are not generalizable to all NSCs, they align with findings from previous studies. In combination with previous studies, recommendations were provided for supports for NSCs in their induction period. Furthermore, the findings in this study add to the body of research conducted on the topic of mentoring novice school counselors.

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Appendix A

IRB Approval

Seattle Pacific
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June 4, 2019

Subject: IRB Approval – IRB # 181906015 (Exempt Review)

To: Kelsey Nugent

Your research project "The role of mentoring in the induction experiences of novice school counselors" has been approved. This study was approved under exempt review as it meets the criteria listed in the *SPU IRB User Guidelines* (2012, p. 5).

Your approval is in effect until what time any methods of the study change substantively. When that occurs, you will need to renew your IRB application. Your study has been assigned IRB number: **IRB # 181906015.**

To complete your documents please add the IRB # to your study's written recruitment material and invitation to participate in the research project.

Best wishes in the completion of your research.

Sincerely,

John B. Bond, Ed.D.
SOE IRB Coordinator
Professor of Educational Leadership

C: Dr. Cher Edwards

Appendix B

Introductory Email to Potential Participants

Hello,

My name is Kelsey Nugent and I am a high school counselor and doctoral student, pursuing my PhD in Counselor Education at Seattle Pacific University. I am conducting a study on the experiences and perceptions of new school counselors in their first few years of working in K-12 schools, with a focus on the supports they use during that time. The study has been approved by the SPU IRB (#181906015).

I hope to add to the research to promote supports for new school counselors as they enter the profession. I would be happy to share the results with you upon completion of the study.

I am seeking participants who are completing their first, second, or third year working as a school counselor in a Washington State K-12 school. Would you be willing to forward my email to your recent school counseling graduates to invite them to participate? My contact information is included and interested school counselors can contact me directly with any questions.

Participants will be asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire and then participate in an approximately 45 minute interview with me via an online video-chat program (Zoom). As a token of my appreciation for participating, participants will receive a $20 Amazon gift card.

Identifying information about participants, their school, and their district will be kept confidential and all records, including recordings, will be destroyed after the completion of the research project.

Interested Participants - Next Steps: If you would like to participate in this study, please complete this short form (link to form provided) and I will reach out to you to set up an interview. If you know of other new school counselors who meet the criteria, would you please also forward this email to them?

If you have any questions or concerns about the study or participating in the study, please contact me via email (email address provided) or phone (phone number provided).

Sincerely,

Kelsey Nugent

Doctoral Student, Seattle Pacific University

Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire

This questionnaire collected data electronically through Google Forms. The text has been included below.

Participant Information

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study on the experiences and perceptions of new school counselors in their first years of working in Washington State schools, with a focus on the supports they use during that time. I hope to add to the research to promote supports for new school counselors as they enter the profession.

The study has been approved by the SPU IRB (#181906015).

Prior to our scheduled interview time, please complete this demographic survey. Identifying information about you, your school, and your district will be kept confidential and all records, including recordings, will be destroyed after the completion of the research project.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study or participating in the study, please contact me via email or phone.

First Name: _____

Last Name: _____

Gender: ( ) Male ( ) Female ( ) Prefer not to say ( ) Other _____

Age: _____

School Name(s) and District: _____

*Your school and district will not be identified in this study. This information will remain confidential.

If this is your 2nd or 3rd year as a school counselor, are you working at the same school that you started at? ( ) Yes ( ) No

Educational Background and Route to Certification: _____

(ex: B.A. in Social Work from Providence College and M.Ed. in School Counseling from Seattle Pacific University)

Previous experience in K-12 education: _____

(Please list any previous experiences you have had working in K-12 education before becoming a school counselor.)

Have you participated in a formalized mentoring program as a professional school counselor?

( ) Yes ( ) No ( ) Not Sure

Preferred Pseudonym: _____

Please provide a preferred pseudonym to be used as your identifier in the research. If you do not have a preference, enter 'No preference' and you will be assigned a name.

Informed Consent:

Informed consent is required as a part of this study. Before your interview, please review the Informed Consent form that was emailed to you. Sign and return to Kelsey Nugent via email. If you do not have access to a scanner, connect with Kelsey directly to determine an alternate way to return your Informed Consent form.

I have received the Informed Consent form and will return a signed copy to Kelsey Nugent prior to my interview.

[Space for electronic signature]

Appendix D

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Initial questions:

- What were your experiences of being supported by others during your first year of being a school counselor?
- What impacted these experiences during your first year as a school counselor?

Potential follow-up questions:

- What was challenging for you during your first year of being a school counselor?
- As you were experiencing these challenges, how did you seek help or assistance?
- Who or what helped you face these challenges?
- Based on your experiences, what advice would you give to a new school counselor entering the profession?

Appendix E

Informed Consent Letter

INFORMED CONSENT

The Role of Mentoring in the Induction Experiences of Novice School Counselors

SPU IRB (#181906015)

Principal Investigator(s): Kelsey Nugent, Doctoral Student

Co-Investigator: Dr. Cher Edwards

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of the research is to learn more about the experiences and perceptions of novice school counselors in their first few years of working in Washington State schools, with a focus on the supports they use during that time. You have been invited to participate because you have been identified as a school counselor with a Washington Residency ESA Certification.

This study will include between five and ten males and females between, ages 22 and older.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to:

- Complete a short demographic survey (~5 minutes)
- Participate in a 45 minute interview with researcher via online video-chat (~45 minutes)
- Review transcript and researcher's interpretation of your interview (~20 minutes)

Interviews will be video and audio recorded for purposes of transcribing. All identifying information will be changed in the transcription process to maintain confidentiality. Recordings will only be viewed by the Principal and Co-Investigators. Images and audio will not be presented in this study. Recordings will be destroyed upon completion of this study.

Your participation will last for approximately 1 hour 15 minutes, spread across the span of 1-2 months. You may withdraw from the study at any time. Upon completion, participants will be compensated with a $20 Amazon Gift Card.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used nor will you be identified in any way. The information in the study records will be kept confidential. Data will be stored securely and will be made available only to persons conducting the study unless you specifically give permission in writing to do otherwise. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link you to the study. Your de-identified data may be used in future research, presentations or for teaching purposes by the Principal Investigator listed above.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

There are no known risks involved in participating in this study. However, the induction period can be a turbulent time for novice school counselors[1]; reflection on these experiences could cause or increase stress on participants. The Principal Investigator will take caution to not

[1] Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Jackson et al., 2002; Matthes, 1992

exacerbate any existing stress during the interview. Additionally, a list of counseling resources will be available for participants upon request.

Seattle Pacific University and associated researchers do not offer to reimburse participants for medical claims or other compensation. If physical injury is suffered in the course of research, or for more information, please notify the Principal Investigator, Kelsey Nugent.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

Participants will be provided with an opportunity to reflect on their own growth and development. It may also allow for a level of appreciation for those who have helped or supported them along the way.

Participants' stories will help to grow the research body around mentoring for novice school counselors.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research, you should contact the Principal Investigator, Kelsey Nugent.

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject you should contact the Seattle Pacific University Institutional Review Board Chair.

Your participation is completely voluntary. Participants may choose to skip any questions they do not wish to answer. If you begin participation and change your mind you may end your participation at any time without penalty.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Participant's Name (please print):_____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

PI's Name (please print):_____

PI's Signature:_____ Date:_____