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# Exploring the Professional Identity of Examplar Novice High School Counselors

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EXPLORING THE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF EXAMPLAR NOVICE HIGH
SCHOOL COUNSELORS

by

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# DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this body of work to my Lord and Savior. This major accomplishment is a testament in itself that you are powerful and always surround me with your love. Thank you! To my wonderful husband, Joshua. You have been a source of strength and encouragement throughout this process. I could not have completed this work without you. To my daughter and unborn son, I hope you will read this one day and be proud of the work I have done, but also hope it encourages you to reach and work hard for your passions. To my family and friends who encouraged and kept me lifted before God, thank you!

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

# ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study investigated how exemplar novice high school counselors described the development of their professional identities. Through interviewing high school counselors who have been practicing between 1 to 5 years, experiences and themes emerged to understand the process of how exemplar novice high school counselors developed a professional identity. Through the themes, researchers will analyze whether novice high school counselors benefited from certain courses as trainees, current job experiences and professional involvement in developing their professional identities.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASCA ................................................................American School Counseling Association

CACREP ......... Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs

CIT ........................................................................................ Counselor-In- Training

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

Counselors and professionals in related fields have debated for three decades the definition of counseling and the professional identity of a counselor as compared to other helping professionals (Gibson, Dollarhide, &Moss, 2010; Hanna & Bemak, 1997; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011; Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011; Stebnicki, 2009). Members of the counseling profession struggle with developing a universal set of identifiers for counselors, but multiple possible descriptors can be found describing professional identity. For example, one author describes professional identity as the integration of the professional's view of self as a competent professional and the consistency between personal worldview and professional view (Reisetter, Korcuska, Yexley, Bonds, Nikels & McHenry, 2004). Counselor identity is the integration of one's professional training and personal values (Nugent & Jones, 2009). Thus, counselor professional identity is a combination of professional training and personal traits in the setting of a professional community (Nugent & Jones, 2009). Gibson, Dollarhide, and Moss (2010) stated that during the process of professional identity development, one integrates his or her new identity in a professional setting. During this time, the counselor's professional "self" is tested via feedback from others, and he or she either a) internalizes this new "self" as part

of his or her identity or b) rejects this version of "self" (Auxier, Hughes & Kline, 2003; Gibson et al.; O'Byrne & Rosenberg, 1998; Reisetter et al., 2004). Auxier, Hughes & Kline (2003) believed the process of professional identity is a sequence of learning, practice, and feedback where the new professional seeks moving from the dependent role to an autonomous role. For the purpose of this study, professional identity of counselors can be defined as a developmental process in which one is able to understand one's self in relation to his or her field and be able to articulate as well as distinguish one's profession from others (Reissetter, Korcuska, Yexley, Bonds, Nikels & McHenry, 2004).

## Counselors' Professional Identity

The professional identity development process not only takes into consideration the training of a counselor, but how one has engrossed one's self into the field through joining organizations, mentorship, and participating in conferences, which is also the reason this definition is used. Having a professional identity, as a counselor is important because it allows counselors to understand and articulate what they do differently that separates them from other helping fields (Auxier, Hughes & Kline, 2003; Burkholder, 2012; Gibson et al., 2010; Reissetter et al., 2004). Benefit of professional identity include, understanding roles in his or her field, applying particular skill sets, as well as being able to distinguish differences in what the job entails. Having a professional identity also helps strengthen the counseling field by helping counselors across the board understand the work they do and clearly define to clients the skills and training they provide (Burkholder, 2012; Gibson, Dollarhide, &Moss, 2010; Hanna & Bemak, 1997; Kaplan & Gladding, 2011; Mellin, Hunt, & Nichols, 2011). A professional identity helps

counselors to be better equipped to serve clients and protect their welfare (Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Prosek & Hurt, 2014; Reiner, Dobmeier & Thomas, 2013).

Seven articles of qualitative studies emphasized the importance of professional identity for both counselors as trainees and new professionals (eg. Gibson et al., 2010, Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Harris, 2009; Luke & Goodrich, 2010; Reiner, Dobmeier & Hernandez, 2011).  Luke & Goodrich (2010) found that counselors valued having an authentic learning experience in which they could not receive in the classroom, which contributed to their professional identity. The researchers also found that having strong leadership skills fostered strong counselors' professional identities. Nelson & Jackson (2003) found a variety of contributing themes in Master's level Latino students. A part from the factors that is central to a person's professional identity (e.g., knowledge, personal growth, and experiential learning), the authors also found that cultural aspects (e.g., relationships, accomplishments, costs, and perceptions of the counseling profession) influenced Latino Master's level students. Moreover, Brott & Myers (1999) examined 10 school counselors' professional identities and found eight theoretical categories emerged from the grounded theory design labeled "Blending of influences" (p. 2). The eight areas include: 1) accounts, 2) advocates, 3) defines, 4) intertwines, 5) manages; 6) rates, 7) responds, and 8) sustains (Brott & Myers,1999).  Brott and Myers (1999) study shows that professional identity does contribute to how school counselors define their roles and shapes the way school counselors deliver services to students and the school system.

Furthermore, Gibson et al. (2010) examined the professional identity of 43 master's level students from four training levels (before course work, before practicum,

before internship, and graduation). The results of the study showed three transformational

tasks that evolved from the grounded theory design: 1) external validation (from peers,

professors, supervisors and counselors; 2) course work, experience, and commitment; and

3) self-Validation (life-long learning, attachment to professional community and

synthesis of personal and professional identity). The three studies focused on master's

level counseling trainees; however, there is a lack of research on how high school

counselors develop a professional identity after entering the profession. Thus, the study

extends understanding about developing a professional identity is important in to the

effectiveness of school counselors' practice.


**Professional Identity development in other Helping Fields**

Not only is professional identity an important consideration when distinguishing

counselors from other helping fields, but it is also important in aiding counselors to

practice effectively and efficiently the skills they have developed to help clients (Luke &

Goodrich, 2010; Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014).  It has been an uphill battle for

leaders in the counseling profession to establish a separate identity from psychologists

and social workers (Blocher & Tennyson, 1963; Burkholder, 2012; Herlihy & Remley,

1995; Nelson & Jackosn, 2003; Scholar, McGlauglin, McCaughan & Coleman, 2014).

Clients and prospective counselors often struggle to understand the work of professional

counselors because the roles are so similar to other professionals (Gale & Austin, 2003).

School psychologist, school social workers, and teachers all have a professional identity

in which their particular fields address certain aspects of the school environment.

Therefore, the counseling education profession has worked hard to understand that professional identity for counselors is needed to help clients and prospective counselors define their duties as counselors. It is also proposed that the counseling education profession work to understand how high school counselors develop a professional identity and define their duties as counselors (Brott & Myers,1999; Clemens, Shipp, & Kimbel, 2011; Maxwell, & Henriksen, 2012).

**School Counselors' Professional Identity**

School counselors are trained to meet the needs of students academically, personally, and socially through a variety of skills taught and developed over the counselors' career (ASCA, 2012). Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) have formulated standards in which school counselors can learn and practice skills that will enable them to succeed in the field after completion of graduate study as well as develop their professional identity (CACREP, 2016). However, there is more that goes into developing the professional identity as a school counselor. Although graduate study begins the journey, internship and the professional world of a school counselor help school counselors' transition from trainee to professional (Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999; Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

Moreover, it is important for school counselors to understand their professional identities because it helps them operate effectively in school settings at various levels they will serve (Brott & Myers, 1999; Brott, 2006; Goodman-Scott, 2015; Pyne, 2011). School counselors must have a strong professional identity to help students become well rounded socially, academically, and personally (Brott & Myers, 1999; Harris, 2009). A

professional identity will also help school counselors operate from the American School Counselors Association (ASCA) model and help reeducate those who still believe school counselors are guidance counselors (Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

The transition from guidance counselor to professional school counselor is slow because of the lack of knowledge school administration and some school counselors who have been trained from the guidance counselor perspective (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Moreover, research indicates that the support from school principals in upholding the requirements of school counselors is necessary (Beale, 1995; Coll & Freeman, 1997; Harris, 2009; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Ribak-Rosenthal, 1994). It is necessary because the relationship between school counselors and principals is essential in determining whether the school counseling department is effective in its services to the student body (Brock & Ponce, 1998). Therefore, Lambie and Williamson (2004) proposed that educating school principals is imperative to not only upholding the effectiveness of the school counseling department but contributes to the professional development of school counselors. Lambie and Williamson (2004) also insist that establishing with the principal a clear definition of a school counselors' role with the understanding of the ASCA model will help enhance their professional identity. New professional school counselors in training help to bridge this gap by developing a strong professional identity and advocating on behalf of the profession when employed (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Nevertheless, high school counselors also must have a strong professional identity in order to help bridge the gap between public/private school administration and CACREP graduate programs.

**High school Counselors' Professional Identity**

There is much that contributes to a school counselors' professional identity and even more to consider when looking specifically at high school counselors. Novice high school counselors receive training in the field through courses, practicum and internship experiences (Brott & Myers, 1999; Harris, 2009; CACREP, 2016). Many high school counselors come in contact with public or private school systems that hinder them from preforming the duties outlined by the ASCA model and what was taught at school counseling programs (Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999; Goodman-Scott, 2015; Hutchinson, Barack & Groves, 1986; Lambie & Williason, 2004; Walker, 2015). Due to some differences in what high school counselors practice while in graduate studies and the reality of the field, many novice high school counselors are met with performing tasks that differ from their perceptions of the field (Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999; Lambie, 2002; Goodman-Scott, 2015; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). According to Lambie & Williamson (2006), the differences between what was taught and the practice of novice high school counselors create role uncertainty within professionals and thus hinders professionals to further develop their professional identity. Lambie & Williamson (2006) also suggested that, due to the ever-evolving history of school counselors, the duties established from the beginning of school counseling history has not been removed from the counselors' responsibilities, thus creating role ambiguity and incongruence in the professional.

Much research has been done on how school counselors develop their professional identities during training, but more research is needed on how novice exemplar high school counselors continue to develop their professional identities as

employees (Brott & Myers, 1999; Brott, 2006; Goodman-Scott, 2015). The benefit of looking at exemplar school counselors is to understand what particular experiences helped to develop their professional identities. These experiences can then be a starting point for CACREP school counseling programs, guidance departments and mentors to help facilitate growth in helping other school counselors develop their own professional identities. Therefore, it is proposed that data should be collected to understand how exemplar novice high school counselors' professional identities develop.

Due to the differences students encounter upon leaving their graduate programs and entering employment, the professional identity of novice high school counselors must be explored to see what contributes to the way they practice as school counselors. It is necessary to understand novice high school counselors' professional identities to help CACREP programs implement strategies that will benefit the growth of high school counselor trainees. The school systems in which these counselors will be employed should be on the same page with graduate school programs. If school administrations do not understand the professional identity of high school counselors, then this may have an impact on how new high school counselors continue in developing their professional identities.

## BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

School Counselors' Professional Identity

The school counselor's professional identity begins during graduate school training and continues to take shape throughout one's career (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson et al., 2010; Nelson & Jackson, 2003; Luke & Goodrich, 2010). The programs

that produce school counselors help trainees develop a sound foundation in their

professional identity (ASCA, 2012; Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999; Lambie, 2004;).

Research shows that having a solid professional identity will help school counselors be

better equipped to serve students holistically (Brott, 2006; Brott &Myers, 1999;

Goodman-Scott, 2015; Lambie, 2004; Perusse & Goodnough, 2005). Studies also show

that perceptions school counselors have of their experience in the field, the feedback they

receive from professors, supervisors, and mentors contribute to the development of the

professional identity (Brott & Myers, 1999; Brott, 2006). School counselors gain an

understanding of their duties while in practicum and internship (Brott & Moss, 1999;

Gibson, Dollarhide, &Moss, 2010); however, if these experiences do not create a realistic

picture of the workplace then it will impact the development of their professional

identities (Brott & Moss, 1999; Brott, 2006). It seems as if the requirements school

administration has of high school counselors is not the same expectations novice high

school counselor have for the field (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Goodman-Scott, 2015;

Perusse & Goodnough, 2005). The distinction between school counselors' perceptions

and administration's expectations creates a disconnect and hinders the fluid development

of the professional identities of high school counselors (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Pyne,

2011).

The difference in perceptions of what a high school counselor does and the

training received in graduate programs leads one to believe that this could contribute to

one's professional identity development. After all, it is known that a counselor's

professional identity is developed through the training one receives from graduate school,

organizations one joins and the mentorship/supervision and internship experiences within

the profession (Brott & Moss, 1999; Gibson, Dollarhide, & Moss, 2010).  We also know that having a strong professional identity helps school counselors serve students effectively (Brott & Moss, 1999).

Many high school counselors in training believe that they will spend a great deal of time counseling students individually, running groups, and having about a 250 student case load (Lambie, 2004; Perusse & Goodnough, 2005). However, this perception gradually changes once employed due to the administration's expectations of a high school counselor (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Mason, Ockerman & Chen-Hayes, 2013). The problem begins with the disconnect between the school counseling programs and the school systems. These two areas must be aligned to help new high school counselors effectively conduct their duties according to the ASCA model (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Goodman-Scott, 2015), help trainees develop a grounded professional identity beginning from graduate studies onward to the professional world, and help strengthen high school counselors' effectiveness in serving students (Brott & Moss, 1999).

Although, school counselors' professional identities begin to develop while in graduate training, it is important to also help trainees understand the history of school counseling and the connection it has to strengthen one's professional identity (Lambie, 2004). According to Lambie (2004), the transition of the field began with the terminology change from vocational guidance, to guidance counselor and then to professional school counselor. Vocational Guidance was started in the 1900's by Frank Parsons who is considered the "father of Guidance" as a way for men to transition into vocational placement based on their aptitude and abilities (Lambie, 2004, p. 125).   In the 1930's E. G. Williamson developed the trait and factor theory, which was an extension of Parsons

vocation guidance tenants (Lambie, 2004, p. 123). Following Roger's counseling concepts, the term guidance began to be replaced in literature and research by counseling (Lambie, 2004). Until the 1950's with the development of ASCA, the number of school counselors was small. However, with the association and journal's formation, the profession of school counseling began to take shape and "professional development strategies, research, resources and advocacy" began the support of professional identity of school counselors (Lambie, 2004). More details will be presented on the history of school counseling in Chapter 2.

Along with clarifying its unique history, it is important that the distinction is made between school counselors' identities and that of school psychologists and school social workers. According to Reynolds (2011), the school psychologist profession must meet certain requirement to maintain their identity separate from other professions. These include, a) "a high level of public trust, b) essential services to the society, c) a scientific discipline that provides basic insights of the profession and applied knowledge and skills, d) body of knowledge specific to the profession, and e) professional associations" (p. 923). Moreover, school social workers' identities are developed based on "a) knowledge acquired to work within the school population, b) the level of personal commitment, c) individual school social workers' personalities to carry out his/her work efficiently, and d) the motivation to quire the status of professional within their field" (Krejsler, 2005, p. 336). Although, these professions have a specific sense of determining their professional identity, one can see some similarities in how that development occurs across professions.

High school counselors' professional identities can be strengthened if they are taught not only what is expected of them in the field, but the reality of what happens within the school system (Brott & Moss, 1999; Goodman-Scott, 2015). While there is however a gradual shift of more school districts adopting the ASCA model as a framework for their school counselors to follow (Lambie, 2004), there are some schools who still need to be linked with the school counseling field. Due to the shift, toward the ASCA Model, we see more high school counselors' duties being implemented that fit his or her training (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Once the gap of transitioning from trainee to professional is tightened, then the professional identity of novice high school counselors can be strengthened. Therefore, the problem and basis of this research is developing a better understanding of how novice high school counselors develop a professional identity as professionals.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

**Statement:** It is unclear how the professional identity of exemplary novice high school counselors develop after graduating from school counseling programs and entering the beginning of their professional employment fields.

Previous research has not determined whether graduate training, job experience or professional involvement has contributed to the professional identity development of novice high school counselors (Brott & Moss, 1999). It is also unclear how novice high school counselors continue to develop their professional identities once employed (Brott, 2006; Brott & Moss, 1999; Perusse & Goodnough, 2005). School counselors in training have a perception of the field that consists of participating in individual and group

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counseling, catering to the needs of about 250 students per case load, providing data from groups sessions and guidance lessons that show effectiveness of productivity, and helping with scheduling (Brott, 2006; ASCA, 2012; Goodman-Scott, 2015; Pyne, 2011). Although, the textbooks and the courses taken in graduate programs outline these areas of focus, many school counselors after graduating are met with a different picture of the field once employed (Brott, 2006; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Goodman-Scott, 2015). There seems to be a lack of literature available to show how novice high school counselors developed their professional identity and how the training they received in graduate school received reflects their identity as school counselors (Brott & Myers, 1999; Brott, 2004). There is no question that many school counseling programs are producing great high school counselors who are well rounded and can even meet the needs of their new position (Burnham & Jackson, 2000); however, it is necessary that programs help school counselors get a better understanding of the public or private school system in terms of how a novice high school counselor is expected to perform (Brott, 2006; Lambie, 2004). Helping trainees to have better insight into the reality of being employed will also strengthen their professional identities (Brott & Moss, 1999). However, more research is needed on understanding how exemplary novice high school counselors continue to develop their professional identity as employees.

At the high school level, depending on the needs of the school, the principal may instruct a counselor to have certain duties that do not align with the ASCA model framework (Pyne, 2011). Activities such as, lunch or afterschool duty where school counselors serve as security in the sense of making sure students do not leave an area or get into altercations (Pyne, 2011). Some high school counselors are instructed to serve as

substitutes in the absence of a teacher or institute discipline to students who misbehave (Pyne, 2011). Although the duties above are outlined in the ASCA model and even on the ASCA website as not to be performed by high school counselors (ASCA, 2012), many school administrations are demanding that school counselors participate (Clemens, Carey, & Harrington, 2010). Due to the differences of how school counselors have been trained and the expectations once employed, many novice high school counselors' professional identities may be skewed or contribute to his or her limited performance (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Brott, 2006). Because the school counseling field has been transitioning from the guidance counselor framework to the professional school counselor framework (Lambie, 2004) it is important that school counselors in training have a strong professional identify to help change the view of the field (Brott & Moss, 1999; Lambie, 2004). Helping school counselors stand up for what they should and should not do once employed must also be taught in graduate programs (Brott, 2006). In order to do so, school counseling programs must not only train school counselors on the duties of school counseling but help them see the reality of what they must advocate for in some public and private school institutions (Brott, 2006; Lambie, 2004). These issues are part of professional identity and emphasize the importance of exploring how novice high school counselors continue to develop a professional identity after graduate training.

**NATURE OF THE STUDY**

The current research study will use a phenomenological methodology to address the problem as well as answer the research question. The purpose of the study is to explore the process by which school counselors develop a professional identity, an in-depth interview will be conducted with exemplar novice school counselors. Exemplar

school counselors will be identified through faculty from top CACREP school counseling programs. These programs will be identified using the directory on the CACREP website. The interviews will be semi-structured and focus on how exemplar novice school counselors describe the development of their professional identities. Chapter 3 will further discuss the research questions and the nature of the study.

## PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to understand the lived experiences of novice exemplar high school counselor's professional identity development. The sample participants will be asked through a semi-structured interview to reflect on graduate training, job experience, and professional involvement. The purpose is to get a holistic view of the lived experiences participants have from their graduate training programs to their employment and how it contributes to their professional identity.

## RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Qualitative Research-Phenomenological design

A qualitative paradigm was chosen for this study for its usefulness in answering subjective questions in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998). A Qualitative paradigm claims the following: a) should be systematically and rigorously conducted; b) should be accountable for its quality and its claims; and c) should produce explanations or arguments (Mason, 2002). Qualitative research seeks to analyze the narratives and actions of research participants (Glense, 2016), For the basis of this study, a qualitative paradigm will help interpret the social world of participants through interactions with

them in their social contexts and understanding their perceptions of being exemplar novice high school counselors (Glense, 2016).

This study is exploring the lived experiences of novice exemplar high school counselors' professional identity development; thus a phenomenological design is used. This design was chosen for its ability to look at the deeper meanings novice high school counselors experience through their perspectives and meaning making (Aspers, 2009). Phenomenology investigates participants' perceptions and experiences in order to examine similarities and differences across cases (Reeder,1988). A phenomenological design attempts to establish a deeper understanding and insightful descriptions for the participants' everyday experiences (Van Manen, 1990). Furthermore, this research design will help to explore novice high school counselors' experiences and perceptions on their professional identity development pertaining to: 1) graduate training, 2) job experiences, 3) professional involvement, 4) self in relation of the field, 5) how one distinguishes the profession from others, and 6) how one articulates the profession.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

**Question:** What experiences have exemplar novice high school counselors identified in developing their professional identity?

**Interview questions:** According to Reissetter, Korcuska, Yexley, Bonds, Nikels and McHenry (2004),

Professional identity of counselors can be defined as a developmental process in which one is able to understand one's self in relation to his or her field and be able to articulate as well as distinguish one's profession from others. Research also shows that

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one develops his or her professional identity through graduate training, experiences in the workforce and involvement in professional organizations (Moss, Gibson & Dollarhide, 2014).

Therefore, the following interview questions are used for this study:

1. Describe how your graduate training help shape your development in the field.

2. Describe how your graduate training help to shape how you articulate the school counseling field.

   a. How did your training help you distinguish your field from others such as school psychologist, school social workers and mental health counselors?

3. Describe how your on the job experience helped you see yourself in relation to the field.

4. How does your on the job experience help the way you articulate the profession?

   a. How does it help distinguish your field from others such as school psychologist, school social workers and mental health counselors?

5. Describe your professional involvement in the field and how it helps you relate to the field.

   a. How does it help you articulate the school counseling field?

6. How does your professional involvement in the field help you distinguish the field from others such as school psychologist, school social workers and mental health counselors?

**OPERATIONAL DEFINATION**

The following terms require explanation for understanding their context within this study.

1) Throughout this study I most frequently use the term "novice" to refer to high school counselors who have been certified and employed in a school system for 1 – 5 years. According to Moss, Gibson and Dollarhide (2014), participants in their study were identified as "beginning" counselors if they had 1 – 5 years of experience. This term does not refer to school counselors who are "new" in a school setting but have been practicing more than five years. The counselor should also have a case load of at least 250 students. (ASCA, 2012).

2) Additionally, the term "High school counselor" is also used throughout the study. This is due primarily to my own educational grounding in school counseling. Moreover, Perusse and Goodnough (2005) refer to high school counselors as secondary counselors who work with students in any grade level from nine through 12.

3) "Professional identity" is also used fluidly as a term to imply a developmental process in which one is able to understand one's self in relation to his or her field and be able to articulate as well as distinguish one's profession from others (Reissetter, Korcuska, Yexley, Bonds, Nikels & McHenry, 2004).

4) "Exemplar"- those identified within the study as exemplar follow the 2016 ASCA ethical standards specifically Standards B3: Responsibility to self.

# ASSUMPTIONS, SCOPE, LIMITATIONS, AND DELIMITATIONS

## Assumptions

According to Heppner, Kivlighan, and Wampold (1992), the nature of qualitative study does not involve experimental manipulation. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will not manipulate the information gathered, but will gain an understanding of the data to explore the development of novice high school counselors' professional development. Denzin and Lincoln (2013) state that qualitative research suggests an importance on the qualities of process and meaning that are not experimentally measured or examined, but instead focus on the socially constructed nature of reality and the researchers' relationship with the study.

In an effort to understand novice high school counselors' professional identities, this research seeks to process the meaning behind how one develops a professional identity and how ones on the job experience further fosters growth in professional identity development. Furthermore, a phenomenological design describes the meaning of experiences of a phenomenon for a variety of individuals (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). Therefore, in this type of qualitative study the researcher minimizes the experiences gathered in an effort to establish a core meaning or essence of the experience (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). Maxwell (2005) states that qualitative researchers do not have the opportunity "of previously planned comparisons, sampling strategies, or statistical manipulation that 'control for' plausible threats and must try to rule out validity threat after the research has begun" (p.107). Therefore, it is imperative that components of

credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability be taken into consideration to assure the quality and accuracy of the study to eradicate potential threats before and during the research study.

**Scope of Study**

The scope of the study focused on 9 novice high school counselors who are currently employed in a public school system across the nation. Due to the lack of research on how novice high school counselors develop their professional identity, this study did not focus on elementary or middle school counselors.

**Limitations**

Limitations of a phenomenological study according to Griffin (1986) are the participation size recommended is relatively small and cannot be said that the experiences are typical. In essence, the subjectivity of the data makes it difficult to establish reliability and validity of information shared (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). It is also difficult to prevent research induced bias; however, the research will take precaution to ensure that bias is considered prior to starting the study (Glense, 2016). Another limitation in this study is snowball sampling. In the case of using snowball sampling to identify exemplar school counselors, it is left to the discretion of a participant to refer a peer as exemplar rather than the individual being identified by a faculty from a top school counseling program.

**Delimitations**

The purpose of the study is to understand the lived experiences of exemplar novice high school counselor's professional identity development. However, this study will not explore the lived experiences of elementary and middle school counselors because the roles of school counselors vary from level to level and the research done on professional identity development of school counselors reflect that of elementary/middle school levels only (Brott & Myers, 1999; Perusee & Goodnough, 2005).

## SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The significance of the study is to provide a descriptive view of how exemplar novice high school counselors develop their professional identities. The qualitative research was designed to gather data that has not been collected regarding the phenomena. The hope of the study is to generate knowledge for assisting novice high school counselors on how they develop their professional identities as well as help educate counseling programs, supervisors, mentors, guidance departments, and school administration on the professional identity process. The benefits of helping to educate counseling programs on the development of high school counselors' professional identities is that programs will be better equipped to prepare well- rounded school counselors (Harris, 2009). Supervisors and mentors will understand the specifics of high school counselors' professional identities and provide the necessary guidance needed to prepare high school counselors for employment (Prosek & Hurt, 2014). Guidance departments and school administrations will benefit from learning about high school

counselors' professional identity in order to better serve students and build a stronger foundation for the school counseling profession (Gale & Austin, 2003; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2013). The specific areas of consideration for the significance of the study were knowledge generation, professional application, and social change.

**Knowledge Generation**

According to Heppner, Kivlighan and Wampold (2004), the purpose of research is to provide an "objective, effective, and credible way of knowing" (p. 8). It is expected within our field to expand on knowledge and contribute to the field through scientific research. Therefore, with the lack of knowledge on how novice high school counselors develop their professional identities, this will help expand on the literature available on the development of professional identities not only for counselors, but for school counselors as well. It is anticipated that gathering interview transcripts on the lived experiences of novice high school counselors will give some insight on how the development of professional identity begins and continues throughout novice high school counselors' employment.

**Professional Application**

The hope is for the findings to have transferability to assist novice high school counselors in helping to understand how their professional identity develops. Counselor educators can also utilize the information to incorporate into the curriculum activities to strengthen the professional identities of high school counselors. Counselor educators can invite guest speakers who work within the field to give a clear picture of the expectations of the field. Counselor educators can also provide experiential activities within or outside

of class to help high school counselors be exposed to the reality of what they will expect even before internship.

Mentors, supervisors, administrators, and guidance departments will also benefit from understanding the professional identity development of novice high school counselors in order to help high school counselors in training transition fluidly into the profession. Shadowing experiences can be arranged, mentors and supervisors can help provide opportunities for high school counselor in training as well as those in the profession to continue with the development of their professional identities.

**Social Change**

Obtaining a descriptive understanding of how novice high school counselors understand their professional identity development will help contribute to high school counselors advocating on behalf of the field in the transition from guidance counselor to professional school counselor. Lambie (2004) states that the transition from guidance counselor to professional school counselor is dependent on advocacy as well as professional identity. The public school system resistance to change in the terminology used is based on this identity shift. Napierkowski and Parsons (1995) acknowledges that "resistance needs to be confronted if counselors are to break out of their limiting roles and employ the skills and knowledge they have been trained to use" (p. 356). Therefore, it is imperative that novice high school counselors understand the role professional identity development plays in this shift from guidance counselor to professional school counselor.

**SUMMARY**

The research study is exploring how exemplar novice high school counselors develop his or her professional identity as new professionals. For decades the counseling field has seen the discussion on the importance of having a professional identity and the benefits contributed to not only counseling but to the school counseling field. It is important that programs that produce school counselors help trainees develop a solid foundation in their professional identities.

Chapter 1 gives an introduction to the topic to help readers see the significance and purpose of such a study in the school counseling field. Chapter 2 will discuss in detail literatures found to support the benefits of having a professional identity for counselors as well as high school counselors in particular. Chapter 3 will give a detail outline of the methodology used to gather data on the study. An explanation of research participants and data collection will be discussed. Chapter 4 will describe in detail the findings of the study based on data collected. Finally, Chapter 5 will give an overview discussion on the interpretations of the findings and implications for the school counseling and counselor education field.

# CHAPTER 2

## LITERTURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature related to the development of exemplar novice high school counselor's professional identities. The literature review includes the exploration of professional identity, the professional identity of counselors, school counselors and other helping fields' professional identity development such as teachers, social workers and psychologists. The review denotes the importance of having a professional identity and the lack of research available to show the evolution of how novice high school counselors develop their professional identity.

This section will first look at the strategy for searching the literature; secondly a description of the construct of professional identity will be reviewed; thirdly an overview of professional identity in relation to other helping fields in the school system; and finally a review of empirical studies related to the topic will be discussed.

### Strategy Used for Searching Literature

The literature search began with inputting the following key words or key words in conjunction with term connectors: professional identity, counselor professional identity, school counselors' professional identity, social workers' professional identity, school

psychologist professional identity, teacher's professional identity, counselor educators' professional identity, school counseling roles, high school counselors job readiness. The EBSCO Host site located under the psychology database generated a list of articles that helped to build the basis of this literature review. The EBSCO host search engine generated about 55 full text, peer reviewed articles from 1990 to 2015. The limitation to this search engine is that it did not have full access to some of the articles needed. Therefore, a specific journal search under electronic resources database helped to generate the specific articles needed. Journals comprised the main resources for which empirical research information was investigated. However, for the lack of articles generated, additional search engines were used for scholarly articles on the topic: ERIC (EBSCO and Psych INFO were all accessible through the USC online library. Google Internet search was also used for articles not accessible by USC online library resources. A total of 91 articles have been gathered from the databases described.

## Content and Organization of Literature Review

The search for relevant literature depicted a limited amount of articles based on empirical research that encompassed the complete context of how novice high school counselors developed their professional identities. A review of literature prompted a search that extended prior to 2000 and the professional identities of other helping fields such as teachers, social workers, and psychologists. This extended search yielded additional literature on key concepts of how various helping fields developed and continued to establish a professional identity after completing graduate studies as well as while employed. However, the literature review showed an exhaustive amount of missing aspects of how novice high school counselors developed their professional identities.

There was a paucity of literature that described the nature of school counselors developing a professional identity.  There is a gap in the literature that suggests further research is needed noting the specific development of professional identity in novice high school counselors. The literature review culminates with a summary noting the significance of literature to the study and further information on closing the gap in the research.

## Professional Identity

This section includes a review of the literature that addresses professional identity development for counselors, school counselors, high school counselors' and other helping fields. The literature comprises empirical research as well as contextual information regarding professional identity. The type of literature is distinguished within each summary.

### Counselors Professional Identity

Blocher and Tennyson (1963) examines the identity and role of school counselors in the professional group. The authors address conflicts in roles based on past and present developments in the field and how school counselors identify their primary role. This article is helpful to the current study because it provides a basis for how school counselors viewed their identity in the past and the growth of their role. Although this article is outdated, it provides a historical context to pull and explore the need for identifying the professional identity development of exemplar novice high school counselors.

Herilhy and Remeley (1995) discuss how each counseling profession has a separate ethical code and the confusion it creates for its consumers and professionals. The authors suggest that efforts to move towards establishing a single code that would support the goals of unification in the profession. The authors discuss the relationships between ethical documents of the American counseling association and its divisions, licensure boards, certifications boards, and counseling specialties. Although much has taken place to improve upon this since the article was written (updates to ACA code); the current study benefits from this article because it shows a historical perspective related to professional identity development and the unification of the counseling profession. However, the article does not focus specifically on novice high school counselors and how they experience the ethical codes and the development of their professional identities.

Hanna and Bemak (1997) studied the impact having a professional identity has on the counseling profession. The authors agreed that having an identity is needed not only for progression in the field to become licensed and employed, but to also solidify a difference from other helping profession such as psychology and social work. Based on the history review of the counseling field and the organizations affiliated with counseling, the authors found that there is not a clear distinction between psychology and counseling. Thus counselors in training (CITs) and practicing counselors have a hard time distinguishing their identity from the psychology field. According to Hanna and Bemak (1997), the counseling field is threatened if a clear definition and identity is not developed. The authors also stated that a knowledge base must be acquired in order for the counseling field to develop a separate identity. With more research in counseling,

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CIT's and professional counselors will have grounded knowledge as to what distinguished their practice from other helping fields. With such a premise, this article is beneficial to my research study because just as the counseling field must distinguish from other helping fields, school counselors must distinguish from school social workers, school psychologists and school teachers. However, the article does not point out any difference in how exemplar counselors may have developed their professional identities. With a solid foundation in exemplar novice high school counselors' professional identities, one will be able to articulate and defend the knowledge and skill differences as employees.

Brott (1999) conducted a quantitative study developing a grounded theory on the professional identity of school counselors. The author identifies major themes that are factors in how school counselors develop their professional identities. This article is helpful to the current study because it shows factors of school counselors professional identities that may be similar to those of novice high school counselors. However, the article lacks the specific nature of how exemplar novice high school counselors in particular develop their professional identities.

Nelson and Jackson (2003) conducted a study on how Hispanic counseling students developed a professional identity. The authors found that there were many articles describing the transformation of counseling students' identities but nothing on Hispanic students. Therefore, a qualitative study was conducted to document critical themes and challenges a group of Hispanic students identified as being helpful during the process of moving toward developing a professional identity. The results of the study showed several major themes central to Hispanic counseling student interns and themes

that were similar to counseling students not in the ethnic minority group. The themes that were similar to non-ethnic counseling students were: "a) knowledge, b) personal growth, and c) experiential learning. Themes that were central to Hispanic students were: d) relationships, e) accomplishment, f) costs, and g) perceptions of the counseling profession" (Nelson & Jackson, 2003, p. 6). In terms of the themes central to Hispanic students, the authors found that relationships were significant with professors, peers, site supervisors and family on the professional identity development process. "Team work and Support" were the main words used by participants to express experiences that contribute to developing ones' professional identity. However, each participant had positive feelings towards the field. The article is helpful to the proposed research study in the case that the questions used during the interview process and the answers are applicable to this study. This article also proves the importance of more research needed in some untouched areas of literature such as exemplar novice high school counselors that have not been mentioned.

Auxier, Hughes and Kline (2003) investigated how counselors in training developed a professional identity. The authors explored through a qualitative study the experiences of counselors in training in order to help counselor educators provide better training to help Master level students develop their identities. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to develop a provisional theory grounded in master's level trainees' experiences of their identity development. The study found what they described as the "recycling identity formation process. The recycling identity formation process includes three processes: 1) conceptual learning; 2) experiential learning and 3) external evaluation (p.32). Many of the participants started their programs believing they would

only listen to lectures, read chapters/articles, and submit papers, which was labeled by the authors as conceptual learning. However, as the counselors matured in their programs, more experiential learning took place, where students were engaged in learning at practicum sites, internships and counseling techniques course. Furthermore, trainees developed professionally when they received feedback from their peers, professors, supervisors and clients about their personal and counseling behaviors. The study helped to contribute to the proposed research study in that it provides a basis on how trainees developed throughout their programs. It also helps to understand the cyclical nature of the process discussed above to gain some insight on how exemplar novice high school counselors may have developed their professional identities.

Gale and Austin (2003) address how professionalism has resulted in challenges to professional counselors' collective identity. The authors interviewed from senior contributors to the profession who have been published in the Journal of counseling & development and constructed themes (training, specialization and credentials, professional associations, and unifying factors) based on their comments to potential solutions in helping professional counselors unify. The authors then provided three recommendations; 1) ACA should initiate a task force to construct a strategic plan for the professions future; 2) Professionals associations and accrediting organizations should work together to promote the unity of the profession; and 3) Counselors should be engaged in continuing the discussion about their collective identity, the profession as a whole and the planned future of the profession. The article is beneficial to the current study because it provides future implications that can be applied to novice high school counselors' future plan of the profession. However, the article fails to incorporate

recommendation for novice high school counselor's professional identities as well as any insight into how exemplar counselors develop their professional identities.

Reisetter. Korcuska, Yexley, Bonds, Nikels and McHenry (2004) conducted a study on Counselor educators and how they view their own research identity. Although the proposed research study is focused on professional identity, the authors provide a perspective that is helpful and used a definition of professional identity that is adapted in the proposed study. Reisetter et al. (2004) argued that many counselor educators are not pursuing research activities once completing the program. If these same counselor educators are training CIT's then the lack of exposure these educators have to research may impact the professional development of counselors. Therefore, the authors conducted a study on the experiences doctoral counselor educators have with research. The study found that there were four major themes that came about a) perceived worldview congruence; b) perceived counseling theory and skills; c) perceived research identity and professional viability, and d) the holistic nature of their perceptions and experiences. The article helps the current study in that it provides a definition of professional identity development that is adapted in the current research study. The authors define professional development as "the integration of the professional's view of self as a competent professional and the consistency between personal worldview and professional view" (p. 3).

Calley and Hawley (2008) conducted a quantitative study gathering surveys from 70 counselor educators to examine their professional identities. Various factors were explored (academic degrees, types of courses taught, scholarship, scope of service) that were related to professional identity. The results determined that professional

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involvement in counseling associations and attendance to professional counseling associations were high for those who had a strong professional identity. It was also noted that respondents were less active in leadership, advocacy and student organizations. This article is helpful to the current study because it gives insight into the counselor educators professional identities who train high school counselors. The themes from the surveys literature also helps with the current study in identifying what factors should be explored. However, the article does not address implications for high school counselors, their professional identities and what distinguishes exemplar counselors.

Previous researchers have adopted a grounded theory method to collect information on the how new counselors develop their professional identities. Gibson, Dollarhide and Moss (2010) expressed how professional identity has been at the forefront of debates in the counseling field. So much so that the American Counseling Association gathered delegates across the organization to deliberate on how counselors can share a common professional identity. This deliberation brought about the 20/20 vision, which would help to narrow a definition for the counseling field. Having a solid definition according to Gibson et al. (2010) will also help new counselors. The lack of research on counseling trainees and their developmental process also provided the authors with a basis to conduct the research. Therefore, Gibson et al. (2010) provided a theory of professional identity development from entry into the program to completion of internship in order to see the developmental process. The results showed that there are three developmental tasks that described the work that must be accomplished to transform identity.  The transformational tasks are: 1) External validation (from peers, professors, supervisors and counselors); 2) course work, experience, and commitment,

where new and pre-practicum counselors in training (CITs) report heavy reliance on external authorities to provide learning experiences through course work and experience with clients; and 3) self-validation (commitment to lifelong learning, sense of professional community; and integrated personal and professional identity). The article provided insight for the proposed research in the sense that one is able to see the step-by-step process in the transformation CITs made in their professional identity development. The experiences CITs had in their training programs significantly contributed to their identity development. Therefore, one may assume that from this study exemplar novice high school counselors may report similar transformational tasks in their transition from trainee to professional. Further research is needed to identify whether exemplar novice high school counselors have similar experiences as expressed by counselors.

Healey and Hays (2011) highlight in this conceptual article how professional identity relates to ones' personal beliefs, life experiences and gender role expectations. The authors provide implications for women in academia, and implication for the profession. The authors address how counselor educators should discuss professional identity development in training programs within the framework of self-assessment and personal reflection. The article is beneficial to the current study because it provides insight on professional development and how it relates to gender roles. However, the article does not have any implications for exemplar novice high school counselors.

Kaplan and Gladding (2011), further explored the need for strengthen the counseling profession by formulating a solid counseling definition. In 2005, a committee of 30 leaders from the American Counseling Association (ACA) developed a strategic plan for the growth and sustainability of the counseling profession (Kaplan & Gladding,

2011); this committee was called the 20/20 Task Force. In 2013, the 20/20 Task Force concluded its collaboration with having developed three products: (a) T*he Principles for Unifying and Strengthening the Profession*, (b) a definition of counseling, and (c) the Building Blocks to Portability Project (ACA, 2016). The seven principles are: (a) a shared professional identity; (b) presenting counseling as a unified profession; (c) collaboratively to improving the public perception of counselors and advocating for the profession; (d) strengthening the profession by creating license portability; (e) expanding and promoting the counseling research base; (f) focusing on students and prospective students to ensure continued health of the profession; and (g) advocacy and promoting client welfare. Members of the task force also developed 23 strategies to utilize in achieving these seven principles. In developing a consensus definition of the term counseling, the 20/20 Task Force determined that counseling is, "a professional relationship that empowers diverse individuals, families, and groups to accomplish mental health, wellness, education, and career goals." (Kaplan, Tarvydas & Gladding, 2014, p.368). The Kaplan & Gladding (2011, 2014) article is helpful to my research because it shows the progress of the counseling field and the importance in having a professional identity. Therefore, my research will contribute to the knowledge base in the importance of novice high school counselors having a professional identity.

Melin, Hunt, Lindsey and Nichols (2011) study further added to the literature on the importance of counselors having a professional identity and the impact it has on inter-professional collaboration. The authors suggested that even though the counseling field struggles with establishing a cohesive professional identity, it causes "a) confusion about roles and responsibility; b) conflicts related to power and status, and c) the proliferation

of professional stereotypes that jeopardizes the effectiveness of inter-professional collaboration" when it comes to collaborating with other helping fields (p. 89). Therefore, the authors suggested that a study should be done to explore the professional identity of counselors across specializations. The study showed that practicing counselors distinguished oneself from other helping professions based on profession-specific roles and responsibility as well as philosophical orientations. The findings also showed that a starting place for counselors to make distinctions from other helping fields were the emphasis on counseling-specific tasks as well as training, credentialing, developmental, prevention, and wellness orientations. The Melin, Hunt, Lindsey & Nichols (2011) articles credits the importance of why novice high school counselors must understand the distinction of their own professional identity from a school social worker and school psychologists. However, the article lacks attention to the role exemplar novice high school counselor's play in inter-professional collaboration and developing their professional identity.

American School Counseling Association (ASCA, 2012) is a professional organization that constructed a professional model developed to help school counselors understand their roles and develop professionally. The ASCA model outlines a holistic path for school counselors to help students, school body and community to work together effectively in progressing the development of students from K-12. The model is beneficial to the current study because it helps define the profession and gives high school counselors an understanding of their roles to practice effectively and efficiently.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2016) is an organization constructed to help counseling programs and

counselor educators train a variety of counselors to develop professionally and holistically. Standards were developed to help programs and educators operate in accordance to what is best for students and the profession in which they will work. The standards are helpful to the current study because it outlines how high school counselors can develop their professional identities within the programs they attend and through practicum and internship. The standards also give a basis on how programs contributed to producing exemplar high school counselors in developing their professional identities.

Burkholder (2012) proposes a theory- grounded model to help counselors conceptualize, contextualize and express their professional identities through various applications, discovery, teaching and integration. The author used three cases to demonstrate the use of the professional identity expression model. The three cases demonstrated how counselor trainees were able to conceptualize based on their particular experiences, contextualize the meaning of what they do and express in action what they have learned from conceptualizing and contextualizing their situations. This article is helpful to the proposed study in that it shows the evolution and expression of professional identity in trainees. However, the article focuses more on counselor trainees rather than on novice high school counselors and how one expresses his or her professional identity to become exemplar.

Reiner, Dobmeier and Hernandez (2013) argued that the ability of the counseling profession gaining recognition as the mental health discipline is dependent on the ability of the profession articulating their professional identity. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to gather counselor educators' perceptions about a) whether there is fragmentation in their field of counseling and b) whether fragmentation has an impact on

legislative efforts (e.g. Licensure and third party reimbursement) (p.176). The study

reported that counselor educators perceived the profession as lacking coherence, which in

turn impedes the professions ability to unite with other professions. The study also found

that the varied licensure requirements across states impacts counselors' identities.

Counselor educators who are from a Marriage and Family therapy (MFT) background

found less fragmentation and less impact on identity due to parity and portability. The

article contributes to the research at hand due to its insight into what counselor educators

view as beneficial to counselors in training professional identities. Having a counselor

educators' perspective on the impact of professional identity helps the research study

look at other factors that may come into play for exemplar novice high school counselors.

Murdock, Stipanovic and Lucas (2013) conducted a qualitative study to explore

how counselors in training developed their professional identities through a co-mentoring

program between master's level and doctoral level students. Participants in the study

were engaged in a co-mentoring relationship with the intent to strengthen their

professional identities. The goal of the study was for each group to provide the other with

experiences that would help build one's professional identity. The results of the study

showed an increase in professional identity due to the co-mentoring relationships. The

study also showed that each group developed collegial relationships with their co-

mentors and acknowledged the need for developing boundaries. This study is beneficial

to the proposed study because it shows other factors (mentoring) that may play a role in

one developing a professional identity. However, it lacked focus on exemplar novice

school counselors and how mentoring may be a factor that contributes to his or her

professional identity development.

Prosek and Hurt (2014) conducted a quantitative study that examined the differences in professional identity development of novice and advanced counselor trainees. The authors hypothesized a significant mean difference in professional orientation and values and professional development may exist between novice and advanced trainees. The authors also proposed that counselor trainees who are more advanced will have higher score in later stages of professional development. The results concurred with authors hypothesis in that there was a significant difference in professional development between novice and advanced counselor trainees. The authors also identified that advanced counselor trainees demonstrated more progression in the stages of professional development compared with novice counselors. The article is relevant to my proposed study because it provided some insight into the professional development of novice counselors. However, it lacked insight in how exemplar novice high school counselors develop their professional identities.

Moss, Gibson and Dollarhide (2014) stated that having a professional identity as counselors helps one to rely on the identity as a "frame of reference" when making decisions about the work field (p. 3). The authors found that there was a lack of research on the professional life span of counselors and created a grounded theory to explain counselors' professional identities. The results of the study concluded that six themes were important to counselors' professional identity development: "a) adjustment to expectations; b) confidence and freedom; c) separation versus integration; d) experienced guide; e) continuous learning; and f) work with clients" (p. 11). The article is helpful to the proposed research study because it demonstrates the need for insight into the professional life span of counselors. There is also a lack of research on the professional

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life span of high school counselors. The article is also helpful because it provides many professional identity development definitions for counselors and gives one insight into how counselors experience their professional identities in the work field. The themes gathered from this article will help to formulate questions to see if there are any differences or similarities between counselors and exemplar high school counselors' professional identity development.

**Counselors Professional Identity**

A part from reviewing literature on the professional development of counselors, due to the essence of the proposed research study, it is also necessary to review literature on school counselor's professional identities.

Brott and Myers (1999) found it necessary to conduct a research study that includes exploring how school counselors develop a professional identity. The authors suggest that many of the literature on counselors look at the experiences or impact a professional identity has on counselors while in graduate programs but not beyond that scope. Therefore, a claim has been made to see how school counselors' professional identities develop to contribute to the work roles and many decisions that must be made while employed. Six research questions were addressed to answer what process school counselors took to develop their professional identities, but also looked at the process of conflict decision. The six questions explored were: "1) what factors determine the school counseling program? 2) Who is involved in determining the school counseling program? 3) How do school counselors make decisions about the school-counseling program? 4) What issues of conflict with principals have been dealt with school counselors? And 5)

what is the decision process used by school counselors when interacting with principals in professional conflict situations." The study developed a grounded theory with eight theoretical categories emerging. The eight categories are: 1) accounts, 2) advocates, 3) defines, 4) intertwines, 5) manages, 6) rates, 7) responds, and 8) sustains. A process was also identified when elementary and middle school counselors were involved with professional interactions when performing their roles. The process identifies was noted as the "Blending of influences" (p. 7). Therefore, it was concluded that professional identity of school counselors does contribute to the defining roles they serve. The research also agrees with various counseling professional identity studies in that professional growth and development begins during one's training for the profession, continues into the professional realm and also as the practitioner identifies with the profession. The articles used in support of the research study conducted due to its insight into school counselors' development of their professional identities. Brott and Myers (1999) explore the experiences of how professional school counselors established a theory based on the data collected that show the cycle of development for participants. However, the study conducted lacks insight into how exemplar novice high school counselors develop their identities and how it contributes to their employment.

Perusse and Goodnough (2005) article answered two research questions. The first was "How do elementary school counselors and secondary school counselors rate the level of importance of graduate-level-training in specific course content areas? And second, how are elementary school counselors and secondary school counselors alike or different in their perceptions about the importance of graduate-level training in specific course content areas?" The results of the study showed that there were five highest rated

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course content areas for both elementary and secondary school counselors, they are career counseling, computer technology, classroom guidance curriculum, program evaluation and development, parent education, and play therapy. However, the greatest disparity in the courses taught to either counseling groups were writing, research and grant proposals. The authors also found that school counselors must place greater emphasis in using data, conducting program assessments and evaluation in order to keep the importance of what school counselors do in the forefront of administration. The article used helps to support the study because it demonstrates the outlook of secondary school counselors' perceptions of graduate training. The research question in this study fit parts of the sub questions asked in my study. However, this article lacks a clear answer to whether exemplar novice high school counselors perceive their graduate training beneficial to professional identity development.

Brott (2006) found it necessary to outline the benefits of CITs to develop their professional identities through the use of learning experiences. Especially with the call for accountability in the school-counseling field, the importance of school counselors justifying their creditability emerges from the professional identities they develop. Brott (2006) empresses the importance professional identity plays in training. Brott (2006) also state that school counselors should accept accountability as a part of his/her professional obligation in that it reflects ones' professional identity. Brott (2006) continues to express how certain training courses prepare CITs to effectively develop their professional identities. Courses such as "Theories of Counseling", "Appraisal in counseling", "Practicum and Internship" courses reinforces ones' skills and develops the professional identity of school counselors. Brott (2006) also expresses the important role counselor

educator's play in structuring the professional identity of school counselors. It is suggested that continuous communication should be continued with former and current students of programs in order to best develop the professional identities of school counselors. The article by Brott (2006) contributes to the proposed research study of focus because it provides one with insight in what works and what does not work in developing school counselors' professional identities. However, it lacks information on specifically how exemplar novice high school counselors develop their own identities.

Payne (2011) examined the extent of school counselors' job satisfaction and how one implements a comprehensive school counseling program. The purpose of such a study is due to stress and role ambiguity school counselors face as employees. Payne (2011) is expanding on Rayle's (2006) study through the use of a more extensive measure called comprehensive school counseling (CSC) program implementation. There are four research questions being investigated in this study. The "first is studied the level of school counselor job satisfaction and the implementation of the CSC program in secondary schools. The second examined whether high individual item-level responses of CSC implementation correlated with increased job satisfaction. The third studies whether certain personal and professional demographic characteristics correlated with job satisfaction (eg. age of participant, years of experience). The fourth examined whether certain personal and professional demographic characteristics correlated with CSCIM total score (e.g. years of experience, student/counselor ration)" (p. 90). With the use of this program implementation, Payne (2011) found a moderate to strong relationship does exist between the CSC program implementation and job satisfaction. It was found that counselors exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction in school counseling programs that "a)

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have administrative support, b) facilitate communication between faculty and staff members, c) have a clearly written and directive philosophy, d) serve all students in the school, and e) take time for program planning and evaluation" (p.94).

Payne's (2011) study contributes to the proposed research study in that it provides insight into the challenges school counselors face and how these challenges may play a role in developing or hindering the progress of their professional identities. Once again, the study does not distinguish how exemplar novice high school counselors may have certain challenges or benefits that could contribute to their professional identity.

**High School Counselors Professional Identity**

In order to establish a foundation for the present study, the researcher also reviewed literature on the professional identity of high school counselors. However, based on an extensive literature review search, very few articles focus on the specific nature of high school counselors' identity development. Therefore, the proposed study will contribute greatly to the school-counseling field in helping counselor educators, school counselors, administrations, supervisors and guidance departments further understanding the importance of exemplar novice high school counselors having a professional identity.

## Theoretical Articles

**Professional Identities of Social Workers**

High school counselors, school social workers, school psychologists and school teachers are considered a part of the helping field. However, there are differences that can be identified based on the roles, philosophy and professional identities of each professional. The following articles will help one distinguish between the professional roles of each.

According to Stephen Webb (2001) social workers must understand their own professional identity and how it relates to the work they do. It has been found that not much research has been done on the professional identity of social workers. Webb (2001) expresses that many social workers are not aware of their own professional identity. He also states that many social workers' identities are tied up in duties that must be completed according to what the government requires (e.g. home visits, legal paper work, etc). However, the board of clinical social workers expects social workers to integrate their professional identities into their practice and professional roles. The integration however is not fluid due to the expectations the government has for social workers practice. A social work review board was constructed in 2006 in the UK to identify the necessity of having a professional identity. The board determined that the field of social work will benefit from having a professional identity because it sets in place clear roles and a distinction can be made from other helping professions.

The distinction has also been made that a social workers professional identity should be based more on core values and principles since ones' focus is generally concerned with a person-centered approach. The article provides a basis in why it is necessary for social workers to develop his or her professional identities. However, the article does not provide specifics on school socials workers and the distinctions they have from high school counselors. In search of a school social work professional identity, it seems as if there are no studies that have been done to portray the development of school social workers' professional identities. Therefore, it is important to further study how exemplar novice high school counselors develop their professional identities in order to properly distinguish between school social workers and high school counselors.

Wiles (2013) conducted a qualitative study on seven social workers to research the interplay between a social workers' professional identity and his or her personal life experiences. The study showed participants developing their professional identities in relation to" desired traits" or through the development of "sense of self" and with other social workers. It was also noted that all participants struggled to define professional identity, but there was a commonalty to their answers. Participants found that expert knowledge and autonomy are evident in the development of their professional identity. Some participants also noted that it was difficult to distinguish between personal and professional life due to the social service aspect of the profession being carried over to one's personal life.   This article is beneficial to the current study because it shows specific areas in which social workers professional identities developed based on the nature of the field. The current study is necessary to help the school counseling

profession understand the progression and construction of exemplar novice high school counselors' professional identities.

McGlauglin and Coleman (2014) investigated the nature of social worker professional identity in a qualitative study. The article focuses on the social workers' sense of themselves in their profession and the development of a social work professional identity. The social workers involved in the study found that their experiences challenged and extended their ideas about social work and also caused them to question where they fit in the profession. The participants also developed over the years the context in which social work is carried out. The study also notes that social workers no matter where they are placed in the profession, share a professional identity that "transcends" organizational structures and task/roles associated with service groups. This article is beneficial to the current study because it provides insight on how social workers think about professional identity and how it is developed over time. Although this article does not refer to exemplar novice school social workers, it shows the significance of conducting a study on exemplar novice high school counselors and how they should be distinguished from school social workers in terms of professional identity.

Moorehead, Bell and Bowles (2016) investigates the experiences of newly qualified social workers and their professional identity. The authors note that there is limited research available on the professional identity of social workers and more research is needed to fill the gap. The authors gathered data from 17 participants on their experiences in the first year after graduating and working in the field. Two major thematic codes were discovered from the interviews, 1) motivations to participate and benefits of participation. From these thematic condes the authors also discovered that

professional identity was perceived as an important part of their early career experiences and the participants valued the opportunity to self-reflect during the research study. The participants also gained from participating especially in being able to articulate their own identity. The article is helpful to the current study because it gives insight on another helping field and how social workers understand their professional identities. It is just as helpful for exemplar novice high school counselors to understand how they develop their professional identities and how it could contribute to the training of high school counselors.

**Professional Identities of Psychologists and School Psychologists**

Moreover, it is necessary to make the distinction between school psychologists from high school counselors' professional identities as well. Cuvon (1967) state that the school psychologist identity is at stake and the role he or she plays in unclear in a school setting. Communication of roles and duties must be clearly identified and represented by school psychologist in order to have a fitting professional identity. However, it seems as if there is still confusion and diffusion of roles within the field. Although Cuvon (1967) calls for an emergence of professional identity in the school psychologist field, there is still a lack of research to justify this need. The current article is the only literature found to justify the professional identity of school psychologist. Although the literature shows a need for school psychologist to have a professional identify, the distinction of roles is made through the training of school psychologists and the differences encountered when employed by a school district. However, the proposed study will help to clarify the

distinctions and point out how necessary it is for novice high school counselors to have a professional identity as well as how exemplar novice school counselors developed their professional identities.

Bruss and Kopala (1993) used a wide range of articles to formulate a framework for understanding the development of professional identity in psychology trainees. Since there are very few literatures written on the professional development of psychologist, the authors synthesized various literature from counseling, nursing, social work and sociology. Due to the arduous and rigorous training of psychologist, the authors believe that one's identity is transformed and affected due to the training. The authors address the impact of graduate training on the professional identity of psychologist and suggest that the professional identity of therapists is more complex since it is tied to one's personal identity. One article that was reviewed stated, "the professional identity serves as a stable frame of reference from which psychotherapists make send of their work and, to some extent, the fabric of their lives" (p.30). A therapist identity is greatly tied and shaped by a plethora of factors such as self-confidence and self-worth. This article demonstrates the lack of research on professional identity in psychology much less school psychologist, but helps the current study because it gathers various research that investigates a framework for psychologist to use in graduate training. Any of the suggestions made in the article could be similar to the way in which exemplar novice high school counselors develop their own professional identities.

Reynolds (2011) specifically discusses the specialization of school psychologist and what the profession must do to distinguish and define the profession from other helping fields. The author lists five elements to make this distinction: "1) The profession must obtain a

high level of public trust; 2) A profession provides essential services to society; 3) a profession is based on a scientific discipline that provides a) basic insight of the profession and b) applied knowledge and skills of practice; 4) There is a body of knowledge specific to the profession; and 5) Professional associations exist that perform key functions to help the progression of the field. Although, this article does not specifically speak to the professional identity of school psychologist but to the profession as whole, this article is beneficial because it outlines factors that contribute to the development of the profession. The current study will benefit from such an article in that it shows the need for exemplar novice high school counselors to understand the benefits of not only personal professional identity but the professions identity as well in distinguishing itself from other helping fields.

**Professional Identities of School Teachers**

Krejsler (2005) discusses the conditions in which it means to be professional among teachers, pre-school teachers, nurses and social workers. The author discusses the significance of the functionalist approach in that it provides specific function in which professionals contribute to be integrated into society. The approach also describes professions in the sense of the practices performed as well as the cultural knowledge, values and skills to which they contribute. On the other hand, the author also makes note of the "Neo-Weberian approach" which deals towards conflicts. The approach pushes toward struggle of various occupational groups over limited resources and how the self-interest of the occupational groups is the driving force behind professional development. The article is helpful to the current study because it provides insight on how various helping fields navigate in keeping their professions identity and also developing trainees'

identities. However, the article does not discuss exemplar novice professionals or high school counselors and how they develop their professional identities.

Timostsuk and Ugaste (2010) presents on student teachers development of professional identity in a qualitative study. 45 teachers described their personal experiences in teaching their own subjects and the positive and negative feelings that arose due to the experiences. The aim of the authors was to study how students of initial teacher education programs understand and describe their professional identities. A number of themes came up and the authors found that "experiencing" was mentioned a great deal by participants more so that "doing", "belonging" and "learning". A great deal of students' professional identity developed within the classroom experiences and delivery of instruction. The participants were greatly influenced by interactions with others (school teachers, pupils, university teachers, fellow students) in a school context. The study also found that student teachers' emotions "intensified" their experiences whether it was positive or negative and belonging to the teaching community played a tremendous role in the development of professional identity. This article is helpful to the current study because it gives insight into how the teaching helping field helps to develop student teachers' professional identities. One may find some similarities in novice high school counselors due to the environment in which the two fields work. Although the article does not mention novice high school counselors, it is important to conduct such a study because it will broaden the knowledge on how exemplar novice high school counselors develop professional identities.

Ulvik, Smith and Helleve (2009) conducted a qualitative study on nine novice secondary school teachers to gain insight on their diverse experiences during their first

year.  The teachers were asked what they enjoyed about working as teachers, what challenges they faced their first year, how those challenges were handled and what support they felt they received or needed. All the participants stated they enjoyed their teaching experience, however mentioned that their role of teacher is at times prioritized over the other roles they hold outside of their profession. In terms of challenges, the answers varied due to prior experience or personality. The study showed that a variety of resources and support is needed, however, the challenged motivated novice teachers to manage the next year more efficiently. The study also noted that eight out of nine participants were very pleased with their teaching education, but noted the gap between theory presented while in training and actual practice. The students stated that they found it difficult to practice what was taught at the university. This article is beneficial to the current study because it looks at novice participants in the teaching field. There may be some similarities in the responses novice high school counselors give in comparison to novice secondary teachers. The interview questions used are helpful in the construction of the questions for the current study as well. Further study is needed on exemplar novice high school counselors to explore their professional identities and the first few years after training.

**Professional Identities of Counselors**

Luke and Goodrich (2010) conducted a qualitative study developing a grounded theory for career counselors. 15 career counselors participated in helping to understand their professional identities and how chi sigma Iota chapter played a part in the development. The results showed that career counselors described their CSI leadership as a big part of their professional identities. Participants also stated that involvement in other

professional organizations also play a role in their professional identity development. This article is helpful to the proposed study because it shows some key themes similar to the counseling professional identity for career counselors. However, there are some differences in which exemplar novice high school counselors may present in terms of their professional development.

Moss, Gibson and Dollarhide (2010) demonstrated within their study that a counselor professional identity provides a framework for professional practice. The authors found it appropriate to conduct a grounded theory approach in order for counselor education programs and counselors to have something to use as a framework. This article is helpful to the proposed study because it demonstrates a working framework for not only counselors, but school counselors as well. The article provides a model in which themes of confidence, freedom and continuous learning are of values to participants.

Burkholder (2012) examines how professional identity is expressed among mental health counselors. The article expresses that there is much discussed about professional identity development, but there is a lack of literature discussing how identity is expressed among counselors. Therefore, this article is beneficial to the current study because it gives a basis to how counselors express their professional identity once developed. Moreover, exemplar novice high school counselors may express their professional identities similar to or different from mental health counselors.

**Professional Identities of School Counselors**

Brott and Myers (1999) noted the lack of research available on the professional identity of school counselors. It was assumed that although there may be similar themes that arise in comparison to a counselors' professional identity, there are differences that could benefit the school-counseling field. Therefore, a grounded theory method was used to demonstrate themes such as: 1) accounts, 2) advocates, 3) defines, 4) intertwines, 5) manages, 6) rates, 7) responds, and 8) sustains. Therefore, it was concluded that professional identity of school counselors does contribute to the defining roles they serve. The article however, does not reflect what contributes to a novice high school counselors' professional identity. The article only focuses on school counselors in general and what may contribute for all school counselors regardless of years of experience. However, the same may not contribute to the professional identity of exemplar novice high school counselors.

Lambie and Williamson (2004) discussed the challenge the school counseling profession is having in transition from the guidance counselor perspective to the professional school counselor and the historical implications behind the transition. The authors inform readers of Frank Parsons, who is considered the father of Guidance. He became the first to introduce vocation counseling to help young men understand what skills and knowledge they have that could be applied to various career fields. The authors then provided background on the formation of the National Vocational Guidance Association which aligned education, social work and psychometrics in vocational guidance and further explored current habits of the school counseling field. However, the authors spend some time discussing four steps in which school counselors can use and

advance their professional identity. The first is to "educate principals", because a principal's support is essential to the school counseling profession. Step 2 is "Abolish teaching requirement for counseling licensure, since teaching is not reflective of effective counseling skills in what school counselors do. Moreover, we have seen teaching requirements removed from licensure over the years. Step three is "Provide supervision in the schools", where school counselors can continue to sharpen their skill set. We currently see more supervision in schools to help interns and newly employed school counselors; and lastly step four is to "reassign inappropriate duties", it is encouraged that school counselors communicate with their principals administrative and clerical duties that are not appropriate for school counselors to be engaged. This article is helpful to the current study because it shows the progression of the field and what factors help build school counselors identities.

Ockerman, Mason and Chen-Hayes (2013) discuss the benefits of Change Agent for Equity (CAFÉ model) in supervising school counselors and how this could help foster growth not only school counselors but close the gap in student outcomes. The authors address in detail the CAFÉ model and suggest that school counselors in training must have trained and consistent supervisors who understand the reality of the job. The authors suggest that supervision should not only entail knowledge and skill base training but incorporate professional identity and helping to strengthen that in trainees. The identity of the counselors is at the core of the model to help trainees and supervisors understand the development of his or her professional identity. It is the duty of the supervisor to help school counseling supervisees not only find resources in the field but to also determine new sources, remove barriers to sources and address issues of equity. This article is

beneficial to the current study because it provides insight into a supervision model for school counselors in training to help foster their professional identity. However, the article does not specifically address how exemplar novice high school counselors continue to develop their professional identities.

## Research Studies

### Qualitative Studies

In order to understand the justification for the proposed research study, several qualitative and qualitative studies have been chosen.  To help one understand the methodology and results of certain studies that contribute to the proposed study these articles will be reviewed.

Nelson and Jackson (2003) conducted a qualitative study on counselor identity development of Hispanic student interns. The authors used a phenomenological research design to explore the development of professional identity in student counseling interns. The participants were 8 Hispanic graduate counseling education students enrolled in practicum/Internship in a regional university. The sample included 1 man in practicum and 3 women in practicum as well as 1 man in internship and 3 women in internship. The procedure included research assistants calling 21 Hispanic students who were asked to participate in an taped interview session. However, only 8 participants agreed to participate in the interview process. At the beginning of the interview, each participant was presented with an informed consent letter and confidentiality was reviewed with each. A semi-structured, in depth interview using 9 questions adapted from the Franklin, Killian, and Targhetta (1999) article was used. The results showed seven major themes

that were central to Hispanic interns, however, there were themes central to the cultural aspect of what the basis of this study was about. The cultural themes were: 1) relationships, 2) accomplishment, 3) costs, 4) and perceptions of the counseling profession. The themes indicate that apart from the central themes significant to all counseling students, Hispanic students paid more attention to relationship and costs as a factor that contributed to their professional identity. The study is relevant to my proposed study because it shows that there are various aspects that could contribute to one's professional identity outside of the typical themes studied. This study also uses the phenomenological design that will be adapted. However, the study does not show how Hispanic high school counselors professional identities can be impacted once in the professional world of school counseling. Therefore, the proposed study will explore the experiences of how exemplar novice high school counselors training and employment contribute to his or her professional identity development.

Luke and Goodrich (2010) conducted a study on the need for chi sigma Iota (CSI) chapter to advocate on the importance of professional identity in career counselors. The authors wanted to know 1) what positives or negatives experiences contributed to the development of your professional identity? 2) what does leadership mean to you? And 3) how do you enact or communicate your professional identity to others? The authors used the grounded theory approach to answer these questions. There were 15 participants in the study who have been identifies as early career counselors also a part of the CSI chapter. The authors used a 38 questionnaire for the interview sessions with participants. The results of the study described an emergent theory that used Strauss and Corbin's (1998) framework, which resulted in themes of learning experiences, personal

characteristics and identification, relationships, etc. The participants described that their involvement in CSI contributed to their leadership skills and is the catalyst for their professional identity development. The article is used a basis for the proposed study due to the organizational aspect of the participant's involvement in CSI. Due to the fact that organization involvement is a part of what I am looking for as a contributor to one's professional identity, this article is beneficial. However, the article focuses on career counselors in particular rather than exemplar novice high school counselors.

Gibson, Dollarhide and Moss (2010) conducted a qualitative study on counselors-in-training (CIT's). A grounded theory methodology was used to discuss the transformational tasks required for professional development of new counselors. Data was collected from 43 participants gathered from the campus of the lead researcher. The results showed that CIT's progresses from focusing on individuals' skills and experts to know having an awareness "self-authorizing. Self-motivation and self-locating" within the community in which they will work professionally. The results also showed the fluid movement of CIT's transforming from course work, through course work to practice, then through practice to real world qualities. This article is beneficial to the current study because it is the first to look across CIT's professional development from beginning of their programs to pre-practicum, pre-internship, and pre-graduation in the building of their professional identities. However, the article only focuses on counseling students and not particularly high school counselors.

Mellin, Hunt and Nichols (2010) conducted a qualitative study on counselors' professional identities and how they perceive counseling as a distinct profession from psychology and social work. The authors had two research questions 1) "How do

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professional counselors define the counseling profession and 2) How do professional

counselors perceive the counseling profession as distinct from psychology and social

work?" (p.142) The authors gathered data from a previous study conducted that

investigated the roles and functions of counselors who passed the National Counselor

Examination(NCE) for licensure. The study gathered data from 238 participants where a

questionnaire was distributed. Of the 238, 204 participants responded to the research two

research questions which were outlines in the questionnaire. For the first question,

responders had a variety of answers which formulated three categories "(a) counseling

skills and service provided, (b) counselor training and credentials, and (c) wellness and

developmental focus" (p.143). For the second research question, 204 responders

answered and led to five categories," (a) case management and community systems, (b)

personal growth and wellness, (c) testing and assessment, (d) individual versus global

focus, and (e) no difference between professionals (p.143). The article is beneficial to the

current study because it helps one understand how counselors define professional identity

and how they distinguish themselves from other helping fields. However, the article does

not focus on exemplar novice high school counselors.

Timostsuk and Ugaste (2010) conducted a qualitative study interviewing 45

student teachers about their professional identity development. The study was done in

2006-2007 school year and the aim of the study was to involve as many student teachers

from different teacher education study programs. Student teachers were interviewed and a

focus group was also conducted. Six questions were used in the interview: 1) "How do

you describe yourself as a teacher> How do others perceive/describe you as a teacher? 2)

What is intrinsic/non-intrinsic for you as a teacher? What do you like/don't like about

being a teacher? 3) Please describe your profession 'journal'. What have you learned during this journey? What else would you like to learn? 4) What other life roles do you have besides that of being a student teacher? 5) What do you manage to influence as a student teacher? What is your impact in your immediate environment, and in wider society? and 6) would you like to add anything in relation to the content of the interview? What would this be?" (p.1565). The interviews were then transcribed and analyzed and coded by two researchers. The study found seven major themes and gathered that teachers face contradictions between a changing social context and their own beliefs and values. The study also showed that for teachers, learning is fundamentally experiential and social and experiencing the world is meaningful. Overall, this article is beneficial to the current study because it provides insight into how novice school teachers develop their professional identities. However, the article lacks information about how exemplar novice high school counselors develop their professional identities.

Moss, Gibson and Dollarhide (2013) conducted a qualitative grounded theory study to investigate how counselors develop a professional identity during their careers. There was a total of 26 counselors who participated and were gathered using a purposeful sampling. The research question for the study was 1) "define your professional identity at the current moment, and 2) what do you think you need to progress to the next level of development of your professional identity?" (p.5). Data was collected through a recorded focus group which lasted 60 to 90 minutes long. Each session was then transcribed and a line by line manual open coding was used for analysis and a grounded theory was developed from the analysis. The results showed that there were six themes that played a role in counselors' professional development; 1) "adjustment to expectations, 2)

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confidence and freedom, 3) separation versus integration, 4) experienced guide, 5)

continuous learning, and 6) work with clients." (p.6). The themes were consistent with

previous studies in that students developed a view of counseling during training and

entered the workforce with unrealistic expectations.  And many of the counselors in there

1-2 year of experience reported struggling with confidence and feeling of self-doubt.

However, confidence grew as counselors gained experience. This article is important to

the current study because it shows how novice counselors have self- doubt and

confidence concerns as well as the interview process to get to this knowledge. It is

important to study exemplar novice high school counselors to understand any similarities

or differences in their professional identity development.

**Quantitative Studies**

Ribak-Rosenthal (1994) conducted a quantitative study to address the reason why

individuals enter the school administration, school counseling and teacher fields. The

authors hypothesize that, "Teachers, school counselors and school administrators will

differ significantly on the reasons they enter their respective professions; and Teachers,

school counselors, and school administrators will differ significantly on the reasons they

think other enter their respective professions. The authors gathered 123 participants

enrolled in California State University and were given a questionnaire with 15 items. The

results indicated that the authors first hypothesis was supported and that administrators

enter the field to gain prestige and money more so than school counselors and teachers.

However, the study showed that school counselors were more motivated to help students

than teachers and administrators and the other two professions agreed that school

counselors were more motivated to help their profession. The article is beneficial to the

current study because it provides insight on the views of the school counseling professions and how others view school counselors. However, the article does not provide information on how these views may help novice high school counselors with their professional identity.

Beale (1995) conducted a quantitative study gathering information from seven school districts on their hiring practiced of school counselors. Employment application along with survey instruments were collected to compile a master list of items used to employ school counselors. A questionnaire was then constructed from the 15 items identified to determine the importance of each item. This questionnaire was sent to 1,000 public school principals in common wealth Virginia. The results of the study indicated four categories, academic performance, behavioral-personal characteristics, recommendations, and work experience. The results show that there is little weight on the academic performance of those who are hired, principals valued the non-intellectual variables (personal interview, recommendations, professional experience) more so than intellectual variables such as grades and test scores. This article is beneficial to the current study because it shows the role principals play in what is important to them when choosing school counselors. However, the article did not provide any indications on how these decisions may impact the professional identity of novice school counselors.

Coll and Freeman (1997) investigated school counselors' role conflict as well as to investigate elementary school counselors' perceptions of role conflict as compared to middle school counselors. The authors randomly selected participants from the national population of school counselors who were members of ASCA. There was a total of 1,510 secondary, middle and elementary school counselors who were surveyed using the Role

questionnaire. The results show that school counselors have difficulty with role conflict which reflects some of the difficulty with demands placed upon them. School counselors also report higher role conflict in comparison to college counselors. The results also showed that elementary school counselors have higher levels of role conflict than middle and secondary counselors in all RQ areas of the questionnaire. The article is beneficial to the current study because it gives insight into the roles and on job duties that may impact how school counselors preform. Although the article does not refer specifically to the professional identity of exemplar novice high school counselors, it does give insight on secondary school counselors attributes to the roles they play.

Burham and Jackson (2000) conducted a quantitative study to determine the perception of roles school counselors hold when compared to the Myrick (1993) and Gysber and Henderson (1994) models. The authors gathered data from 80 certified school counselors who were given a 19 item questionnaire. The results showed that school counselors engaged in individual counseling more so than what was expected in the recommendations made by Myrick. The results also showed that many of the school counselors were more apt to conduct individual counseling than anything else and this could be due to the counseling education program in which they were graduates. Small groups were viewed favorable in comparison to the recommendation of Myrick. Moreover, the duties of school counselors were viewed as either favorable duties that were realistic or unrealistic due to what was taught in graduate programs. The article is helpful to the current study because it shows the perceptions of school counselors and the roles that are realistic once employed. However, the article does not have any

implications to how these factors may play a role in exemplar novice school counselors professional identities.

Perusse and Goodnough (2005) conducted a national study on professional school counselors on what they perceive as important course content areas in preparing for the profession of school counseling. The research questions included: 1) How do elementary school counselors and secondary school counselors rate the level of importance of graduate-level training in specific course content areas, and 2) How are elementary school counselors and secondary school counselors alike or different in their perceptions about the importance of graduate-level training in specific course content areas? The study included 1,000 professional school counselors who represent all 50 states and were randomly selected by ASCA from the ASCA membership database. The selections were categorized by the grade levels served such as those who served grade levels K-6 were categorized as elementary and those who served 9-12 were categorized as secondary. However, 218 elementary school counselors participated and 352 secondary school counselors participated. The authors used the Total Design Method questionnaires, which were mailed out to 1,000 ASCA Members. Twenty-Four course content areas were used as stem items according to the authors. Respondents were asked to rate each course content area on a scale of 1-5, which indicated the amount of importance of graduate level training for school counselors in each area.  The results showed that the five highest ranked content areas were the same for elementary and secondary school counselors (individual counseling, small group counseling, consultation with parents and teachers, understanding child growth and development, and legal/ethical issues in counseling) (p.113). Moreover, elementary school counselors tied in rank between legal/ethical issues

in counseling and classroom guidance curriculum. However, four of the five of the lowest ranked content areas for elementary and secondary counselors are: psychopathology, DSM-IV, and diagnosis; couple and family counseling, curriculum and instruction, and writing, research and grant proposals. Moreover, in terms of research question 2, there were no significant differences in mean rank between elementary school counselors and secondary school counselors in areas such as: assessment techniques, multicultural counseling, couple and family counseling, legal/ethical issues in counseling, school law, special education, case management of students' progress, and public relations. However, secondary school counselors rated higher in three content areas than elementary school counselors. The areas were career development, drug and alcohol abuse, and computer related technology. The study is relevant to my proposed research because it provides areas in which school counselors rated what courses benefit or lacked in contributing to their practice as professional school counselors. However, this article did not provide evidence as to whether certain courses contributed to one's professional identity. Therefore, it is necessary to explore what courses in training contributed to exemplar novice high school counselors' professional identities.

Scarborough and Culbreth (2008) investigated the discrepancies as well as the factors that predict discrepancies between actual practice and preferred practice in interventions school counseling programs use. The article called for six hundred elementary, middle, and high school counselors from southern states to participate. Participants were asked to complete the school counselor activity rating scale, the counselor self-efficacy scale and the school climate scale. The results of the study indicate discrepancies between the way a group of school counselors actually spend their

time and the way that they would prefer to spend their time. This study is useful for the proposed study because it shows quantitatively that there are discrepancies in how school counselors spend their time and how they would actually like to spend their time which gives insight on the on job experiences of school counselors. However, this article does not reflect how exemplar novice high school counselors experience on the job involvement and how this may contribute to ones' professional identities.

Goodman-Scott (2014) conducted a quantitative study on school counselors perceived preparation and practice within their field. The authors research questions were, "a) how effective do school counselors perceive their preparation? b) what are school counselors most reported job activity? c) does building level affect perceived preparation among school counselors controlling for graduation date and accreditation date; and d) does building level affect perceived practice among school counselors controlling for graduation date and accreditation status?" (p.59). The authors gathered data from 1,052 participant o completed a school counseling master degree and graduated between 2002 and 2012. The authors used the *school counseling activity rating* as an instrument to measure school counselors process in relation to their preferred job. Research results found a moderate level of preparation and practice were reported by participants that aligned with the 2003 ASCA model. It was reported that school counseling participants were prepared for the recommended job activities more so than other job activities. School counseling participants also reported having a moderate performance rate of job activities comparable to the ASCA model guidelines and also report having to perform "other" job activities even though the activity does not align with the ASCA model.  This study is relevant to the current study because it provides

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support to how certain on the job activities play a role in school counselors development. However, based on my research question, this study did not provide support on how exemplar novice school counselors on the job activity play a role in their professional identity development.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the literatures provide a basis in describing the importance of having a professional identity for counselors and school counselors. However, there is a lack of research on the importance of high school counselors and specifically novice high school counselors developing a professional identity. Therefore, the proposed study will close the gap and provide information that distinguishes school social workers, school psychologist and school teachers from high school counselors. The study will also explore through the phenomenological research design the lived experiences of new high school counselors and how they developed and continue to develop their professional identities. Chapter 3 will provide a methodology section to describe in detail the process of choosing participants, data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 will describe in detail the findings of the data collected. Lastly, chapter 5 will provide a discussion on the interpretations of the findings as well as implications for the field.

# CHAPTER 3

## RESEARCH   METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenological study will be to understand the in-depth lived experiences of exemplar novice high school counselors' professional identities. According to Glense (2016), qualitative research seeks to provide the researcher with the narratives and actions of the research participants. Qualitative research will explore exemplar novice high school counselors' thoughts and experiences pertaining to how they develop their professional identities. Using a qualitative design for this research is useful in answering subjective questions in a natural setting (Creswell, 1998). (Moss, Gibson & Dollarhide, 2014; Reissetter, Korcuska, Yexley, Bonds, Nikels & McHenry, 2004.) Participants in this study are located in an urban school setting that provides the "natural setting" Creswell (1998) referred to in qualitative research. A phenomenological design helps to interpret the social world of participants through the interactions in their social context and the perceptions they convey (Glense, 2016).

This chapter focuses on the research design of this study. The content explains the methodology used, a description of using a phenomenological approach, the role of the researcher, the questions used in the interview process, the context of the study and its overall design, participant selection and finally the data collection and analysis process.

## Qualitative Methodology

A qualitative methodology was used for this study due to its effectiveness in answering the research questions concerning the in-depth experiences of exemplar novice high school counselors developing his or her professional identities. Qualitative research is appropriate to this study as a method researchers use to search for meaning in subjective data. This study is concerned about the meaning exemplar novice high school counselors make from their experiences as counselors and how these experiences develop one's professional identity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Moreover, qualitative research does not provide a single truth about the experiences of the participants in the study rather it describes the experiences of all participants and recognizes that their experiences are rooted in a variety of contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). In qualitative research, the researcher tries to provide rich descriptions of participant's direct accounts (Creswell, 2007). In order to understand the data collected, the researchers must be immersed directly with participants to develop a relationship. In qualitative research, the researcher is the primary collector of data, and I am responsible for the collection and explication of the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). One must be aware, however, that in qualitative research, the researcher has values she brings to the study (Creswell, 2007; Glense, 2016). It is imperative that the researcher provides transparency around assumptions and values in order for the reader to discern possible confounding of the data (Denzin, 1989). This study includes a research journal of my reflections and documentation of my emotions through the inquiry (Glense, 2016).

Qualitative research provides the subjective experiences of participants and uses the first person in the writings. Qualitative research requests the use of observations,

interviews, focus groups and or reflective journaling (Creswell, 2007; McNiff, 1998). This study uses the qualitative method of in-depth interviewing to gain subjective experiences of exemplar novice high school counseling participants.

## Phenomenological methodology

In choosing a qualitative research design, it was the objective of the researcher to keep in mind the purpose of the study and the research questions to be answered. The purpose of the study is to explore the lived experiences of exemplar novice high school counselors and their professional identities. The research question asks, "What experiences have exemplar novice high school counselors identified in developing their professional identity?" Therefore, the purpose of the research study would best be answered by a phenomenological approach because it searches for the meaning and nature of participants' direct experiences through first person accounts (Glense, 2016). The phenomenological design provides rich descriptions and explorations of the lived experiences pertaining to how exemplar novice high school counselors develop their professional identities.

Phenomenological design is the study of participants' experiences in the world (Shepardie, Young, & Daniels, 2010). The philosophy of this approach is based on Husserl's teachings, which originated at the turn of the century and has evolved into two major forms, descriptive and interpretative (Moustakas, 1994). Moreover, Husserl's phenomenology was descriptive in nature in that he suggested the use of intention or mental directedness and phenomenological reduction which better helps one understand an experience. The description provided by Husserl's approach was intended to be "what

presents itself precisely as it presents itself, neither adding nor subtracting from it"

(Giorgi, 1992, p. 115). Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the descriptive

phenomenological approach is used. This form of phenomenological approach was

chosen due to its purpose of understanding participants meaning making of their

experiences in developing a professional identity. Other approaches such as grounded

theory would not fit in answering the research questions because it is not the goal of the

researcher to build a theory. There are theories that are available to speak to school

counselors' professional identities. It is the goal of the researcher to understand the

experience of how exemplar novice high school counselors develop their professional

identities rather than build a theory. In terms of completing a case study, it is not the

objective of the researcher to focus on just one participant. I believe more can be grasped

from an approach that uses more participants to explore experiences and an approach that

fits answering the research question in a more exploratory way.

### Role of Researcher

**Researcher-participant relationship.** As the main research investigator on this

study, a qualitative approach calls for the researcher to be active in building a relationship

with participants to collect data (Glense, 2016). The researcher built rapport through

active listening and discussion on being a school counselor. The researcher also kept a

research journal throughout the process. In this journal, I wrote my biases in order to be

careful not to have these biases influence my interpretation of the data. I conducted each

research interview for all nine participants and transcribed each data collected in order to get a full sense of participants' experiences (Glense, 2016).

**Researcher bias.** However, there are some biases I have as a high school counselor. In my experience working the first year as a school counselor, I believed that there were some experiences needed during my training that would have helped me identify strongly as a school counselor. For example, exposure to scheduling students for classes and opportunities to attend conferences contribute to my professional identity. However, I was not able to learn about scheduling until the start of employment. I believe these areas contribute to a school counselors' professional identity and assume will strengthen one's identity. My assumptions in the study are that exemplar novice high school counselors' experiences on the job will contribute to how they see themselves as school counselors. I also assume that the organizations novice high school counselors are affiliated with will contribute to their professional identity. However, I think this will be true for those who attend conferences and are strongly active in taking part in the fields' professional organizations. I also provide a brief response to each interview question.

**General Responses to Interview Questions**

1. *Describe how your graduate training help shape your development in the field.*
   My graduate training helped to shape my development in the filed through the variety of classes I took such as comprehensive school counseling, theories and practicum/internship. These particular courses gave insight into the field and what I should expect in terms of the role of a school counselor. The in class role plays and in class activities also helped to prepare me to work with students.

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*2. Describe how your graduate training help to shape how you articulate*

*the school counseling field. My* graduate training helped to shape how I articulate

the school counseling field through the specific exposure I had with school

counselors in the field prior to practicum and internship. In our school counseling

courses we had to interview school counselors, we researched the field of school

counseling by reading articles and writing journal posts. During internship I was

able to shadow a school counselor for a few weeks before obtaining direct hours

with students.

a) *How did your training help you distinguish your field from other helping fields*

*such as school psychologist, social workers and mental health workers?* My

training helped to distinguish the field from other helping fields through the class

interactions we had with school psychology trainees, social worker trainees and

mental health trainees. The department had courses in which these other helping

fields would be a part of and we would collaborate with one another on class

projects pulling from our specific backgrounds and roles. This interaction outside

of internship gave me insight into what to expect when working with social

works, school psychologist and mental health.

*3. Describe how your on the job experience helped you see yourself in relation to*

*the field.* My on the job experience helped me to see myself in relation to the

field through how the people I worked with identify and saw my role as a school

counselor. I understood my role as a school counselor but found that I had to

educate and advocate on behalf of my field to administration and staff because

they did not have a good understanding of the role of a school counselor. I found

there was a gap between what I was trained and what was expected of me on the job.

*4. How does your on the job experience help the way you articulate the profession?* My on the job experience helped me to articulate the profession through the interactions I had with students, parents, and those I worked with. I understood my role and was able to express that to others when engaged with students. I understood that I am an advocate for students and utilize my counseling skills to help students academically, personally and socially. I worked in a team setting and could consult and collaborate with other professionals to meet the needs of students and their families.

*And*

a) *How does it help distinguish your field from others such as school psychologists, school social workers, and mental health workers?* My on the job experience helped to distinguish between other helping fields by seeing their roles executed during IEP and 504 meetings. I collaborated with the mental health worker through referrals and group sessions. Due to the fact that the school psychologist was only on the grounds for IEP meetings, I did not have much interaction with her but understood her to only engage with students who needed special education services. I found that I was the constant for the students since I was visible at the school on a daily basis.

*5. Describe your professional involvement in the field and how it helps you relate to the field.* My involvement in the field consisted of being a member of ASCA and

ACA. I did not have the opportunity to attend conferences since my district did not reimburse for such activities, but did read the journals to stay abreast on the changes and updates of the field. Our district also had professional development days in which professionals from the school counseling field would do workshops with all the school counselors in the districts, principals would also attend to become familiar with the ASCA model and be sure to support school counselors in their roles.

*And*

a) *How does it help you articulate the school counseling field?* My involvement in professional organizations although limited to reading journals, helped me gain perspective on what I could do differently to help certain students on my case load. I utilized research to improve my group sessions and expressed what I was learning to the head of our department in order to make changes. I believe this helped me to be comfortable to share what I was learning and build up our department.

6. *How does your professional involvement in the field help you distinguish the field from other helping fields such as school psychologist, school social workers and mental health workers?* My involvement in professional organizations did not help much in distinguishing the field from other helping fields. It was rare to see an article speaking on the differences of these fields. I did not see the other helping fields in our professional developments.

**Professional Background.** I graduated in 2011 with a Master's degree in school counseling from Andrews University. I obtained certification in the states of Michigan

and South Carolina. I worked as a school counselor at Camden High school in Camden, South Carolina for three years and obtained certification as a Global career development facilitator (GCDF). I am currently working on my doctorate degree in counselor education and supervision. I identify as a Black, heterosexual female who is married. These characteristics are important to consider in the interpretation of data because of the experience I have in the field of study, the bias I have towards the school counseling field, and my own professional identity. Therefore, I have noted my biases and provide answers to the questions I asked each participant.

## Methods and Procedure

**The site and setting.** The goal of phenomenological approach is to capture the lived experiences of participants in a natural setting (Glense, 2016). The setting of this study is the field of professional school counselors in the United States. Of the nine participants interviewed all were actively employed in a high school setting; years of experience ranged from 1 to 5 years, and the average age was 32. Participants interviewed were eight females and one male, seven identified as Caucasian and two as African- American. Six participants indicated married, two single and one widowed. The school's participants are employed demonstrate a variety in size, socio-economic structure, inner-city, rural and suburban constructs with a range of performance ratings. The selection provided the researcher with an array of differences and similarities among participants' experiences that provided the transferability of the results and theme generation. What follows is a detailed explanation of how participants were selected.

**Participant**

One element of a qualitative research study is the attention paid to choosing or

selecting participants for investigation (Patton, 2006). Although sampling is a term better

suited for quantitative research as it implies a representative group gathered from a larger

population, criterion selection is suited for quality assurance in cases that meet

predetermined criterion (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The researcher utilized purposeful,

snowball sampling and an exemplar methodology to recruit participants due to the

research question and nature of the study (Creswell, 2014). According to Heppner and

Heppner (2004) criterion based sampling is used in phenomenological study to select

participants who meet the phenomenon under study and to better articulate their

experiences. The use of purposeful sampling according to Patton (2002) provides a

manageable information system that exhibits certain predetermined characteristics such

as gender and ethnicity which provides depth in qualitative analysis of the research.

Using these particular participants provided diversified life and counseling experiences

and also helped to provide data across social classes and districts.

**Exemplar Methodology.** Exemplar methodology has been a method used since

Aristotle's time (Bronk, King & Matsuba, 2013). However, the actual use in research was

conducted by Maslow (1971) where he wanted to understand how individuals self-

actualized. More specifically this term is defined as "a sample selection technique that

involved the intentional selection of individuals, groups or entities that exemplify the

construct of interest…in a highly developed manner" (Bronk, King & Matsuba, 2013,

p.2). This method is used in developmental research as a preferred sample selection to

learn what characteristics exemplars exhibit that individuals in similar circumstances can

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attain for developmental growth.   Therefore, the sample for this study was *exemplar*

*novice high school counselors*.

**Nomination criterion.**  In an exemplar methodology, the ideal criterion for

selecting

participants is concrete, narrow and descriptive enough of a highly developed group of

individuals, however leaves enough room to capture a range of experiences and

characteristics (Bronk, King & Matsuba, 2013).  The 2016 ASCA ethical standards

specifically Standards B3: Responsibility to self, provide us with a concrete and

descriptive understanding of what constitutes an exemplar school counselor. Therefore, I

developed the following criteria for what constitutes an "exemplar novice high school

counselor": 1) novice high school counselors who have been counseling for less than five

years; 2) counselors must be employed and certified in the state in which they are

employed; 3) participants must have a case load off at least 250 students;  4) participants

must receive their degree from a CACREP counselor education program and 5) someone

who exemplifies the ASCA code of ethics (2016) description of standard B3:

Responsibility to self. The researcher selected participants from a list provided by

faculties of top school counseling programs.  According to Creswell (1998) a

phenomenological study calls for five to 25 participants.  Previous qualitative studies that

explored the professional identities of counselors (see Nelson & Jackson, 2003 [8

participants] and Harris, 2009 [8 participants]) had similar sampling sizes. Based on

Nelson & Jackson, 2003 and Harris, 2009 studies, I plan to recruit 8 participants,

however, I will interview participants until data saturation is reached (Sousa, 2014).

**Nominators.** According to Bronk, King & Matsuba (2013), the individuals selected to nominate potential participants are seen as experts in the field.  Therefore, I sent emails inviting faculty from top CACREP school counseling programs to recommend exemplar novice high school counselors. For the purpose of this study I gathered a list of top school counseling programs from the collegechoice.net website which configures their data from the National Center for Education Statistics. I then checked with the CACREP database to see which schools were CACREP accredited. CACREP was contacted for a list of top schools, but was informed that they did not have such a list and was instructed to check the site indicated above. I generated a list of 10 schools and sent emails to the school counseling department chair requesting their assistance along with a link to 2016 ASCA ethics code highlighting standard B3 as an example for exemplar school counselors (Appendix D). The schools contacted were 1. University of Florida; 2. University of Georgia; 3. Indiana University;4. University of Missouri; 5. Pennsylvania State; 6. University of Missouri; 7. University of Iowa; 8. University of Central Florida; 9. College of William and Mary and 10. University of Wisconsin.

**Participant Selection.** Four school counseling department chairs responded with a list of 23 students to contact that they recommended as exemplar novice high school counselors. Based on the criteria for nominees to take part in the study, nine nominees met the requirements of the study.   The researcher contacted each high school counselor, introduced herself as a certified school counselor and a current doctoral candidate at the University of South Carolina interested in understanding how exemplar novice high school counselors develop their professional identities. An email was sent detailing the

purpose of the study and requesting their participation. A demographic form was provided to each participant to collect background information prior to the interview (Appendix C) . A total of seven participants responded agreeing to take part in the study, however, one individual cancelled due to illness and left six participants in total. Since this amount did not reflect previous research samples gathered (Nelson & Jackson, 2003 and Harris, 2009) with the need to reach data saturation, I followed up with the Universities contacted prior, but a response was not returned. I moved towards gathering the remaining participants through snowball sampling. The current participants referred colleagues and/or friends in the field they thought were exemplar high school counselors. An email was sent to these scheduled participants outlining the criteria for selection (Appendix B). A list of four nominees were gathered and emails were sent to each nominee. Of the four nominees, three responded that qualified to participate in the study. I scheduled each participant with an interview date and emailed demographic forms for each participant to complete prior to their scheduled interview time. A total of nine participants qualified and agreed to take part in the study.

**Participant Characteristics.** From the list of 27 nominees referred, nine were interviewed. 17 qualified nominees did not respond to the invitation and one scheduled an interview but cancelled. Demographic information for the 9 interviewed nominees are as follows (see demographic table 1.1 for summary). Eight participants (88.88%) identified as female and one identified as male (11.11%). Six participants identified as White (66.66%) and Three participants identified as Black (33.33%). Years in practice range from one to five years. Three participants held a Master's degree (33.33%), three participants held a Masters plus 30 (33.33%) and three participants held a Specialist

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degree (33.33%). The average age of participants was 32 years. In terms of professional

involvement eight out of nine participants were involved in some way with their local or

national organization (88.88%). See demographic table (1.1) for full break down of

demographic information for each participant.

Table 3.1

Demographic Table

| Participant | Credential | Experience (years) | Sex | Race |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Ed.S | 1 | Female | African-American |
| 2 | M.A. | 4 | Female | African-American |
| 3 | Ed.S | 1 | Female | White |
| 4 | M.A. | 5 | Female | White |
| 5 | M.A. +30 | 2 | Female | White |
| 6 | Ed.S | 3 | Male | African- American |
| 7 | M.A. | 3 | Female | White |
| 8 | M.A. +30 | 5 | Female | White |
| 9 | Ed.S | 1 | Female | White |

**Research question.** The research question to be answered is "What experiences

have exemplary novice high school counselors identified in developing their professional

identity?" To answer this question a list of interview questions has been formulated based

on research of professional identities. The interview questions asked are:

1. Describe how your graduate training help shape your development in the field.

2. Describe how your graduate training help to shape how you articulate

the school counseling field.

a) How did your training help you distinguish your field from other helping fields such as school psychologist, social workers and mental health workers?

3. Describe how your on the job experience helped you see yourself in relation to the field.

4. How does your on the job experience help the way you articulate the profession? And

a) How does it help distinguish your field from others such as school psychologists, school social workers, and mental health workers?

5. Describe your professional involvement in the field and how it helps you relate to the field. And

a) How does it help you articulate the school counseling field?

6. How does your professional involvement in the field help you distinguish the field from other helping fields such as school psychologist, school social workers and mental health workers?

Moving forward, there are some details that must take place in order to begin the process of collecting data.

**Ethical protection of participants**

The research study was conducted in accordance to the University of South Carolina IRB standards and the Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association. In accordance to the principles of non-maleficence, beneficence, autonomy, justice, and fidelity, the study honored each. The study also followed the counseling

principle of 'do no harm'. To assure the ethical protection of research participants, one must first disclose to participants the purpose of the study. There was an explanation of the study in the informed consent form provided to each participant (Appendix B). An email address and phone number of the investigator was provided to answer any questions participants may have about the study. Participants were provided with feedback at the end of the study if they wanted to follow up with the results. The informed consent assures participants that the study is confidential and all names of participants will be removed and replaced with a letter. The data collected will be kept in a safe and secure place that only the researcher will have access to. The informed consent will also inform participants that the data will be destroyed immediately after the study has been completed.

**Data collection procedures**

In the fall semester of my second year (2015), I asked three counseling education professors and one educational law professor to serve as committee members on this study. Each member agreed and one was selected as the chair of my committee. I outlined for my chair the research question to be studied and obtained USC Institutional review board (IRB) permission to proceed with the study after committee approval of the proposal both in written form and as amended during the oral defense. In obtaining approval from the IRB, it signifies my confidence in attending to the ethical consideration of participants. It was noted in the IRB request that participants' names are  removed from transcripts, all recordings are kept in a safe and secure place and will be destroyed at the completion of the study.  I started to collect data May 2017 after participants were selected and rapport was built. As I collected data I engaged in a process of researcher

self- assessment or what Creswell (2007) called "bracketing". This process is understanding and setting aside ones pre-existing beliefs or biases about the topic being investigated. It also allows the researcher to "a) reconfront the phenomenon with a blank slate, b) focus on the phenomenon and become open and passive, c) set reasoning aside, and d) listen carefully and allow yourself to be drawn in (Grbich, 2007 p. 78).

To begin data collection, each participant scheduled an interview time. The researcher conducted a phone conference to ask the interview questions. The interviews were audio recorded and the recordings are kept in a filing cabinet that the researcher only has access. Once the interviews are completed, the researcher transcribed each interview. Data analysis is the next step after collecting data.

## Data Analysis

After all interviews, and transcripts are collected at the end of June 2017, the researcher began analysis in July 2017. In analyzing the data, I followed the approaches suggested by Morrisette (1999) who in turn adopted the procedure from Colaizzi (1978) and Osbourne (1990). As a justification of using this approach, I searched the electronic database for phenomenological analysis and found Morrisette (1999) article on the step-by-step analysis process. Using this analysis allows the researcher to have less research anxiety in seeing the themes spread out in a grid format. The systematic analysis of Colaizzi and Osborne also enhances the credibility of a phenomenological study as well as creates a smooth path to answer the research question.

The analysis process begins with placing the transcribed data in front of one and "uncovering the essential structures of the phenomenon in question" (Morrisette, 1999, p.

2). There are seven steps outlined in which a researcher must follow in order to formulate themes and gain an understanding of what was collected. The first step is the "interview as a whole". In this step the researcher reviews and listens to each audiotaped conversation. Morrisette (1999) suggest that the researcher review the tapes as soon as possible following each interview to remain familiar with the data. This "what?" will help the researcher to be aware of the experiences described and similar themes that arise. The second step entails the "interview as text". It is here that each interview is transcribed into text. It is encouraged that the researcher transcribe the text for two reasons, 1) to ensure the anonymity of co-researchers and 2) that the researcher becomes immersed into the experiences of participants. Following this step, the researcher must read each transcript a few times and highlight key words and significant statements. The process sets the groundwork for the first order of thematic abstraction.

The third step is "first order thematic" which entails the researcher reviewing the transcripts and collecting the highlighted significant statements that the researcher will then paraphrase and assign a theme. Once the paraphrases are collected, they can then be placed in a "tabular" form and titled "the first order thematic abstraction" (Morrisette, 1999, p. 16). The fourth step is "Second order thematic" which the researcher creates a second order thematic cluster. The table clusters the researcher themes (as found in the first order thematic abstraction) to the second order grouping and attaches a general description. These descriptions reflect the experiences of participants and are used to compare experiences. A theme begins to take shape from these descriptions.

Step five is the "Individual co-researcher", where a co-researcher is selected to compare themes with the main researcher. The data along with constructed themes are

revisited to ensure common elements are shared between reviewers. The sixth step is "overall synthesis of co-researchers' protocols". Here the step involves reflecting on various themes that evolve from each participants' interview. The process provides an understanding of individual and shared experiences among co-researchers. Step seven involves "between persons' analysis" where the clustered themes for all co-researchers are presented in a grid format which provides a quick visual reference to the themes that may or may not be present with each co-researchers' experiences. Between persons' analysis is helpful in comparing experiences among co-researchers and in formulating a picture of their inner experiences.

## Trustworthiness of Data

**Triangulation.** According to Glense (2016) triangulation is to increase the creditability and validity of the study. In this study, analyst triangulation is done to see the data in different lenses (Merriam, 2002 & Creswell, 1998). The data was reviewed by the researcher then given to two additional reviewers comprising the research team to also review for further verification of themes and codes. From there further themes were developed from coding. One of the reviewers selected is a former licensed professional counselor and holds a doctoral degree in counselor education and supervision. The second individual chosen is a vocational rehabilitation counselor and holds a doctoral degree in counselor education and supervision. Both individuals have also conducted qualitative research. After analysis, the team indicated themes from the coding done which will be discussed in chapter 4.

**Member check.** According to Creswell (1998) & Merriam (2002) member check is prescribed as another procedure to ensure credibility and dependability of the study. Member check includes sharing the transcriptions with participants to ensure accuracy of the ideas and experiences recorded. Each participant was provided his or her transcript to be reviewed after two weeks for comments, recommendations and accuracy. Eight participants responded back through email and one participant did not have the time to review their transcript. Each participant that responded stated that they were comfortable with the responses they gave and did not have anything to add. With those responses, I continued with analysis. Dependability is the process in which results would be obtained if the study was replicated with the same participants or with participants from different contexts (Shenton, 2004). The researcher has provided a detailed methodological description in order for the study to be replicated.

**Rich, Thick Description.** Generalization (external validity) can be ensured within a phenomenological research by "allowing the reader to enter the research context"

(p. 49) described as the third process by Creswell (1998) which contributes to the trustworthiness of the research. Merriam (2002) also indicated that researchers should seek to obtain and portray a rich and thick description of each participants lived experiences concerning the phenomena which will help the reader to be encapsulated into the understanding of the research. Based on the responses of the nine participants (to be presented in chapter 4), I was encapsulated into their stories. Providing thick descriptions will allow future researchers to evaluate whether the findings of the current study are transferable to their own line of research as well as compare the phenomenon (Kline,

2008; Sheraton, 2004).  Rich, thick descriptions of exemplar novice high school counselors' professional identities development are included in the findings in chapter four.

**Neutrality.** Bracketing my assumptions, thoughts and feelings around the study will ensure that my perceptions do not influence the study's results. Patton (2002) states that researchers must be able to own and have a reflective voice and perspective. It is my duty as the researcher to think critically about what I am doing and why; as well as challenge my assumptions when they arise in order to be careful how it shapes the research I do. Therefore, outlining some assumptions and beliefs pertaining to exemplar novice high school counselor professional identities will help.  The assumptions made will be discussed in the results chapter.

**Summary**

In conclusion, chapter three describes the methods and process used to collect and analyze data. The use of qualitative phenomenological approach was presented. The researchers' role was described along with the context and justification of the chosen study. Description of the site, participant selection and description of the interview questions were described. Finally, the data analysis approach including the significant coding process was described. Chapter four entails the results of the data analysis and chapter five will give an overview on the interpretations of the findings and implications for school counselors and counselor educators.

# CHAPTER 4

# RESULTS

It was the purpose of this study to understand the lived experiences of novice exemplar high school counselor's professional identity development. I used purposeful sampling and peer nomination of exemplar novice high school counselors to gather participants for the study.  I collected data through a semi-structured in-depth interview process. Following the phenomenological analysis method adapted from Morrisette (1999); the analysis method began with transcribing each participant recorded interview, reading each transcription and highlighting key words and statements. I then proceeded to collect the highlighted significant statements that I paraphrase and assign a theme, cluster the themes formulated to create a general description which is then outlined in a table format to compare participants' experiences. The chapter begins with a detailed summary of these analyses, followed by a review of the emergent themes for the research question and ending with a presentation of the final results of the study.

**Analysis**

In order to answer the research question; what experiences have exemplar novice high school counselors identified in developing their professional identity, I applied the Phenomenological analysis model presented by Morrisette (1999). I also bracketed any assumptions and biases I had using Microsoft word, which also detailed the seven step process utilized to analyze the data gathered. Microsoft word was used to record emerging themes and chart the comparisons between participants (screen shots of evolution included in Appendix E and F). What follows is a description of the coding and theme generated process of analysis.

**First Order Thematic**

The analysis process started with listening to each recording and transcribing word for word what participants answered (steps 1and 2). I, along with a research team of two, conducted line by line analysis (e.g. first order cluster) with all nine transcribed interviews, highlighting any significant statements, paraphrasing and assigning a theme (step 3). Initially, I assigned a number to be sure that the identity of each participant is kept hidden; the research team then reviewed each transcribed protocol individually. We conducted joint sessions comparing each other's analysis. Although coder A is somewhat familiar with the school counseling profession, coder A and B are not familiar with the literature of professional identity of novice high school counselors as I am. Therefore, the review sessions began with either coder A or B leading out in the thematic process. Each coder would read their formulations of paraphrased statements and themes and discussion would ensue about the most appropriate theme for each statement. The purpose of

engaging in such a discussion was to minimize bias from previous research. During this process, themes started to generate and take shape from the data. As the discussions took form during these sessions, I created memo's outlining assumptions and thoughts I had. At the end of the analysis process 256 paraphrased statements and themes were recorded. Each of the 256 statements and themes were recorded via Microsoft word. Appendix E illustrates this process of first order thematic.

**Second Order Thematic**

The fourth step of the sequential analysis process consisted of creating a second order thematic cluster. I started with creating a tabular form of each participants' themes and assigning a cluster description. The cluster descriptions reflect the true experiences of each participant and are used to compare experiences. According to Morrissett (1999), "the descriptions also form the basis for the synthesis of individual co-research experiences" (p. 5). As the individual themes are synthesized, a picture of each participant experiences emerges. Along with outlining the themes and cluster description of each participants' protocol, I also used numbered statements to capture the essence of each participants' experiences, as demonstrated in Appendix F.

**Within Persons Analysis**

Next, I gathered each participants' protocol and one by one reflected and summarized (step 5) the experiences of participants to provide an overall picture. I also documented new thoughts and assumptions in an analysis memo that came to mind during this process. I then met with my research team to go through each individual protocol and their summarizations to indicate areas that may have been missed. We

discussed the themes that appeared and sharpened where needed (step 6). We noticed some areas where saturation was reached and for others, they were not. According to Morrissett (1999), this next step allows a better understanding of individual and shared experiences among participants. I started to understand the experiences of each participant in a much deeper sense and saw where multiple participants shared the same themes.

**Between Persons Analysis**

In step seven, a grid format is created to present the clustered themes of all participants (Table 5). This grid format provides a quick reference to specify themes that may or may not be present within each participants' experiences. The grid served as a quick reference point, and the format is also helpful in comparing experiences across the board for each participant which constructs a global picture of a participants' inner experience. I created a grid format with showing participants 1-9 outlined across the grid and themes constructed down the grid. I then placed an" X" next to each name and theme represented to begin gathering a picture of what themes were marked more. I will present the results of the study based on the research question in a narrative format and present statement examples to support the emerging themes.

<div align="center">

**Results**

</div>

Within their responses to the interview questions and articulating their lived experiences as exemplary novice high school counselors, their perspective roles regarding the research phenomena were revealed. The interview and participants revealed descriptive experiences of the development of their professional identity as

exemplary novice high school counselors. Based on the transcript analysis, 23 themes evolved. The 23 themes identified were found across the nine participants' responses, based on the second order thematic clusters. Of the 23, eight themes became consistent throughout participants' responses. The eight themes were identified based on a grid format outlining the 23 themes, and any theme that had more than six participants indicating a particular theme was chosen as prominent among participants. The eight identified themes were: a) experiential learning, b) exposure, c) program training, d) role differentiation, e) administration support, f) professional development, g) mentorship, and h) advocacy. The reading and re-reading of the transcripts, along with collaboration with my research team, and peer reviewed articles, a collective definition of each theme was created.

### Emergent Core Themes

**Experiential Learning.** The research question focused on *what experiences exemplar novice high school counselors identified in developing their professional identity*. Analysis revealed that experiential learning (5 participants) experienced at practicum and internship was helpful to participants. According to Kolb (1984) "experiential learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (p. 41). All nine participants reported in their responses that their practicum and internship experiences proved to be valuable in understanding their professional identity as school counselors. However, five participants particularly stated it was the "hands on experience" or "experiential learning" while at practicum or internship that helped them understand their identity as school counselors. The five that indicated the "hands on

experience" or "experiential learning" were selected after re-reading each of the nine

particular statements and seeing those particular statements outlined in their responses.

Experiential learning is evident in the following participant expressions.

School counselor 1A: *the practicum and internship experience were helpful, both of my supervisors they practically kind of through me in and I'm a hands on learner and I was able to retain and get a lot of experience. That helped me right now or has helped me in my first year.*

School Counselor 1B: *I really think my practicum and internship gave me the tools I needed to feel confident into the field and by that I mean it gave me hands on experience and I think without that last year of internship I wouldn't have made it… so I'm glad that we got to see that ability and learn how to be able to work with others and have that kind of mindset going in.*

School Counselor 5H: *I think that one of the parts of my training was the internship and practicum requirement because I really found that I learned a lot from doing things and just from that experiential part of it so I think that piece was very crucial and just being able to practice the skills I was learning about and seeing things in action… so that was big for me.*

**Specific Courses.** Some counselors also discussed that there were courses that had

experiential learning activities to help them gain a better understanding of the field

that was also helpful.

School Counselor 5I: *My techniques class was probably the best class… but the techniques is so important because that's how you are learning how you will talk to your clients or students in my case as a school counselors and then we would mirror that and practice them with other students in the class to get more hands on experience doing the techniques.*

School Counselor 1C: *my school counseling consideration class helped me know more than anything. We actually made like …we developed our own school counseling program… we had to make it all out and write it all out… like what we would do for this or what we would do for that, even down to surveys we would use and how to implement it. So I really think that helped me understand what I would have to do as a school counselor and I have been going back and referring back to it at times to help with our school and that has been helpful for me.*

**Exposure.** The participants elaborated on how their practicum and internship experiences shaped their development in the field. Within these narratives, exposure was revealed. Exposure can be defined by Webster Dictionary as "laying open or subjecting to the action or influence of something." The research participants revealed how their practicum and internship experience helped to expose them to the school counseling field in the following statements.

**Three Level Exposure.** The school counselors discussed how being exposed to all three levels of the school counseling field helped to prepare them for the field.

School Counselor 1A: *oh the (practicum and internship) were invaluable I mean the practicum I did in a middle school… I like the way I was exposed to all three levels because some of my co-workers did not have that exposure to all three levels and I think that was very valuable and coming in contact with other students at other levels and knowing what to expect in each school level.*

School Counselor 2D: *where I am at the school is a lot of on the job training at the high school and I feel like because my practicum and internship experiences were in K-12, I had exposure to each setting I really could do anything at that point and felt prepared for whatever job was available, which was my goal at the point.*

**Working World.** Some school counselors reported being exposed to the ever changing world of the field and realizing the population they wanted to work.

> School Counselor 1C: *So… definitely like in internship we got to work with other people and do hands on things and we got to kind of see the busy world that the field is… so I articulate it as the field that's ever changing constantly; nothing is planned and so I was able to learn how to get into that mindset rather than a fixed mindset.*

> School Counselor 3E: *practicum exposed me to the type of school I wanted to be in, my practicum was in a low income urban setting in Rochester New York and so I could see the need for school counselors; a lot of social emotional, the impact of poverty and I knew that I wanted to work with that population that struggled with the hierarchy needs… like their basic needs.*

**Understanding the role.** One school counselors reported gaining exposure to the job responsibilities and technology used for scheduling students.

> School Counselor 1C: *In my internship, all three of my supervisors talked me though what it takes to schedule students in PowerSchool because they were doing stuff for their responsibilities as school counselors, and they would walk me through how to use PowerSchool. Of course it changed a little bit since I am in a different school district, but I was able to still feel proficient enough to search for students and look up demographic information like the basic tools I would need for that. If the students (trainees) knew how to use that (Power School) in the program, to know a head of time I think that would be really good.*

**Reality of the field**. School Counselors reported that exposure to the reality of the field helped them understand their roles as school counselors.

> School Counselor 3F: *It's (internship) a lot different than grad school training in terms of the theories and the models and all that is great, but the way it's actually*

*implemented in schools is not the same. I feel like, it was different especially now that I work in the school I see how my role has changed. I thought it (program training) was a good broad general view of what we do in our role, but not realistic.*

School Counselor 5I: *I think with my graduate training, my internship was the best part of the graduate training, my graduate program was highly based more on mental health counseling than actual reality of what we do in the field, but the internship really proved beneficial, we did a lot of solution focused counseling and that did help during my training where we had to do counseling sessions that were 50 minutes long with our clients, but now as a school counselor, we have to do it in such a shorter time frame because it has to do more with academics and less time students can be pulled out of class.*

**Program Training.** Seven participants discussed program training. Others did not express program training as a benefit and were not directly asked about it. Six participants described program training to help them understand the role of a school counselor, develop a framework of the field, and developing their counseling approaches through internship. The following school counselors explain the importance of program training:

**Understanding the role of a school counselor.** School counselor reported that the courses they took specific to school counseling helped them understand their role.

School Counselor 1C: *I really think my school counseling consideration class helped me know more than anything; the one's that was geared toward us (trainees) and I forgot the names of the others, even though they were recent like the school counseling development or programing something like that, where we actually… developed our own school counseling program.*

School Counselor 2D: *I felt it (training) gave me a lot of experience to help me for my current job. My techniques class was probably the best class; I feel like I*

*lucked out because I had a doctoral student that was fantastic, and I think really that could have been hit or miss because I talked to other students who went through the same program and had a different doctoral student… but the techniques is so important because that's how you are learning how you will talk to your clients or students in my case as a school counselors;  So in my techniques class you are learning about the book work and learning about the different techniques and how to apply them in different situations whether a student is suicidal or whether a student is having issues at home or whether or not the student doesn't want to do their school work, and then we would mirror that and practice them with other Students (trainees) in the class; but our doctoral student was so fantastic that was what I think taught me how to be successful in what I do now.*

School Counselor 5H: *I had one class that was called Leadership in school counseling I think, and in that class… I found pretty difficult but in retrospective it was pretty helpful, it was about data and the importance of it and how to be a leader and advocate in your role in the school.  I also really enjoyed, the first class we ever took; was a broad introduction to school counseling in general, just to kind of paint the picture of what that role kind of looks like because for me I was a psychology major and the only thing I knew about school counseling was what I saw from my school counselors and from someone I talked to who was in the program before I decided to pursue that myself; so that was really helpful to introduce us to it and we had a counseling skills class for a semester to lay that foundation for getting into practicum and internship.*

**Framework for the field.** Two participants expressed the benefit of their program

trainings setting a framework for understanding the field.

School Counseling 3E: *I think it was more of the fundamental skills that kind of gave me a basis for what I do on the job. I think most particularly with training us on how a counseling session should look like or group counseling session should like, so I*

*think that's the area that was most developed when I started with counseling in the*
*real world.*

School Counselor 3F: *I think it gave a good overview, a good basis… just the way the*
*program was structured to give a framework of the field, but I mean it's a nice*
*overview but until you actually get into it and again from district to district, it may be*
*different, and from talking to other counselors, the job varies a lot and the level you*
*will work at but overall the graduate program was good but it's a hard job to prepare*
*for because things change so much.*

**Developing as a counselor.** Two participants expressed their program training

helping to develop their counseling approach.

School Counseling 4G: *What I have gotten most out of the graduate program was*
*developing an idea of what my own counseling approach is or through the*
*different theories and techniques taught; so once I got in the field I feel like I*
*applied a lot of the techniques not in the same manner as a clinician in private*
*practice. You know a lot of times in grief counseling… being mindful of those*
*techniques taught and showing that I'm in the here and now with my students and*
*that you know using active listening skills so on so forth; so I would say that's*
*what helped me the most.*

School Counseling 5H: *practicum and internship, you know pushed me out of my*
*comfort zone and helped me to develop some counseling skills and evaluate some*
*of the things I was doing just because of the requirements I had in place …and of*
*course I learned a lot from my classes, but I think that piece was very crucial and*
*just being able to practice the skills I was learning about and seeing things in*
*action… so that was big for me.*

**Inter-disciplinary.** Nine participants discussed inter-disciplinary within their

responses. According to the Oxford dictionary, inter-disciplinary is defined as "a

coordinated group of experts from several different fields who work together toward a

common goal". In this case, participants were asked to explain their understanding of

what makes their role as school counselors different from that of a school social

worker, school psychologist and mental health worker. The following responses

indicate that participants understood the role differences either during their program

training, practicum/ internship, or while on the job. School counselor participants

report the following:

**Program outlines differences.** Two participants stated that their programs played

a part in helping them understand the differences in roles between a school counselor,

social worker, school psychologist and mental health worker.

School Counselor 1A: *I think the program helped me to understand that, first I am an advocate for the students in the areas of academics, the social and emotional aspect as well as the career aspect… so you know some of the other helping professions, such as, the social workers and school psychologist they are more… focused more on the social emotional well-being and school psychologist more social and emotional in the impact of academics… and then what differentiates us is that academic and career piece t*hat we also focus just as much on so I would say that the grad course I took kind of outlined that and made that apparent before I started my job.*

School Counselor 2D: *I can easily distinguish now but back to those classes we did at Clemson we did have some school psychologist come in to the assessment class and talk about what they do and their role, and talked about how we work with them when we are looking into students that may need additional services so I understood what that meant through classes.*

**Practicum/Internship exposed role differences.** Three school counselors report

that during their practicum and internship experience they were able to learn the roles

and differentiate between roles through working more with the social worker, school psychologist and mental health workers.

> School Counselor 1B: *I'm not sure if we really talked about at the university, but it became real clear what the roles and differentiation between roles were during internship.*

> School Counselor 1C: *I feel like in the internship experience, I was able to see the social worker in the school I was in and even the school psychologist coming in sometimes, and I got to see the differences in roles early.*

> School Counselor 2D: **…***but I think I really understood when I was in the school setting as an intern because I went to a lot of 504 meetings and saw the school psychologist there and saw that professional interpret testing and explain things to parents. I had to work with a social worker as an intern trying to find you name it, for my students whether it was trying to find transportation or food or whatever else; So I learned about it some in classes but I really started to see it when I started to spend hours in the school.*

**On the Job experience.** School counselors report that specifically working with social workers, school psychologist and mental health workers either on team meeting or one on one, their on the job experience helped them to have a deeper understanding on the role differentiations. The following statements report these findings:

> School Counselor 3E: *So on the job we really differentiate pretty well, we handle more of the  concerns, individual counseling concerns and when it becomes something that might be a long term management , like kids that come in that have depression in a little counseling session we find that there is more clinical significance to it then we refer, we don't have a social worker but we have an agency that brings in a satellite location to our building and they do mental health counseling ;so we would refer to that person who can meet on a more regular basis, and they have connections to psychiatry , substance abuse counseling…that we refer out because they can do a little more with the family than we are able to. The psychologist is nice because if there is any testing especially if there is a 504 or IEP that the person is concerned she is great about*

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*handling that and I also consult with her on some bigger issues like suicide and what not and she is a great resource to consult. I think that in our building we have clearly defined our roles and it helps to show this is you go to, and what I go to you for and what I'm responsible for.*

School Counselor 5H: *I don't remember any specific examples of that (learning about other helping professionals) before actually being on the job… because I learned a lot more of what school social workers and school psychologist did in my first job so I'm sure I probably had some minimal interactions in my internships but nothing else that I could actually think of.*

**Administration support.** Once school counselors leave their training programs, they enter a school system with staff and administration that they must become familiar with in order to meet the needs of the student body. The administration has been an area mentioned by seven participants that has been a source of support on the job. School counselors reported that some administration understand and support their roles of school counselors, promote the use of the ASCA model and are careful to not allow duties outside the scope of what a school counselor does on a daily basis. Although two school counselors found their administration to be non-supportive and have misconceptions about their roles, its seems as if a majority of the school counselors report otherwise. Here are the responses referring to the support of administration:

**Understand/Support of school counselors' roles**. Five school counselors report that their principals and administrative staff support their roles as school counselors and in some way understand what they do for the school body.

*School Counselor 1B:* the principal here has been in education for 44 years and he is retiring this year so, I'm not sure how much anyone has been able to explain the ASCA model, I think he has a lot of respect for professionals and what professionals say they are going to do and he understands that ...we are going to be professionals and doing the things we say we will do. I'm not sure if he is really clear on all that we do but is supportive.

School Counselor 1C: *I think I got super lucky with this school, they whole heartedly understand what we do. We have a great relationship; we have one administrator to each counselor for each grade so we work with them pretty closely; we tag team a lot of times with situations that happen like I'll handle a situation that the students do, like if the students' need discipline, they will handle that part, but I will speak to them usually at the same time during a conference about their personal or social issues that may go along with the decision they made or something like that. So we definitely tag team with that and our admin understand that we don't do discipline or stuff like that and so they take on those roles for us. So that has been pretty helpful and its worked out very well I think.*

School Counselor 2D: *I feel like our principal is very progressive and understand and values what we do... I think having a principal who understands what we do as counselors and not having someone who thinks we do the clerical and administrative stuff that has been huge. The other administrators, we have 5 of them in our school, so the others are slowly learning, but are not as quick to catch on, but they don't make as many as the big decisions as the principal so I feel like that's more helpful that he understands.*

School Counselor 5H: *The school where I am now, I mean I can't say enough of how receptive and supportive they are of us, compared to other places I've worked. I began to see how much more you can accomplish and do for students when you have*

*support like that from administration so that has been really great.*

School Counselor 5I*: I've been to three different high schools and everyone has been different. I do feel like the high schools I have been at the assistant principals are our direct supervisors and do understand because they are in the*

*trenches with us every single day; so their offices are where our offices are and they hear, like my office is literally right across from my supervisor's office so they hear the conversations and they know what we go through and they know the students coming in and so forth.*

**Administration promotes ASCA model.** Three school counselors reported that

administration

promotes the ASCA model within the school counseling department.

School Counselor 1C: *Yes, it is followed… and we have an admin who is over the counselors she is our 12ᵗʰ grade admin but we go to her for counseling questions, like if we wanted to go to a conference we would go to her and ask her and the district will sponsor, and she is really good she knows the ASCA model and is really good about checking in on us to make sure we are using it as best we can, and that's a good thing that she is aware of.*

School Counselor 4G: *Yes, the do… the new admin understands and even knows what the ASCA model is.*

School Counselor 1A: *this year the district that I'm in we are trying to incorporate the ASCA model in all the schools, and I think this may be the second or third year; at the beginning of the school year we all had to sit down with our principal to outline the department goals and vision statement and then we had to put into place a plan as far as counseling duties he had to sign off on.*

**Job duties outside scope of school counselor role.** It is apparent in the responses

of two school counselors that their administration not only understand their roles, but

are careful not to allow them to engage in job duties that do not fit their roles.

School Counselor 1A: *Absolutely, probably because my principal is a trained counselor so his background is a trained school counselor before he became*

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*principal or got into administration. So he defiantly values the work that we do and we don't have to do anything testing related really, I mean a lot of the school wide meetings we don't have to be a part of that don't pertain to us, so he does value the school counselors definitely.*

<u>School Counselor 2D:</u> *I feel like our principal is very progressive and understand and values what we do for our students so much so that he took some responsibilities away from us that used to fall under the umbrella of school counseling, that does not fit there. For example, we are not in charge of testing anymore at our school we have a testing coordinator that is part time teacher that coordinates all the standardized testing, which allows us to do more in the classroom and more one on one with students we have been able to do more things with parents we have parents come in for coffee with the counselor where we talk about a particular topic once a quarter and give them the chance to learn something and interact with us.*

**Professional Development.** All nine participants reported that professional development was beneficial to their professional identity as school counselors. Professional development according to the education glossary, can be defined as "specialized training, or advanced professional learning intended to help improve professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness in a professional area." Professional development may look like being a part of professional organizations, reading journals, attending conferences or actively being engaged on the board of professional organizations. A variety of our school counselor participants report professional development helped with networking/consulting, building resources to better help the school body, understanding how to better advocate for the field, help to strengthen the identity of his or her role as a school counselor and keep up to date with

changes in the field. The responses of participants referring to how professional development has helped to develop their professional identity is as follows:

**Network/Consult.** Five participants indicate in their responses that attending conferences has helped them network with other professionals and consult on areas that could improve their effectiveness at their particular schools.

> School Counselor 1B: *The conference I attended helped me to see how to handle things differently, the way some of the professionals reported handled things helped me to implement some things in a different way when I came back (to school setting).*

> School Counselor 2D: *there are professional development opportunities and trainings where people come together as a group to talk about something, for example like when talking about the 504 process we may have meetings with counselors and school psychologist together to talk about everyone's roles, so the roles are clearly delineated.*

> *School Counselor 3F*: *So I'm pretty involved and like to be involved…It's nice to go to different meetings and see different counselors across the state and see different programs and how they work. The different programs in different schools and see what the trend is and whether the trend is what we see at our school for suburban cities and rural. You're getting different perspectives of different people at various schools so you are able to see if the things you are doing at your school is being validated or there is cost for concern…. and in terms of what you should be doing, and I think it's really critical to see other ideas from other schools and to see how we could incorporate it or even help improve it.*

> School Counselor 4G: *I find that it's important to be a part of a local organization because these are individuals that work in the same district that we do… so we are faced with the same challenges or similar challenges, and we are able to problem solve and work through… what works for one school may*

*potentially be a strategy to use you know at my school…It is something that I can ask the other members in the organization.*

School Counselor 5I: *I love to meet new people and love to hear what they are doing at their schools; so I'm always asking and always getting different information whether it's from a different district because we have 19 high schools, about to be 20 high schools next year in our district, so in our school alone we have 3300 kids, so getting a lot of different ideas and doing a lot of collaborating and consulting with different counselors does help especially with people who are not at your school and right now that is the best way… and that works at the high school level.*

**Resources**. Four school counselors found it helpful to gather resources from conferences or professional organization journals and sites to help them become more effective. The following responses report how resources play a role in their professional development.

School Counselor 1A*: I think going to these conferences you are able to network and socialize with other counselors from various districts other states and schools and I think its invaluable to be a part of some of these organizations because otherwise you wouldn't have access to some of these information and the things that shared and the resources that are available and what counselors are willing to share for free. So I think the involvement in these organizations help me to be the best counselor I can in the school level and to incorporate these resources from the conferences and adding them to my program at my school.*

School Counselor 1C: *but I obviously get all the information they send me and I've used a couple of the high school resource tools that they send before, and I follow the discussion boards… I am able to get some questions answered there regarding what I do on occasions.*

School Counselor 4G: *when I have to refer certain families I don't have a resource that I may believe someone in the organization may have then I can easily reach out to them because we meet regularly so I can collaborate with members and that has been most beneficial aspect of being in a local counseling organization.*

School Counselor 5H: *I'm a member of ASCA and I'm also a member of the Palmetto state association and within that I don't have a major role in this committee but I'm newly helping with the membership piece of that and that is the extent of my involvement. Both of the organizations have a ton of resources through their websites and through conferences that I use.*

**Strengthen role/Professional growth.** School Counselors report that being involved in professional development or professional organizations has helped with strengthen their roles as well as help them to grow professionally. The following responses provide an outlook on the development:

School Counselor 3E: *I think for me, it helps remind me that as a school counselor, my primary focus is on the well-being of the students, not on testing, not on any of those other things, so the professional development is good in reminding myself that this is the role of the school counselor.*

School Counselor 3F: *it is very clear in terms of like what we should be doing versus like what should not be doing and also like again …. and you know really outlining and defining what our role is within the school and I think doing that separates us from what I think we should or shouldn't be doing. I like to go into those conferences and events and stuff like that to like really like I said, learn more and also kind of validate in terms of go back and tell administrators like listen we really shouldn't be doing this.*

School Counselor 5H: *I think going back to the professional development piece of it, it really helps, just the more you learn and the more you read current research it helps you reinforce what your role is as school counselor and what you're not*

*and your responsibility and ethics and things like that… I think by being a part of these organizations help you stay up to date and to be clear on what my job is.*

**Mentorship.** The theme mentorship denotes the counselors' awareness to either seeking out or being open to mentorship by someone that has years of experience in the field or a good understanding of the what the field entails. The participants provided insight into their openness to seek out mentors or their willingness to gain direction from an individual they trust and look up to in the field. They provided narratives to a mentorship program established through state and district requirements for certifications as well as narratives explaining the need for mentorship within the first few years as a new school counselor.

**State/district mentorship programs**. Participants reported that within their first two years of being a school counselor, the district provided them with experiences school counselors from other schools in the districts as mentors. Three participants reported that having a mentor was very helpful the first few years and helped them navigate through job requirements they were unfamiliar with. The following participants provide a narrative of this mentorship program:

School Counselor 1A: *Well, the district does provide first year counselors with a mentor (ADEPT), so I have a mentor at another high school in the district and we have met twice so far this year and she has been a huge support, and I didn't know what to expect, but she was very open and allowed me to vent my frustrations… I felt like I had a safe place to vent so she has been a great resource and I kind of pattern myself how she has her case load set up because she is very organized and I pattern some of my work habits and case load after how she runs her office.*

School Counselor 1C: *I also have been paired with a school counselor in the district (ADEPT), but not in our school… she has to come observe me throughout the year so we have met probably 5 or 6 times throughout the school year and talk about things and observe me…. gives me feedback and tells me what could have been done differently so that's been super helpful.*

School Counselor 5H:  *In the first two years of being a school counselor I had to go through an ADEPT evaluation process through South Carolina so I had a mentor through which was It was another school counselor.*

**Program Professor mentorships.** Participants reported that their program professors provided mentorship through their graduate training and at times after training. The narratives explain the benefits of professor- mentor and mentee relationships and their impact on building participants professional identities. The following participants explain the impact:

School Counselor 1A: *so I had been speaking with Dr. Limberg (professor) in the summer before I started so she was very helpful to me when I was looking for jobs and kind of deciding my role for a job.*

School Counselor 4G: *Dr. Vanhorn who was my professor and advisor though out my graduate program even though in my program I felt like I didn't have a mentor I think I utilized my advisor for the purpose of advising I didn't reach out to them as I should have to seek more of a mentorship opportunity from them. But now I am reconnecting with Dr. Vanhorn, because she does have a career course that she instructs and she has reached out to me to see if her students can come get some hours. So now I have that relationship that I am developing again at the university, so in the event that I needed a mentor someone who has been in the profession for so long and has the knowledge and experience, I can always reach out to Dr. Vanhorn.*

**Co-workers as mentors.** Participants narratives expressed how administration,

school counselor co-workers, and guidance directors serve as mentors. The mentorship

relationship helped to build resources and a level of comfort for new school counselors to

inquire about an issue. The following participants report how these mentorship

relationships have helped:

> School Counselor 1B: *I was assigned a mentor when I was first hired here and so one of the counselors observes and gives feedback when I need it. I also feel comfortable asking any of them questions I may have even if my questions are dumb.*

> School Counselor 1C: *But also the other school counselors I work with have been very helpful… I think they have both been the best mentors for me, like one has been there for 5 to 6 years and the other is in her second year and is going through ADEPT and all that so she knows what I'm going though I guess and reaches out to me when they see me struggling before I have to ask… they have been good mentors for me as I figure out my role here.*

> School Counselor 3E: *I think that my coworkers are somewhat mentors… I ask them questions constantly and I value their opinion but it's more like a one off question, this particular question I would ask whoever is closest to me and I don't have one person that I go to.*

> *School Counselor 3F:  He's not a counselor, he doesn't have a counseling background, but he is very pro counselor.  I interviewed with his school district four years ago and I didn't get the job but I made a connection with the principal, he actually called me back in after the interview and said "hey you didn't get the job but I want to give you some feedback". So he is an associate principal at a local district but he oversees the school counseling department there and like I said it's kind of a rival district, they are very very progressive about their counseling plan and their outlook and he was awarded the New York State administrator of the year award on behalf of the counseling association two years ago. So he is very pro-counselor and he was very good …so we stayed in contact*

*for the past four years so it's been very very rewarding to be able to…and again having him kind of in my corner as I oversee the development of this new at risk program at our high school …although I think of things from a counseling perspective, it pays to have that administrative perspective because you know that's the language that they tend to speak and I think you have to understand that language to be able to have your ideas really listened to and taken seriously.*

School Counselor 4G*: I would say when I became a school counselor, the guidance department chair or director of guidance, was the person I reached out to the most because, I would say that there are a lot that we do in schools that we are not trained for in our programs, so having someone in the school setting as a mentor to help with things that were not taught in the program was very beneficial. So I felt like I was fortunate to have a director of guidance as a person I was comfortable with when I came across so many questions or scenarios that were related specifically to the school and district mandates, I was able to refer to her.*

School Counselor 5I: *My mentor is more of my supervisor who is my assistant principal of instruction… when I have questions and so forth, she is the one I seek out.*

**Advocacy.** The theme advocacy is exemplified in the lived experiences of six school counselors. Some counselors found their role of advocate on behalf of students and the need to advocate on behalf of their field. Participants expressed the following lived experiences regarding advocacy:

**Confidence to Advocate.** Two school counselors gave their insight on how much confidence they have as new high school counselors to advocate.

School Counselor 1A: *I would say I feel pretty confident because our admin is very supportive of what we do, but at the same time I feel comfortable going to the admin if I had an issue for example a teacher was questioning something I did when I had every reason to change the schedule, so I do feel comfortable, but if it were a different*

*administration then I wouldn't but they are very approachable and have total support*
*from them and that may be different from other administration.*

School Counselor 1B: *No! I'm brand new, and know enough to be quite for a while*
*and to wait and watch and listen and there are some very strong and good school*
*counselors here so I'm following their lead.*

**Advocate on behalf of students**. Four school counselors report that they understand

their role of school counselor to be one who advocates on behalf of ones' students. The

following narratives express the role of advocate:

School counselor 1A: *I think the program helped me to understand that… first I*
*am an advocate for the students in the areas of academics, the social and*
*emotional aspect as well as the career aspect.*

School Counselor 3F: *I think my graduate training did a good job*
*comprehensively in outlining my roles as a student advocate and that we are there*
*for students in whatever way they may need you.*

School Counselor 4G: *I think this really laying out that we are not just there to*
*schedule students and do the data entry or the administrative work but being*
*advocates for our students letting individuals know that we are there to serve our*
*student and their families when they are in need and when there is a crisis.*

School Counselor 5H:  *I learned and I describe it as school counselors are*
*advocates for students and we are there to look at the whole student and not just*
*the academic piece but the other two domains as well.*

Based on the responses of the study participants, this research begins to reveal several areas in which exemplary novice high school counselors identify the essential experiences and concepts that helped in shaping their professional identities. Eight themes were uncovered that addressed the research phenomenon. The themes were extracted from the essence of participants lived experiences and identified as a) experiential learning, b) exposure, c) program training, d) role differentiation, e) administration support, f) professional development, g) mentorship and h) advocacy. Each participants' narratives outline specifics to how these themes played a role in their professional development. Chapter five is a discussion of the study results as well as any limitations, suggestions for future research and implications.

**CHAPTER 5**


**DISCUSSION**


The purpose of this study was to obtain exemplary novice high school counselors' perceptions of their professional identity development. The narratives of the school counselors provided rich descriptive insight about their perspectives on developing their professional identity as new employees in the field.  This chapter summarizes the study by discussing the interpretations of the findings, which will provide a link to previous literature with the study's thematic results. There will be a discussion on the implications for social change, recommendation for action, and recommendations for further study. Finally, the chapter will conclude with the researchers' reflections regarding the study.

**OVERVIEW**

Having a strong professional identity as a school counselor helps to serve the student body effectively (Brott & Moss, 1999).  The school counselor's professional identity begins during graduate school training and continues to take shape throughout one's career (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson et al., 2010; Luke & Goodrich, 2010; Nelson & Jackson, 2003). The goal of this study is to gain some clarity as to how the professional identity of exemplary novice high school counselors develop after

graduating from school counseling programs and entering the beginning of their professional employment fields.

This research study was a qualitative study which examined the lived experiences of novice exemplar high school counselor's professional identity development. The prevailing research question was: *What experiences have exemplar novice high school counselors identified in developing their professional identity?* The research participants were 9 exemplary novice high school counselors who are employed at a high school setting for no more than five years. The findings reflect participants' lived experiences extracted from transcripts of their individual semi-structured interviews. Each participant was asked the following questions during the interviews:

1. Describe how your graduate training help shape your development in the field.

2. Describe how your graduate training help to shape how you articulate the school counseling field.

a. How did your training help you distinguish your field from others such as school psychologist, school social workers and mental health counselors?

3. Describe how your on the job experience helped you see yourself in relation to the field.

4. How does your on the job experience help the way you articulate the profession?

b. How does it help distinguish your field from others such as school psychologist, school social workers and mental health counselors?

5. Describe your professional involvement in the field and how it helps you relate to the field.

a. How does it help you articulate the school counseling field?

6. How does your professional involvement in the field help you distinguish the field from others such as school psychologist, school social workers and mental health counselors?

## INTERPRETATIONS OF FINDINGS

**Emergent Core Themes**

**Description of developing a professional identity**

The research question focused on *what experiences have exemplar novice high school counselors identified in developing their professional identity?* The review of the literature provided information on counselor's professional identity development through the training received from graduate school, joining professional organizations and the mentorship/supervision and internship experiences within the profession (Brott & Moss, 1999; Gibson, Dollarhide, &Moss, 2010). The review also showed how various helping fields developed and continued to establish a professional identity after completing graduate studies as well as while employed. However, little empirical research on the professional development of novice high school counselors after training was found. Further, the literature provided little in terms of the development of exemplary school counselors professional identity development. The results that answered this research question are presented below in comparison to previous literature on the subject.

**Experiential Learning.** The first interview question focused on how school counselors graduate training helped shape their professional identities. The research findings suggest that exemplary novice high school counselors found *experiential learning* whether in class or during their practicum and internships very beneficial to the development of their professional identities. This became evident in the responses of five school counselors as they expressed having a "hands on" approach while on internship and being able to put to practice the techniques and skills developed. These findings are congruent with studies done by Nelson and Jackson (2003) who found the theme of "experiential learning" among Hispanic students as important to their development. Auxier, Hughes and Kline (2003) study is also congruent with the current research theme in that they found what they described as the "recycling identity formation process". The recycling identity formation process includes three processes: 1) conceptual learning; 2) experiential learning and 3) external evaluation (p.32). Auxier et al. (2003) stated that overtime "experiential learning" became more important than conceptual learning to counselors- in- training. It is through experiential learning that trainees had to put into practice the conceptual framework of theories with real clients.

**Exposure.** The participants also indicated that the exposure they received while on internship was beneficial to their professional development. Seven school counselors indicated that being exposed to all three levels of the school counseling field, seeing and understanding the role of a school counselor and being exposed to the reality of the field helped with the development of their professional identities. Therefore, it is necessary that not only do school counselors gain experience from elementary or secondary placements, but from k-12 placement to meet the need of being exposed to all three levels

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of the field.  According to Burkholder (2012), counselor trainees are able to conceptualize, contextualize and express their professional identities through various applications, discovery, teaching and integration. CIT's were able to conceptualize based on their particular experiences, contextualize the meaning of what they do and express in action what they have learned from conceptualizing and contextualizing their situations. It is through exposure to various situations whether from practicum, internship or on the job exposure that school counselors are able to develop their professional identities.

**Program Training.** Seven of the nine participants indicated that program training helped with the development of their professional identities. Some participants indicated that through certain courses such as comprehensive school counseling, theories and practice and practicum/internship, the courses helped participants understand the fundamentals of the field, their role as school counselors and to develop their counseling approaches. Auxier, Hughes and Kline (2003) found that as counselors-in-training (CIT's) matured in their programs, an established framework for the field was built in certain courses where students were engaged in learning at practicum sites, internships and counseling techniques courses. With the current study, participants reported building a framework for the field based on introductory to school counseling courses and counseling techniques.  Gibson et al. (2010) provided a theory of professional identity development from entry into the program to completion of internship in order to see the developmental process. The results of their study showed one area impacting the professional identity of trainees, course work. Similar to Gibson et al. (2010), the current study also shows participants reporting that course work helped with understanding their role as school counselors and developing their professional identities.

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**Inter-disciplinary.** Nine participants expressed that understanding their roles

different

from those of a school psychologist, social workers and mental health workers also

played a part in developing their professional identities. Whether through the experience

gained from internship or on the job experience interacting with other helping

professions, participants reported that job duties and expectations of roles differed.

Melin, Hunt, Lindsey and Nichols (2011) study further added to the literature on the

importance of counselors having a professional identity and the impact it has on inter-

professional collaboration. The authors suggested that even though the counseling field

struggles with establishing a cohesive professional identity, it causes "a) confusion about

roles and responsibility; b) conflicts related to power and status, and c) the proliferation

of professional stereotypes that jeopardizes the effectiveness of inter-professional

collaboration" when it comes to collaborating with other helping fields (p. 89). The study

showed that practicing counselors distinguished oneself from other helping professions

based on profession-specific roles and responsibility as well as philosophical orientations.

Through the current study, one can see the distinctions of roles develop within

participants through experience in the field and the interactions they had with particular

helping professions rather than course based teachings of other helping fields. It is

necessary for counseling programs to begin helping trainees understand the role

differences among other helping professions in order to develop professional identities.

**Administration support.** Seven participants reported that administration support

whether through understanding their roles as school counselors or not tasking school counselors with responsibilities outside the scope of their duties, helps to build a stronger professional identity. Payne (2011) found that counselors exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction in school counseling programs that "a) have administrative support, b) facilitate communication between faculty and staff members. Administrative support not only helps school counselors to be more satisfied with their job, but also helps to develop their professional identities.

Lambie and Williamson (2004) discussed the challenge the school counseling profession is having in transition from the guidance counselor perspective to the professional school counselor and the historical implications behind the transition. However, the authors spend some time discussing four steps in which school counselors can use and advance their professional identity. The first is to "educate principals", because a principal's support is essential to the school counseling profession; 2) Abolish teaching requirements; 3) provide supervision in schools and 4) re-assign inappropriate duties. It is apparent that counselor educators must include within the curriculum preparation for school counselor trainees in working with principals and other school administration to address the four steps. However, there is not much support from literature showing how administrative support helps build professional identity, thus the need for the current study.

**Professional development.** All nine school counselor participants also stated that professional development through joining professional organizations, being involved in conferences, and attending district workshops helps to solidify one's professional identity. Brott, (2006) express that professional development is a necessary part of the

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professional identity of counselors and serves as an opportunity for new counselors to develop and evolve into effective practitioners. Previous research (Brott & Myers, 1999; Gibson, Dollarhide, &Moss, 2010; Reissetter, Korcuska, Yexley, Bonds, Nikels & McHenry, 2004; Perusee & Goodnough, 2005) defines as a part of professional identity development, joining and participating in professional organizations. Therefore, it is not surprising that all nine participant responses included professional development as an area that helped develop their professional identities.

**Mentorship.** Through mentorship, eight school counselors helped to understand their

roles as school counselors and strengthen their professional identities. Murdock, Stipanovic and Lucas (2013) conducted a qualitative study to explore how counselors in training developed their professional identities through a co-mentoring program between master's level and doctoral level students. Participants in the study were engaged in a co-mentoring relationship with the intent to strengthen their professional identities. The results of the study showed an increase in professional identity due to the co-mentoring relationships. Lambie and Williamson (2004) discussed four steps to transition from the guidance counselor perspective to the professional school counselor perspective. Step three is "Provide supervision in the schools", where school counselors can continue to sharpen their skill set. We currently see more supervision in schools to help interns and newly employed school counselors. The current study found that participants sought mentors in previous program professors, district mentoring programs and co-workers that participants valued feedback. In states such as South Carolina, it is a part of their certification requirements for new school counselors to go through a mentorship program.

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Newly employed school counselors can look into professional organizations, schools or districts for specific mentoring programs.

**Advocacy.**   Six school counselor participants stated that advocacy, whether it be through

self-advocacy or student advocacy, advocating on behalf of the field or the program training in advocacy; each participant found advocating to be a part of building their professional identities. Participants also indicated that some of their courses taught them how to advocate and also through their involvement in local professional organizations, they were able to advocate for the field through their attendance at district and school board meetings.   Brott and Myers (1999) found it necessary to conduct a research study that includes exploring how school counselors develop a professional identity. The authors suggest that many of the literature on counselors look at the experiences or impact a professional identity has on counselors while in graduate programs but not beyond that scope. The study developed a grounded theory with eight theoretical categories emerging, moreover, one of the categories that emerged was advocacy. Advocacy proved to be a one of the areas in which school counselors were able to develop their professional identities. Lambie (2004) states that the transition from guidance counselor to school counselor is dependent on advocacy. The Multicultural and Social Justice Competency (2015) has multiple descriptions on action that describes what counselors can do to help advocate on behalf of clients and the profession.  The current study shows how advocacy plays a role in how school counselors develop their professional identities and through time can advocate on behalf of the profession.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

It is imperative that novice high school counselors understand their professional identity development in order to help them advocate on behalf of the field in the transition from guidance counselor to professional school counselor. There needs to be shift from the language used in the school setting of guidance counselor to professional school counselor in order for social change to occur. Lambie (2004) states that the transition from guidance counselor to school counselor is dependent on advocacy as well as professional identity. Novice school counselors cannot develop strong advocacy unless they understand their roles as school counselors and can articulate that to administration and other stakeholders in the school system. Napierkowski and Parsons (1995) acknowledges that "resistance needs to be confronted if counselors are to break out of their limiting roles and employ the skills and knowledge they have been trained to use"

(p. 356). Thus the theme of advocacy emerges as one of the areas within the current study as a way in which novice high school counselors can gain a deeper understanding of the development of their professional identities. Therefore, I now present recommendations for specific actions for counselor educators, supervisors and mentors.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The results are the collective experiences of participants' perceptions of how they develop their professional identities. The findings have transferability to assist high

school counselor trainees in understanding the development of their professional identities. The findings have implications for counselor educators, supervisors of school counselors, and mentors.

**Counselor Education Curriculum**

**Shadowing experience.** The results suggest that exposure and experiential activities are helpful to high school counselors in developing their professional identities. Most of participants indicated that practicum and internship, with some course work were areas where they received much of their exposure to the field. It is necessary for counselor educators and school counseling programs to expose high school counselors to the reality of the field even prior to practicum and internship. Trainees can gain exposure to the field by engaging in shadowing experiences where they are able to observe the work of a school counselor in action for a semester. Such courses as "Foundation of school counseling" or" Comprehensive school counseling" can attach to the curriculum shadowing opportunities for students to be engaged. Shadowing experiences can be created by asking prior graduates from training programs who are practicing in local school districts to take on a trainee for a period of time. This allows students to see before going into practicum and internship what the field demands and they can generate an understanding that will help to develop their professional identity.

**Invited school counseling speakers.** Eight participants reported that they did not get the exposure to other helping fields prior to starting their internships or working in the field. One participant was exposed to social workers after taking a class she needed in the social work department. Outside of that course, however, she did not have any interaction

with school psychologists, or mental health workers prior to starting her internship. It has been an uphill battle for leaders in the counseling profession to establish a separate identity from psychologists and social workers (Blocher & Tennyson, 1963; Burkholder, 2012; Herlihy & Remley, 1995; Nelson & Jackosn, 2003; Scholar, McGlauglin, McCaughan & Coleman, 2014). Being able to differentiate the roles of other helping fields does help to develop the professional identity of counselors according to Kaplan and Gladding (2011). Therefore, counselor educators can invite not only school counselors to speak to their trainees about the reality of the field, but also invite school psychologist, social workers and mental health workers as well. Specifically, in courses such as, "Introduction to counseling", "Communication skills in counseling", or "Counselor as consultant", where trainees are learning about the field as a whole and are developing collaboration and consultant skills to be effective school counselors. By inviting these different helping professionals, trainees will be able to differentiate their roles and have a better understanding of their interactions with these professionals in the school system.

**Create Dialogue with Administration.** As indicated in the study's results, administration support is a key element in the development of novice high school counselors' professional identities. Lambie and Williamson (2004) suggested that in order for the language of the school counseling to change from guidance counselor to school counselor, we must bridge the the understanding of the field by including into the conversation administration. Therefore, creating space for trainees and principals of schools to dialogue on the role of a school counselor is necessary. Training programs can have forums where principals are invited on campus to dialogue along with trainees or

counselor educators on informing school principals of the roles of a school counselor. School counseling counselor educators can develop workshops to present at school district professional developments to school counselors, administration, and superintendents which will help create a space to dialogue about the misconceptions of the field as well as the responsibilities according to the ASCA national model. Guidance departments and school administration will benefit from learning about high school counselors' professional identity in order to better serve students and build a stronger foundation for the school counseling profession (Gale & Austin, 2003; Rockinson-Szapkiw et al., 2013). Having such a conversation will help trainees gain the support they need from administration to develop their professional identities and to work on bridging the gap between the expectations of the field and the reality of the field once employed.

## Recommendations for Supervisors

**Feedback.** Supervisors play a key role in the development of high school counselor professional identities (Dollarhide and Moss, 2010; Moss, Gibson and Dollarhide , 2013; Ockerman, Mason and Chen-Hayes, 2013). Three participants indicated that through their site- supervisors while on internship, they were able to gain an understanding of the field through "hands on experiences" and develop their counseling skills through the feedback their supervisors gave. Therefore, it is imperative that school counseling supervisors provide positive and negative feedback to help trainees grow professionally.

Supervisors should also create opportunities for trainees to practice their skills and understand the nature of the field through, observations, allowing them to do

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individual and group counseling and to utilize databases to help build their knowledge on scheduling. One participant stated that her exposure to a scheduling database before being hired as a school counselor helped her confidence in scheduling students at the high school level. Moreover, Ockerman, Mason and Chen-Hayes (2013) suggest that supervision should not only entail knowledge and skill base training but incorporate professional identity and helping to strengthen that in trainees. Therefore, supervisors must be fully aware of their own professional identities and continue to work on building their professional identities in order to help trainees. It is suggested that supervisors must be certified school counselors working in a school setting who have at least two years of experience doing supervision. Supervisors can be trained by taking supervision courses at universities that have such a course and fulfill a certain amount of hours being supervised as a supervisor in training.

**<u>Recommendations for post-mentorship</u>**

**Mentoring programs.** Previous literature and the current study substantiate mentorship as a critical component to school counselors developing a professional identity (Gibson, Dollarhide and Moss, 2010; Murdock, Stipanovic and Lucas, 2013) . Three participants indicated that the districts they are employed have a mentoring program where newly certified school counselors must be peered with another seasoned school counselor in the district the first two years as school counselors. Through mentorship, high school counselors are given the opportunity to ask questions about the work they do and share their experiences or frustrations with the job as new school counselors. In order for novice school counselors to grow professionally, mentorship should continue even after training is completed. According to the findings in the current

study, mentorship provides additional resources outside of training to be shared with the novice school counselor and helps establish an understanding of one's professional identity through the mentor-mentee relationship. Two participants also indicate that continuing mentorship by a professor from their program of training helped to gain employment and supervision opportunities. One can hypothesize that a positive mentorship relationship is one where the counselor feels validated by the mentor, the mentor has a willingness to share knowledge, skills and expertise, provides guidance and constructive feedback, and helps the mentee set and accomplish goals. With a positive mentor, novice school counselors are able to continue their professional growth and identity development in the field.

## RECCOMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

### Factors that contribute the most to professional identity development

The present study offers the lived experiences of novice high school counselors and their perspective on developing their professional identities. Although the data that emerged shows areas in which novice high school counselors develop their professional identities, it does not show what factors contribute the most to the development of school counselors' professional identities. In order to show this, a quantitative study must be done on a large scale of novice high school counselors. The quantitative study would be particularly beneficial to counselor education programs to implement specific factors based on such a study into their training programs to help develop school counselors' professional identities.

**High school Counselors with more than five years of experience**

The current study specifically interviewed novice high school counselor with less than five years of experience in the field. Conducting a study with high school counselor with more than 5 years of experience would be beneficial to the field because the study would determine if there are any other factors that may contribute to one's professional identity development with more years of experience. According to Moss, Gibson and Dollarhide (2014) there is a lack of research on school counselors after training that follows them through their transition to the working field and beyond. Therefore, it would benefit, counselor educators, supervisors and mentors to understand the career life span of a school counselor in developing and continuing to develop their professional identity.

**Counselor Educators, Supervisors and Mentors' perspective**

It is imperative to gain understanding on the perspective counselor educators, supervisors, school administration and mentors have on how school counselors develop or continue to develop their professional identities. There has been fairly extensive research (Brott, 2006; Brott & Myers, 1999; Moss, Gibson, & Dollarhide, 2014; Perusse & Goodnough, 2005; Pyne, 2011) on school counselors' perspective, but research is also needed in the area of counselor educators, supervisors, mentors and school administration. Counselor educators, supervisors, mentors and school administration work closely with school counseling trainees. However, it has not been investigated as to whether they understand what contributes to trainee's professional identity or if there is inconsistency between what educators and supervisors think new counselors need and

what the counselors themselves think. Therefore, more research is needed to gain some insight on this particular group of individuals.

## LIMITATIONS

According to Creswell (2005), all research contains potential flaws and weakness. The limitations of the current study include the sample size and lack of variety in research participants. The lack of sample size and variety in participants limits our ability to validate that findings are applicable across all exemplary novice high school counselors. A part from the sample size, time was also a limitation to the current study in which the data was collected at a time when school was ending and participants were getting ready to go on vacation. Post-follow up interview questions were not able to be done due to timing of data collection. If given more time, I would have interviewed more participants to see if additional themes would have emerged and if all thematic clusters would saturate.

Another limitation in this study is snowball sampling. In the case of using snowball sampling to identify exemplar school counselors, it is left to the discretion of a participant to refer a peer as exemplar. Although I used faculty nominations as well, a few of the names given by faculty did not meet the criteria set and I had to resort to snowball sampling. Limitations also exist in that our data base consists of self-report data which could be subject to the influence by the interaction of the interviewer/interviewee relationship. Lastly, there is also the possibility of researcher bias regardless of the memo's kept by the researcher. Patton (2002) states "How you study the world determines how you learn about the world"

(p. 125). Therefore, there is space in a qualitative study for the potential of subjectivity.

## CONCLUSION AND RESEARCHERS REFELCTION

The current study presents a phenomenological approach of exemplary novice high school counselors development of their professional identities. As a former high school counselor myself with three years of experience in the field, I felt very aware of my own thoughts and prior experiences as a novice high school counselor surfacing. I applaud the courage and willingness of each participant to open up about their fears and surprises the field had in store. Many did not realize the impact certain experiences had on their growth as school counselors, and many never stopped to think about how they developed their own identities as school counselors.

The participants generously shared what they considered to be flaws in themselves as well as in their trainings. It was also hard to discover the lack of administrative support some participants had compared to other participants in the study. However, even these counselors were able to move forward in their careers and help students overcome regardless of the lack of administrative support. It was also great to see the passion each participant had for the field, and to learn how deeply they identified as advocates on behalf of their students. It seemed as if each participant placed each of the students they work with above everything else they did in their work and were able to see the benefits of such sacrifice.

Similarly, I was impressed with the level of involvement participants had in local or national professional organizations and thought that this was a part that played a role in their development and growth as professional school counselors. However, it was also

hard to hear the disappointments some felt with the progression of the field and helping others outside of the field understand their roles as school counselors. As I listened to each unique experience, I realized that these exemplars gained an understanding of their professional identities not only from program training, but more so from being on the job and the experiences they encountered on a daily basis. It was these experiences that molded and shaped their unique work ethic and success as high school counselors. Therefore, with this knowledge as counseling professionals, we must broaden our understanding of the various experiences that help novice high school counselors develop their professional identities and implement these lessons in the trainings of school counselors in and outside of counseling education programs.

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## APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

1. Describe how your graduate training help shape your development in the field?

2. Describe how your graduate training help to shape how you articulate

the school counseling field? How did your training help you distinguish your field from

others helping fields?

3. Describe how your on the job experience helped you see yourself in relation to the

field?

4. How does your on the job experience help the way you articulate the profession? And

A) How does it help distinguish your field from others?

5. Describe your professional involvement in the field and how it helps you relate to the

field?  And How does it help you articulate the school counseling field?

6. How does your professional involvement in the field help you distinguish the field

from others helping fields?

**APPENDIX B: Letter invite to participants.**

Hello,

You are being invited to take part in a research study focused on *The Professional Identity of Exemplar Novice High school counselors* that I, Kimberly Nelson is conducting. If you would like to take part your participation is completely voluntary.

- The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of exemplar novice high school counselors in developing a professional identity who have been practicing between 1to 5 years.

- You will be asked to participate in an individual interview. You will be asked a series of open ended questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not want to.

- You will be asked to participate in a phone interview only one time. It will take between 30 to 45 minutes.

- You will also be asked to complete a demographic survey.

- You will be given a $20.00 gift card for participation

The criteria to participate in the study is as follows:

1) novice high school counselors who have been counseling for less than five years

2) counselors must be employed and certified in the state in which they are employed

3) participants must have a case load off at least 250 students

4) participants must receive their degree from a CACREP counselor education program

5) someone who exemplifies the ASCA code of ethics (2016) description of standard B3: Responsibility to self.

**If you are interested in participating in this study, please respond to this email to schedule a time to complete the interview** or contact Kimberly Nelson  at kdawes@email.sc.edu or 209-605-4506



You will be audio taped as part of this study.  All data will be kept confidential and upon study completion recordings will be destroyed. You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Kimberly Nelson. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject contact, Lisa Marie Johnson, IRB Manager, Office of Research Compliance, University of South Carolina, 901 Sumter Street, Byrnes 515, Columbia, SC 29208, Phone: (803) 777-7095 or LisaJ@mailbox.sc.edu.  The Office of Research Compliance is an administrative office that supports the USC Institutional Review Board.  The Institutional Review Board (IRB) consists of representatives from a variety of scientific disciplines, non-scientists, and community members for the primary purpose of protecting the rights and welfare of human subjects enrolled in research studies.



There are no known risks associated with participating in this research except a slight risk of breach of confidentiality, which remains despite steps that will be taken to protect your privacy. Taking part in this study is not likely to benefit you personally. Participation will be confidential. Study records/data will be stored in locked filing cabinets and protected in computer files protected by a password. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed. Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason, without negative consequences.



Thank you,

Kimberly Nelson, M.A., CSC., GCDF

**APPENDIX C: Demographics Survey**


**Directions: Please complete the following demographics survey (all responses are confidential). Please type in your answers. Feel free to change the formatting or use more space if needed.**

**Gender:** ____Male ____Female ____Other          **Age**: ____

**Ethnicity**:     ____African-American ____Asian-American ____Hispanic

____Caucasian/White (Non-Hispanic) ____Native-American ____Pacific/Islander

____Other

**Current Marital Status**: ____Single ____ Divorced____Married/Partnered

____Cohabitate____Widowed____Other


**EDUCATION:**

**Highest Degree Completed**: ____Bachelor ____Masters ____Specialist

**Where did you complete your graduate studies**?

College/University: _____          Year: _____ Is it CACREP accredited_____


**What high school are you currently employed?** _____


**How many students are on your case load?** _____

**EXPERIENCE:**

How many years have you worked as a high school counselor?

_____


Briefly describe your position responsibilities?

_____

Are you currently a member of a national counseling association(s) (e.g., ACES, ACA, ASCA)? _____Yes _____No

If so which one(s)?

_____

Have you attended a national or state conference in the past three years? _____Yes _____No If so which one(s): _____

In your current position, what percent of your time do you spend on:      Guidance lessons_____   Individual counseling_____   Group counseling _____      Student Planning (IGP's, 504, IEP's,etc) _____

What type of professional organization service are you involved in?

_____

**APPENDIX D: Email to University Faculty**


Dear Faculty,

My name is Kimberly Nelson and I am currently a doctoral candidate at the University of South Carolina. I am working towards completing my dissertation for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Counselor Education and Supervision. I am inviting you to recommend or forward this letter to some of your top school counselors who are currently working in a high school setting as new school counselors between 1 to 5 years.

The purpose of this study is understand how exemplar novice high school counselors develop their professional identities. One goal of this study is to assist CACREP programs and Guidance departments in utilizing the information gathered to strengthen the professional identities of high school counselors.

Please reply to this email with a name and email address of the exemplar high school counselor you would like to recommend for this study or forward this letter. Your help is greatly appreciated.

Should you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me at Kdawes@email.sc.edu.


Thank you,

Kimberly Nelson, M.A., GCDF
Doctoral Candidate
University of South Carolina

Joshua Gold, Ph.D.
Chair
Professor
Department of Counselor Education and Supervision
University of South Carolina

## APPENDIX E: Example of First Order Thematic

**Year 1A Participant**

**Key:**

1.    **Statement**
   a) **Paraphrase meaning**
   b) **Theme**

**1.**    because I think a lot of the course described a lot of real life scenarios that I kind of deal with today especially the, I can't think of the class, where we use different counseling techniques and then you know taught to incorporate the theory of our choice

**paraphrase meaning:** counseling technique/theory course utilized real life scenarios and helped counselors to learn theories to use.

**Theme:** theory course found invaluable to help with real life experiences; **experiential learning**

**2.**    I mean they practicum I did in a middle school they I like the way I was exposed to all three levels because some of my co- workers did not have that exposure to all three levels and I think that was very valuable and coming in contact with other students at other levels.

**paraphrase meaning:** to the elementary, middle and high school levels was valuable during the practicum/internship process.

**Theme:** Various levels of **exposure** during internship

**3.**　　　yea the practicum and intern experience, both of my supervisors they

practically kind of through me in and I'm a hands on learner and I was able to retain and

get a lot of experience and that helped me right now or that has helped me in my first

year.

**Paraphrase meaning:** Practicum and internship were hands on experiences that helped

greatly as a first year school counselor.

**Theme:** Practicum and Internship course invaluable experiences as trainees

**4.**　　　I don't do a lot of lengthy individual counseling a lot of the sessions

are pretty much one or two times if the student really has an issue or if they have an

issue and they come and they are really upset, I will follow up with them but nothing

past three or four sessions

**paraphrase meaning:** individual counseling not done regular unless students' needs are

pressing

**Theme:** lack individual counseling as school counselor (Role expectations)

**5.**　　　group counseling I'm running the study skills group for ninth graders and I have a

group of five boys right now this is my second group, the first group was a mixture of

one girl and the rest was boys but we meet every week after school and just discuss study

habits like time management skills organization skills and I'm brining in the principal

tomorrow as a guest speaker so that's the only group I have been able o facilitate I'm a mentor with one of our girls group and we have like about five mentors and we each have to take turns running the session but that's like a group of 23 girls so that's a large group.

**Paraphrase meaning:** multiple group sessions conducted with ninth grade students

**Theme:** groups conducted more **(Role expectations)**

**6.** I would say a lot of the course that I took, the professors went by the ASCA national model to define or help us define the role of a school counselor in a school environment so those I guess parameters you set when you are in that role of a school counselor

**paraphrase meaning:** ASCA national model used as parameters to define the role of school counselor separate from other helping fields.

**Theme: Role definition by ASCA model**

**7.** this year the district that I'm in we are trying to incorporate the ASCA model in all the schools and I think this may be the second or third year and at the beginning of the school year we all had to sit down with our principal to outline the department goals and vision statement and then we had to put into place a plan as far as counseling duties he had to sign off on it and we had to sign of on it but it was basically the same form we used in one of our classes so I was already familiar with how to fill it out.

**Paraphrase meaning:** The ASCA model is used as a basis to outline department goals and counseling duties.

**Theme:** ASCA model used as an outline

**8.** Absolutely, probably because my principal is a trained counselor so his background is a trained school counselor before he became principal or got into administration, so he defiantly value the work that we do and we don't have to do anything testing related really, I mean a lot of the school wide meeting we don't have to be a part of that don't pertain to us so he does value the school counselors definitely

**paraphrase meaning:** administration values school counselor role since he or she is a former school counselor. Will not allow school counselors to do anything outside their duties.

**Theme: Administration values school counselor roles.**

**9.** I think the program help me to understand that you know first I am an advocate for the students and the areas of academics, the social and emotional aspect as well as the career aspect

**paraphrase meaning:** school counselor understands her role as advocate for students in terms of their social, emotional and academic lives.

**Theme: Specific role identification:** Advocate for students

**10.** other helping professions such as the social workers and school psychologist they are more like the social worker, they are focused more on the social emotional well-being and school psychologist more social and emotional I would say and they what differentiates us is that academic and career piece

**paraphrase meaning:** social workers and school psychologist roles differ in terms of the social emotional aspect and school counselor's roles are more career and academic related

**Theme: Role identification and differentiation among helping fields**

**11.** so I would say that the grad course I took kind of outlined that and made that apparent before I started my job.

**Paraphrase meaning: graduate work helped with role identification**

**Theme: learning role differentiation**

**12.** . I would say maybe I guess through practicum and internship I really got more of the roles of what the social worker and school psych did in comparison with what a school counselor did

**paraphrase meaning: Internship solidified the role differentiation between helping professions**

**Theme: Role identification solidified**

**13.** but definitely since I had to sit in on 504 meetings or IEP meetings or when a child was EPC'ed from the home I was able to see what the social worker role was in that regards

**paraphrase meaning: hands on experience during the internship field helped to solidify the distinction between roles of school counselor, social worker and school psych**

**Theme: experience solidify role distinction**

**14.** doing IGP meetings and course registration… and I will say that experience really helped me to understand my role as well as collaboratively working with our gear up coordinator which we have one in our school to make plans for or design interventions

**paraphrase meaning: on the job experience helped to solidify role as school counselor**

**Theme: employment solidify roles**

**15.** or also when attending professional development conferences and things like that obtaining knowledge from other counselors and learning from their experiences and what they do at their schools and I think that's valuable and has helped me professionally as well.

**Paraphrase meaning: exchange of information and resources at conference with other counselors helped professional growth**

**Theme: conference networking pertinent to professional growth**

**16.** you know when people ask me what I do I am better with helping to educate them as far as what we do on a daily basis as school counselors and they didn't realize, what we did or some of the things that we do I guess for example a lot of people did not realize what we do when we are called in a crisis situation

**paraphrase meaning: better able to explain role to others who may not have known otherwise or understood role of school counselor**

**Theme: Educate others on profession**

**17.** I think we are sometimes viewed as if you have a schedule question especially at the high school level they don't necessarily recognize that counselor piece I would say.

**Paraphrase meaning: Teachers or other professions may not understand the role of a school counselor completely. Understanding is one sided. Do not see the counselor piece.**

**Theme: misunderstand the roles of school counselors by others.**

18.     her job descriptions she will deal with for example if a family is had a fire the

social workers from various schools will get together to assist that child so not only are

the counselors assisting the social worker in that regards but we are also for example the

student who had a fire we are emailing teachers and saying hey this student just had a fire

please allow them to extend the deadline for their work because obviously they can't

focus

**paraphrase meaning: school counselor and social worker roles are distinctive in**

**certain scenarios.**

**Theme: role distinction when collaborating**

19.     So the social worker primarily will deal with the family being taken care of and

the students basic needs are met and as a counselor I have to define my role in that

situation but also make sure their academics aren't hurt as well.

**Paraphrase meaning: social workers are taking care of the social-emotional needs**

**and school counselor is attending to the academic piece of the situation.**

**Theme: define role in collaboration**

20.     I will say one surprise that I had was kind of how the teachers perceive us, cause

teachers have a perception that I feel like they think we don't know what we are

        doing or that maybe I don't know, I just think I was surprised that they to an

extent question our ability to place kids in certain classes they kinda question

you or there is no trust in the relationship with the teachers and school

counselors as far as the environment I'm in now.

**Paraphrase meaning: teachers mistrust the credibility of school counselors when it comes to scheduling.**

**Theme: mistrust in relationships with other helping fields.**

21. Well I got exposure to all that in practicum and internship because we had to have access to that our schools and then not only was I sitting in with

supervisors in different meetings but they also showed me how to navigate

power school as far as scheduling, like at the internship level I basically did

everything that the counselors did.

**Paraphrase meaning: engaged in all the activities school counselor did as an intern, including working powerschool, the scheduling system.**

**Theme: Hands on experience at the internship level**

22. I had that exposure in my internship and knew what to expect and knew how the process would flow.

**Paraphrase meaning: exposure during internship prepared school counselor for on the job experience**

**Theme: Internship served as preparation for employment**

23. I've actually attended a lot of conference this year because I feel like I want to learn everything from other counselors in the field

**paraphrase meaning: conferences helped to gain information from other professionals in the field.**

**Theme: professional development helped with professional growth.**

**24.** allows me to network with other counselors but in those workshops these are

people from other high schools who share what has worked and allows me to go back to

my department and share what has worked to see if we could better serve our students and

help our programs at the school level

**paraphrase meaning: networking during conferences helped to learn various resources to take back to school**

**Theme: networking helped build resources**

**25.** so it definitely help

me know and be confident in what I am and not supposed to do so my role wont

clash with someone else's.

**paraphrase meaning: better advocate on behalf of self in terms of job experience and role.**

**Theme: advocate in school counseling role**

**26.** our guidance director does a good job trying to incorporate professional

development for the professional field to give us information and tools that we could

incorporate in our schools

**paraphrase meaning: guidance director helpful in providing resources for our professional growth**

**Theme: director help with professional growth (Mentorship)**

**27.** to incorporate these resources from the conferences and adding them to my program at my school.

**Paraphrase meaning: build resource tools to help school counseling department and school grow**

**Theme: build resources**

**28.** I've been to two conference and one was specifically for

school counselors and all the information that was given pertained to resources

for school counselors um there was a workshop I went to in December I think it

was a career development or career technical development, and there was not

just school counselors present but also college information specialist it was

 career development facilitators so you were able to see or understand their

role too and what they were supposed to be doing for IGP's and how they could

incorporate different field studies to expose them to various careers.

**Paraphrase meaning: roles are defined at conferences where school counselors are dominant, but not much other helping fields at these conferences**

**Theme: role definition at conferences**

**29.**   the district does provide first year counselors with a mentor so I have a

mentor at another high school in the district and we have met twice so far this

year and she has been a huge support and I didn't know what to expect but she

 was very open and allowed me to vent my frustration and I felt like I had a safe

place to vent so she has been a great resource and I kind of pattern myself how

she has her case load set up

**paraphrase meaning: First year school counselors are provided a mentor from the**

**district. Mentor has been very helpful during the transition from trainee to**

**employee.**

**Theme: mentorship during first year**

**30.**   I would say I feel pretty confident because our admin is very

supportive of what we do but at the same time I feel comfortable going to the

admin if I had an issue for example a teacher was questioning something I did

when I had every reason to change the schedule, so I do feel like I do feel

comfortable, but if it were a different administration then I wouldn't but they

are very approachable and had total support from them and that may be

different from other administration

**paraphrase meaning: comfortable speaking to admin about concerns**

**Theme: Can advocate on behalf of self, due to comfort.**

**31.**     I think they both played a big part in how it was shaped, the course expect for

one was instrumental in helping me to be comfortable in my role as a school

counselor. And I still refer to some of my course work and internship experience

now so I would say that was very valuable in shaping my identity and then my

work experience though I still think I'm on a learning curve because I'm learning

something new every day that also coupled with my graduate work has shaped

my professional identity.

**Paraphrase meaning: course work and on the job experience helped shape**
**professional identity. Still refer to course work from time to time.**

**Theme: training and on the job experience help shape professional identity**

# APPENDIX F: Example of Second Order Thematic Clusters

**Legend:**

A- **First order clusters (statement support from research team)**

B- **Cluster Description**

**Code: ESC (Exemplary school counselor)**

**Question: Is there a difference in experiential learning and exposure??**

1. **Experiential Learning (1A-1,31 )**

   - ESC found it invaluable to do what was taught in practicum and internship, but also found that the experiential activities in some of the school counseling courses helped them to grow professionally.

2. **Exposure (1A-2;K-13;21;22;31)**

   - ESC found the exposure they had in practicum and internship helped them to understand the field better, but also found that they gained much from being exposed to all three levels of the field.

3. **Role defined/Expectations (1a-k-6,9)**

   -Exemplary SC found that certain courses and the use of the ASCA national model helped to define the role of a school counselor

4. ASCA model used as a base (1a-7(9)

Exemplary SC found that the ASCA model was used as a baseline to formulate roles and

duties for the school counselor.

5. **Administration values school counselor roles (1a-K8)**
   - ESC found that administration that was supportive to school counselors did not allow sc to engage in roles outside of job duties.

6. **Role Identification/Differentiation/ Inter-disciplinary (1a-K10,11,12,13,14,18,19,28**

   - ESC found that the program outlined roles differentiations and the practicum and internship solidified the variances in these roles. The more experience gathered from internship the more the ESC was able to solidify the differences in roles between sc, sw and sp. Employment also played a role in the distinction of roles between these groups.

7. **Misinterpretation or Miseducation of the school counseling field (1a-K16,17**

8. **conference networking pertinent to professional growth (1a-K15,23,24,27)**

   - an exchange of information or networking at conferences helps with professional growth and to build resources at school.

9. **advocate in school counseling role (1a-K-25,30)**
   ESC found that they were stronger in advocating for themselves the more years of expeience they had and how comfortable they were with administration. The training from their programs gave them insight into what they should advocate on behalf.

10. **Mentorship (1a-k-26,29)**
    ESC found other school counselors, and some administration to be helpful mentors. Some districts instituted a mentorship program as a part of their qualification requirements to solidify or make permanent one's certification in the field.

**Thematic Cluster GRID**
**23 themes emerged**
**\*8 Themes identified as significant to participants- those with over 6 X's identified.**

**Participants**

| Themes | 1A | 1B | 1C | 2D | 3E | 3F | 4G | 5H | 5I |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **\*Experiential Learning** | x | x | | | | x | | x | x |
| **\*Exposure** | x | x | x | x | x | x | | | x |
| **\*Program training** | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| **Role Identification/solidified** | x | | | | | | x | x | |
| **\* Inter-disciplinary** | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| **\*Administration support** | x | x | x | x | | | x | x | x |
| **\*Professional development** | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| **Learning Professions language** | | x | | | | | | | |
| **\*Mentorship** | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x |
| **Collaboration across** | | x | | | x | x | | x | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| fields/Multidisciplinary | | | | | | | | |
| **\*Advocacy** | x | x | | x | | x | x | x |
| **Educate others** | | | | | | | x | |
| **Role confusion/Profession disconnect** | | | | | x | x | | x |
| **Expectations at training Idealistic vs. Reality of job** | | | x | x | x | x | | |
| **Incorporating ASCA model** | x | x | | x | | | | |
| **Non-related school counselor duties** | | | x | | x | x | | |
| **Leadership role** | | x | | x | | | x | |
| **Team approach builds identity** | | x | | | | | | |
| **Securing job strengthens identity** | | | | | x | | | |
| **Misinterpretation or Miseducation of the school counseling field** | x | | | | | x | x | |
| **No admin support** | | | | | x | x | | |

| District Support | | | | | | | X | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Experience/ Length of time on job** | | | | | | | | | |