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Deborah K. Buchanan

Austin Peay State University, buchanand@apsu.edu

Blair Sumner Mynatt

University of Tennessee, blair.mynatt@gmail.com

Marianne Woodside

University of Tennessee - Knoxville, mwoodsids@utk.edu

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Novice School Counselors' Experience in Classroom Management

Abstract

A school counseling core curriculum is typically delivered in a classroom setting. Therefore, school counselors need to be prepared to manage a classroom during the delivery of classroom core curriculum lessons. Phenomenological research methodology was used to understand the classroom management experiences of seven school counselors in their first year of employment. Findings indicated that participants' experiences were influenced by: a) prior knowledge and experience, b) relationships with teachers and students, c) the classroom teacher's management style, and d) the ability to plan, organize, and deliver engaging, developmentally appropriate core curriculum lessons. Implications for school counselors, and counselor educators in preparing school counselors for classroom management, and specific training techniques are discussed.

Author's Notes

Author Note This research was conducted by Deborah Buchanan, Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling, The University of Tennessee; Blair Sumner Mynatt, Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling, The University of Tennessee; and Marianne Woodside, Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling, The University of Tennessee. Deborah Buchanan is now an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychological Science and Counseling, Austin Peay State University; Clarksville, Tennessee. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Deborah Buchanan, Department of Psychology, Austin Peay State University; P.O. Box 4537; Clarksville, TN 37044. Email: buchanand@apsu.edu.

Keywords

school counseling, classroom management, guidance curriculum, school counseling core curriculum

A developmental school counseling core curriculum is a vital component of a comprehensive school counseling program's delivery system (American School Counseling Association, 2012). The school counseling core curriculum is typically delivered in a classroom setting, therefore it is analogous to classroom teaching (Bringman & Lee, 2008). The delivery of a school counseling core curriculum to students in the classroom is effective for reasons such as: a) it is the most effective and efficient way to meet the needs of a maximum number of students (Bringman & Lee, 2008; Geltner & Clark, 2005) due to the high student to low counselor ratios; b) school counseling core curriculum classroom activities improve student academic achievement and overall school success (Bringman & Campbell, 2003; Carey & Dimmitt, 2012; Lemberger, Selig, Bowers, & Rogers, 2015); and c) school counselors inform students of school-wide opportunities, distribute information and address students' developmental, academic, and career needs in an efficient manner through the school counseling core curriculum (Akos, Cockman, & Strickland, 2007).

Studies also state that academic achievement is contingent upon effective classroom management (Cheema & Kitsantas, 2013; Fisher et al., 2015; Marzano, 2011). As a result, it is imperative that school counselors are versed in the knowledge and skills necessary for classroom teaching and effective classroom management. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), two prominent governing bodies of the school counseling profession, support school counselors' involvement in school counseling core curriculum delivery and classroom management.

The ASCA National Model School Counselor Competencies (2012) state that school counselors should be able to demonstrate classroom management and instructional skills

necessary to effectively implement the school counseling core curriculum. Moreover, the CACREP Standards for school counseling programs asserts that school counselors receive the requisite training to design a core curriculum, develop lesson plans, deliver differentiated instruction, and implement classroom management strategies (CACREP, 2015). Despite the importance of classroom management in the effective delivery of school counseling core curricula, the knowledge and skills necessary for effective classroom management have not been thoroughly examined in school counseling research.

To answer the research question for this study, “What are novice school counselors’ experiences in classroom management while teaching classroom guidance lessons?” the researchers chose a phenomenological research methodology for its ability to richly and deeply portray participants’ experiences free from interpretation and researcher bias (Merriam, 2009). Through the description of novice school counselors’ lived experiences in classroom management, counselor educators are able to gain an understanding of school counselors training needs, and thus tailor learning activities to better prepare school counseling students to successfully manage a classroom during the delivery of school counseling core curricula instruction.

It is worth noting here that the term *guidance curriculum/lesson* is used interchangeably with the term *school counseling core curriculum/lesson* throughout this manuscript. This reflects the current trend established by the ASCA (2012) to replace the term *guidance curriculum* with *school counseling core curriculum* since the inception of this research study.

Literature Review

Classroom management can be defined as all the strategies teachers use to establish and maintain an effective learning environment including: managing behavior, arranging the physical

environment, and establishing and maintaining classroom procedures (Brophy, 1986; Goodwin, 2012; Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2013). A well-managed classroom limits distractions, provides structure, creates a positive environment, and supports students' learning. As more states align their school counseling programs with the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Model school counselors are spending more time in the classroom than in previous years. Under the ASCA National Model school counselors may spend up to 45% of their time in classrooms delivering core curriculum lessons, depending on the school level in which they work (ASCA, 2012). Despite the fact that teaching school counseling core curriculum lessons is a fundamental component of the profession (ASCA, 2012; Bringman & Lee, 2008; CACREP, 2015; Geltner, Cunningham, & Caldwell, 2011; Peterson, Goodman, Keller, & McCauley, 2004; Quarto, 2007) a thorough review of the literature revealed a dearth of research on school counselors' experiences in classroom management

School Counseling Research Related to Classroom Management

School counseling research related to classroom management has primarily focused on the differences in perceived experiences between school counselors with- and without prior teaching experience (Bringman & Lee, 2008; Peterson et al., 2004). These studies highlighted the challenges participating school counselors faced in managing the classroom while performing classroom guidance lessons. Those school counselors with prior teaching experience indicated a greater degree of comfort in managing the classroom (Peterson et al., 2004), and reported higher levels of competence in conducting classroom guidance lessons than their non-teaching peers (Bringman & Lee, 2008). Conversely, participants with no prior teaching experience reported lower levels of competence in conducting classroom guidance lessons, and increased challenges in developing classroom skills (Bringman & Lee, 2008; Peterson et al.,

2004). Some participants without prior teaching experience reported becoming increasingly more comfortable in the classroom with time. Others reported a lack of classroom skills and found it challenging to “figure out classroom management” (Peterson et al., 2004, p. 250). These studies did not explicate the characteristics of ‘competent delivery’ of a classroom guidance lesson, nor were specific details of what was challenging about classroom management addressed. One can surmise classroom management would be an aspect of competence in the delivery of school counseling core curriculum lessons, and a set of requisite classroom management skills would be necessary for competence to ensue.

Quarto’s (2007) investigation of school counselors’ experiences in managing student behavior during large group guidance shed some light on the specific classroom management strategies school counselors employed to manage off-task (e.g. out-of-seat, focusing on something other than the lesson) and/or disruptive behavior (e.g. talking out-of-turn, annoying a classmate) during the delivery of classroom guidance lessons. Despite the fact that two-thirds of the participants had received no training in classroom management during their training programs they were employing verbal and non-verbal techniques such as making the voice louder or softer to draw attention, using direct and indirect verbal comments, using direct eye contact, proxemics, and silence as means for managing off-task/disruptive behavior. The participants who had received prior training reported learning these techniques through observing teachers and school counselors in the classroom, assigned readings, and classroom discussion (Quarto, 2007).

What Counselor Educators Say

Recent research in the school counseling literature underscores counselor educators attempt to identify the specific classroom management knowledge and skills in which school

counselors need to be trained. Geltner, Cunningham, and Caldwell, (2011) identified 40 knowledge (13 items) and skills (27 items) components necessary for effective classroom management. Most of the knowledge items were related to group counseling while the 27 skill components focused specifically on classroom management behaviors. Behaviors such as rule setting, nonverbal communication, using wait times, reinforcing, processing, and facilitating cooperative learning activities were among the skills identified as necessary for effective classroom management (Geltner et al., 2011).

Geltner et al's (2011) research is indicative of the strides counselor educators are making to understand the classroom management training needs of school counselors. To address these training needs counselor educators are beginning to employ some strategies to better prepare their non-teaching experienced students for the rigors of classroom management. Some of these strategies include developing specific courses to orientate non-teaching experienced school counseling students to classroom management. Courses such as Bundy and Studer's (2011) School Orientation for Counselors course provides direct instruction in classroom management and includes classroom observations, interviews, and reflective journaling (Bundy & Studer, 2011). Peterson and Deuschle's (2006) model for school-counseling interns with no prior teaching experience includes reflective observations of school culture and interviewing school administrators, teachers, and other school staff. While counselor educators are making progress in addressing the classroom management training needs of school counselors, research that ascertains the occurrence and effectiveness of these measures is still lacking.

Teacher Education Literature Related to Classroom Management

Due to the paucity of research on classroom management in the school counseling literature, the authors turned to the teacher education literature for further research on the topic. Research over the past several decades has consistently shown that classroom management is the one aspect of the teaching profession in which teachers feel the most ill-equipped (Duck, 2007; Freiberg, 2002; Goodwin, 2012; Meister & Melnick, 2003; Stoughton, 2007). Despite their training in research-based best practice pedagogy, new teachers often shy away from cooperative- and projected based- learning activities in favor of lectures and textbook instruction in fear of losing control of the classroom whereas their experienced counterparts tend to exert less control over classroom activities and student behavior (Ritter & Hancock, 2004; Unal & Unal, 2009; Van Hover & Yeager, 2004). Additionally, research on new teacher attrition revealed that classroom- and behavior management are cited as the most common reasons new teachers leave the profession (Harrell, Leavell, van Tassel, & McKee, 2004; Meister & Melnick, 2003; Mitchell & Arnold, 2004). Since classroom management is challenging for new teachers one can surmise it is equally as challenging, if not more so, for school counselors with no pedagogical training on best practices in classroom management.

The Essential Classroom Management Skills School Counselors Need to Possess

The curricular nature of school counseling core curriculum classroom activities closely approximates classroom teaching, and requires planning and delivery skills akin to those required of teachers (Akos, Cockman, & Strickland, 2007; Geltner et al., 2011). School counselors need to be proficient in (a) designing curriculum, (b) developing lesson plans, (c) structuring the physical classroom, (d) establishing classroom rules, schedules, and procedures; (e) managing transitions, and (f) maintaining student motivation (CACREP, 2015; Hennington &

Doggett, 2004). Strategies such as using proxemics, differentiated instruction, cooperative learning techniques, and wait times are also important skills for school counselors to utilize (Akos, Cockman & Strickman, 2007; Evertson & Neal, 2006; Geltner, 2011).

For the purposes of this study the authors conducted a thorough review of the literature to determine what school counselors experience in terms of classroom management while conducting core curriculum classroom lessons. Classroom management appears to be an area of school counselor competency that has been ill-defined. It has received little attention in school counselor training programs, and proves to be the greatest challenge for school counselors entering the profession. The latter is congruent with the teacher education literature. In order to better prepare school counselors for the rigors of classroom management it is essential that counselor educators understand what school counselors actually experience in the field.

Method

Phenomenological research is a qualitative research method that examines a phenomena, or experience through the subjective eyes of the participants by listening to their different stories (Willis, 2007). The goal of phenomenological research is to *describe*, rather than *explain* the participants' lived experience (Pollio, Henley, & Thompson, 1997; Willis, 2007). The iterative process of repeated immersion in the text of participants' first-person interviews enables two or more researchers to identify the salient themes that illuminate the participants' experience; and draw out the *essences*, or deeper meaning of the phenomena under study (Merriam, 2009). This process allows the researchers and potential readers to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena.

Participants

The participants in this study were licensed school counselors who recently graduated from a 48-hour CACREP accredited school counseling program, and who had been working in a school setting for less than one year. Participants were identified and recruited by contacting the school counseling program director at a university in the southeastern United States. A total of 12 school counselors were initially contacted, and seven agreed to participate in the study. Participants included four elementary school counselors, two high school counselors, and one middle school counselor. One elementary school counselor had previous teaching experience. All participants were female, between the ages of 24 to 35, and identified as Caucasian.

Procedures

The researchers became interested in exploring novice school counselors' experiences in classroom management because of their involvement supervising school counselors-in-training. Two of the researchers have previous experience as school counselors and classroom teachers. The third author has over 20 years of experiences as a counselor educator. All three researchers are privy to the challenges of managing a classroom through their own experiences, and observations of school counselors-in-training.

Before the authors began this study the lead author, and primary investigator, participated in a *bracketing interview* led by the second author/co-investigator. The *bracketing interview* provides the interviewer with a sense of what it is like to be interviewed on the topic of investigation (Pollio et al., 1997), and aids in the identification of salient themes and meanings held by the lead investigator on the subject (Merriam, 2009). Thereby "sensitizing [her/him] to any potential demands [she/he] may impose on their co-participants either during the interview or in its subsequent interpretation (Pollio et al. 1997, p.48)." The *bracketing interview* and subsequent discussion helped the researchers understand their preconceived ideas about

classroom management. Trustworthiness of the data included using multiple researchers involved in a negotiated analysis, the continual discussion of researchers' own experiences, and member-checking (Glesne, 2006). The interviewer kept a reflective journal throughout the data collection and analysis process writing before and after each interview and reflecting on her own subjectivity (Glesne, 2006; Merriam, 2009; Pollio et al., 1997).

Data Collection

Once the Human Subjects Research Board approved the study, the lead investigator made initial contact with the participants. The nature of the study was explained, and a copy of the approved Institutional Review Board application and an informed consent form was sent via email. At the time of the interview a professional disclosure statement was discussed, and informed consent and permission to tape were obtained prior to beginning each interview. Each interview lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and began with the question "Tell me about your experience with classroom guidance, specifically classroom management." Open-ended questions and prompts such as "Tell me more" or "Can you elaborate?" helped participants' expand on the description of their experience. The interviewer took care to allow the participants sufficient time to think before responding, and any incongruences were clarified immediately following a contradictory statement (Glesne, 2006). The audiotaped interviews were then transcribed by an independent transcriptionist who removed all identifying information. Upon receipt of the transcribed interview data, the lead researcher assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity, and increase meaning and readability of the reported data.

Method of Analysis

The data was analyzed through a multi-step process. First, each researcher independently extracted *meaning units*, in the form of words or phrases from the transcribed interviews that

conveyed a significant aspect of the participant's experience (Thomas & Pollio, 2002). A new *meaning unit* began when the participant changed theme or topic during the conversation (Wertz, 2005). Second, the researchers independently reviewed the meaning units and assigned relevant themes. Third, researchers worked together to develop a negotiated set of themes. Fourth, the researchers used the new set of themes and reviewed meaning units again while looking for examples of current themes and identifying deviant cases. This independent review and group negotiation took place in four face-to-face meetings and multiple email communications, and continued until the researchers came to a consensus of themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data. The researchers then developed the meaning of classroom management for each participant, discussed the multiple meanings, integrated the themes, and suggested an essence of the experience for these participants. The researchers then documented their findings and sent them to the participants to member-check for accuracy of interpretation. All participants reported that the researchers' interpretations were an accurate reflection of their experiences. Lastly, the researchers used thick, rich description to illustrate each of the themes in documenting their findings.

Results

Three major themes emerged from the interview data. Theme titles were selected from participants' actual words in an effort to keep the reporting of the findings grounded in the participants' experience. The first theme, *experience helps*, illuminates the influence participants' prior experiences have on their current classroom management. Theme two, *each classroom has its own language*, describes how participants' relationships with students and teachers influences their experiences. Theme three, *the way I manage*, illustrates the strategies

and techniques participants use in planning and preparation, lesson delivery, and managing behavior.

Experience Helps

The participants in this study indicated that prior experience played an important role in preparing them for managing a classroom. They talked about how content knowledge affected their comfort level in the classroom, and how continued experience and professional development will play a part in advancing their classroom management skills. All of the participants indicated that prior “experience helps,” and “increases [their] comfort level” in the classroom.

Ashley, a middle school counselor, reported that though “[she] knew it was going to be a trial,” her practicum experience was very helpful in making her “[feel] very comfortable in the classroom,” and “having a supervisor with [her] during training was help[ful].” Stephanie, a high school counselor, indicated that she had taken “a couple of classes...on [the] history of education and classroom management” and “that [these courses] were definitely very helpful.” However, Stephanie went on to state, “...in both my internships I had to do a lot of classroom guidance and...it’s definitely a lot more nerve-wracking...than small group or individual counseling.” Lindsey, an elementary school counselor indicated that she “was not trained to manage a classroom” in her graduate training, and “did not have the exposure” to the classroom environment she would have liked.

Prior teaching experience also influenced participants’ experience. Bridget, an elementary school counselor, indicated that her prior teaching experience “influenced [her] classroom management style,” and Stephanie’s semester of teacher training “was definitely helpful” and allowed her to “see things from [a] teacher’s standpoint...learning how to maintain

[students'] attention, focus, and discipline.” Whether their training included learning about classroom management techniques or not, all of the participants indicated they initially experienced anxiety. For some “there was a lot bigger learning curve” than for others.

The degree of content knowledge and passion these school counselors held for the subject matter also influenced their comfort level in the classroom. As Stephanie indicated, “planning was minimal because [graduation requirements] are something that I’m intimately familiar with...I already felt like an expert.” School counselors who know their “skill set” and feel “naturally passionate... and interested in” the topic they are teaching, experienced confidence and a greater comfort level in the classroom.

Participants recognized that in addition to prior experience and content knowledge, participants recognized that engaging in professional development activities will increase their comfort in the classroom and their ability to manage it effectively. Lindsey stated, “I would like to take some...continuing education in the summertime...if there ever was a course on classroom management...Anything to do with classroom guidance...I would be interested in.” Engaging in professional development and continuing education activities related to classroom management strategies is a way in which Lindsey felt she could improve upon her skills. She acknowledged she has “a lot to learn” and learning “what’s normal for teachers and counselors who teach...what are normal obstacles they face, and strategies for handling disruptions” would be helpful.

The school counselors in this study described how the internship experience provided them with a fundamental understanding of classroom management. Prior teaching experience increased confidence and presented some insight into participants’ management style. All of the school counselors interviewed acknowledged they still had a lot to learn, and that professional

development and continued experience in the profession will increase their classroom management skills.

Each Classroom Has Its Own Language

Each classroom is a unique constellation created by the personalities, experiences, behaviors and interactions between teacher and student. The participants reported that their experience with classroom management was highly dependent upon the teacher and students in each classroom, and the relationships they had with them. Additionally, the teacher's classroom management style greatly influenced the experience these school counselors had in managing the classroom while conducting classroom guidance lessons.

The teacher's classroom management style had a profound effect on Bridget's experience while conducting classroom guidance lessons. She stated, "We are reliant on somebody else's management structure...if [the] teacher is a strong manager it is going to be easier." Conversely, "if [the] teacher is not a strong manager you've got an additional level of challenge." Bridget often asks herself, "Do I manage these kids similarly to the way their teacher manages them?" Additionally, school counselors' experiences can also be impacted by whether or not the teacher stays in the classroom. Lindsey felt she was "strugglin[g], [and] didn't really know how to go about [managing the class when] the teachers left [the room]." However, additional support and a more positive experience ensued for Lindsey when the teacher "stay[ed]...and participate[d] in the lesson...or [was] at the desk just doing some follow up work." This allowed for the teacher to "chime in and give a lending hand... [if the students were] doing anything that's not the classroom expectation."

Building a relationship and communicating with teachers informed the classroom management strategies these school counselors employed. Beth, an elementary school counselor

stated, “I need to find out what the teachers are doing in their classrooms and I’ll try to be consistent with that in my classes.” Lindsey reiterated this sentiment, “each classroom has its own language. If you know the cues, and the ‘little sayings’ the teacher uses, it makes managing the classroom easier because the students know exactly what to do.” These school counselors communicate with teachers in an effort to understand the classroom management strategies students are accustomed to. In addition to the influence teachers have on school counselors’ classroom management experience, the relationship that participants have with students is a powerful determinant in the success of their classroom guidance lessons.

Through their relationships with students participants developed mutual respect, managed the classroom more effectively, and differentiated their instruction. Controlling a classroom is difficult when “there is no familiarity with the students,” stated Bridget. Similarly, Beth acknowledged, “when [the students] know that you know their name, they respect you because you respect [them]...it’s a mutual respect...and that makes a world of difference.” There is an advantage to being a school counselor because, “we have those deeply personal relationships” and Bridget has been able to “leverage that in a way that accommodates for the fact that [she] is not in their rooms all day.” Participants indicated they often have insight into the students they encounter in the classroom because they have worked with them on an individual basis. This helps them to modify their expectations to accommodate the student’s needs. Ashley stated, “[W]hen I’ve got a kid who I know has had a lot of stuff going on at home...and I see them not where I would want them to be, I’m going to cut them some slack.”

“Management is relationship” for these school counselors. The relationships they have with the students and the classroom teacher are the most critical factors in their classroom management experience. Teachers’ classroom management practices can either enhance or

impede school counselors' experience. The relationships these school counselors have with their students allowed them to know their students' needs, and how to maintain control.

The Way I Manage

A significant part of classroom management for these school counselors was planning and preparing their lessons. They talked extensively about the importance of creating and implementing engaging, relevant, and age appropriate lessons which resulted in positive classroom experiences when expectations, routines, rules and consequences were established early. The ability to employ a variety of techniques to manage behavior was also a contributing factor in creating a positive classroom management experience.

For these school counselors "planning is the first step" and "...really critical to successful [classroom] management." Emily, an elementary school counselor stated, "[lesson planning] sometimes can be a little overwhelming because I have K through 5." Lindsey validated Emily's sentiment stating, "When I first started ...planning for the lessons and developing what curriculum I would use...I just felt panicked and I felt rushed because there's a lot of time that had to be given elsewhere." For Bridget lesson planning also involves knowing what resources are available in the classroom.

Typically, you don't have your own classroom. So, I'm walking into somebody else's room that I'm not comfortable with and in order to effectively manage ...I need to have thought through, 'Where are the markers? Do they have crayons? Is there room for this [activity]? Where are they going to sit...stand? How do I do this? Because if I haven't thought through those pieces, I've created a management problem."

Bridget indicated that good lesson planning is a powerful anecdote to poor classroom management practices on the part of the classroom teacher. She stated, "[when the teacher is not

a strong manager] you've got that challenge and those are not things we can control...the way I manage that is to plan the devil out of it." Planning, "the devil" out of a guidance lesson includes having back-up plans. Back-up plans are important to managing a classroom as Beth pointed out, "you try your best to plan but sometimes...if we end early, or if I notice I'm losing [the students], I have a feelings cube, and I feel like we are still getting something out of [the lesson], but it doesn't require a lot of mental activity." For Stephanie, "It always helps to be...over-prepared...if I don't have anything else planned and one of the activities goes haywire then I'm just kind of screwed. I think being over-prepared and liking your subject matter...helps."

Participants emphasized the importance of implementing creative, relevant, engaging lessons. Ashley stated, I try to do things that keep it very interesting and keep [students'] attention." Bridget believes, "[p]art of the management piece is the buy in from the kids," letting them know, "it matters so much to me that you know this." Rachel, a high school counselor, corroborated, "I think the most important thing is establishing that rapport, grabbing their attention, giving [students] information that is very accessible and relevant to them." Conducting core curriculum lessons that engage students also meant incorporating a variety of activities in each lesson to meet the needs of the students' different learning styles. Bridget emphasized this point by stating, "If I don't have them doing several things...giving them plenty of time...to do something that they excel in, they're going to start to become unsettled." Classroom management is somewhat dependent on lesson presentation as well. "Some [lessons] work and some don't, and that plays a huge part in the management of the classroom," according to Ashley.

The participants talked about the importance of establishing expectations, routines, rules and consequences early on in the year. The “biggest thing” for Emily is “starting out at the beginning of the year letting [the students] know what I expect, and going over the rules...letting them know what is going to happen [if the rules aren’t followed].” Bridget stated it is important that her students “understand the task and understand my expectation,” letting the students know at the start of each lesson “what I am going to do so they can see that there is going to be a beginning and an end.” When “clear expectations” are established the “[students] very rarely question what’s supposed to happen...they understand where to go and when,” concluded Emily. These school counselors believe establishing rules and routines, being clear in their expectations, being firm, fair and consistent “is always really helpful.”

Effective classroom management strategies create a learning environment that promotes on-task student behaviors. However, even in the best of classrooms there are times when the school counselor must address students’ off-task behavior. As Bridget stated:

In a tough [behavioral] situation thirty seconds can mean (makes a blow-up sound and gesture) where somebody is out of their chair, they are talking, moving around. Now it’s going to take me five minutes to get [the students] back [on-task] and that’s five instructional minutes. In a twenty-five minute lesson that’s one-six of my time. [I]f I am correcting [off-task] behavior [or] talking out...that’s not fun. And for the kids who are on-task, well that’s just a negative environment.

Participants used several techniques to minimize off-task behavior. Verbal prompts and proximity are two techniques they employed to keep students focused and on-task. Rachel stated, “If [the students] are doing something different, I just ask them to please be respectful of others...and I use my proximity. I walk around. I might get right next to someone who is doing

something different.” Using proximity allowed Rachel to address students off-task behavior without “calling them out.” “Making eye contact [and] keeping things at a good pace, moving, [and] not going off on a lot of tangents” reduces behavioral concerns for Emily.

Positive reinforcement techniques were also used to reduce the probability of misbehavior. Praise and incentives are positive reinforcement techniques that participants employed to manage classroom behavior. Beth explained that the school-wide incentive program along with verbal praise helped to reinforce positive behavior. “Whenever we see a student...sitting quietly during a lesson, and looking and listening, even if it is in the middle of the lesson, we’re like ‘thank you for listening and being respectful. I like how you’re doing that’ so that’s been a good thing.” Using incentives is often a challenge. Participants indicated they don’t have a “treasure box” or other classroom based reward systems to use as positive reinforcement. Emily found it helpful to join the special areas Professional Learning Community (PLC) at her school. The PLC formed an incentive program to support positive student behavior while in their special area classes. She found joining this group, and implementing the incentive program “work[ed] really well, for the most part.”

All of the participants felt that managing behavior through discipline is counterproductive” to counseling, and they “hate being expected to discipline.” Beth emphasized the importance of following up on a disciplinary encounter with her students after the guidance lesson. “I don’t like being...a disciplinarian.... but when a kid is screaming out in a way that comes off as ... misbehaving...you can tell...as a counselor ...they are just calling out for something.” Participants also detailed their dependence on the classroom teacher for managing specific discipline issues with students. Lindsey stated “finding ways to ask teachers

to please stay in the room worked [with] several teachers. [The teacher] know[s] how to reach... the students better than I do because they're with them all day, every day.”

Planning and preparation, creating engaging, relevant lessons; establishing rules and routines early in the year, and being consistent are key to creating positive classroom experiences. The school counselors in this study indicated they “hate[d] being expected to discipline” preferring to manage behavior through appropriately pacing their lessons, and using subtle behavior management strategies such as proximity, verbal prompts, and eye contact. Verbal praise, as well as classroom or school-wide incentive programs were positive reinforcement strategies that school counselors relied on to minimize off-task student behavior.

Discussion

The three major themes that emerged from this study are *experience helps*, *each classroom has its own language*, and *the way I manage*. These themes illustrate the factors that influenced the classroom management experiences of the novice school counselors who participated in this study. Each theme was stated in the participants' own words to preserve the veracity of their experiences in the reporting of the results. A discussion of the results, the limitations of this study, and the implications for school counselors, counselor educators, and future research

Experience helps describes the sum of experiences and knowledge that participating novice school counselors brought to their first school counseling placement. Regardless of their previous experiences, all participants described feeling anxiety. This finding is consistent with the finding of Bringman and Lee (2008) and Peterson et al, (2004); and teacher education research that found classroom management to be one of the greatest fears among teacher candidates (Merç, 2011; Wash & Freeman, 2014). Participants also indicated they felt more

confident when they were familiar with the content they were presenting in the lesson. Lastly, participants indicated a desire to participate in professional development opportunities that could increase their confidence.

Every classroom has its own language speaks to the impact that the classroom teacher and students bring to the classroom management experience. The unique nature of a classroom's climate is dictated by the relationship between teacher and student, and was the single most impactful factor in participants' classroom management experience. Knowing the management strategies the classroom teacher employs in her/his classroom, and duplicating these during school counseling core curriculum instruction provides students with consistency in expectations, thus reducing disruptive behavior (Fitzsimmons, 1998). Research shows that aggressive management strategies based on exclusionary discipline increases student misbehavior exponentially (Baroody, Rimm-Kaufman, Larsen, & Curby, 2014; Roache & Lewis, 2011). Whereas democratic approaches utilizing positive behavioral support strategies (e.g. using pre-corrections, global and specific praise, and involving students in establishing rules and behavior expectations) decrease disruptive behavior and promote a positive classroom climate (Mitchell & Bradshaw, 2013). When classroom teachers utilized ineffective classroom management strategies the participants in this study had a more difficult time managing classroom behavior. Whereas their experience was positive in a classroom where the atmosphere embodied a respectful, democratic atmosphere supported by positive behavioral support strategies.

Relationship is the single most effective classroom management strategy one can utilize to manage behavior and create a positive learning environment (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). When teacher – student relationships are constructive, school counselors' experiences are more

favorable. Similarly, when school counselors have positive relationships with their students classroom management tended to be more positive. Moreover, school counselors who know their students are able to engage in differentiated instruction practices that respond to students' learning needs. Given the importance of relationship and classroom climate on student behavior, it is judicious for school counselors to learn positive behavior support strategies such as Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS) and differentiated instructional practices during their training programs.

The way I manage describes how participants planned their classroom lessons, communicated classroom expectations, and managed student behavior. Participants in this study detailed planning developmentally appropriate core curriculum lessons; a pro-active, preventive approach to classroom management (Roscoe & Orr, 2010). Lesson planning also increases teacher-task behaviors. When teachers engage in teacher-task behaviors (e.g. delivering lessons, asking questions, etc.) students are more likely to display on-task behaviors, reducing the incidence of problematic behaviors (Ratcliff et al., 2010).

The novice school counselors in this study indicated they explained their classroom expectations early in the school year. Evertson and Emmer (1982) emphasized the importance of effective classroom management at the beginning of the school year since it is highly unlikely for a teacher to move from ineffective to effective management as the school year continues. It is imperative that new school counselors “set the tone” with students at the beginning of the year by establishing rules, routine, and expectations during the initial core curriculum lesson, and refer to them frequently throughout the year.

Nearly all participants described a “hands off” approach to student discipline preferring to leave discipline in the hands of the classroom teacher or administrator in order to preserve

positive student-counselor relationships. Consistent with Quarto's (2007) findings non-punitive approaches to managing student behavior such as eye contact, verbal and nonverbal prompts, proximity control, and recognizing positive student behavior with praise and incentives were used to thwart student misbehavior. This attention to positive student behavior may serve to strengthen rapport between school counselors and students; as research has indicated students report higher levels of affiliation with teachers who use rewards and recognition as a classroom management system (de Jong et al., 2014).

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations to this study. First, phenomenological inquiry focuses on the essence of the lived experiences of a specific population, and the findings are drawn from participants' self-perceptions, thus the data could not be triangulated. Second, the small number of participants drawn from a narrow geographic area, the unequal representation of school levels, and the lack of diversity among participants limits how well findings can be applied to school counselors in general. The findings are best understood through the context of the seven school counselors interviewed for this investigation. Transferability can be determined through considering the detailed descriptions specific to the participants' setting and situation. Lastly, two of the researchers have had previous experience as classroom teachers. Despite their best efforts to be aware of and set aside their biases, it is possible their own experiences in classroom management created a bias that placed limitations on their analysis.

Implications for School Counselors

Beginning school counselors may experience anxiety and apprehension during the delivery of school counseling core curriculum classroom instruction. Therefore, the more experience they can receive prior to entering the field the more likely they are to experience

positive self-efficacy in their abilities to manage the classroom (Bandura, 1995). Greater competence ensues when school counselors are comfortable with their own knowledge of lesson content. Staying abreast of the professional literature on the subject matter being taught, and engaging in professional development activities that enrich content knowledge and classroom management strategies has shown to increase self-efficacy and strengthen classroom management among teachers (Dixon, Yssel, McConnell, & Hardin, 2014; Newton, Leonard, Evans, & Eastburn, 2012). The same can be applied to school counselors. Table A1 lists specific strategies school counselors may consider to strengthen their classroom management skills.

Implications for Counselor Educators

Prior experience with classroom management is necessary for new school counselors. Teacher preparation literature suggests that supervised experiences (Espin & Yell, 1994) coupled with coursework in classroom management (O'Neill & Stephenson, 2012) are most beneficial in impacting teacher classroom management effectiveness. While school counseling programs may not be able to offer a course in classroom management, opportunities for classroom management instruction should begin with students' first school based experience (Peterson & Deuschle, 2006).

Counselor educators should anticipate apprehension from school counseling students during their school-based experiences. It is important for counselor educators to normalize these feelings while providing experiences to build students' confidence. School counseling coursework should include multiple opportunities for observational learning and practice in the development and delivery of school counseling core curricula for diverse age groups (Bringman & Lee, 2008). (See Table A1). As there is a lack of specific literature related to school

counseling and classroom management, counselor educators are encouraged to adapt extant literature from teacher preparation when training school counselors. If a counselor education program does not have the resources available to teach classroom management skills within the school counseling program, school counseling students could take elective coursework related to teaching and learning, and classroom management in their institution's teacher preparation program.

Implications for Future Research

While this research expands our knowledge and understanding of school counselors' experiences in classroom management during the delivery of core curriculum classroom instruction and authenticates existing literature on the topic (Bringman & Lee, 2003; Geltner et al, 2011; Peterson et al, 2004; Quarto, 2007), further research is warranted. The subjective nature of self-report data leaves room for more empirical study. For example, a mixed-methods approach that includes observations of school counselors' classroom management practices, the use of semi-structured interviews, and/or surveys of classroom teachers' observations and students' experiences could allow for triangulation and potential corroboration of findings. Research that involves a larger, more diverse participant sample across a larger demographic area could potentially validate this study and allow for broader application of the findings. Lastly, exploring the classroom management practices of more tenured school counselors and comparing them to novice school counselors' practices could aid in the development of effective training models.

Conclusion

Effective classroom management is one of the most impactful contributions to students' academic success (Marzano & Marzano, 2003); therefore it is imperative that school counselors

learn and practice effective classroom management strategies while teaching core curriculum lessons. This is often a challenge for school counselors who enter the profession without prior teaching experience (Bringman & Lee, 2008; Peterson et al., 2004). However, counselor educators can help build novice school counselors' self-efficacy and competence in classroom management by providing them with learning opportunities that include observation, didactic instruction, and practice throughout their training program.

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Appendix

Table 1
Classroom Management Action Strategies for School Counselors and Counselor Educators by Theme

| School Counselors | Counselor Educators |
|---|--|
| Experience Helps | |
| Observe classroom teaching early and often during training program. | Provide opportunities early and often in the training program for classroom observations and analysis. |
| Gain classroom training experience as part of practicum/internship coursework. | Have students deliver core curriculum lessons to peers in foundational school counseling courses. |
| If classroom management coursework is not built into the training program, take a course in a teacher education program as an elective. | Structure practicum/internship assignments to include core curriculum lesson delivery - observe and provide feedback during field experiences (see Peterson & Deuschle, 2006). |
| Stay current on core curriculum lesson content. | Utilize an integrative model for building classroom management skills (see Bundy & Studer, 2011). |
| Engage in continuing education/professional development specific to classroom management. | Have students take elective courses in teaching & learning, and classroom management. |
| Each Classroom Has Its Own Language | |
| Develop positive relationships w/teachers; observe and talk about their management strategies. If effective, adopt teachers' classroom management strategies. | Teach collaboration strategies throughout training program; provide case scenarios & role play to reinforce & practice collaboration skills. |
| Develop your own classroom management plan. | Have students' interview teachers about teaching & learning strategies, and classroom management. |
| Build & maintain positive relationships with all students. | Have students develop their own classroom management plan & share w/classmates (see Monroe et al., 2010) |
| Learn students' names; greet them at the outset of each lesson; and use them often during lesson delivery. | Observe and provide feedback to school counseling students on their student interactions during core curriculum lesson delivery. |
| Know your students learning styles and deficits; employ differentiated instructional strategies. | Provide instruction on teaching and learning; learning styles, and differentiated instructional practices. |

(Continued)

Table 1 Continued

Classroom Management Action Strategies for School Counselors and Counselor Educators by Theme

| School Counselors | Counselor Educators |
|---|---|
| The Way I Manage | |
| Develop/deliver engaging lesson plans that include multiple learning modalities, and have a back-up plan for each lesson. | Include lesson planning activities/assignments including workshop style format with peers (see Ozogul et al., 2008). |
| Become familiar with and practice school-wide expectations and rule. | Provide knowledge of school-wide behavior programs such as PBIS. |
| Establish rules, routines, procedure, and behavior expectations in partnership with students; reinforce at onset of each lesson; refer back to them as necessary. | Include case scenarios and role-play activities related to managing student classroom behavior including reinforcement of positive behaviors. |
| Use proximity, eye contact, verbal/non-verbal cues, and acknowledge positive students behaviors. | Provide exposure to functions of behavior & behavior modification strategies. |