A FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS: PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES ABOUT

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL COUNSELING PROGRAMS

by

HOWARD BRENT HENDERSON

(Under the Direction of Jolie Daigle)

ABSTRACT

Confusion over the role of school counselors has existed since the beginning of the profession. Confusion still abounds due to the role expectations society has placed on school counselors. A framework exists to help turn the ambiguity surrounding the role of school counselors. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs provides an evidenced-based program that has the potential to improve the academic, social-emotional, and career readiness skills of students in the form of a comprehensive school counseling programs. Unfortunately, many principals are unaware of comprehensive school counseling programs, and the potential benefits a program can provide a school.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. One research question guided this study: What are principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. The researcher used in-depth semi-structured interviews to elicit stories from participants about their experiences as principals of schools with comprehensive school counseling programs. This study was engaged Transformational

Leadership as a theoretical framework to guide the study. The findings of this qualitative study indicated that principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs are: (a) it defined the role of school counselors, (b) strengthened school counselor leadership skills, (c) influenced school discipline, (d) school counselors developed school-wide respect, (e) and enhanced working relationships between school counselors and principals as well as school counselors and teachers.

INDEX WORDS: Comprehensive School Counseling Program, Principal, School Counselor, Educational Leadership, Counselor Education, ASCA National Model, Collaboration, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

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HOWARD BRENT HENDERON

BS, Georgia State University, 1992

M. Ed., University of Georgia, 2002

Ed. S., University of Georgia, 2004

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial

Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2020

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HOWARD BRENT HENDERSON

Major Professor:	Jolie Daigle
Committee:	George McMahon
	Sally Zepeda

Electronic Version Approved:

Ron Walcott
Interim Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2020

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my parents, Donald and Mary Ellen Henderson. Mama and Daddy, I know you were with me through each step of this journey and I know you are celebrating my accomplishment. When times were dark and I wanted to quit, I could feel you both gently prodding me onward. When I cried, I knew you both were there holding me and providing support. When I did not believe in myself, I knew you did, and that gave me the strength to continue. I am so happy that you were my parents. You gave me everything I ever wanted and supported me on every journey I took. Now, as I reach the end of the most difficult journey I have ever experienced, I dedicate to you something I never thought I would achieve…my dissertation.

With all my love and all my heart.

Your son,

Brent

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation journey has been, by far, the most challenging thing I have ever done. There were so many times when I thought I would not make it to the finish line. If not for undying support from family and friends, I would not be standing here today.

To Calvin, my partner, and soon to be husband, how to say thank you? You have supported me on this journey for the past long four years through all the ups and downs. You did everything you could to make the journey as painless as possible. You have understood when I could not attend events and only had words of encouragement for me to go the distance. I love you more than you will ever know.

Bruce and Janie, thank you for being there and sending words of encouragement. Those usually came at just the right time. I love you both and hope we can catch up now that I have finished school forever!!

Andy, Jennifer, and Jett, "I love you" is not enough. You have been in my corner this entire journey. Thank you for being you and for all of the laughs. Andy, thanks for my new moniker, DUB – Dr. Uncle B.

Paula, my best friend, I know our time together has been very limited through this journey, but I thank you for your support. Your expert editing skills were so helpful. Thanks for always being a phone call away.

Fran and Mary, I am not sure where to begin. From the beginning, you have supported and encouraged me. Thanks for getting me away from it all during our travel

adventures. Life would not be the same without you both. Love you both with all my heart.

Pat and George, for all the dinners, fabulous appetizers, and incredible drinks, I thank you. You guys provided a breath of fresh air when I needed it the most. Thanks for making me laugh. Don't ever change…"You got me?"

Louise and Darryl, all the way from Ireland, I have felt your love and constant support. Thank you both for everything you have done for me during the journey and the 32 years you have been in my life. You are more important to me than you will ever know.

Julie, Terri, Amy and Eric, you are the most fabulous friends a guy to have. Thank you for loving me through this journey. Julie, thanks for letting me drop in to sing and ring hand bells during the holidays. Terri, thanks for the great hugs and complete silliness. Amy, for your thoughtfulness and friendship. Eric, thank you for making me laugh and not take things too seriously. Your friendship is a great gift.

Dr. Pam Paisley, I am still a proud member of the Kudzu Krew. You are the one who inspired me to take a leap of faith and pursue my Ph.D. It is because of your legacy that I stand here today. I only hope to be half the teacher and mentor you are. I love you so much.

To my cohort: Becka, Bobby, Brean'a, Jennifer, Raven, and Zyer. There is no way I could have done this without each of you. We have struggled along the way, but we have done it together. Thanks for pushing me to new horizons of understanding about the world around me. Thank you for helping me be more than I could ever have imagined. I will miss each of you, but I am excited to see all the places you will go.

Bobby and Jennifer, I am not sure what to say. We have made it to the end of one crazy

journey. I am so thankful that you both were here for the journey and for the lifelong

friendships that have developed. Raise a glass to the "old folks!"

To my work family – Team OAC – Dianne, Tinisha, Kim, Katrina, and Kim.

You ladies kept me going when I thought I did not have the energy or drive. Your words

of encouragement got me over many obstacles. Kimmie, the mom hugs you gave me got

me through some of the most difficult moments. I know Mama was smiling down from

heaven when you shared only the hugs a mom can give. I will hold a special place in my

heart for you until my last breath.

To my committee, Dr. Jolie Daigle, Dr. George McMahon, and Dr. Sally Zepeda,

thank you, seems so insignificant concerning what you three have done for me

throughout the journey. Thank you for saying yes when I asked if you would be on my

committee. Thank you for the guidance and encouragement along the way. Dr. Daigle,

for all the phone calls, advise, and encouragement. Thank you! Dr. McMahon, for your

guidance, gentle prods, support, and especially your friendship. Thank you! Dr. Zepeda,

all those years ago, you encouraged me to begin this journey, albeit a different program.

For your wisdom, gentleness, encouragement, and support. Thank you!

To the UGA Gwinnett Campus staff, Dr. Laura Crawley, Jill Rhoden, Erika

Tapia, Andy Gerlach, Lisa Jackson, Charles Crisman. Each of you own a piece of this

dissertation. You made me laugh when I did not feel like laughing. Thank you…for

everything. Miss Betty, thank you for your concern and the great hugs!

To my participants, I owe a huge debt of gratitude. Without you, I would not be

writing these words. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for agreeing to participate

in my research study. Your time, thoughtfulness, honesty, and words of encouragement are much appreciated. Thank you for bringing the voices of principals to the literature about school counseling.

To my social-media *friends*, some I know and some I have never met, thank you. I used the medium as a source of accountability, and you came through. Your words of encouragement got me through a lot of *Thursday Night Writing Episodes.* #KeepMovingForward

Finally, to anyone who is thinking about pursuing your Ph.D., go for it! Know that it is difficult and challenging. You will have to give up things that you love, but oh, the reward in knowing you have accomplished something that so few do is a fantastic reward.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

School counseling literature includes an abundance of research on the importance

of collaboration between school counselors and principals (Clark & Stone, 2000; Dahir,

Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010; Edwards, Grace, & King, 2014; Janson & Stone, 2009),

how support from a principal can elevate a school counseling program (Carnes-Holt,

Range, & Cisler, 2012; Lowery, Quick, Boyland, Geesa, & Mayes, 2018), the impact of

the roles and duties school counselors are assigned (Bringman, Muelle, & Lee, 2010;

Leuwerke, Walker, & Shi; 2009), as well as the potential impact comprehensive school

counseling programs have on student success (Dimmitt, 2003; Hatch & Chen-Hayes,

2008; Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001, Lapan, Whitcomb, & Aleman, 2012; Sink &

Stroh, 2003). However, missing from the current literature are the perspectives school

principals have pertaining to the impact comprehensive school counseling programs have

on their schools and students' success.

Comprehensive school counseling programs have a comprehensive scope, a

preventative design, are developmental in nature (American School Counselor

Association; ASCA, 2012) and are comprised of certified school counselors who use

school and student data to make decisions pertaining to their school counseling program

(Lowery et al., 2018). Comprehensive programs allow school counselors to

systematically deliver services in a developmentally appropriate manner to all students in

their school (Johnson, Nelson, & Henriksen, 2011), thus assuring access to opportunities

and rigorous courses for all students (ASCA, 2012). Research provides evidence that

students who are exposed to comprehensive school counseling programs perform at higher rates academically (Dimmitt, 2003; Lapan et al., 2001, Lapan et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003) and have lower discipline referrals (Lapan et al., 2012) than students who attend schools that do not have comprehensive school counseling programs. Based on my experience in schools, principals have a desire for students to achieve academic success, for discipline issue to be minimal, and for their schools to experience overall success. Current research (Dimmitt, 2003; Lapan et al., 2001, Lapan et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003) provides evidence of potential positive outcomes comprehensive school counseling programs have on students and schools. Results of this study may encourage principals in schools without comprehensive school counseling programs to implement a comprehensive program in their schools.

I embarked on my dissertation journey researching a slightly different topic; however, it quickly became evident that the perspective of principals on comprehensive school counseling programs was missing from both school counseling and educational leadership literature. I assumed, based on my experience as a school counselor with a comprehensive school counseling program and my principals' support of the program, that the voices of principals would be represented in the literature. When I saw this missing piece, I knew I needed to change directions and provide a platform for principals' experiences to be documented. Having principals' perspectives and experiences of leading schools with comprehensive school counseling programs added to school counseling and educational leadership literature has the potential to create a stronger partnership between the two professions as well as raise awareness of the impact school counselors can have when implementing a counseling program that is standards based and data-driven.

Statement of the Problem

Over the past century, school counseling has advanced from a vocational only focus to one that is data driven and proactive in nature (ASCA, 2012; Lapan, 2012; Lapan, Gysbers, & Kayson, 2006; Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). These changes have led to role confusion and misunderstanding of the work of school counselors (Dodson, 2004; Gysbers, 2010; Leuwerke et al., 2009) from all stakeholders. While it is troublesome that the role of school counselors is unclear to the majority of the stakeholders, it is a critical concern when principals are uncertain of the role of school counselors as they guide the direction of the school and assign duties to reach the destination. Comprehensive school counseling programs, which provide specific roles for school counselors (ASCA, 2012), have the potential to increase student achievement (Sink & Stroh, 2003; Wilkerson, Pérusse, & Hughes, 2013) and in so doing can help schools meet important achievement milestones (Carey & Dimmit, 2012).

Currently, the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling* (ASCA, 2012) is the standard bearer of what school counseling should look like across the United States. Within the Model, the appropriate role of school counselors and the potential to create significant impact on student academic achievement is clearly noted as is the importance of principal involvement (ASCA, 2012). The National Model was created by using three existing models of school counseling along with research from The Education Trust (Janson & Stone, 2009). While the Model outlines the importance of principals' support to ensure the successful implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program, a gap exists in the literature when looking for principals' perspectives on comprehensive school counseling programs.

Collaboration is a natural place to bring principals into the conversation of comprehensive school counseling programs as the importance of the collaborative relationship has been documented in research (ASCA, 2012; Clark & Stone, 2000; Dahir et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2014; Janson & Stone, 2009). Collaboration between principals and school counselors is vital, as Dahir et al. (2010) assert that the axis of this relationship is a joining of shared goals about student achievement and school success. When a collaborative partnership is created between principals and school counselors to establish the focus of the school counseling program on goals for school improvement, the result will be increased student success (Dahir et al., 2010).

Positive effects of comprehensive school counseling programs on student academic achievement have been documented through research (Dimmitt, 2003; Lapan et al., 2001, Lapan et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003). Lapan et al. (2001) found when school counselors provided classroom instruction, personal counseling, and collaborated with parents, middle school students received higher grades, felt safe at school, and reported having better relationships with their teachers than students in schools without comprehensive school counseling programs. According to Sink and Stroh (2003), students in elementary school have high academic success when exposed to a comprehensive school counseling program that is implemented with fidelity. In fact, these students perform better on norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests than students not exposed to a comprehensive program (Sink & Stroh, 2003).

Comprehensive school counseling programs also affect discipline rates and graduation rates of high school students. Research conducted by Lapan et al. (2012) indicated high school students had lower disciplinary incidents, lower suspension rates, and higher graduation rates when a comprehensive school counseling program was fully

implemented. The previous cited research clearly shows the benefits of students who attend schools that have implemented comprehensive school counseling programs. This research (Dimmitt, 2003; Lapan et al., 2001, Lapan et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003) provides school counselors with evidence to show their principals the potential benefits for the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program. The ASCA National Model provides a framework to help school counselors have "greater intentions and clarity in their practice" (Sabella, 2006. P. 412) as they support all students. With this framework providing clarity for their practice, it is key for school counselors to raise awareness of comprehensive programs with their principals by showing the potential impact comprehensive school counseling programs can provide their school.

Principals receive little pre-service or staff development training on school counseling practices and current standards for the counseling profession (Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Finkelstein, 2009; Protheroe, 20210). Unfortunately, this leaves principals to use their own personal experiences of school counseling programs to assign duties to the school counselors in their building (Finkelstein, 2009). Principals' lack of knowledge and understanding of the potential benefits a comprehensive school counseling programs provide students and the school, further complicates the implementation of a comprehensive program. School counselors must work with their principals to ensure there is an understanding of the impact school counselors can have on student success when their roles are aligned with a comprehensive school counseling program (Amatea & Clark, 2005; ASCA, 2012). Hearing the perspectives of principals in schools with comprehensive school counseling programs have the potential to provide additional evidence of the positive impact comprehensive school counseling programs may have on

overall school performance and persuade other principals to engage in learning about comprehensive counseling programs.

Comprehensive school counseling programs focus on all stakeholders of the school (i.e., students, faculty/staff, parents, and the community) by using school data to create programming for targeted groups (ASCA, 2012; Lapan, 2012; Lapan et al., 2006; Lowery et al., 2018). Research (Clark & Stone, 2000; Edwards et al., 2014; Janson & Stone, 2009; Lapan et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003) shows the impact school counselors have on all facets of school. However, when principals lack knowledge of appropriate roles of school counselors and of comprehensive school counseling programs, students and schools are negatively impacted (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Lowery et al., 2008). While understanding principals' perceptions of school counseling is vital for school counselors when advocating for their programs, the intentional formation of a partnership between the two parties will lead to the creation of common goals for student achievement and overall school success. In order for school counselors to be instrumental in bringing about systemic change through leadership, advocacy, and collaboration (ASCA, 2012) they need supportive principals who are actively engaged in conversations pertaining to comprehensive school counseling programs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. This was accomplished by revisiting the experiences with each participant in order to find "comprehensive descriptions and the essences" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13) of those experiences. The study is needed, as it will give voice to school principals to discuss their perceptions about

comprehensive school counseling programs; a voice that is currently missing from the literature. Principals' perspectives will not only raise awareness of comprehensive school counseling programs among other school leaders, but has the potential to help school counselors better understand how to gain their principals' support for their school counseling program. The research question that guided this study is: What are principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs?

Significance of the Study

Principals are essential to the success of school counseling programs as they control the direction of the school through assignment of duties (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Graham, Desmond, & Kinsser, 2011; Lowery et al., 2018), determine if school counselors are seen as leaders in the building (Dahir et al., 2010), and work with school counselors to develop goals to reach the school mission (Dahir et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2014). Yet, their experiences and perceptions of comprehensive school counseling programs are missing from school counseling and educational leadership literature. This is a significant missing piece from the literature in light of the potential impact the ASCA National Model can have on student success (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008), the breadth of research showing the importance of principals and school counselors working in tandem to advance student success in academic, social, and career development (Armstrong, MacDonald, & Stillo, 2010; Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Stone & Clark, 2001), and how students are negatively impacted when principals assign school counselors to non-counseling roles due to their lack of knowledge of the comprehensive counseling programs (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Lowery et al., 2008).

Research demonstrates the value school counselors place on the ASCA National

Model (Carey, Harrington, Martin & Stevenson, 2012; Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009;

Johnson et al., 2011; Poynton, Schumacher, & Wilczenski, 2008), but very little exists on

principals' perspective on the National Model. An abundance of research is available on

the perceptions principals have regarding school counselors (Chata & Loesch, 2006;

Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; Fitch et al., 2001; Graham et al., 2011; Leuwerke

et al., 2009; Williams & Wehrman, 2010), but not on their perspectives about

comprehensive school counseling programs. Adding the experiences principals have

with comprehensive school counseling programs in their schools into school counseling

and educational leadership literature will provide information on the intentional

formation of a partnership between the two parties that could lead to the creation of

common goals for student achievement and overall school success. To serve the best

interests of students, the participation of school principals in supporting the establishment

of comprehensive counseling programs is needed. This study provided missing

information on comprehensive school counseling programs by collaborating with

principals to co-create meaning of their personal experiences with comprehensive

counseling programs.

Brief Overview of the Study

In this qualitative study, I used a phenomenological approach in order to gain a

deeper understanding of the meaning shared by school principals' lived experiences and

perceptions of comprehensive school counseling programs (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002;

Vagle, 2018; van Manen, 1990). Purposeful sampling was used to select participants

from the southeast region of the United States. The participants were twelve principals

from schools that received Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) designation for

the first time within the last five years. The principals have served in their current

position prior to and during the RAMP process. A semi-structured interview protocol

(Merriam, 2009) was used to elicit rich narrative descriptions from the participants

through the use of open-ended questions and probes. An interview guide, which I

created, holds the questions I addressed during the interviews (Patton, 2002).

Horizontalization of data (Moustakas, 1994) began after the first interview was

transcribed and coded.

A two-person research team independently coded two transcripts. The research

team members were school counselors with practical knowledge of comprehensive

school counseling programs and in their first year in counselor educator programs.

Having experience with comprehensive school counseling programs and knowledge

gained by working in a school setting, these individuals had skill sets that ensured my

biases did not impact the research. Using consensus coding (Hays & Singh, 2012), the

research team agreed upon the codes that were used to complete the remaining

transcripts. The triangulation of multiple researchers during consensus coding increased

the trustworthiness of the data (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). After coding two

transcripts and the completion of consensus coding, I created a codebook that contained

definitions or descriptions of each quote which will increased intercoder reliability

(Patton, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

School counselors are called upon to deliver a program that supports the

academic, career, and personal social development of all students through a

comprehensive program (ASCA, 2012). The ASCA National Model (2012) recommends

that school counselors engage in leadership roles to support students' academic

achievement and development through enhanced delivery of services. Traditionally,

leadership has not been a concept connected with school counseling, but it is now seen as

a foundational skill (Mason & McMahon, 2009). Despite national initiatives calling for

school counselor leadership practices, currently, there is no established model.

Transformational leadership was used to guide this study as it supports developments in

school counseling (Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2016). Additionally, the basic tenets of

transformational leadership support the notion of collaboration and building working

relationships based on respect. According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership is

a process in which "leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of

morale and motivation" (p. 20). Transformational leadership theory focuses on the

connections formed between leaders and followers. It speculates that leadership is the

process by which a person engages with others to create a connection that results in

increased motivation and morality in both followers and leaders. Transformational

leadership puts the leader and the group members in an egalitarian framework whereby

power is shared and the goal of the group is to achieve ongoing, large scale

transformation beyond simple task completion. Northhouse (2016) explained:

> Transformational leaders are recognized as change agents who are good role
>
> models, who can crate and articulate a clear vision for an organization, who
>
> empower followers to achieve a higher standard, who act in ways that make
>
> others want to trust them, and who give meaning to organizational life. (p. 198)

Transformational leadership has been shown to predict a positive school culture

consisting of norms, beliefs, and values (Deal & Peterson, 2016). Most important in the

school counseling profession, the ASCA National Model (2012) acknowledges the

strength of leadership to design a comprehensive school counseling program. To achieve

systemic change, administration collaboration, a school counselor will need to not only be a leader but identify which leadership practices attribute to these goals. A common strand among successful educational leadership approaches is a core belief that leadership is central for transformative visions focused on improved, productive student outcomes (Bass, 1985). Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) conceptualized transformational leadership as being conducive to creating a productive school culture and a structure of shared decision-making.

Leadership is a foundational skill for school counselors (Mason & McMahon, 2009), and while principals are the established leader of a school, the tenets of transformational leadership can motivate either leader or follower as leadership is shared through the collaborative relationship. These collaborative relationships are built on mutual needs, goals, and values, thus, allowing followers to be leaders and leaders to be followers (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership supports collaboration between school counselors and principals in working to implement a comprehensive school counseling program to accomplish common goals of student success and overall school improvement. In this study, I sought to fill the gap in research by exploring principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs.

LIMITATIONS

There are a few limitations to consider for this study. First, the participants were selected from the southeast region of the United States. My findings may have been impacted as different findings might have been produced if participants represented broader geographic regions. Second, principals were excluded if they were not principal of the school before and during the RAMP application process, as well as a year after the recognition. How might the findings differ if this group of potential participants were not

omitted. Third, excluding principals from schools who have received RAMP recognition two or more times removed the perspectives of principals with more exposure to comprehensive school counseling programs. Fourth, assistant principals were not included in this study. This removed the perspectives of an entire group of administrators. Finally, not being in the same physical location with participants during the interviews will limited my ability to note body language and reactions participants may have had to questions. This may have impeded on the choice of follow-up questions asked of participants and caused me to miss an opportunity to go deeper when exploring the reaction.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

American School Counselor Association (ASCA)

ASCA is a national organization that promotes professionalism and ethical practices of school counselors. ASCA was formed in 1952.

ASCA National Model

The ASCA National Model is a framework which guides school counselors in the implementation of a data-driven, comprehensive school counseling program aimed at serving all students. According to ASCA (2012), the Model assists school counselors (a) move school counseling from responsive services provided for some students to a program for every student, (b) provide uniformity to standardize school counseling programs across the country, allowing for flexibility to customize to individual schools, and (c) re-establish school counseling as a crucial educational function that is integral to academic achievement and overall student success.

Comprehensive School Counseling Program

Comprehensive school counseling programs are standards-based and data-driven and includes a curriculum focused on academic, career, and social-emotional development of students in grades kindergarten through twelfth (ASCA, 2012). Comprehensive school counseling programs are comprised of state certified school counselors who make decisions pertaining to their school counseling program using school and student data to ensure equitable access for all students to a high-quality education (Lowery, et al., 2018).

Principal

A principal is the building leader and oversees all operations of the school including curriculum, instruction, discipline, hiring, and assignment of staff duties (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Graham et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018).

Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP)

RAMP is a school award based on the tenets of the ASCA National Model that is granted only after school counselors complete a detailed application substantiating their efforts to develop and implement comprehensive, data driven, accountable school counseling programs that are guided by their schools' specific needs (Wilkerson et al., 2013). RAMP recognition was first presented in 2004. RAMP recognition is the culmination of the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program and is granted through an extensive review of data.

School Counselor

School counselors are certified/licensed educators with a minimum of a master's degree in school counseling, who are uniquely qualified to address all students' academic, career and personal/ social development needs through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes and enhances student success.

School counselors are important members of the education team and help ensure students become productive, well-adjusted adults (ASCA, n.d.[c]).

School Counseling

According to The Education Trust (2009), "school counseling is a profession that focuses on the relations and interactions between students and their school environment to reduce the effects of environmental and institutional barriers that impede student academic success. School counselors foster educational equity, access, and academic success in a rigorous curriculum to ensure that all students graduate from high school ready to succeed in college and careers.

Student Success

Student success is a term used to describe accomplishment in student achievement, attendance, and discipline (ASCA, 2012).

Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI)

The transforming school counseling initiative was a joint venture between the Education Trust and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, which consisted of several stages to encourage the development of new program models for pre-service training of school counselors (Martin, 2002).

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The perspectives of principals pertaining to comprehensive school counseling programs is currently missing from the school counseling and educational leadership literature. An exploration of the perspectives of principals on comprehensive school counseling programs allowed participants to share their experiences in their own words and the meaning they have made of their experiences. As co-creators of the research, these principals informed both the school counseling and educational leadership

professions on how comprehensive school counseling programs impact student achievement and overall school success. The principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs filled a gap in both school counseling and educational leadership literature. Their perspectives have the potential to expand comprehensive programs to schools as principals without these programs see the potential benefits. Viewing the research through the lens of transformational leadership theory kept a focus on the importance of creating relationships between school counselors and principals that are built on mutual respect in order to improve the overall school and increase student success. The chapter that follow provide a context in which to view the perspective of principals about comprehensive school counseling programs while highlighting the importance of principals' participation in the creation, implementation, and continued support of comprehensive school counseling programs. A phenomenological approach was used to collect and analyze the narrative responses of principals followed by discussion, limitations, future research, and recommendations for the involvement of school principals in the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of relevant literature examining the experiences of school principals of a school with comprehensive school counseling programs. To assist with laying a foundation for this discussion, a thorough examination of existing literature on school counseling will be presented. The literature review begins with a brief history of school counseling, which created an understanding of the progression of the specialty of school counseling. The history of school counseling establishes an understanding of existing perceptions of school counseling. Thereafter, the chapter explores the influence of educational reform on school counseling. The impact of comprehensive counseling programs on students and school performance is discussed followed by a review of the ASCA National Model. This will assist readers in understanding the recommended model for school counseling programs. The appropriate and inappropriate roles and functions of school counselors and, changes the field has experienced. Further, a review of educational leadership pre-service programs will be discussed and the importance of establishing a collaboration in the educational setting. Finally, a review of transformational leadership theory will help frame the lens through which aspects of this study were viewed. This study's primary research question is: What are principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs?

A Brief History of School Counseling

The role of the school counselor and the profession of school counseling are exponentially different than at its birth back in the early 1900s. At the genesis, guidance programs had a strong nexus with vocational education (Paisley & Borders, 1995) to address the social reform movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s (Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers, 2010; Paisley & Hayes, 2003). According to Gysbers (2001), vocational guidance was created in response to the economic, educational, and social problems of the time and was concerned with young people's entrance into the world of work. The role of vocational guidance counselors, comprised of teachers who added this role to their teaching responsibilities (Cobia & Henderson, 2003; Gysbers, 2010; Lambie & Williams, 2004) and whom had no formal training (Gysbers, 2001), was to provide students with information on vocations (Gysbers, 2010). Charles W. Eliot (as cited in Gysbers, 2010, p.8) stated, "multitudes of American children, taking no interest in their school work, or seeing no connection between their studies and the means to later earning a good livelihood, drop out of school too early…." Charles Eliot felt schools should prepare students for work and that career focus should be central to their educational experience (Gysbers, 2010). Vocational guidance connected school with careers and was seen as a way to change both education and industry (Gysbers, 2001) by providing students with career information within an arena where they could gain knowledge and experiential learning about particular careers (Bloomfield, 1916, as cited in Gysbers 2001, p. 97).

1920s. From the late teens to early 1920s, the focus was on vocational education rather than guidance (Gysbers, 2001). However, by the early 1920s, the focus was shifting toward attention given to personal and educational aspects of individuals and less on social concerns (Gysbers, 2001). Many of the changes during the 1920s were due to

the influences of mental health, psychometric measurement, and child development, which created a more clinical model of guidance (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2001). The changes signaled a shift from economic issues to psychological issues and had an emphasis on counseling for "personal adjustment" (ASCA, 2012, p. vi).

 1930s. According to Gysbers (2001) the influence of the mental health movement of the 1920s laid the foundation for personal counseling to dominate theory and practice during the 1930s. With the emphasis on personal counseling, conversations began to emerge regarding the personnel responsible for school counseling, duties they performed, the selection process of these individuals, and training they received (ASCA, 2012). A major development was a new structure for vocational guidance and counseling known as pupil personnel services (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2001). The new structure included attendance officers, school nurses, and vocational counselors (Gysbers, 2001). ASCA (2012) states:

> With the emergence of guidance services, the field of school counseling moved from a position with a list of duties to a position with a list of duties organized by guidance service for all students under the overall structure of pupil personnel services. (p. vi)

 1940s. During World War II, attention was diverted from school counseling; however, research and literature returned its focus to the need of counseling in schools after the conclusion of the war (ASCA, 2012). The decade was articulated by a growth in psychotherapeutic processes after the 1942 publication of *Counseling and Psychotherapy* by Carl Rogers. As interest grew around Rogers' person-centered approach, there was an expansion of school-based counseling (ASCA, 2012).

1950s. The decade began with the formation of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) as a division of the American Personnel and Guidance Association in 1952 which served to strengthen the identity of school counseling (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). For the first time, vocational counselors had a voice at the national level. Lambie and Williamson (2004) argue the launch of the Sputnik satellite by the Soviet Union in 1957 was a catalyst for the rapid advancement of school counseling by leading to the passage of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958. The NDEA greatly impacted vocational guidance (Gysbers, 2001) and had a significant impact on school counseling through the 1960s and 1970s (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012) by providing funds to ensure school counseling services were provided to all high school students (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The NDEA along with the Vocational Educational and Training Act of 1946 focused attention and monetary support on the selection and training of school counselors (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2001) for the first time. Gysbers and Henderson (2012) suggest that how school counselors were trained and issues taught in counselor education courses were important byproducts of the NDEA that continued the metamorphosis of school counseling.

1960s through 1990s. Guidance in schools continued to focus on the needs and concerns of the nation (e.g., substance abuse, school violence, mental health) during these four decades. (Gysbers, 2001). A major accomplishment of the 1960s was the introduction of counselors at the elementary level (ASCA, 2012). This was a huge development for school counseling and provided support to students K-12. The pupil personnel organizational structure had remained in place, but through the 1960s through the 1980s it took on a new name of pupil personnel services and included guidance, health, psychological services, school social workers, and attendance (Gysbers, 2001).

Also, during the 1960s, school counseling became nested in the pupil personnel services realm and with an emphasis on personal adjustment, emerged as a central service (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

The decade of the 1970s was an exciting time that saw the dawn of comprehensive development programs which focused on the career, personal-social, and academic development of students (Gysbers, 2001). According to Gysbers (2001), three school counseling model programs were developed during the 1970s and 1980s: (a) Johnson and Johnson's competency-based model (1980s), (b) Myrick's developmental guidance and counseling model (1980s), and (c) Gysbers and Moore's model, developed during the 1970s, was refined and enhanced over a 15-year period by Gysbers and Henderson. Their model emphasized organizational structure consisting of content, framework, and resources, further revolutionized school counseling (Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

Throughout these decades, Gysbers (2001) insists that changes in the labor force and globalization of industry was a concern that brought about the passage of significant legislation. These were the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education and Applied Technology Education Amendment Act of 1990, and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational-Technical Education Amendment Act of 1998 (Gysbers, 2001). These three acts impacted school counseling in ways never imagined. In fact, career guidance was drastically changed by the 1998 Amendment Act's definition of career guidance and academic counseling as "providing individuals with information access on career awareness and planning for their occupation and academic future which shall involve career options, financial aid, and post-secondary options" (as cited in Gysbers, 2001, p. 99). Herr (2001) suggests that the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Act of

1984 and the National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC) of 1988, solidified the movement of establishing comprehensive guidance programs in schools.

By the close of the 20th century, comprehensive counseling programs were being implemented at a high frequency and have since become a "major way of organizing and managing guidance in the schools of the United States" (Gysbers, 2001, p. 101). With comprehensive counseling programs taking hold, the beginning of the 21st century was fertile for school counselors to become change agents, using data to inform their practice (ASCA, 2012), and to continue the evolution of school counseling. As comprehensive school counseling programs were implemented around the country, the conversation about the role of school counselors was brought to the forefront.

Role Ambiguity

Looking through the annals of school counseling literature, it quickly becomes evident that the role of school counselors has been unclear since the earliest records (Dodson, 2004; Gysbers, 2010; Leuwerke et al., 2009). Lambie & Williamson (2004) assert role ambiguity exists when (a) an individual lacks information about their role, (b) work objectives lack clarity, and (c) when uncertainty pertaining to peer expectations of the scope and responsibility of the job exists. At the dawn of school counseling, teachers and some administrators were moved to the role of vocational guidance counselor in addition to their other responsibilities (Gysbers, 2010). These individuals received no training for the role of vocational nor was there any structure provided other than a list of duties that encompassed the role (Gysbers, 2001). It would appear the random selection of vocational counselors couple with no training, planted seeds of confusion about the role of school counselors. This confusion continues to spread to educators and other

community members. Gysbers and Henderson (2012) contend the common thought was individuals serving as school counselors should have an education background, thus, when they did not have an education background, it was unclear how they fit into a school setting. The question often asked was if school counselors are not teachers first, what are they (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012) and what role do they serve? This looming question led to duties being assigned that were not consistent with school counselors' identity and training.

Due to role confusion, many school counselors are assigned roles as quasi-administrators (Johnson et al., 2011), hall monitors, lunchroom monitors, test administrators, master schedule developers (ASCA, 2012; Bardhoshi, Schweinle, & Duncan, 2014; Edwards et al., 2014; Lowery et al., 2018). Lowery et al. (2018) noted, when school counselors are assigned non-counseling duties, they are unable to adequately address the needs of students and families regarding academics, social emotional issues, and college and career readiness. This ultimately impacts the influence school counselors can have on student success. According to Amatea and Clark (2005), in many cases it is incumbent on the school counselor to educate principals on the appropriate roles school counselors should be undertaking. These conversations are important due to the unfamiliarity of school counseling roles and responsibilities by many administrators (Johnson et al., 2011); however, having these conversations have the potential of placing school counselors in awkward positions. Since principals make the decision about what roles and duties the school counselor will perform, as well as serve as their evaluator, the conversation, if not handled properly, can create tension between the two parties (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Graham et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018). Thus, creating barriers to an effective partnership. As Chala and Loesch (2007) note, collaborative relationships

between these two parties are essential for school counselors to successfully execute

appropriate roles and functions.

Role Theory

A brief examination of role theory provides a platform to understand how the

ambiguity of the role of school counselors exists. According to Biddle (1986) and Turner

(2001), an individual's social identities and particular situations influence their behaviors

in different settings. Schools have duties that define the "potential behaviors to be

performed in accordance with a specific job" (Shivers-Blackwell, 2004, p. 41). The

debate about the roles assigned to school counselors has existed since the genesis of the

profession (Dodson, 2004; Gysbers, 2010; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Leuwerke et al.,

2009), with role assignments being made by principals based on personal experiences

(Finkelstein, 2009). Katz and Kahn (1966) suggest role theory focuses on the roles

within the organization and the interaction between these roles and the impact this has on

achieving organizational goals (1966). Research is plentiful in supporting the impact

school counselors have on achieving school goals when school counselors are assigned

appropriate roles (Chala & Loesch, 2007; Dahir et al., 2010; Riddle, 2009; Sun &

Leithwood, 2012). There are varying viewpoints under the umbrella of role theory;

however, organization role theory seems to be most salient to ambiguity around the role

of school counselors.

Organizational role theory focuses on how individuals accept and carry out roles

in task-oriented and tiered systems (Biddle, 1986). In organizational role theory,

behaviors are recurring patterns of actions that are important for effective functioning in a

particular role and organization (Biddle, 1986). Due to training differences of principals

and school counselors (Dodson, 2004; Finkelstein, 2009; Johnson et al., 2011), the

environment is conducive for the misunderstanding of appropriate behaviors for school counselors to engaged. Role theory provides additional evidence for ensuring principals have a clear understanding of the impact of school counselors on student and school goals when assigned appropriate roles (ASCA, 2012).

According to Turner (2001), roles are not stagnant; rather, they are continuously evolving as individuals participate in activities that lead to redefining established roles. Turner's words provide a stimulus for school counselors to be diligent in their work of assisting help principals in understanding the appropriate functions in which they should be engaged (Amatea & Clark, 2005; ASCA, 2012; Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Chata & Loesch, 2007; Goodman-Scott, Betters-Bubon, & Donohue, 2018; Ziomek-Daigle, Goodman-Scott, Cavin, & Donohue, 2016). To work with principals in this manner, school counselors must build relationships to build a bridge of support and trust (Dollarhide et al., 2007; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Stone & Clark, 2001). Collaborative relationships between these two parties are essential for school counselors to serve appropriate roles and functions (Chala and Loesch, 2007).

Influence of Educational Reform on School Counseling

The school counseling profession has been in a constant state of change since guidance was first introduced in the early 1900s. Initially shaped by the social reform movement of the late 19th century, school counseling has morphed from its early focus on career and moral development to a comprehensive, developmental, and collaborative school counseling program (Paisley & McMahon, 2001) that is available to all students (Paisley & Borders, 1995). The early years of the 21st century created new opportunities for change as major school reform took center stage on the educational landscape.

No Child Left Behind. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was a major school reform movement. According to the U.S Department of Education (2005), the No Child Left Behind Act was a groundbreaking education reform with an aim to improve student achievement and change the culture of American schools so that no student was left behind academically. It established an expectation that school counselors contribute to school improvement (Dahir et al., 2010) through the call for accountability and increased academic achievement for all students. Dollarhide and Lemberger (2006) argue that NCLB forced schools to be accountable for the most at-risk students (i.e., students of color, students who live in poverty) and to ensure these students succeeded academically. NCLB created an environment where school counselors had to become experts in disaggregating school data in order to address specific issues. Dollarhide and Lemberger (2006) found that school counselors attribute NCLB to forcing them to use data to effect change and that without NCLB data would not have been used. With the focus on the aggregation and disaggregation of student data, NCLB was an impetus for the creation of the ASCA National Model (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012).

National Standards. During the last decade of the 20th century, school reform was gaining great momentum. A troubling aspect of the education reform movement was the omission of school counseling from the discussion (Dahir, 2004). *Goals 2000*, which provided the impetus for school reform, supported the creation of benchmarks across curriculum to ensure all graduates were ready and able to compete in the global economy (Dahir, 2004). According to Dahir (2004), the absence of school counseling from Goals 2000 pushed the ASCA Governing Board to develop the National Standards in 1994. The standards provided school counselors a foundation on which counseling programs could be individualized to fit the needs of each school and school district (Schwallie-

Giddis, ter Maat, & Pak, 2003). The importance of being able to inform stakeholders of the relationship school counseling programs have on student achievement became abundantly clear as accountability was pushing school reform (Dahir, 2004). ASCA determined the program standards would define what students should know and do as a result of participating in a school counseling program (Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Dahir, 2004).

Transforming School Counseling Initiative. The school reform movement during the early part of the 21st century came at a time of technological advances and rapidly changing diversity in K-12 American public schools (Martin, 2002). According to Martin (2002), the juncture of these forces in concert with an unfavorable review of school counseling, furnished a foundation for rethinking, reframing, and transforming school counseling. The Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) was a joint venture between the Education Trust and the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund (Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Martin 2002). TSCI was a five-year, national initiative encompassing several stages to encourage the development of new program models for pre-service training of school counselors (Martin, 2002). Martin (2002) contends the purpose of these new programs was to prepare future school counselors to serve as student advocates and as academic advisors who exhibit a belief that all students can achieve at high levels in rigorous, challenging academic courses.

No Child Left Behind, the National Standards, and the Transforming School Counseling Initiative led to an understanding that a model was needed for school counseling which would provide a scaffold to better understand the school counselors' role and their value to student achievement. This scaffold would be the birth of wide-spread comprehensive school counseling programs.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). President Barak Obama signed ESSA on December 10, 2015 (U.S. Department of Education [U.S. DOE], n.d.). According to the U.S. Department of Education (n.d.), ESSA reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, which is the nation's education law. Additionally, ESSA replaced No Child Left Behind (NCLB) of 2001 (Brown, Lenares-Solomon, & Deaner, 2019). ESSA retained the principle of accountability for states to provide high standards for educating all students (U.S. DOE, n.d.). However, ESSA allows greater flexibility for states and local school districts to set goals for standards, to determine how growth will be measured, and to decide consequences if schools do perform well (U.S. DOE, n.d.). The passage of ESSA will have a significant influence on education, but also school counseling. According to Brown et al. (2019), school counselors must advocate and with stakeholders and their state counseling associations to define their roles as outlined by ESSA.

School counselors are included in the definition of "mental health service provider" (ESSA, Pub. L. 114-95, Title 20 § 4102, pp. 169-170) as well as "specialized instructional support personnel" (ESSA, Pub. L. 114-95, Title 20 § 8003, pp. 298-299). "Specialized instructional support personnel" (§ 8003, pp. 298-299) is a new term in ESSA, replacing pupil services personnel. This change in terminology reflects the similarities between pupil services and related services, as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Act, and the professionals that provide these services to children (National Association of School Psychologist [NASP], n.d.). Teaching core curriculum lessons is a significant component of comprehensive school counseling programs. The new designation of section 8003, provides school counselors with additional support to advocate for a comprehensive school counseling program.

According to Brown et al. (2019), several areas in the law denote the role of school counselors and areas where school counselors could provide an equitable, well-rounded education to all students. The first area located in Title IV focuses on providing a well-rounded education to prepare future citizens and consumers through technology, innovation, and career and life skills (Brown et al., 2019). According to the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD, 2015), this a change from Title IV in NCLB where the focus was on core academics. ESSA specifies that states develop programs "that support access to a well-round education" and "can be conducted in a partnership with an institution of higher education" (ESSA, Pub. L. 114-95, Title 20 § 4107 to 4108, pp. 176-177). Activities that school counselors currently promote through comprehensive school counseling programs to increase graduation rates or explore careers are supported in the section. The second implication for school counselors is section 4108 in Title IV of ESSA. This section allows the use of funds to "develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive programs and activities…that foster and support safe, healthy, supportive, and drug-free environments that support academic achievement; and promote the involvement of parents" (§4108, p. 178). This section of ESSA again provides strong support for comprehensive school counseling programs. The final area that will impact school counselors is located in Title 1 and deals with family engagement (Brown et al., 2019). Title 1, Section 1116, was retitled "Parent and Family Engagement." A core component of comprehensive school counseling programs is working with families and involving families in the child's education. This provides further support for school counselors to implement comprehensive school counseling programs.

Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

As the name implies, a comprehensive school counseling program has a diverse and wide-ranging view within schools. A comprehensive school counseling program, according to Lowery et al. (2018), is comprised of state certified school counselors who make decisions pertaining to their school counseling program using school and student data to ensure equitable access for all students to a high-quality education. ASCA (2012), declares that comprehensive school counseling programs have a comprehensive scope, a preventative design, and are developmental in nature. Comprehensive school counseling programs allow school counselors to systematically deliver services in a developmentally appropriate manner to all students in their school (Johnson et al., 2011) not just a select few, thus assuring equitable access to opportunities and rigorous courses for all students (ASCA, 2012). Comprehensive school counseling programs changed the question from "*What do school counselors do?*" to "*How are students different because of the school counseling program?*" (ASCA, 2012; Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Stone & Dahir, 2009). Studies (Dimmitt, 2003; Lapan et al., 2003, Lapan et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003) have shown positive effects of comprehensive school counseling programs on the academic achievement of students.

Lapan et al, (2003) found when school counselors provided unique emotional and programmatic resources (i.e., core curriculum activities, personal counseling, collaborating with parents) seventh grade students received higher grades, felt safe at school, and reported having better relationships with their teachers than students in schools without comprehensive school counseling programs. Sink and Stroh (2003) found evidence to support the argument that when a comprehensive school counseling program is executed with fidelity in elementary school, students exposed to the program

have high academic success. In fact, these students perform better on norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests than students not exposed to a comprehensive program (Sink & Stroh, 2003). Research also show positive results with student discipline and graduation rates. Lapan et al. (2012) found high schools reported lower disciplinary incidents and lower suspension rates when high levels of college and career counseling and responsive services were provided by high school counselors. Lapan et al. (2012) also found students graduated at higher rates when counseling programs included responsive services and college and career counseling. Research clearly shows the benefit of students being exposed to comprehensive school counseling programs. To assist school counselors with the development and implementation of comprehensive programs, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) created a framework.

American School Counselor Association National Model

Over the past century, school counseling has developed from a vocational only focus to one that is data driven and proactive in nature (ASCA, 2012; Lapan, 2012; Lapan et al., 2007; Paisley & Hayes, 2003; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). In 2001, ASCA brought together practitioners, theorists, and experts in the field who recommended that a model was needed to assists school counselors to become central team players to achieve their school mission (ASCA, 2012). The outcome of the think tank was the ASCA National Model which serves as a scaffold for "designing, developing, implementing, and evaluation of standards based, data driven school counseling programs" (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008, p 34).

In 2003, ASCA released the *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*, which according to Sabella (2006), "changed the practice of the school counselor from reactive to proactive" (p. 412). The Model was intended to (a)

move school counseling from responsive services provided for some students to a program for every student, (b) provide uniformity to standardize school counseling programs across the country, allowing for flexibility to customize to individual schools, and (c) re-establish school counseling as a crucial educational function that is integral to academic achievement and overall student success (ASCA, 2012). Hatch and Chen-Hayes (2008) assert that the ASCA Model delineates how school counselors can link their work to student achievement data and show how their results connect to the academic mission of the school. Sabella (2006) states "the framework provided by the ASCA National Model helps school counselors have greater intentions and clarity in their practice" (p. 412). Sabella's description does not try to over analyze the purpose; rather, he presents a simple and clear picture presented in layperson's language, which is advantageous when attempting to combat the long history of role confusion faced by school counselors.

ASCA borrowed heavily from three models of school counseling – Gysbers and Henderson's (2012), comprehensive school counseling, Johnson and Johnson's (2003) competency-based model, and Myrick's (2003) developmental model as well as research by The Education Trust (1997) on school counselor preparation in the development of the ASCA National Model (to Janson & Stone, 2009). Borrowing from these existing models, ASCA created a model that consists of four themes and four components (ASCA, 2012).

Themes

The ASCA National Model emphasizes four themes (ASCA, 2012), which help to address many social justice issues and access issues students face in today's schools (Shields, Dollarhide, & Young, 2018). By applying leadership, advocacy, and

collaboration to a comprehensive school counseling program, school counselors impact student achievement and systemic change, ensuring equity and access to rigorous education for all students (ASCA, 2012; Stone & Dahir, 2009). Several school counseling national initiatives have been clear that *leadership* is a necessary skill for all school counselors (ASCA, 2005; McMahon, Mason, & Paisley, 2009; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Mason and McMahon (2009) assert that while not historically associated with school counseling, leadership is a foundation of school counseling and skills such as advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change require school counselors to have a certain level of leadership. *Advocacy* places school counselors squarely in the forefront of education reform as they are uniquely positioned advocate for all students to acquire high academic, career, and personal/social standards (ASCA, 2012). *Collaboration* has many benefits from increased support for student achievement and development (ASCA, 2012) when involving stakeholders. Collaboration between school counselors and principals can have significant effect on student achievement by providing an opportunity for school counselors to impact the achievement for all students (Clark & Stone, 2000; Edwards et al., 2014; Janson & Stone, 2009). Finally, school counselors engage in *systemic change* by recognizing systemic obstacles to student achievement and working with members of the community, faculty, students, and parents, remove those barriers to ensure the success of all students (ASCA, 2012)*.*

Components

ASCA emphasizes four components in the National Model which provide the charge to school counselors to attack the inequities found in schools (ASCA, 2012; Shields et al., 2018). The *foundation* of a school counseling program holds the essence of

the program - student knowledge, attitudes, and skills learned due to the school

counseling program (ASCA, 2012) and has a goal to "establish the focus of the

comprehensive school counseling program based on the academic, career, and

personal/social needs of the students in the schools" (ASCA, 2012, p. 21). The

management component of the National Model provides assessments and tools which

assist school counselors to "develop, implement, and evaluate their program based on

clearly defined priorities reflecting student needs" (ASCA, 2012, p. 29). The *delivery*

component focuses on how the school counseling program is provided to students

(ASCA, 2012) and specifically targets how school counselors use their time. The goal

for time is 80% spent in direct service with students and the remaining 20% spent

interacting with others on behalf of a student (ASCA, 2012) through indirect service.

Through *accountability*, school counselors evaluate their programs to determine "how

students are different as a result of the school counseling program" (ASCA, 2012, p. 85).

Data from program evaluations help school counselors "garner the political clout

necessary to improve school counselor to student ratios and redefine the roles and

activities of school counselors" (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Hatch & Chen-Hayes,

2008, p. 40).

  The ASCA National Model is a data driven tool, requiring counselors to review

and analyze the data of their schools before making decisions on what programming they

will implement (ASCA, 2012) for all students, thus, helping counselors focus on

efficiency and effectiveness of their programs (Schwalli-Giddis, ter Maat, & Pak, 2003).

Research has revealed that when students are exposed to a comprehensive school

counseling program they tend to earn higher grades, have less classroom disruptions, and

have better peer relationships (Dahir et al., 2009; Lapan et al., 2007; Sink, 2005).

The ASCA National Model was first released in 2003 and the fourth edition was released in 2019. Table 1 provides a brief summary of changes over the four editions.

Table 1

Comparison of the four editions of the ASCA National Model

Edition	Year	Changes
1st	2003	- Provided a definition of a school counseling program - Provided appropriate roles for school counselors - Recommended the majority of school counselors' time be spent in direct service to all students - Reflected a comprehensive approach to program foundation, delivery, management, and accountability - Emphasized that school counseling programs are driven by data - Established benefits for all school stakeholders - Programs do not remain stagnant, rather change as data is collected about the effectiveness - Four Elements: Foundation, Delivery System, Management System, and Accountability - Four Themes: Leadership, Advocacy, Collaboration and Teaming, and Systemic Change
2nd	2005	- Section titled "The Theory Behind the ASCA National Model" was added - This section defined what constituted a theory and presented a brief history of school counseling theory - Seven questions that needed to be answered by theory were outlined - Questions were answered using 27 major principles and 15 subprinciples to represent the theory base of the ASCA National Model
3rd	2012	*Components* replaced *Elements* - Foundation: Addresses components that drive every school counseling program. - Three sections were added: - Program Focus *program goals* were added - Student Competencies *other student standards* were added - Professional Competencies

- ASCA competencies and ethical standards were added
  - o Content from the second edition was aligned under the three new sections
- Management: Provides assessments and tools to manage school counseling program.
  - o Included new as well as revised tools designed to help develop and maintain program components
- Delivery: Focuses on the method of implementing the school counseling program to students.
  - o A clear and defined distinction between direct and indirect student services was added
  - o Components of the delivery system were divided between direct and indirect student services
  - o Some system support topics from the second edition were moved to other components.
  - o Tables with changes included
- Accountability: Designed to help school counselors analyze data collected from other sections of the National Model.
  - o Three subsections added:
    - ▪ Data Analysis – inform decisions about the program.
    - ▪ Program Results – help to complete reports
    - ▪ Evaluation and Improvement – helps to identify strengths and areas of improvement through analyzing self-assessment and program assessment data
- Four themes: Leadership, Advocacy, Collaboration, and Systemic Change were woven throughout the four components
- Additional information (i.e., special topics written by professionals) was included

4th	2019	• The four themes were removed from the outer edge of the National Model diamond and are now interwoven representing they are integral components. The themes are highlighted in the text to give practical examples of how the theme relates to a particular section.
		• Define (previously Foundation): Identifies the standards that define the school counseling profession
		○ Includes two sections:
		▪ Student Standards
		▪ Professional Standards
		• Manage (previously Management): Helps school counselors effectively and efficiently manage the school counseling program
		○ Includes two sections:
		▪ Program Focus
		▪ Program Planning
		• Deliver (previously Delivery)
		○ Includes two sections:
		▪ Direct Student Services
		▪ Indirect Student Services
		• Assess (previously Accountability)
		○ Includes two sections:
		▪ Program Assessment
		▪ School Counselor Assessment and Appraisal

Sources. American School Counselor Association,(2003, 2005, 2012, 2019)

Advocating for the American School Counselor Association National Model

The aforementioned research delivers strong support for schools to implement a

comprehensive counseling program as suggested by ASCA; however, in a study

conducted by Leuwerke et al. (2009), six-years after the release of the ASCA National

Model, over 70% of principals had very little to no exposure to the Model. When

administrators remain unaware of the Model, confusion over the appropriate role of

school counselors is perpetuated and collaboration between school counselors and

principals is stifled (Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Williams & Wehrman, 2010). It becomes

important to provide learning opportunities for principals and administrators to learn

about what a comprehensive school counseling program can do for the students in their

school (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012; Carey et al., 2012; Lapan et al., 2001; Lapan et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Wilkerson et al., 2013). The Model offers guidance on the roles school counselors should be involved in, it also provides an answer to what school counselors do and how to know school counselors are effective (Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2003). This is important for principals to know since many of them understand education from the perspective of a teacher, which the majority were before becoming principals.

While school counselors do teach lessons, their training is different from teachers and can lead to further confusion pertaining to their roles from those trained in teacher programs. This incongruence in training makes it even more important for principals to understand the role of school counselors and for principals to be able to answer the questions regarding what school counselors do. If principals had a clear understanding of the Model and the appropriate roles of school counselors, the two parties could partner to establish priorities, and focus the school counseling program on school improvement goals (Dahir, et al., 2010).

Educational Leadership Pre-Service Preparation

Research is clear that principals hold the most power in a school as they hire staff and assign staff particular duties (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Graham et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018). With this power, principals control the path everyone will follow to meet goals as well as set the tone of the school (Bringman et al., 2010; Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Chata & Loesch, 2007). Without the support of the principal, it is difficult to have a successful school counseling program (Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Chata & Loesch, 2007).

Unfortunately, research show that administrators do not have exposure to the appropriate roles of school counselors while in pre-service programs (Dodson, 2004; Finkelstein, 2009; Johnson et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018) nor do principals feel they

are adequately prepared to collaborate with school counselors (Lowery et al., 2018).

Even more disturbing, according to Johnson et al., (2011), is the missed academic

benefits for students due to school counselors being assigned non-counseling duties.

These findings show the importance of intentional collaboration between pre-service

educational leadership programs and counseling programs so school counselors and

school principals will understand and respect the roles each play in student achievement

and schools' success.

According to Bringman et al. (2010) and Leuwerke et al. (2009), when principals

are exposed to appropriate roles of school counselors and the influence they have on

student success, principals' perspectives about school counseling and recommendations

of the use of school counselors are positively impacted. Without information on school

counselors and comprehensive school counseling programs, administrators are left to

their own accord to find training. Those that initiate this self-discovery journey tend to

positively adjust their attitudes toward school counselors (Bringman et al., 2010;

Leuwerke et al., 2009), while those who do not engage in self-discovery have a relatively

unclear understanding or outdated awareness of the profession.

Principals' Perceptions About School Counselors

Chata and Loesch (2007) report that many principals believe registration,

scheduling, administering tests, and maintaining student records are appropriate functions

of school counselors. Pérusse, Goodnough, Donegan, and Jones (2004) supported this

finding in their study showing a majority of principals believe appropriate roles for

school counselors are incongruent with the roles recommended by ASCA. Without

training during educational leadership pre-service programs, principals are left to conjure

up what they think a school counselor should do based on their own personal experiences

(Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001) and outdated practices (Finkelstein, 2009). Zalaquett (2005) found that elementary principals overwhelmingly rated coordination of intervention meetings as the activity school counselors spend the majority of their time engaged in completing. School counselors must become intentional to build relationships with principals in order to build a bridge of support and trust (Dollarhide et al., 2007; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Stone & Clark, 2001). According to Zalaquett (2005), "it is important for school counselors and principals to form a partnership based on knowledge, trust and positive regard for what each profession does." (p. 456). Research shows that building relationships between school counselors and principals increases an understanding of the roles of each professional when working with students (Armstrong et al., 2010; Zalaquett, 2005). The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is clear that these two groups must form partnerships in order to positively impact student achievement. The ASCA National Model (2012) states:

> Although the school principal may serve as the head of the school and ultimately be responsible for student success, the school counselor plays a critical role in making student success a reality. Principals need school counselors' perspective and leadership in working together on behalf of the students in the school…. School counselors must be the ever-present voice to ensure student needs are recognized and the staff knows how to access additional help or resources when needed. (p. 17)

School counselors positively influence the academic achievement of students; however, working in a collaborative relationship with school administrators, students will have greater academic success. As Dahir, et al. (2010) stated, "At the heart of the relationship

between school counselors and principals is the convergence of goals about student

achievement and school success" (p. 287).

By working together and developing common goals for student achievement and

then working collaboratively toward the specified goals, students will reap the benefit of

maximizing and reaching their academic goals. This collaborative relationship is vitally

important to the academic success of all students; thus, research encourages school

counselors to take the lead in establishing working, collaborative and trusting

relationships with their principals (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Armstrong et al., 2010;

Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Dahir, 2004; Dahir et al., 2010;

Dollarhide et al., 2007; Zalaquett & Chatters, 2012). School counselors are not

powerless in influencing the perceptions held by principals about their roles in student

achievement; therefore, they must take a proactive approach to communicating directly to

principals (Dollarhide et al., 2007). Investing in such relationships provide opportunities

for principals to understand the impact school counselors can have on student

achievement (Clark & Stone, 2000; Edwards et al., 2014; Janson & Stone, 2009).

Additionally, the principal, school counselor relationship presents an avenue for working

toward an alliance to create schools that are physically, socially, and emotionally safe for

all students (Yavuz, Cayirdag, Dahir, & Gümüseli, 2017) and are responsive to

stakeholders' needs (Riddle, 2009).

Helping principals understand the role of school counselors is important since

they may base the role on their personal experiences (Fitch et al., 2001). Additionally,

coming from different training backgrounds and experiences can lead to incongruency as

well. The majority of principals were trained to be teachers and practiced as a teacher

prior to entering school leadership. Their base of understanding comes from this

viewpoint and they can be uncertain how to work with school counselors (Lowery et al., 2018). While trained differently, both come with a goal of helping students succeed (Dahir et al., 2010), so it is critical for principals to have a strong foundation of understanding how to appropriately use the school counselor in their building. It is also important that principals' expertise and voice are brought into the conversation of comprehensive counseling to ensure all students are receiving equitable access to public education.

Principals' Perspectives About the American School Counselor Association

National Model

Review of literature establish that principals play a critical role in the development and sustainability of a comprehensive school counseling program. From their power in controlling the direction of the school through assignment of duties (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Graham et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018), to ensuring school counselors are seen as leaders in the building (Dahir et al., 2010), to working with school counselors to develop goals to reach the school mission (Dahir et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2014), principals are essential to the success of the school counseling program. Unfortunately, principals' voices are missing from school counseling literature regarding their perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. This is a significant missing piece from the literature in light of the potential impact the ASCA National Model can have on student success (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008), the breadth of research showing the importance of principals and school counselors working in tandem to advance student success in academic, social, and career development (Armstrong et al., 2010; Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Stone & Clark, 2001), and how students are negatively impacted when principals assigned school counselors to non-counseling roles due to their

lack knowledge of the comprehensive counseling programs (Chata & Loesch, 2007;

Bickmore & Curry, 2013; Gysbers & Henderson, 2012; Lowery et al., 2008). Principals

should be intentionally invited to the conversation to ensure their voices and expertise in

student academic success are part of the conversation of comprehensive school

counseling. If systemic change is a true cornerstone of the ASCA National Model

(ASCA, 2012), then all partners in student success must have a voice pertaining to the

perceived strengths and weaknesses of the ASCA National Model.

Research shows us the value school counselors place on the ASCA National

Model (Carey et al., 2012; Dahir, et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2011; Poynton et al., 2008),

but very little exists on principals' perspective about the Model. The present research on

principals pertains to their perceptions of school counselors (Chata & Loesch, 2007;

Dollarhide et al., 2007; Fitch et al., 2001; Graham et al., 2011; Leuwerke et al., 2009;

Williams & Wehrman, 2010), not on their perspectives about comprehensive school

counseling programs. While understanding principals' perceptions of school counseling

is invaluable information for school counselors in advocating for their programs, the

intentional formation of a partnership between the two parties will lead to the creation of

common goals for student achievement and overall school success. In order for school

counselors to be instrumental in bringing about systemic change through leadership,

advocacy, and collaboration (ASCA, 2012) the profession must be deliberate and actively

engage principals in the conversation.

Currently, the most relevant information that brings to light the voice of principals

is *The College Board 2012 National Survey of School Counselors and Administrators*

(2012). While the survey does not gather information on the ASCA National Model, it

does provide a view of principals' thoughts on school counselors and the role they play

on student development. It is clear from survey responses that school counselors and

principals continue to view the role school counselors play in student success differently.

Intentionally partnering with principals and bringing them to the conversation could help

alleviate these differences (Amatea & Clark, 2004; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Leuwerke et

al., 2009; Zalaquett, 2005). To serve the best interests of students, the participation of

school principals in establishing comprehensive counseling programs is needed, and this

study will fill the gap of the experiences of school principals of a school with

comprehensive school counseling programs through collaboration and transforming the

status quo of school counseling.

Collaboration in Educational Settings

The importance of collaboration was prevalent in the literature. Many references

were made regarding the importance of principals and school counselors collaborating,

none clearer than Dahir et al. (2010) who said, "the success of collaboration is rooted in

the assurance that the beliefs and priorities of principals and school counselors are

focused on a common goal, which is a passion for improving student outcomes" (p. 298).

While members of these two professional groups arrive in their positions via different

educational training paths, they both have a common mission of ensuring students reach

their full potential by removing barriers that impede students' journey. The research is

unobstructed in showing that collaboration is a powerful joint effort that leads to the

convergence of goals pertaining to student achievement and school success (Dahir et al.,

2010), school counselors' ability to perform appropriate roles (Chala & Loesch, 2007),

and the schools' ability to be responsive to stakeholders' needs (Riddle, 2009). In fact,

Doughtery (2014) asserts that collaboration is increasingly seen as an important service

provided by members of helping professions and involves a process in which two or more

participants work together toward a desired outcome for a client. For example, a client

can be a student if a school counselor and teacher collaborate to assist the student toward

a goal. Collaboration requires participants to listen to one another, value contributions,

and enable each participant to have a sense of belonging (Goulet, Krentz, & Christiansen,

2003). These ingredients lead to mutual respect which is required for successful

collaboration to occur (Edwards et al., 2014; Goulet et al., 2003).

Collaboration is not relegated for use only in schools, but it is a valuable and

necessary tool in which schools engage. It is used to assist youth, families, schools and

the community (Henderson, MacKay, & Peterson-Badali, 2010; Shaw & Brown, 2011)

reach a desired end. Different from consultation where one participant is seen as the

expert, participants in collaboration each come with their own set of expertise

(Doughtery, 2014) and can be from different disciplines (Finello, 2011) such as school

counselor, principal, school psychologist, teacher, etc. Collaboration is an important

service for schools to utilize as professionals from different disciplines work side by side

to improve student success. Finello (2011) states, "collaboration emerged as a way to

help the parties involved to take on a greater sense of ownership in the problem-solving

process, most particularly, the carrying out of interventions" (p. 11). This statement by

Finello supports research showing the critical need for principals and school counselors

to collaborate in order to remove barriers to student and school success. Entering into

relationships based on mutual respect and common goals creates a process whereby

leaders and followers work together to effect change in the culture of the system

(Anderson, 2017; Sun & Leithwood, 2012).

Existing research (Dahir et al., 2010; Doughtery, 2014; Henderson et al., 2010;

Riddle, 2009; Shaw & Brown, 2011) not only supports the use of collaboration in

schools, it gives credence to the inclusion of collaboration as one of the four themes of

the ASCA National Model. ASCA (2012), promotes collaboration as a critical ingredient

for the focus and practice of school counselors. School counselors engage in

collaboration with various stakeholders and in numerous ways. School counselors

collaborate through advocacy for their counseling program (Edwards et al., 2014;

Sabella, 2006), on behalf of students (Dahir et al., 2010), and parents (Riddle, 2009).

While collaboration includes many individuals, possibly the most important is the school

principal due to their ability to control the direction of school programs (Chata & Loesch,

2007; Graham et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018). ASCA (2012) fully supports intentional

collaboration between school counselors and principals as an important means to student

achievement and school success. Collaboration is a critical skill for school counselors as

it has the potential to create permanent change in collaborative partners as participants

work toward successful completion of common goals.

Transformational Leadership

With emphasis on the importance of collaboration between school principals and

school counselors in the literature (ASCA, 2012; Dahir et al., 2010; Doughtery, 2014;

Henderson et al., 2010; Riddle, 2009; Shaw & Brown, 2011), transformational leadership

theory was used to guide this study. James MacGregor Burns (1978) introduced the term

transformational leadership in his seminal work *Leadership.* According to Burns (1978),

transformational leaders who have "motive and power tap followers' motives in order to

realize the purposes of both leaders and followers" (p. 18.)   Put differently,

transformational leaders discover the motives of others and encourage followers so both

reach their goals (Hallinger, 2003; Sun & Leithwood, 2012). Burns felt that leadership

was intimately linked to the needs of the followers and by nature dynamic and responsive

to the individual employee (Burns, 1978). For Burns (1978), leadership is different from power because it is inseparable from followers' needs. The work of Burns changed leadership from a solely transactional exchange of rewards and consequences to a personal, nurturing, and uplifting relationship between employee and leader (Bass, 1999). Currently, transformational leadership is one of the most popular leadership approaches and appears to connect with changes to school counseling practice (Hallinger, 2007). Bass and Riggio (2006) suggested that transformational leadership's popularity might be due to its emphasis on intrinsic motivation and follower development, which fits the needs of today's school counselors, who want to create comprehensive school counseling programs.

Bass (1997) affirms that transformational leadership is universally effective across cultures, as it can provide the envisioning and empowerment required by this century's knowledgeable and diverse workforce. Transformational leadership is concerned with improving the performance of followers and developing followers to their fullest potential (Bass & Avolio, 1993). People who exhibit transformational leadership often have a strong set of internal values and ideals, and they are effective at motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good rather than their own self-interests (Kuhnert, 1994). Transformational leaders encourage followers to do more than what is required (Sosik, Potosky, & Jung, 2002), are proactive and help followers to attain unexpected goals (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003), and they move followers beyond immediate self-interest (Bass, 1999). Designing and implementing comprehensive school counseling programs takes time and energy Principals are important in encouraging school counselors to implement comprehensive school counseling programs. While school counselors lead the process toward implementing

comprehensive school counseling programs, principals are called on to encourage and help school counselors move forward to showcase their programs. There have been several variations of transformational leadership since its introduction, so Burns (2003) stressed the importance of the concept by stating:

> To transform is to cause a metamorphosis in form or structure, a change in the very condition or nature of a thing, a change into another substance a radical change in outward form or inner character, as when a frog is transformed into a prince or a carriage maker into an auto factory. It is change of this breadth and depth that is fostered by transforming leadership. (p. 24)

This tangible description used by Burns of transformational leadership best represents the change needed for the relationship between principals and school counselors in order to transform schools with the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs. Research by Bernard Bass (1985) highlighting transformational leadership behaviors is considered the cornerstone of research on transformational leadership in schools. According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership behaviors describe particular behaviors or activities in which leaders participate that will improve the overall performance of the school. Bass (1985) contends leaders engaged in four transformational leadership behaviors (a) inspirational motivation, (b) individualized consideration, (c) intellectual stimulation, and (d) idealized influence daily.

Inspirational motivation involves leaders communicating high performance expectations in an encouraging and enthusiastic fashion (Bass, 1985). Change can be difficult and uncomfortable. Inspirational motivation could be used by a school counselor to assist a principal with letting go of the status quo and creating a new way of

conducting business vis-à-vis a comprehensive school counseling program. Motivation

of faculty members can be accomplished by the principal and school counselor being

enthusiastic about the changes and creating an atmosphere that reassures stakeholders.

Individualized consideration is displayed when leaders pay attention to the

developmental needs of followers and support and coach the development of their

followers (Bass, 1985). Individual consideration might be seen when school counselors

are struggling to find meaning with school data and the principal provides encouragement

and guidance on disaggregating data.

Intellectual stimulation requires leaders to challenge followers and help them

become more innovative and creative (Bass, 1985). Working collaboratively, a principal

and school counselor could use intellectual stimulation to challenge and support faculty

in pairing educational curriculum with the school counseling curriculum to discover

commonalities that could lead to co-teaching experiences.

Finally, *idealized influence* is when leaders provide vision and a sense of mission

and sets the example while showing determination and confidence (Bass, 1985). An

example of idealized influence is when a school counselor approaches their principal with

data to show how the school and students could be positively impacted by implementing

a comprehensive program. In this situation the school counselor offers a mission and

vision of what a comprehensive school counseling program would look like as well as

what would be different due to the addition of the program.

These four behaviors support the use of transformational leadership as the

theoretical framework for this study as it places the emphasis on the importance of the

leader in creating new norms which parlay into the success of a school counseling

program and highlights why the perspective of principals are so important in the research

of the ASCA National Model and comprehensive school counseling programs.

As previously discussed, leadership is a foundational skill for school counselors

(Mason & McMahon, 2009). While the principal is the established leader of a school, the

tenets of transformational leadership can motivate principals and school counselors

toward common goals. This supports Burns' (1978) assertion that transformational

leadership brings about a relationship built on mutual needs, goals, and values, thus

allowing followers to be leaders and leaders to be followers. Ultimately, principals and

school counselors work together to ensure each student feels connected to their school

and supported by the faculty and staff of the school. Through the collaboration between

the school counselor and principal, appropriate behaviors and skills will be viewable for

all keyholders; thus, influencing movement toward changing the culture of the school

where students feel supported and connected.

Transformational leadership was originally applied to corporate settings (Shivers-

Blackwell, 2004); however, it has become popular ins school leadership over the past

several decades (Anderson, 2017; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood & Sun, 2012).

Anderson (2017) argued that transformational leadership is a viable approach for

educational leaders to use in transforming schools based on the success seen in business

organizations and the positive impacts seen on school success. Anderson (2017) states:

> transformational leadership is appropriate for school settings because of its
>
> emphasis on preparing employees to learn new things, building and strengthening
>
> new organizational norms, establishing new meaning and ways of thinking, and
>
> its effectiveness as a tool in helping leaders break established norms and establish
>
> new norms that transform school culture. (p. 5)

Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) define transformational leadership as a form of principal

leadership that moves individuals toward a level of commitment to achieve school goals

by setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the

instructional program. Transformational leadership seems to encompass the "new

vision" (House & Martin, 1998) for school counselors that stresses an active, dynamic,

and collaborative role as a school change agent and advocate who uses his or her

comprehensive program to promote positive student outcomes. With the established

research on the impact of transformational leadership in schools and its focus on creating

new norms, attitudes, and changes to the organizational culture, it is a natural fit to use

when examining experiences of school principals of a school with comprehensive school

counseling programs.

   According to Hallinger (2003), Leithwood and his colleagues are credited with

bringing transformational leadership to the educational literature having conducted the

most substantial adaptation of Bass' transformational leadership construct into the

educational arena. The initial concepts of transformational leadership played an

influential role in guiding Leithwood's development of his transformational leadership

model, but his model of school leadership was derived from his own qualitative and

quantitative research (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). Leithwood's concept of

transformational leadership is supported in literature in order to meet school goals

(ASCA, 2012; Chata & Loesch, 2007; Dahir et al., 2010; Doughtery, 2014; Graham et

al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2010; Lowery et al., 2018; Riddle, 2009; Shaw & Brown,

2011). Leithwood's model brings attention to building productive community

relationships, which is not addressed in earlier models. Leithwood's model initially

conceptualized transformational leadership into eight dimensions: creating vision,

developing group goals, maintaining high performance expectations, modeling, providing individual support, providing intellectual stimulation, building a productive school culture, and building structures for collaborations (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Fernandez, 1994). Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) suggested the addition of a ninth dimension: building good relations with parents. This is an important addition as parents are very much part of the work of school counselors (ASCA, 2012).

Leithwood's model also includes management dimensions that address the transactional component of transformational leadership. These are as follows: establishing effective staffing practices, providing instructional support, monitoring school activities, and buffering staff from excessive and distracting external demands. Leithwood and Harris (2006) further grouped these dimensions into four categories: setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization, and managing the instructional program. They describe these categories as the core practices or the basics of successful school leadership. According to Leithwood and Harris (2006), these categories encompass specific leader behaviors that are common among successful school leaders. These dimensions of being a transformational school leader encompasses establishing goals and high-performance expectations.

Transformational leadership brings about change in individuals and social systems as well as enhances the motivation, morale, and performance of followers (Bass, 1985). Through the lens of encouraging change and improving the performance of others, principals could use transformational leadership to develop the leadership skills of their school counselors. The creation of such a relationship serves to develop an individual vis-à-vis school counselor who, through their professional training, is uniquely qualified to work with all stakeholders. When motivated to develop their leadership

skills, the school counselor is motivated and potentially can bring in additional resources

from relationships with stakeholders. Northouse (2016) explains transformational leaders

as:

> Transformational leaders are recognized as change agents who are good role
>
> models, who can create and articulate a clear vision for an organization, who
>
> empower followers to achieve a higher standard, who act in ways that make
>
> others want to trust them, and who give meaning to organizational life. (p. 198)

It is a daunting task to implement a comprehensive program. School counselors need the

support and encouragement of their principals to motivate them to achieve the goal

(Burns, 1978; Hallinger, 2003, 2007, Northouse, 2016) having a comprehensive school

counseling program in place for all students.

A comprehensive school counseling program takes planning and coordination

with stakeholders to implement, and the principal is at the epicenter of the success based

on their support of a program. Operating from this orientation, a principal would provide

the support and resources to begin a comprehensive program based on their trust of the

change it would bring to the school. Transformational leadership supports models of

leadership that focus on collaboration (Daniëls, Hondeghem, & Dochy, 2019), which

makes a substantial nexus with comprehensive school counseling programs.

Collaboration and leadership are themes of comprehensive school counseling

programs, and school counselors are highly encouraged to enter collaborative

relationships with their principals (Amatea & Clark, 2005; ASCA, 2012; Chala &

Loesch, 2007; Dahir et al., 2010; Graham et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018; Riddle, 2009).

If principals are receptive to expanding their views and working with school counselors,

research has shown the possible changes to the culture of the school (Riddle, 2009),

increase in student academic achievement (Dimmitt, 2003; Lapan et al., 2001, Lapan et

al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003), reduction in student discipline incidents (Lapan et al.,

2012), and more significant support from community stakeholders (Riddle, 2009).

The ASCA National Model, comprehensive school counseling programs,

collaboration, and transformational leadership each have tenets that form a nexus with

each other and to this study. In seeking to learn about the experiences of school

principals of a school with comprehensive school counseling programs, these four

elements will provide a secure foundation on which to build this study.

Chapter Summary

There is a plethora of research that shows how impactful school counselors can be

on student achievement and helping schools meet their improvement goals (Clark &

Stone, 2000; Edwards et al., 2014; Janson & Stone, 2009). This is especially apparent

when school counselors can fully implement a comprehensive counseling program, as

outlined by ASCA. Research delivers a clear picture of the importance of school

counselors and school principals collaborating and the impact such collaboration can

have on school improvement and student achievement (ASCA, 2012; Chala and Loesch,

2007; Clark & Stone, 2000; Edwards et al., 2014; Janson & Stone, 2009). Research also

furnishes evidence that school administrators do not have a clear understanding of the

role of school counselors (Dodson, 2004; Gysbers, 2010; Leuwerke et al., 2009), nor do

they know about comprehensive school counseling programs (Johnson et al., 2011;

Lowery et al., 2018). Assuming principals and assistant principals have obtained degrees

or certificates in educational leadership where there was limited or no exposure to

comprehensive programs, it becomes incumbent on school counselors or school

counselor district personnel to provide training for administrators (Amatea & Clark, 2005).

Ensuring principals understand comprehensive school counseling is not enough to ensure school counselors will be successful in bringing about systemic change. It will be important for school counselors and principals to develop relationships that are built on mutual respect and trust (Dahir et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2014; Goulet et al., 2003). Using collaboration as the underpinning of the relationship will ensure that each person brings their expertise (Doughtery, 2014; Goulet et al., 2003) as the two parties begin to develop goals for change that will impact every student in the school. Further, operating through the lens of transformation leadership theory will provide additional support for the development of respectful relationships that allow for idea sharing from the involved individuals.

In closing, research supplies ample information pertaining to how the ASCA National Model is implemented and school counselors are utilized in particular ways to ensure the academic and social/emotional success of all students will be positively impacted. However, missing from this research are principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. Through this current study, principals will be solicited to gather pertinent information on the benefits they have seen from the implementation of comprehensive school counseling program for their schools. This research will help further show the importance of having the principal as a partner in order to transform the school counseling program and achieve the common goal of student success and school improvement.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. This chapter describes the methods and procedures that were used to understand the perceptions of school principals about comprehensive school counseling programs. Detailed description of the data analysis process is also be included. The study was guided using the framework of transformational leadership theory, which puts the leader and the group members in a democratic framework where power is shared and the goal of the group is to achieve ongoing transformation. The guiding research question that was answered using the methodology, procedures, and data analysis described in the chapter is: "What are principals' perspectives of comprehensive school counseling programs?"

Qualitative Research

A review of pertinent literature produced an abundance of information regarding the vital role school principals play in the success of school counseling programs (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Graham et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018). However, the literature exposed the absence of research on principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. According to research, the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs can have tremendous impact on student achievement and overall school success (Dahir, 2004; Dahir et al., 2009; Lapan et al., 2007; Sink, 2005), but without the involvement of school principals and their supportive voices, many students may miss out on the experiences with a comprehensive counseling program. By

utilizing a qualitative approach, I conducted thorough and engaging conversations with 12 principals who have experiences with comprehensive school counseling programs (Hays & Singh, 2012). Qualitative research meets the goal for this study due to a guiding principle that data collected from participants will take me on a journey of discovery (Guba, 1978).

Qualitative inquiry uses narrative reporting to describe experiences individuals have in their daily lives and what those actions mean to the individuals (Erickson, 2011; Morrow, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005). According to Merriam (2009), "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (p. 5)." Merriam's explanation best justifies why qualitative research, rather than quantitative design, was used in this study. I sought to understand principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs by participating in conversations with principals, specific to their experiences supporting comprehensive school counseling programs. Engaging in conversations with principals who have direct familiarity with comprehensive school counseling programs provided an understanding of the meaning these individuals make of their experiences (Morrow, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005). Utilizing qualitative research for the current study will provide a platform for principals to share their experiences and their perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

Qualitative research allowed me to be deeply involved with my participants (Creswell, 2014) as we engaged in conversations that allowed me to understand their experiences as principals of school with comprehensive school counseling programs using rich descriptions, rather than simply describing their experiences (Merriam, 2009).

Qualitative research encourages the researcher to spend quality time with participants in

order to obtain a full understanding of the experiences that led to their perspectives about

comprehensive school counseling programs rather than simply discovering outcomes

from a quantitative model (Creswell, 2014; Guba, 1978). Being intentional about the

time spent with participants in order to learn from their experiences and the meaning they

associate with those experiences, situated the researcher as "co-constructor" of meaning

(Morrow, 2005, p. 254), thus allowing the researcher and participants to create meaning

together. As Guba (1978) suggested, "the best way to study process is to observe it

directly, rather than to infer its nature from the known input and the observed output" (p.

25). As the observer of these experiences and through the utilization of interpretive

practices, I will "make the world visible" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3) and gain a

deeper understanding of principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling

programs. Qualitative research allowed me to place the relationship between myself and

the participants at the forefront of the study, thus, ensuring that the study focused on the

stories and experiences of the participants, rather than the generalizability of the study.

Phenomenology

Qualitative research offers several approaches for conducting research. For the

purposes of this study, I selected a phenomenological approach for data collection and

analysis as it afforded me the opportunity to explore the lived experiences of the

participants as principals of schools with comprehensive school counseling programs

(Creswell, 2014). The phenomenological approach attempts to gain a deeper

understanding of the lived experiences of individuals by eliciting thick rich descriptions,

or ample detail, of the experiences of participants (van Manen, 1990) along with focusing

on the essence, or intrinsic character, of their lived experiences (Merriam, 2009; Patton,

2002; Vagle, 2018). Husserl (as cited in Vagle, 2018), introduced the term *lifeworld* to signify the world of human experiences. It is within our lifeworld that "living and experiencing of phenomena take place" (Vagle, 2018, p. 7). According to Merriam (2009), phenomenology "focuses on the experience itself and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness" (p. 24). In other words, the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals surrounding a phenomenon and the meaning they give to those experiences (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

The aim of phenomenology, according to van Manen (1990), "is to transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence" (p. 36). This is accomplished when participants recreate their experiences and researchers capture their words (Vagle, 2018). The words and experiences of principals of schools that have implemented comprehensive school counseling programs are missing from literature; however, using a phenomenological approach, the words of participants will be captured and used to provide meaning to their lived experiences. There is an assumption in phenomenological research that within each phenomenon there is an essence or essences that are shared among individuals who experience the phenomena (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) stated the essence or essences are "the core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced" (p. 106), and Merriam posits essence is "the basic underlying structure of the experience" (p. 25). I explored the intrinsic characteristics that are shared among school principals, their narratives involving their experiences of supporting the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs, and their beliefs of the impact, positive or negative, these programs bring to their schools. In order to elicit these personally held perceptions, I worked to foster respectful relationship with participants where they felt empowered to share their stories.

Relationship with Participants

The collection of narratives provided comprehensive and focused detail of the participants' experiences. Researchers strive to create an atmosphere where participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences surrounding the phenomena being studied (Morrow, 2007). Seidman (2019) asserts that researchers should establish connection and equity with participants throughout the research process. To establish connection and equity with participants of the current study, I contacted potential participants who were selected through purposeful sampling and who met pre-determined criteria. I introduced myself through email and provide a professional background as well as provide a rationale for my interest in hearing their perspectives of comprehensive school counseling programs. I also expressed my interest in hearing their narratives as a conduit for providing new information for school counselors and school administrators in supporting school counselors to implement comprehensive school counseling programs.

Procedures

Participant Sampling

Purposeful sampling was be used to locate participants for my study. Patton (2002) argued that "the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry" (p. 230). Prior to embarking on purposeful sampling, specific criteria were developed that was used for selecting participants (Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002).

For the current study, 12 principals were selected from schools in the southeast region of the United States that have received first time Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP; ASCA, 2012) recognition for implementing comprehensive school

counseling programs within the last five years. RAMP status was used as it is the best

indicator a school has implemented a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA,

2012). RAMP is based on fundamental tenets of the ASCA National Model and is

"conferred only after school counselors complete a detailed application substantiating

their efforts to develop and implement comprehensive, data-drive, accountable school

counseling programs guided by their schools' specific, identified needs" (Wilkerson et al,

2013). These 12 principals have served as principal of the school prior to and during the

RAMP process as well as one-year after receiving RAMP. This established criteria for

the selection of the participants allowed me as researcher to capture the essence of the

principals supporting comprehensive school counseling programs are captured through

information-rich cases.

After the study had begun, ASCA released the fourth edition of the ASCA

National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs in June 2019. After

reviewing the criteria for this study, I made the decision the third edition of the ASCA

National Model (2012) would serve as the model for this study. The reasoning was the

participants' schools would have received RAMP during the tenure of the third edition.

At the time of the conclusion of this study, schools could submit RAMP applications

using guidelines from either the third or fourth editions.

Recruitment

I requested access to the RAMP database through the School Counseling

Analysis, Leadership, Evaluation (SCALE) website. Once access was granted, I secured

a list of all RAMP schools since the inception of the recognition. I sorted a list of schools

located in the southeast region of the United States. Next, I removed schools that had

received RAMP more than one time along with any that received RAMP more than five

years earlier (i.e., 2014 or earlier). This categorization of the initial data provided 131

potential schools. I conducted a search of the internet to explore the schools' websites to

determine the length of time the principals had been in their roles at the school. I ruled

out any who do not meet the criteria pertaining being principal prior to and during the

RAMP application process as well as one-year post RAMP. After this sort, a list of 69

potential participants were found. I sent email invitations to participate in the study to

these 69 principals (Appendix A). The emails provided a description of the current study,

as well as information on the amount of time of their involvement. Principals were also

informed that participants will receive a $25.00 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the

study. All electronic communication contained a description of the study, IRB approval,

and my contact information.

Obtaining participants for the study was an arduous process. Three rounds of

email invitations were sent to potential participants. Three affirmative responses were

received after the first invitations were sent. One week later, the second email was sent

and five positive responses were received. The following week, emails were again sent

to any potential participant for whom a return response had not been received. After the

third round of invitations an additional four potential participants responded affirming

their participation.

As principals expressed an interest in participating in the study, I arranged a time

to call in order to officially introduce myself, explain the purpose of the study, determine

their level of interest, answer any questions they have about the study, and ensure they

meet the criteria to participate. At the conclusion of the phone conversations, a

demographic questionnaire was emailed to gain additional information about the

participants and ensure they meet established criteria for participation in the study

(Appendix B) . Additionally, based on guidance of The University of Georgia

Institutional Review Board, an informed consent form was included in the email

(Appendix C).

Institutional Review Board Process (IRB)

Each university is required to have an Institutional Review Board (IRB) that

functions to protect the "rights and welfare of participants in research conducted under

the auspices of the institution (Seidman, 2019, p. 62). This is done by reviewing all

potential research studies, such as this one, that involve human subjects. Therefore, the

University of Georgia's IRB would need to approve the study prior to any contact with

perspective participants and research being initiated. An IRB application was completed

and submitted for approval by me upon receiving approval from the dissertation

committee after a successful defense of the dissertation prospectus. Once I received

approval to conduct the research, I provided each participant with an official informed

consent form to participate. Participants were reminded their participation was voluntary

and they could withdraw from the study at any time during the process with no

consequence. According to Patton (2002), informed consent is a voluntary agreement to

participate in the research. Obtaining consent from the participants involved explaining

their rights, the purpose of the study, the procedures that will be undertaken, and the

potential risks and benefits of participating (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection

According to Patton (2002), qualitative data consist of "quotations, observations,

and excerpts from documents" (p. 47) that describe a phenomenon in such a clear manner

the reader understands what it was like to be in the environment. Qualitative data

collection involves several steps that include setting the limits for the study, gathering of

information through interviews, and creating a protocol for recording the information (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative researcher is the main instrument of data collection, therefore, the researcher selects collection strategies linked to their theoretical framework (Merriam, 2009), nature and purpose of the study (Morrow, 2007), relationship and status of the population (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013) and their view of the problem under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013; Merriam, 2009). Following is a description of the data collection that will be utilized for the current study.

Demographic Questionnaire. A brief demographic questionnaire was sent to each potential participant in order to gain additional information and to ensure they met the criteria for the current study. For the purposes of this study, the questionnaire asked about participants' knowledge or lack of knowledge about comprehensive school counseling programs, years at the school as principal, if they served as principal during the RAMP application process, and their level of participation in the RAMP process. It was important for this study that participants were the principal prior to and during the RAMP process as well as at least one-year after in order to speak to any changes comprehensive school counseling programs brought to the school.

Semi-Structured Interviews. Interviews are necessary to gain understanding of past events and experiences (Merriam, 2009) and interviews "allow us to enter into the other person's perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 341). Therefore, semi-structured interviews were used as the primary means of data collect in this study. Semi-structured interviews allowed me to elicit sufficient details from the participants through the use of open-ended questions, and probes to understand their experiences. Probes are generated by listening to participants' responses and use their words to ask additional open-ended questions (Roulston, 2010). As the researcher, probes allowed me to delve deeper with participants

by using their own words to further discuss their involvement with school counselors and perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. Initial open-ended questions were generated prior to the interview and were asked to each participant; however, probes were individualized to each participant based on their responses. I created an interview guide to hold the questions and issues to be addressed during the interview (Patton, 2002). While using a semi-structured interview allowed for flexibility with each participant, the interview guide was used to notate the questions that were asked of each participant.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews allowed for questions to be changed, added, or deleted as the interviews were completed (Hayes & Singh, 2012; Merriam, 2009). Several questions, originally in the interview guide were reworded for clarity. Rewording occurred if (a) a particular question needed clarification by multiple participants, (b) participants asked for clarification. Furthermore, questions that did not provide answers supporting the research question or took participants on a different path than anticipated were deleted. Making these adjustments to questions allowed for "moments to be opened for additional questions so that no stone is left unturned" (Vagle, 2018, p. 89)

Due to participants and researcher being in different geographical location, in person, face-to-face interviews were not be an option. Interviews were conducted via Zoom, an online video conferencing platform. Zoom allowed the participants and me to see one another while not being in the same physical space. Additionally, the Zoom platform allowed interviews to be scheduled at convenient times for participants and myself. Also, it allowed the participants to select a place where they felt comfortable to share their experiences. Each participant received an invitation through email that

provided the date and time of the interview as well as a link to access the video

conference platform. An individual link was created for each participant that allowed

only the participant and the researcher to access the video conference. Participants were

notified that the interviews were being recorded via Zoom as well as an audio recording

device. Participants were notified how interviews will be discarded after transcription

has taken place.

As the sole interviewer, I conducted one interview with each participant in order

to collect the initial data. The interviews lasted approximately 30-45 minutes and

contained 10-12 open-ended questions. At the beginning of the interview, I asked

participants to provide a pseudonym if they had not done so on the demographic

questionnaire. I then reminded each participant of the informed consent and received

verbal consent as was approved by IRB. The participants were reminded a pseudonym

for their school would be chosen by me, but the level of the school would accurate.

An interview protocol (Appendix D) was used to assist with asking of questions

and provided a place for recording responses (Creswell, 2014), and points of interest.

The literature review conducted for this study was used to assist with the formation of the

questions. The interviews were recorded on Zoom and an audio recording device. Using

audio recording provided a record of the participants' words, thus, allowing me to access

the original data (Seidman, 2019) should I need to review any data. I wrote memos

(Appendix E) after each interview to encapsulate initial thoughts and reflections I had

during the interview and to capture any particular statements that resonated. Writing

memos after each interview assisted me in understanding principals' perspectives about

comprehensive school counseling programs by getting ideas on paper and using the

writing to facilitate reflection and insight (Maxwell, 2013). The memos provided a place

to summarize the interview as well as note any inconsistencies, salient or interesting points, main themes, and general comments about the interviewee's responses in comparison with the responses of other participants.

Interviews were held on an agreed date and time and took place using a Zoom, video conferencing platform. The location was determined by each participant. Participants were asked to be in a location where they were comfortable answering specific questions about their experiences and where they would not be interrupted. The researcher's location will consist of either my home office or my work office, both which provide an environment conducive for confidentiality and privacy.

Data analysis

Data analysis is a complex process that involves "moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" (Merriam, 2009, p. 176). Data analysis is the process of making sense out of the data collected for the study and involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting (Merriam, 2009). The goal of data analysis is to answer the research question of the study which is, what are principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs?

Simultaneous Analysis. Due to the emergent nature (Patton, 2002) of qualitative research, data analysis is done simultaneously with data collection (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009). Simultaneous analysis involved me collecting data, transcribing the data, and analyzing it simultaneously throughout the interview process (Creswell, 2014). This approach allowed me to compare the data with the next interview (Merriam, 2009), which allowed for the adjustment of questions. According to Patton (2002), analyzing data concurrently during the collection process "improves both the quality of data

collected and the quality of the analysis" (p. 437). Thus, I began data analysis process at the conclusion of the first interview and continued until the final interview has been transcribed (Johnson & Christensen, 2014).

Phenomenological Reduction. The first step in phenomenological reduction is epoche. Epoche, a Greek word meaning to refrain from judgement (Moustakas, 1994) is an essential process in phenomenological analysis. Epoche allowed me, as the researcher, to acknowledge and suspend the biases, prejudices, judgements, and assumptions of the comprehensive school counseling programs (Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2018). Being aware of epoche allows the researcher to view the phenomenon with fresh eyes (Patton, 2002). "In epoche, the everyday understandings, judgments, and knowing are set aside, and phenomena are revisited, freshly, naively, in a wide-open sense, from the vantage point of a pure ego" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). At its core, epoche allows for data to be analyzed virtuously and without any preconceived prejudice. It honors the experiences of participants by looking at the data without judgment. The term most widely used in qualitative research to discuss epoche is bracketing (Vagle, 2018). Moustakas (1994) also stated that during the epoche process, the researcher is to view each experience as new and each is given equal value. I began the research process bracketing my experiences as a school counselor, who managed a comprehensive school counseling program, and had the support of my principal. Bracketing helped to maintain my focus throughout the study with the participants and their experiences. Epoche is not a single event, rather it is an ongoing analytical process. Because epoche is ongoing, I bracketed throughout the research process in a reflexivity journal.

According to Moustakas (1994), phenomenological reduction consists of three steps (a) bracketing, (b) horizontalization, and (c) clustering. The goal of

phenomenological reduction is to analyze the data collected from interviews, develop

codes, and identify the emerging themes based on the experience as described by the

participants.

      Phenomenological Data Analysis. After transcribing the interviews, I engaged

in phenomenological data analysis as described by Moustakas (1994) and immersed

myself in the data to uncover the meaning of each participants' experience. First, after

transcribing, I read each transcript multiple times in order to become intimate with the

data. Second, a research team, consisting of myself and two additional people, coded the

interview transcripts of two participant. We began the coding process with

horizontalization. In phenomenology, horizontalization is the first step in which the

research team uses the transcription of each participant to identified *nonrepetitive* and

*nonoverlappin*g statements, or meaning units, in the transcripts (Moustakas, 1994).

During this process the research team was looking for moments of experience that are

necessary and sufficient to understanding the experience and eliminating those statements

that are repetitive or overlapping. Third, after horizontalization, we clustered the

meaning units into themes. Next, the research team developed textural descriptions, in

which the team refined the data to understand the meaning and depth of the experience

from each participant (Moustakas, 1994). I used the textural description to create

structural descriptions or definitions that include verbatim examples from the interviews

to "provide a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the experience" (Moustakas,

1994, p. 135) to identify relationships among the meanings.

      Each member of the research team independently coded two transcripts using in

vivo coding, in which participants' own words are used to assign codes (Saldaña, 2016).

Once in vivo coding was complete, the research team came together to agree upon the

codes through a process referred to as consensus coding (Hays & Singh, 2012). After the

initial codes were agreed upon, I compiled a list of all codes. The triangulation of

multiple researchers during consensus coding increased the trustworthiness of the data

(Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2002). Next, I categorized these quotes and clustered them into

themes that I found to be common among responses. The research team immersed

themselves in the interview transcripts and searched for themes or meaning units, as well.

According to Patton (2002), this increase intercoder or interrater reliability. After the

second transcript was coded, I created a codebook which contains definitions or

description of each code along with direct quotes from the participants.

Trustworthiness of the Data

Researchers utilize different approaches to ensure the validity and accuracy of

their findings (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative researchers use many names to define this

process. For the purposes of this study, I used the term trustworthiness. Maxwell (2013),

contends trustworthiness can best be conceptualized by asking readers to ponder why the

findings should be believed as well as how they might be incorrect. To ensure

trustworthiness for this study, I utilized several strategies to approach the data using

epoche to locate both strengths and weaknesses.

Member Checking. According to Guba and Lincoln (1989), member checking is

key is establishing trustworthiness. Member checking is a process of consulting with

participants to ensure their meanings have been accurately portrayed (Johnson &

Christensen, 2014) and to ask if the data analysis "represents their experiences" (Hays &

Singh, 2012, p. 206). I provided electronic copies of the participants' transcribed

interviews and ask them to check the transcription for accuracy, clarity, and to make any

necessary corrections. Unfortunately, on three participants returned their transcripts. I

made several attempts with the remaining nine participants, but was unable to contact them. After assigning themes, I attempted to schedule follow-up interviews with the three participants to allow them to comment on the themes and findings (Creswell, 2014; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). This opportunity for participants to review the findings would ensure their experiences had been accurately interpreted and that I did not frame their experiences through biases. Regrettably, the seven participants did not respond to emails. The remaining five participants informed me they would not be able to complete this portion of the study. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, I engaged in peer debriefing with a member of my research team.

Peer Debriefing. According to Morrow (2005), a peer debriefer "serve as a mirror, reflecting the investigator's responses to the research process. Further, they propose alternative interpretations to those of the investigator" (p. 254). Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (1986) assert that peer debriefing strengthens the credibility of the study. Engaging a peer debriefer provided accountability to ensure my subjectivity did not influence the findings. After completing my initial interpretations, I sent my findings, the codebook, and the 12 transcripts to my peer. We participated in four virtual peer debriefing sessions where my partner challenged the findings and interpretations. At the conclusion of the fourth session, we both concurred that the findings were credible to the study.

Triangulation. To check for credibility of the study, triangulation (Creswell, 2014; Hays & Singh, 2012; Patton, 2002) and peer review were employed. Employing the strategy of triangulation with multiple investigators corroborated the interpretation of the transcriptions to ensure research participants' subjective experiences, thoughts, and viewpoints are authentically and accurately portrayed in the research results (Creswell,

2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1986; Merriam, 2009). Ensuring authenticity and confirmability further strengthens the trustworthiness of the study.

A research team consisting of myself and two additional individuals assisted with analyzing data, and reviewing the codes and themes which evolved. Using the research team in this manner helped to reduce potential bias as well as provide consistency in assessing the data (Patton, 2002). My research team consisted of the researcher and two school counselors who are first year doctoral students in counselor educator programs. Both members were currently taking their first qualitative course in their doctoral studies. I selected these women after speaking to two classes at different universities. They were both excited about the study and had interests in the principals' role in comprehensive counseling programs. Once member checking of interviews, codes, and themes were completed, research team members reviewed the same documents to ensure researcher bias is not present and that codes and themes have been consistently developed throughout all interviews.

During the coding process, I used investigator triangulation, simultaneous data collection, rich thick description, and recursively to confirm trustworthiness of the data. These steps enhanced meaning, and increased authenticity of the study.

Rich Thick Description. Patton (2002) asserts that thick, rich description furnishes the underpinning for qualitative analysis and reporting. Using vivid and detailed descriptions of the data in the research will transport the reader into the setting of the participants and provide a common experience (Creswell, 2014; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). I used words and phrases that provided rich, thick description to allow readers of the study have a clear understanding of principals' perspectives of comprehensive school counseling programs so they are able to make their own

interpretations of the importance of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). Additionally, using rich, thick description makes the findings more realistic, thus, adding to the trustworthiness of the findings.

Audit Trail. An audit trail, which assists to minimize researcher biases, maximize accuracy of the data, and account for impartiality (Patton, 2002) was used during this study to house the evidence of data collected (Hays & Singh, 2012). According to Hays and Singh (2012), it is an ethical obligation to keep records of research and should be available for review. My audit trail contains all documents used and collected throughout the research process (e.g., contact information for participants, informed consent forms, demographic questionnaires, data collection, interview protocol, codebook, reflexive journal, memos, and transcriptions).

Bracketing. The goal of phenomenological research is to understand the essence of a phenomenon (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). To accomplish this, I must understand the phenomenon from the perspective of the person who experiences it (Vagle, 2018) and keep biases and assumptions at bay. Therefore, I used bracketing to isolate my biases and assumptions pertaining to my closely held beliefs about the benefits of comprehensive school counseling programs (Maxwell, 2013; Morrow, 2005; Vagle, 2018), thus, allowing me to clearly focus on the research question. According to Moustakas (1994), bracketing temporarily suspends the researcher's conjectures about a phenomenon. While bracketing did not eliminate my experiences not my assumptions about the phenomenon, it did allow the participants' experiences to be brought into clear view (Vagle, 2018; van Manen, 1990).

Reflexivity. According to Vagle (2018), researcher reflexivity is "consistently examining how one's positionality, perspectives, backgrounds, and insights influence all

aspects of a study" (p. 14). At its root, reflexivity pertains to the researcher being self-aware of how privilege, life experiences, and thoughts may influence interpretations of data. Being reflexive is an intentional and continual process in qualitative research to ensure personal biases and perspectives do not influence the analysis of the data. I am a school counselor with closely held opinions about the benefits of comprehensive school counseling programs, I kept a reflexivity journal throughout the research process to engage in self-reflection. In my journal, I wrote about my experiences with data and the interviews, feelings that arose, assumption, beliefs, and values. I also journaled about each step of the process and the feelings that emerged as I became engrossed in the data.

Memos. Memos are an important data analysis strategy as they capture thoughts and reflections during the data collection time period and are the initial analysis of new data (Maxwell, 2013). Memos from interviews assisted in ensuring the trustworthiness of the data as well as providing a way to check for biases and that data is being examined uniformly. I wrote memos immediately following each interview. This provided me a place to make note of reactions I had to the participants. I also used the memos as a place to reflective on my role as the interviewer. I attempted to be honest and make note if I asked questions that could be interpreted as a leading question. Additionally, writing memos after each interview provided a space for jotting down "preliminary words or phrases for codes" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 21). Writing memos at this juncture in the data collection became a gauge where I could check for redundancy in the data. After the interviews were transcribed, I again wrote memos to capture any thoughts or memories from the interview that were previously forgotten. Writing memos at this stage permitted me to begin initial analysis as "writing memos helps you work toward a solution, and away from a problem" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 44).

Subjectivity Statement

As a former school counselor and current district leader of school counseling for a large metropolitan district, I brought to this current research a set of internal beliefs and assumptions about comprehensive school counseling programs, the benefits a comprehensive school counseling program can provide students, and the role of the principal in the implementation of a comprehensive program. These assumptions and beliefs informed my observations and new experiences surrounding school counseling and comprehensive school counseling programs. These beliefs and assumptions are not static, rather they change over time; however, "I cannot shed my subjectivity like dried skin after being sunburned" (Peshkin, 1994, p. 47); it is always present. My subjectivity was formed by the totality of my values, attitudes, past experiences, and relationships with administrators.

I received my master's degree in school counseling from the University of Georgia (UGA) during the final years of the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI). I learned about the importance of advocating for all students, collaborating with key stakeholders, and the use of data to make decisions about programming. My graduate studies concluded prior to the release of the first edition of the ASCA National Model; however, my experiences during graduate school provided a firm foundation for building a comprehensive school counseling program.

My belief that comprehensive school counseling programs can have positive impact on students was fermented early in my career as a school counselor. The school district rolled out comprehensive school counseling over a three-year period. Once fully implemented, I saw dramatic changes in the academic performance of students of Color as well as discipline referrals. I used school data to show the inequities of student

enrollment in rigorous courses. Larger number of students of Color were able to enroll in

Advanced Placement (AP) courses. The end of the year data showed these students

performed as well on the AP exams as White students. Using discipline data to focus

interventions on specific students and staff development for teachers, contributed to a

decrease in the behavior referrals for Black males. Due to these experiences, I saw first-

hand the role school counselors play in removing barriers that impede students' success.

I also saw how White privilege and lack of cultural competency can be used to negatively

impact students of Color. My experiences raised my awareness of the importance of

looking at data and using it to bring needed conversation and change for groups of

students that are marginalized. I believe when school counselors implement a

comprehensive school counseling program with fidelity, the overall school experience is

positively impacted for all students and awareness of blatant or implicit biases are

heightened.

Through my own experiences collaborating with administrators, I have noticed

abundant student possibilities. While serving as head counselor at a large public high

school, I made it a priority to develop relationships with my principals that were built on

genuine respect and trust. Through these relationships, I advocated for change in

processes that I believed would bring about positive change for students. For example, I

advocated for the alignment of the administrators' discipline caseload with the caseloads

of the counselors in the department, which drastically shifted my perspective related to

the power of collaboration with administration; this change created an opportunity for

counselors and administrators to work together with students.

For the first time, I saw the advantage of working in tandem with administration

and the impact it had on students. I also gained knowledge about the role of

administrators in student success, as I had never given administrators credit for helping students; rather, I saw them as disciplinarians and evaluators of faculty. This experience provided a powerful learning experience and a desire to learn more about the role of principals and school counselors working together to facilitate change for students, the school, and the community.

Acknowledging the beliefs gained from my personal experiences will not only assisted in gaining a better understanding of the phenomenon, but also enforced the credibility of the study (Maxwell, 2013). Glesne and Peshkin (1992), posits that:

> subjectivity is the basis for the story that I am able to tell. It is a strength on which I build. It makes me who I am as a person and a researcher, from the selection of a topic clear through to the emphases I make in my writing.
>
> Subjectivity is something to capitalize on rather than to exorcise. (p. 104)

During the research it was important to continually be aware of my subjectivity in order to not impose my assumptions on the research (Maxwell, 2013; Peshkin, 1994), but rather to build upon it by telling my participants' stories. Through these aforementioned strategies, I ensured that experiences of the participants were free from my subjectivity.

Researcher Assumptions

As noted in the previous section, I believe that experiences and relationships provide powerful learning opportunities. It is through these experiences and relationships that the many realities held by individuals are seen and the meaning of the experiences are co-created (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This foundation of co-creating meaning is strong in both my personal and professional lives. While qualitative research encourages that researcher and participants serve as co-creators of meaning (Morrow, 2005), I have, until now, had little involvement with research. Both my counselor theoretical foundation,

person-centered theory, and my leadership framework, transformational leadership, have collaboration as core tenets. When in the counseling environment or when functioning in a leadership role, I attempt to understand how others see the world and themselves within the world. In this current study, participants and the research team were integral as we collaborated to find the meaning of the participants' collective experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Seidman (2019) posits that ethical challenges can be present at any stage of the research process. Therefore, ethics hold an important place in research. The ethical codes of two professional organizations provide clear guidance for researchers. According to the American Counseling Association (ACA; 2014), Code of Ethics (Section G), "counselors who conduct research are encouraged to contribute to the knowledge base of the profession and promote a clearer understanding of the conditions that lead to a healthy and more just society." Researchers are called upon to add to the professional knowledge and the improvement of client's lives when conducting research. The ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2016) state that researchers must "adhere to educational/psychological research practices, confidentiality safeguard, security practices, and school district policies" (Section B.1.n).

Both the ACA and ASCA ethical standards support the notion of non-maleficence and beneficence. Non-maleficence, the concept of doing no harm, was achieved by limiting and preventing situations that might have caused harm to the participants. Beneficence, the concept of doing good for others, in qualitative research ensures that benefits for participants are maximized and that participants receive "something valuable" (p. 79) from the findings (Hays & Singh, 2012). Along with these ethical

concepts, it was imperative that I was honest, trustworthy, and acted with integrity throughout the research process with all persons involved (Hays & Singh, 2012).

The utilization of technology in this study brought to bear an additional level of ethical considerations. Interviews for the current study were conducted via Zoom, a synchronous video connection. This platform created a need to revisit informed consent. I did not personally know any of the participants. Prior to the interviews, informed consent forms were sent to each participant for their review. To ensure fully informed consent from participants, the following steps suggested by Seidman (2019) were followed: (a) participants received the consent information ahead of the interview, (b) consent information was orally reviewed before the interview began, (c) participants were asked if they have specific questions about the study and questions were answered, (d) permission to record the interview was confirmed, and (e) throughout the study, participants were reminded of the consent information, they had an opportunity to have any questions answered, and their willingness to participate was reaffirmed. Being intentional of ethical considerations was an important process in the current study and was a discussion topic when meeting with the research team.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I provided a detailed description of qualitative research and the phenomenological approach that guided my study. Qualitative research was used to record the narrative description of the participants' experiences of being a principal in a school with a comprehensive school counseling program and how the participants assigned meaning to their experiences (Erickson, 2011; Morrow, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2005). A thorough understanding of the participants' experiences around this phenomenon was discovered by using a phenomenological approach. The goal of

phenomenology is to understand the essence of the phenomena (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). The phenomenological approach attempts to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of individuals by eliciting thick rich descriptions of the experiences of participants (van Manen, 1990). The experiences of the participants were vividly described in order to understand the principals' perspectives of comprehensive school counseling programs.

Throughout this study, I used the lens of transformational leadership to collaborate with participants in understanding their perspectives of being principals in a school with a comprehensive school counseling program. Twelve principals, selected through purposeful sampling, were interviewed to understand their experiences with comprehensive school counseling programs and the meaning they made of their experiences. Participants were principals at schools that have received RAMP recognition within the last five years. An explanation was provided of how phenomenological data analysis will be used to identify the essence of participants' experiences and to make meaning of the data that will be gathered. The data collected answered the research question that guided this study: What are principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs?

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

This chapter presents findings of a qualitative study examining principals'

perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. The purpose of this

study was to explore principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling

programs. The following research question guided the qualitative exploration of this

phenomenon: What are principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling

programs? The interview questions produced thick rich descriptions of the participants'

experiences of being principals of schools that have implemented comprehensive school

counseling programs. Additionally, characteristics such as the ambiguity of the role of

the school counselors, principals' lack of knowledge about school counseling, working

relationships, impact on school data, and mental health of students were identified that

influenced participants' experiences.

The chapter provides critical findings from twelve semi-structured interviews

with principals of schools located in the southeast region of the United States of America.

This chapter begins with an introduction of the 12 principals. Following the brief

description of participants, Table 2 conveys information about participants including

pseudonyms, fictitious school names, the level of their school, the state in which their

school is located, number of years as principal of the school, number of years principal

before RAMP, and the year the school received RAMP recognition. Next, the findings

are summarized from the 12 participant interviews to highlight common emergent themes

(Creswell, 2014). This summary is divided into the five themes that emerged from the

data: (a) Defined role of school counselors, (b) Strengthened school counselor leadership skills, (c) Influenced school discipline, (d) Developed school-wide respect, and (e) Enhanced working relationships. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the findings.

PARTICIPANTS

This study included twelve principals from four southeastern states: Virginia, Louisiana, Kentucky, and South Carolina, who are principals of schools with implemented comprehensive school counseling programs. Each school has been recognized by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) as a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) school within the last five years. Participants were principals of their school during the RAMP application, which provided a knowledgeable foundation of the components of a comprehensive school counseling program. Following is a brief description of each participant:

David, who has a degree in school counseling and served as a school counselor before entering administration, is the principal of Riverside Elementary School. Riverside Elementary is located in a growing suburban area. David has been the principal of Riverside Elementary School for 15 years and was principal for 12 years before Riverside received RAMP recognition in 2017. David has two full-time school counselors and one half-time school counselor at his school who serve 650 students in pre-school through fifth grades. The student body is 94% White, 3% Other, 1% Hispanic, 1% Black, and 1% Asian. David shared that the heroin epidemic is impacting his community. David is a White male.

Faith is the principal of Landon High School. Faith has been principal of Landon High School for eight years and was principal for seven years before the school received

RAMP recognition. Faith has five school counselors at Landon High School for a student population of 1,450. The student body is 70% Black, 16% Hispanic, 12% White, and 2% Multiracial. There are over 30 languages spoken at Langdon. Langdon High School has a large contingent of students from a nearby military base, which exacerbates a high transient rate. Faith is a Black female and holds a doctorate.

Gloria is the principal of a diocesan owned school, St. Thomas High School. Gloria has been the principal of the school for four and a half years. She was principal for one year before the school received RAMP recognition. Gloria has four school counselors; one is a college counselor. St. Thomas High School has 480 students. The student population of St. Thomas is 95% White. Gloria is a White female and holds her doctorate.

JJ is the principal of Hillside Elementary School. JJ has been the principal of Hillside Elementary School for eight years, and he was principal for four years before Hillside received RAMP recognition. JJ has one school counselor at Hillside Elementary and no assistant principal. There are 270 students at Hillside Elementary in kindergarten through fifth grade. Seventy percent of the students are on free or reduced meals. The school enjoys a high teacher retention rate. JJ is a White male. JJ also reports the heroin epidemic is impacting his school.

Mark is the principal of Ellenwood Elementary School in a relatively affluent area. Mark has been principal of Ellenwood Elementary for six years and was principal two years before the school received RAMP recognition. Mark has one full-time school counselor and a .2 counselor who works one day a week. Ellenwood Elementary School has 900 students in kindergarten through fifth grade. Thirteen percent of the students are

eligible for free or reduced meals. The study body is 65% White, 10% Hispanic, and 5% Black. Mark is a White male.

Mary is the principal of Five Forks Elementary School and was a school counselor for five years before entering administration. Mary opened Five Forks Elementary School as principal and has been the principal of Five Forks for 13 years. She was the principal of Five Forks Elementary School for 11 years before the school received RAMP recognition. She has two and a half school counselors at Five Forks Elementary School who serve 588 students. Sixty-five percent of the students qualify for free or reduced meals. The student body is 84% White, 4% Black, 2% Hispanic, and 2% Asian. Mary shared that heroin is a significant issue in her community and impacts students in her school. Mary is a White female who holds her doctorate.

Reggie is the principal of Sullivan Middle School, which is located in a rural but growing area of the state. Reggie opened the school and has been the principal of Sullivan Middle School for 14 years. He was principal 12 years before Sullivan Middle School received RAMP recognition. Reggie has two and a half school counselors at Sullivan Middle School who served 825 students. The study body of the school is 80% White, 10% Hispanic, and 6% Black. Reggie is a White male and holds his doctorate.

Robert is the principal of Lakeside High School in an affluent district. He has been the principal of Lakeside High for eight years and was principal for two years before the school received RAMP. Reggie has eight school counselors at Lakeside High School who serve 2,119 students. The student body is 51% White, 28% Asian, 9% Hispanic, and 6% Black. Robert is a White male who recently completed his doctorate.

Solarek is the principal of Downton High School. He is proud to note that he opened Downton High School as principal 18 years ago. He was principal for 16 years

before Downton High School received RAMP recognition. Solarek has six counselors at Downton High School who serve 1,600 students in grades nine through 12. The student body of the school is 44% White, 32% Hispanic, 13% Asian, and 7% Black. Twenty-seven percent of the students qualify for free or reduced meals. Solarek is a White male and holds his doctorate.

Vagabond is the principal of Dixie Elementary School and has been the principal of Dixie Elementary for nine years. Vagabond was the principal of Dixie Elementary School for three years before the school received RAMP recognition. Vagabond has two full-time school counselors and one who works one day a week. They serve 930 students, of which 57% are White, 15% are Hispanic, 12% are Black, and 9% are Asian. Nine percent of the students qualify for free or reduced meals. Vagabond is a White male and holds his doctorate.

William is the principal of Centerville School and opened the school six years ago. He was principal for four years before Centerville School received RAMP recognition. William has one elementary school counselor and one middle school counselor at Centerville who serve 1,000 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The student body of the school is 70% White, 19% Hispanic, and 5% Black. Twenty percent of students qualify for free or reduced meals. William is a White male who is currently in his second year of a doctorate program.

Yeshai is the principal of Stevens Middle School. Yeshai has been principal of Stevens Middle School for six years and was principal for two years before Stevens Middle School received RAMP recognition. Yeshai has seven school counselors at Stephens Middle School who serve 1,586 students in sixth to eighth grades. The student body is 43% White, 32% Hispanic, 20% Black, 2% Asian, and 3% Multiracial. Thirty-

seven percent of the students are English language learners. Yeshai is a White male who

is currently working on his dissertation.

Table 2

Participants' general information

Pseudonym	Gender	Level	State	Years as Principal of School	Year of RAMP Recognition	School Counselors
David	M	ES	KY	15	2017	2.5
Faith	F	HS	SC	8	2018	5
Gloria	F	HS	LA	4.5	2016	4
JJ	M	ES	KY	8	2017	1
Mark	M	ES	VA	6	2015	1.2
Mary	F	ES	KY	13	2017	2.5
Reggie	M	MS	SC	14	2017	2.5
Robert	M	HS	VA	8	2016	8
Solarek	M	HS	VA	18	2017	6
Vagabond	M	ES	VA	9	2016	2.4
William	M	K-8	VA	6	2018	2
Yeshai	M	MS	VA	6	2016	7

Discussion of Themes

The in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants regarding their

experiences as principals of schools with comprehensive school counseling programs

describe an array of insights that were gained by these principals. The participants'

perspectives will allow readers of this study to conceptualize the influence that

comprehensive school counseling programs have on students, teachers, the school

environment, as well as the importance of the school counselor. Discussed below are the

five significant themes that emerged from the data.

Defined Role of School Counselors

The first theme that strongly emerged from the interviews focused on how the

role of school counselors were defined by participants after a comprehensive school

counseling program was implemented. Other than Mary and David, who were practicing

school counselors prior to becoming principals, none of the other participants had a clear

understanding of the role of school counselors before beginning the process of

completing the RAMP application. Solarek said, "One of the biggest changes, on a major

level, is that we have been able to be clear about their [school counselors] role." Even

with first-hand knowledge of school counseling there were things to learn as David

discussed:

> I knew what school counselors should be doing since I have a degree in
>
> school counseling. I always said at my school "the counselors need to be
>
> doing counseling", so I have never used them for test administration or
>
> test coordinator or any of those kinds of things. I insisted that counselors
>
> do guidance. It wasn't until RAMP [application process] that I had a
>
> better understanding of how you could use data to support the things that
>
> the counselors should be doing as opposed to just doing guidance.

Faith and Solarek had similar experiences in how they learned about school counseling.

Faith learned from the director of school counseling who advocated for what role they

should be playing in the school:

> The director of counseling advocated for us to move our program to a
>
> comprehensive one. After implementing the comprehensive program, the school
>
> counselors managed to change the view of what their roles are in high school and
>
> it has been remarkable to see. I no longer see them as people who are at the
>
> school to coordinate and administer tests or they help only when there is a
>
> problem. When we see our school counselors, we see professionals who work
>
> with groups, work with students to prepare them to be college and career ready.
>
> As principal, I can speak for myself and my faculty, when I say that our

counselors are more than just scheduling meetings. Their role is much larger than

that. It is vital to our school.

Before being "enlightened about the role of school counselors" by his director of

counseling, Solarek based his knowledge of school counseling on his own experiences

from high school:

 I'm a math teacher and an administrator. I didn't know a thing about school

counseling to begin with. I didn't know a thing about what a school counseling

program could do or what it should look like. And I sure did not know what

school counselors should or could really do for students. Nothing in my

educational background prepared me. I didn't have any experience in it.

Reggie echoed this experience:

I didn't know much about school counseling. I was a high school teacher and

administrator. In high school, my experience with school counseling, really it

was all about scheduling classes and college applications. When I went to

elementary school as an assistant principal, the counselors were just there working

some with students, and a lot with parents. It wasn't until I came to Sullivan that

I began to understand the role of school counselors and how they impact all

aspects of the school.

With implemented comprehensive school counseling programs, participants

noted how the school counselors undertook their new roles. Solarek said, "I like that the

counselors have such a clear focus on what their role is and how they are go about

playing that role. They have been able to articulate their role to me, because I have the

resources to help define their role properly." Solarek provided an example of how he

uses his resources and authority to ensure his school counselors are engaged in appropriate activities:

> We have been able to articulate to our entire staff and to them [counselors] the type of tasks that are most appropriate for counselors to be engaged in so that other teachers, parents are not going to them [counselors] for things that other members of the school team are better equipped to handle just by job description, by function, or whether they would be better served by somebody else.

JJ noted a major shift in his school counselor and her approach to her role:

> Once we implemented the comprehensive school counseling program, she changed from being an assistant principal figure to a school counselor. She was accustomed to scheduling and overseeing committees in more of an administrator role. Once we implemented the comprehensive program, her work is at least 80% of time with students. I support this and tried to make sure her time is protected.

David reflected back on his school counselor training to note how the role has changed:

> I can't express enough how important of a role they [school counselors] play and are never off the clock…. It's really amazing how this role has changed over the years and how much is asked of our counselors. They are very deft at wearing a number of hats and they wear them all with composure.

> According to participants, the clarity of the role of school counselors brought a level of intentionality and enhanced professional identity to the work of the school counselor. Mary talked about the intentionality of the school counseling program at her school:

> A comprehensive school counseling program provides a systemic view of their counseling program and sheds light on all the things you can be doing. It makes

you think more intentionally about your program due to using data, which is huge, to make decisions.…Implementing a comprehensive program they are going to be able to meet the needs of their students due to the shift in focus.

Gloria also discussed the intentionality of her school counselors:

They became more intentional after implementing the counseling comprehensive program. Before it was, 'well, we are going to do this'. Using the data, they looked where we had gaps and where we had overlaps. They began asking, 'How can we make sure that everything we do is purposeful and meaningful?' It was not like that before. It was a check-off list. They became purposeful in their work.

While several participants believe the work of their school counselors became more intentional, Vagabond also thinks it increased their level of professional identity:

The switch in professional identity and their focus was a paramount piece. A big change that the counselors were passionate about was not being called guidance counselors. I thought, 'Oh, well sure, I can deal with that if that's what you really want.' But then the more we talked about it, the more I understood. I can understand that subtle difference….we know words and terms matter. Having that professional set of standards, it makes your job more professional and holds you accountable.

The principals in this study embraced their new understanding of the role of school counselors, along with the realization that school counselors can, and do, impact all aspects of the school environment. While understanding the role of school counselors is a significant theme, participants noticed additional changes in their school counselors that influenced the school counselors' position within the school environment.

Strengthened School Counselors Leadership Skills

Leadership skills for school counselors as they are called upon to serve in a variety of leadership capacities at their schools (ASCA, 2005; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Participants in this study were clear that school counselors are leaders in the building, and they saw the leadership skills of the school counselors improve after implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program. Mary said her school counselors "have grown as leaders, and my staff would now consider them leaders in our building, they have a lot of respect for them." Yeshai indicated specifics about the change in leadership he noticed:

I have seen a change in their confidence and their ability to handle difficult situations, which include difficult parents and difficult teachers. Their negotiating skills and problem solving have increased. They began to see themselves as more than just counselors who are working on advisement and looking at grades, now the expectation and the belief system made them, more well-rounded within the context of a school, which is what you need.

Participants identified a significant part of school counselors' leadership responsibility as supporting the principals in making decisions that impact the school. William was clear from the onset of hiring staff for his new school that he "wanted someone in that position [school counselor] who would be part of my leadership team and help me make decisions about our school and our school community." Each participant discussed how they depend on their school counselor to help support the school in reaching their identified goals. Yeshai believes it is "important that they [counselors] are in alignment with the principal to ensure we all share the same vision and the same outcome goals." Mary

provided this example of how her school counselor assists in meeting her goals for the school:

> She is willing to help us problem solve when we are in situations that maybe we're not making the progress and the growth that we need. She is willing to make changes and work with whatever plan we have developed for a student. At the same time, we'll look at the data and realize that we need to make some changes and she offers ideas and suggestions because she knows the student really well.

During the interviews, participants identified three areas within the school environment where they saw leadership skills of school counselors in play – serving on the leadership team, providing professional development, and leading or serving on committees.

Each participant, regardless of school level, include one school counselor, on their leadership team. While slight differences in the principals' descriptions of their leadership teams existed, membership consisted of the principal, assistant principal(s), school counselor, and others who held significant leadership roles in the school. The majority of participants indicated their leadership teams met weekly to discuss a myriad of topics related to the school and make decisions school operations. Solarek shared that "the counseling department has representation and help develop systemic game plans." Mark shared the "meetings help to make sure everyone is on the same page in terms of meeting the needs of our school."

Additionally, Faith stated, "my director of counseling provides updates to the full leadership team on the school counseling program and any upcoming events they will be hosting." Reggie sees an additional level of importance for his director of counseling to hold a seat on the leadership team:

My director of counseling has an opportunity to share with the leadership

team…the classroom guidance lessons that are upcoming, issues the counselors

are seeing with particular students, and other items of importance from the

counseling department. This is huge. For me, it is important to be in touch with

what she is doing and what is going on in counseling and for her to know what

other leaders are doing. This helps us to be on the same team as we attempt to do

what is best for all of our students.

Several of the participants discussed having school counselors on the leadership team

provided a place to discuss specific student issues. Gloria shared her thoughts on the

importance of having school counselors on the leadership team:

…out of the leadership team come things we are seeing with the kids. Our head

counselor takes that information back to the counseling team. Counselors report

back to the leadership team with things they can address. They survey the kids

and organize programs for kids based on the information and what we are hearing

about or seeing.

David has dedicated time for the counselors to discuss specific student concerns during

the leadership team meeting:

…A lot of what we do comes out of a team approach, but the counselors

are bringing their student data with them…. They'll bring that data to the

meeting and they say "here are the students we've identified and here are

the findings." They discuss groups they want to propose moving forward

with, along with students they are going to see, in small guidance groups

or individually. They also discuss ideas about something that show up in

the behavior data and, and as a team we'll problem solve what kind of

approach do we want to take to these behavior issues we're seeing.

The common denominators when participants spoke of the importance of having a school

counselor on the leadership team was creating a unified team and allowing each member

a voice in the decision-making process. Robert indicated that when making decisions,

"We have a team approach… it's not one person that's responsible for it." While the

leadership teams may look and function differently at each school, they have one

common purpose, which JJ summarized as, "We meet so we can be on the same page and

I can support her in her work."

The second area identified by participants where they witnessed the growth of

leadership skills of their school counselors was in delivering professional development to

faculty and at the district level. Mark talked about the importance of school counselors

teaching the skills to teachers so that the skills can be reinforced by teachers:

The counselors provide social emotional learning skills in small groups for

students referred by teachers. They'll also do those through classroom lessons as

well as through staff development to teach the skills to our teachers, because our

school counselors are only in the classroom once every other week.

David has seen his counselors not only provide professional development at the school

but, they have "assumed more leadership at the district level. We have a district PLC

[professional learning committee] for all the counselors, and the counselors from here

tend to help lead things more."

Local school committee membership was seen by the participants as a place

where the school counselors have increased their presence and their leadership. Robert's

school counselors:

Are asking to be part of groups that may not have included a counselor, to be part

of one of those committees, so they participate in all of them. They do lead some

of them. And it's not just counseling stuff, but also worrying about other things,

our teachers dealing with that, their own stressors and that they do as part of being

a teacher and an educator. So, they've taken a lot of those roles on, and some of

the groups and organizations they developed.

Solarek believes it is important to have counselors in leadership roles on committees that

address the academic, social emotional learning needs of students:

Our counselors are represented on each action team that address the most pressing

needs of 21st century adolescents. They [counselors] are part of the planning

process as we think about school wide initiatives to address the academic, social

emotional learning needs, and the positive behavioral interventions that we have

in place for our students. They are present and engaged in all of those processes.

There are some processes that are led and directed by the school counseling team.

Mark utilizes his counselors' leadership on the school's Positive Behavioral Interventions

and Support (PBIS). Mark said, "The PBIS implementation went hand in hand with our

comprehensive school counseling program. Our school counselor heads up the PBIS,

which is made up of teachers, staff, and an administrator."

In each of these areas, participants saw a dramatic increase in leadership skills

exhibited by school counselors and noted the leadership opportunities given to school

counselors that, previously, would not have been provided. Solarek shared:

We gave the school counselors some leadership responsibilities in recent years

that we had not asked them to assume before. A lot of them center, of course,

around things that fit right into the three domains of their work. An example is

we support our students' social and emotional learning needs, feeling like we need

a systemic, tier one level intervention for every student. A couple of our

counselors played the key role in planning activities for the entire school. I would

have never thought about a counselor having that level of influence on what was

going on a day to day basis. They were literally planning things we would do a

weekly or bi-weekly basis.

The principals in this study described in rich detail the growth in leadership of their

school counselors after the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling

program. Also, the principals shared how the development of leadership skills in their

school counselors positively influence all areas of the school's environment.

Influenced School Discipline

The principals in this study noted a reduction in discipline concerns after the

implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs. For the participants,

having a decrease in behavior issues was significant. Vagabond relates the decline in

discipline data directly to the counseling program:

I see the behaviors going down and I think the counseling program is integral to

that trend. The program is embedded in everything that we are doing. It is clear

that when the behavior is down that also contributes to better academics.

JJ and David believe there is a nexus between the decrease in behavior issues and the

comprehensive school counseling program. JJ talked about a tremendous change in

discipline since implementing a comprehensive school counseling program:

Our discipline data has gone down drastically every year since we implemented

the comprehensive school counseling program. It did spike last year, but has

leveled out again this year. Her classroom lesson topics cover social emotional

learning and serve as a tier one level intervention for all our students. I believe

these skills are responsible for the drastic reduction in discipline issues.

David has seen a significant improvement in discipline and attendance. He said, "Our office referrals and behavior referrals have reduced drastically; well over half. That change has been since we implemented the comprehensive program. Our attendance and our behavior data have both improved over the last two years." Reggie attributes the decrease in discipline to the collaborative work with school counselors to drill down to the root problem rather than just assigning consequences:

Well, I've seen a reduction…. We've tried to shift towards the cause of the

behavior rather than just dishing out a sanction. Let's get to the root of what's

going on here. Why is this happening? That's where the counselors help. The

bigger discipline issues that come up we try to involve a counselor with us when

we're going through determining what the sanction is going to be. We talk to the

counselors about what they know about the student, let them talk to the students

as well. Again, rather than just say, "Hey, you did this, here's your punishment,

don't do it again." It's really working with our counselors to understand and we've

had to work with our teachers to make sure they get it. Sometimes the

consequence given to a student might not be quite as heavy as the teacher

anticipated, but it really is us working with our counselors trying to work with the

students to change the behaviors and you've got to understand where it's coming

from before you can do that.

Solarek discussed how administrators utilize restorative practices, taught to them by the school counselors, when issuing consequences to students and how school counselors work to keep restorative justice practices at the forefront:

The number of catastrophic disciplinary mistakes that our kids are making have

gone way down. We are still dealing with little things. But we are not seeing

kids who have long strings of out of school suspensions, whose educational

experiences are being compromised because their behaviors so negatively affect

their school experience. That is very much a result of us being more aware that

the student isn't acting out because he's a jerk. He is acting out because he's

hurting. Our counselors continue to help us look at the whole child and practice

restorative justice in our discipline consequences.

All participants were resolute in their belief that comprehensive school counseling

programs had a direct link to the reduction in behavior concerns at their schools. Several

made mention that while the data looks good for the community, it is essential for the

overall culture of the school. As Vagabond said, "…when, everyone is safe; everyone is

able to learn."

Developed School-Wide Respect

Confusion over the role of school counselors has plagued the profession

since its inception. The question often asked is if school counselors are not

teachers, what are they (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012), and what role do they

serve? Solarek has seen this in his career. Solarek said, "There's always been this

mystery on every faculty, the three faculties I've been privileged to work, about

what the school counselors do all day." Mark elaborated on how the ambiguity of

the role of school counselors creates a lack of respect:

You know counselors are not administrators and counselors are not

teachers. And in a school you have administrators and teachers. So, that's

my philosophy, I think it plays into just the whole ambiguity of what is it

that a counselor does? Teachers and administrators don't always see the value, due to not understanding the role. I believe this can result in lack of respect for the counselors.

Through the comprehensive school counseling program, participants have seen an increase in the respect teachers provide school counselors as educational professionals, which has helped to create a feeling of being on the "same team." Gloria stated:

I don't think they [school counselors] felt that we were on the same team. It was more like an adversarial role. Now, I think teachers are more likely to collaborate with counselors and problem solve some difficult issues. After the comprehensive program development, they were visible, supporting teachers, and running innovative programs, they receive respect from the faculty, because in the past they were not who people would come to.

Yeshai and JJ both noted that having counselors attend meetings and discuss specific student needs has help raise the respect level. Yeshai believes the respect increased by removing the ambiguity about the role of the school counselors:

Implementing a comprehensive program helped solidify clarity around the expectations of the counselors. Removing ambiguity about the role of the counselors and understanding how they [school counselors] function to support and the structures that we've built to allow support has helped. Another thing I probably should mention is three Fridays of the month we have meetings where we discuss students' academic and behavior data. The counselors are always at these Friday meetings and help develop interventions. This has helped the teachers see the counselors in a

different way, and I have seen the level of trust and respect surrounding

the school counselors increase from the faculty.

JJ's school counselor also attends regularly scheduled meetings, which he believes has

increased the level of trust:

She sits on the professional learning committee (PLC) now. We have PLCs every

Thursday. She attends the PLC on the last Thursday of every month to go over

what she is working on the next month during classroom guidance activities and

provides updates on groups that she is running, with our teachers. She also

checks with teachers to see if they have any concerns or know of needs of kids

that we don't know about?" Just to have that time with teachers on counseling is

important. Also, we don't run into issues with her having time in the classroom,

because our staff sees how important it is that our kids get that time with our

counselor and we do not get any pushback.

David, too, has seen a change in the respect his faculty gives the school counselors in his

school since a comprehensive program was implemented:

I think that teachers accept them as professionals now. In teaching, teachers keep

a pretty exclusive club. I mean if you are not a teacher, you will never be a

member of their club. I believe teachers accept them as being on the same level

now. I see this in the willingness to collaborate with the counselors. Teachers

will just go and seek out the counselors, because they see them teaching lessons,

running groups, and bringing a program that requires us to consider the whole

child in everything we do.

Similarly, Reggie has seen a change in how teachers and school counselors interact and

work together. Different from the other participants, Reggie believes a small change of

being visible and talking to teachers made a huge difference in the respect teachers awarded the school counselors. Reggie said:

> …it goes back to school counselors being a part of everything that we do in our building. At the beginning of each year, we spend time having our counselors talk about our comprehensive program. This is exactly what we're about and this is what we're trying to do. This is how we support our vision and for the year. I think our counselors do a really, really good job of being visible and being there for the teachers. I think they do a nice job making sure teachers understand their role is in support of, number one, our students, but in support of what we're trying to do as a school. They don't operate separate from what we're doing as a school. Their job is to support and they say that all the time to our teachers, "We're here to support what you're [teachers] doing in the classroom."

A benefit of increased respect for the schools is participants realizing how important school counselors are to the school. Mary was resolute in her belief this new-found respect for her school counselors have fostered the school counselors' credibility with the faculty said:

> We cannot function without them. They are integral to our school, to my assistant principal, and myself. We see the needs of our students changing so much that it is becoming a challenging job ….we're always talking with them about who we can get support from, mental health counseling, who needs support in the classroom, you know, what teacher. They also serve on our core team to support kids that are in crisis. They do classroom guidance lessons, small groups, and one-on-one check-in in the mornings with students. They are very vital to our school.

Similarly, Gloria sees the counselors as integral to the school, but acknowledges this changed with the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program:

> The comprehensive school counseling program is good for the school as a whole, it really sets the counselors in the place as an integral part of the whole academic program, and I don't think they were seen that way before.

Participants of the study saw an improvement in the professional relationship between teachers and school counselors after implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. Teachers became more open to working with the school counselors and allowing school counselors to have class time to deliver lessons.

Enhanced Working Relationships

Participants of the study were clear that after implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, the working relationships with their school counselors and between school counselors and teachers were enhanced. Participants defined "collaboration and communication" as important components of a good working relationship. The participants also noted they became more intentional about their working relationships with their school counselors after comprehensive school counseling programs were implemented. Mark has met with his school counselors and assistant principals since becoming principal, but attributed their comprehensive school counseling program as adding value to the meetings:

> When I arrived, I instituted a weekly meeting that happens between the counselors, my assistant principal, and me. We talk about individual students who have a need or changes that are going on. We discuss if there are any students we are concerned about or new students we want to bring up. Since the

comprehensive counseling program, we have kept the meeting going and now

have specific goals to collaborate on.

For David, following the steps of the RAMP application made him aware of the

importance of meeting with the school counselors. David described his experience is this

manner:

Prior to implementing the comprehensive counseling program, we met to

collaborate, because it was a requirement of the grant application our district was

awarded that brought us the additional counselors. The collaboration was not

intentional, rather it felt like we were checking off a box. However, collaboration

between myself and my school counselors increased after we implemented the

comprehensive program. The RAMP process had a big piece in my becoming

intentional about collaboration. We did it for RAMP, but when I saw the benefit,

we have kept it up. It provides us an opportunity to discuss issues that they

[counselors] may see that I do not or vice versa. We are also able to discuss how

to deal with community issues and support our students. The heroine epidemic is

huge here, and we are seeing effects on students now. We use a lot of

collaboration on problem solving and thinking of interventions to help our

students who are impacted.

JJ also became intentional about collaborating with his school counselor. However,

unlike David, the time with JJ and his school counselor is deemed sacred time and is not

to be interrupted unless for an emergency:

Since we began the comprehensive school counseling program, the collaboration

with my counselor has increased and we are now intentional about ensuring our

meeting. We are very data-focused, data-driven and our collaboration revolves

around that. We look at data at our weekly meetings and develop processes around our school data. Our conversations have enriched our goals for the school counseling program and our school. It used to be like fly-by. "This kid is having a hard time. I need you to follow up." That was the extent of our collaboration. Now it is proactive. When we meet, we look at referrals and try and determine what the child is communicating through their behavior and look at how we can impact that in a positive way. Our time is sacred and we are committed to meeting each week.

Collaboration with all of his school counselors is important for William:

I have constant and ongoing collaboration with my director of counseling, I am creative about meeting with the other counselors. I go to their duty locations to catch up and discuss any concerns. I do schedule formal meeting times, as well, to collaborate on issues that are more sensitive in nature.

Yeshai differs slightly from other participants on his view of the importance of collaboration with his school counselors:

Within our structure we have to be of one accord. That means the role of the counselor is just critical in providing that level of support to students, but then of course, there's the level of support that they have to provide for parents in contention with teachers and students. So, collaboration is non-stop given the essential function that counselors serve.

Due to the unique role of the school counselor, collaboration with teachers is very important. Gloria stated, "For teachers and counselors to collaborate and work together, a high level of trust needs to exist to work efficiently for students." While Mark's

sentiment about collaboration with teachers is similar to Gloria, Mark makes a distinction

between respect and confidence:

> Counselors and teachers must have professional confidence in the each other in
>
> order to work collaboratively and do what is best for students. Part of this
>
> confidence is built through relationships with teachers and them having trust in
>
> the counselor.

There appears to be a level of professional confidence between the teachers and the

school counselors at Mary's school since the comprehensive school counseling program

was implemented:

> Teachers consider the counselors part of their team, so whatever they're working
>
> on or if they need help with a student or they need a plan, they are going to go to
>
> them and work with the counselors to try and problem solve with them.

> Collaboration is an important piece of the working relationship and was noted by

the participants. Additionally, each participant discussed the importance of effective

communication between themselves and their school counselors. Effective

communication was woven throughout the interview data, and was not tied to one

specific area. Mary stated it perfectly when she said, "I, along with my assistant

principals are always talking to our counselors."

> Several participants discussed that while they are always available to talk with

counselors in a formal setting, finding informal time is important too. Solarek enjoys

close proximity to the school counselors and finds that visiting several times a day is

essential. He also is intentional about what he wants to discuss with them:

> My office is closer to the school counselors than to my administrators….I've
>
> really enjoyed that because it gives me an opportunity to be really present with

them. So, we spend our days in and out of their offices. Every day I have a folder

sitting right here to my left that says 'school counseling' on it and I put the things

that I want to talk to school counselor about.

Mark also likes to be flexible around communicating with his counselors. Mark said, "I

see the counselors daily, so our formal meeting is not the only time we talk. Obviously,

when things come up, there is accessibility on both sides."

Gloria is open to having conversations as needed, but she also recognizes her

school counselors keep her informed:

They let me know when something is going down that I need to know. If

something is going down that I don't need to know about, they work it out, and

tell me the outcome. Now, this takes a level of trust, but they always keep me

informed and up to date. I am never caught by surprise with anything.

Effective communication is not only important between school counselors and their

principals, it is a vital part of the working relationship between teachers and school

counselors. Robert said:

…they [school counselors] are communicating more with our teachers about a

host of things. Counselors and teachers are having more conversations about

students. Teachers see if they bring counselors in as soon as they have a concern,

it can ward off issues before they start.

David believes, "The comprehensive school counseling program has removed the

ambiguity surrounding how counselors function to support teachers and has

allowed for more open dialogue between teachers and counselors." Similarly,

William believes, "The conversations have changed, the focus in just how they go

about responding to the needs of students."

While school counselors are but one piece of the school environment, it is important that a viable working relationship exists between school counselors and administrators as well as with teachers. As noted by the participants, these relationships ultimately influence the direction of the school in deciding what is best for the students.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided detailed descriptions of the lived experiences 12 principals had serving schools with comprehensive school counseling programs. This study was guided by one fundamental research question: What are principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs? The data collected provided meaningful statements from the individual semi-structured interviews. Five recurring themes emerged from the participants' comments. The first theme, defined role of school counselors, described how principals and teachers came to understand the role of the school counselors through comprehensive school counseling programs. The second theme, strengthened school counselors leadership skills, described the changes principals saw not only in school counselors' leadership skills but the increase in their initiative to take on leadership roles in the school. The third theme, influenced school discipline, described the decreases in overall discipline data seen by principals after implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. The fourth theme, developed school-wide respect, reflected how the perceptions teachers had of school counselors changed. The final theme, enhanced working relationships, described the benefits collaboration and communication have on students and schools. In the chapter that follows, results of this study will be discussed along with implications for counselor education programs and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of this study provide a greater understanding of principals'

perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. Guided by

transformational leadership, this phenomenological study was designed to answer the

following research question: "What are principals' perspectives about comprehensive

school counseling programs?" Semi-structured interviews with 12 principals from

schools in four states in the southeast region of the United States helped to answer the

research question. The participants' schools have an implemented comprehensive school

counseling program and have received the Recognized American School Counselor

Association (ASCA) Model Program award for the first time within the last five years.

To make meaning of the data, phenomenological data analysis was utilized and the

findings were represented in the participants' own voices using quotes from the

interviews. The quotes were clustered into five themes: (a) Defined role of school

counselors, (b) Strengthened school counselor leadership skills, (c) Influenced school

discipline, (d) Developed school-wide respect, and (e) Enhanced working relationships.

This chapter presents conclusions drawn from the findings, implications for several

groups of educational professionals, limitations of the study, and recommendations for

future research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. This was accomplished by revisiting experiences with each participant in order to find comprehensive descriptions and meanings (Moustakas, 1994) of those experiences. The study was needed to allow school principals to discuss their perspectives of comprehensive school counseling programs; a voice currently missing from the literature.

Discussion of Research Findings

This study was analyzed through the lens of transformational leadership. The ideology of transformational leadership helped frame my analysis of the participants' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. As a theoretical framework, transformational leadership concentrates on building capacity to support change through a shared vision and commitment (Hallinger, 2003). The theory focuses on the connections formed between leaders and followers and posits that leadership is the process by which a person engages with others and is able to create a connection that results in increased motivation and morality in both followers and leaders (Hallinger, 2003). Using transformational leadership allows me, as the researcher, the opportunity to give 12 principals an arena to articulate and give meaning to their own experiences by placing them in the center of the research. Although each participant is principal of a school with an implemented comprehensive school counseling program, their experiences related to the phenomena are varied and unique.

According to Hallinger (2003) transformational leadership is grounded in "understanding the needs of individual staff rather than controlling them towards the schools desired end, and that leadership may be shared" (p. 337). This current

study explored the experiences of 12 individuals who are principals of schools with comprehensive school counseling programs that are designated as Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) schools. Through this exploration, five themes emerged that describe the participants' experiences and connection to transformational leadership.

Using phenomenological data analysis gave me the occasion to look for the true meaning of participants' experiences as principals of schools with comprehensive school counseling programs. The participants were encouraged to reflect on the school counseling program before the implementation of the comprehensive school counseling program and after implementation to help define the meaning of their experiences. The researcher believes participants were willing to join him on this journey due to feeling safe and comfortable in sharing their experiences. This assumption is supported by Morrow (2007) who indicates qualitative researchers strive to create an atmosphere where participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences surrounding the phenomena being studied. Rapport was easily established with each participant and conversations flowed naturally. Several participants expressed excitement for both being able to share their experiences of leading a school with a comprehensive school counseling program and how our conversation prompted more ideas. Vagabond appreciated being asked to think about his school counseling program. Vagabond said, "While I wasn't feeling well today, these were good question for me to think about. Thank you for that." Solarek said, "And thanks to this conversation, it just stimulates my thinking a little more about how to empower my school counselors to lead other things that we're doing." Yeshai implied his appreciation for the

time to reflect on his school counselors, "They wear so many hats over the course of a day…it's nice to think about all they do."

A significant discrepancy related to the positive impact of a comprehensive school counseling program on students' academic achievement was found while exploring the participants' experiences. Current literature is full of research purporting the positive impact comprehensive school counseling programs have on the academic achievement of students (ASCA, 2012; Dimmitt, 2003; Lapan et al., 2001, Lapan et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003). No evidence was found in the current study to support the impact of student academic achievement when students had access to a comprehensive school counseling program. In fact, participants were reluctant even to entertain this thought. When discussing whether school counselors made an impact on the academic achievement of students, the hesitation was heard in participants' voices, and physically, they seemed to grow uncomfortable. A few participants felt academic achievement for students targeted for tier-two interventions such as a small group was positively influenced. However, participants were not sure this was captured or could be captured in the schools' testing data. Participants all agreed that too many factors played into achievement data. The participants discussed myriad programs and interventions, including their comprehensive school counseling program, to help improve students' academic achievement. One participant said, "It is like spokes on a wheel, and the comprehensive school counseling program is one spoke among many that work toward student academic success." This was a noteworthy discovery for this study as it challenges established research and opinions (ASCA, 2012; Dimmitt, 2003; Lapan et al., 2001, Lapan et al., 2012;

Sink & Stroh, 2003). The impact on student achievement is often used as a

selling point to entice principals to support a comprehensive school counseling

program. ASCA (2012) as well as Stone and Dahir (2009) assert that by applying

leadership, advocacy, and collaboration to a comprehensive school counseling

program, school counselors impact student achievement and systemic change,

ensuring equity and access to rigorous education for all students. The participants

of this study felt comprehensive school counseling programs are valuable, but did

not see the connection between the comprehensive program and student academic

achievement. This is best summarized by Mark who said, "Academic

achievement is like spokes on a wheel. The comprehensive school counseling

program is one spoke among many that work toward student academic success."

RAMP is a school award based on the tenets of the ASCA National Model that is

granted only after school counselors complete a detailed application substantiating their

efforts to develop and implement comprehensive, data-driven, accountable school

counseling programs that are guided by their schools' specific needs (Wilkerson et al.,

2013). According to ASCA (2012), RAMP recognition is the culmination of the

implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program and is granted through an

extensive review of data. Additionally, Mullen, Chae, and Backer (2019) assert RAMP is

earned by school counseling programs that consistently adhere to the ASCA National

Model and demonstrate its implementation and outcomes through data-driven practices.

According to Dodson (2009), RAMP status influences administrators'

perspectives of school counselors. Principals from schools with RAMP recognition tend

to perceive school counselors to deliver classroom lessons, guide students with

disciplinary concerns, consult with teachers and interpret student records (Dodson, 2009).

The participants of this study agreed with Dodson's findings. Additionally, the participants perceived school counselors use data throughout their programs. The participants equated RAMP with the comprehensive school counseling program in their schools.

In some cases, it was difficult for the participants to separate RAMP from the school counseling program. The data from this study indicate three areas participants perceived to be important about RAMP: (a) data informed the school counselors' practice and program design, (b) school counselors learned to aggregate and disaggregate data to ensure attention was given to the whole child, and (c) annual agreement helped participants understand the role of school counselors. The participants were clear; these three areas are critical in assisting principals in understanding the value of supporting the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs and felt this warranted their support.

The RAMP application process is time-consuming and requires both financial and time resources support of principals. ASCA (2012) suggest a recommended timeline of two-years to complete the RAMP process. Currently, the RAMP application costs $250 for ASCA members and $500 for non-ASCA members (ASCA, n.d.[a]; Mullen et al., 2019). While this raises equity issues, school counselors depend on principals to pay the application fee. One participant, Yeshai, expressed concern over the time commitment, "I remember thinking was the RAMP certification process worth it because the counselors were out of the world of counseling for such significant amounts of time. They were unable to provide students with the services that they needed." However, he came to see the benefit as it "focused the attention of the school counselors and the administrators on the needs of the whole child; thus, impacting the school community."

Principals found school counselors' use of data to be vital in the development of the school counseling program as well as ensuring the school was focused on the whole child. Through the RAMP application process, school counselors began using school data to enhance their practice. The participants noted their school counselors began bringing student data to leadership meetings. Conversations were had about particular students, using the specific student's data. These collaborative conversations, using student data, led to the development of interventions to work with these individual students. The principals indicated these interventions led to improved discipline success for the specific students and was monitored through additional data.

Additionally, the participants noted school counselors became proficient in the use of school-wide data to develop tier-one interventions to deliver to all students. These interventions tended to focus on the SEL of students in developing skills to make them productive and successful student citizens. Furthermore, school counselors used data to assist their schools in implementing MTSS or PBIS programs. The school counselors' use of data was viewed positively by the participants. The participants indicated they would share with colleagues without RAMP and comprehensive counseling programs that school counselors becoming data experts helped to improve overall school data.

The participants were also clear that it was a particular portion of the RAMP application that laid the foundation for their understanding of the role of the school counselor. The RAMP application requires school counselors to show evidence of several aspects of their school counseling program. According to ASCA (2012), "the annual agreement outline the organization and focus of the school counseling programs and are made between each school counselor and the administrator in charge of the school counseling program" (p. 46). The annual agreement assures intentional

conversations are held between school counselors and administrators about the alignment of school counseling program goals with the goals of the school. According to ASCA (2012), these conversations can lead to the administrators' understanding of comprehensive school counseling programs and the role of school counselors. It was through discussions about RAMP and the RAMP application process that many of the participants gained a real understanding of the counseling program and how to best use their school counselors. Ten of the participants had no prior training or knowledge of the role school counselors can play in a school or of comprehensive school counseling programs. Two of the participants were former school counselors but were genuinely surprised at learning how school counselors can use data in planning their programs. The participants shared they would share the importance of the annual agreement with colleagues who currently did not have a program in place or who had never gone through the RAMP application process. The participants found a benefit of RAMP for helping move their schools and students to greater success.

Currently, there is an absence of research in school counseling or educational leadership literature regarding principals' perspective about comprehensive school counseling programs. The majority of research available pertains to the perceptions principals hold regarding school counselors (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Fitch et al., 2001; Graham et al., 2011; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Williams & Wehrman, 2010). The findings from this study answered the research question.

Defined Role of School Counselors

Throughout history, the role of school counselors has been plagued with ambiguity and confusion (Dodson, 2004; Gysbers, 2010; Leuwerke et al., 2009). Consistent with the literature on the ambiguity of the role of school counselors, the

participants of this study, except two who were previously school counselors, expressed

having no prior knowledge of the role of school counselors. Similarly, the participants

had no recollection of the role of school counselors or how to best utilize school

counselors being discussed during their pre-service leadership programs, which is also

supported by existing research (Dodson, 2004; Finkelstein, 2009; Johnson et al., 2011;

Lowery et al., 2018). As shown in existing literature (Edwards et al., 2014, Johnson et

al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018), this is troublesome as it tends to lead to school counselors

serving in roles that do not allow them to adequately assist the students.

Furthermore, the literature supports the notion that principals' experiences with

school counselors are common determinants when deciding what roles school counselors

should perform (Fitch et al., 2001). This study substantiated the literature by finding

most of the participants based their knowledge of the role their school counselors should

play on their experiences with counselors. These experiences stemmed from their

experiences as high school students or once they entered the education profession.

Solarek said, "I only know what my own high school experience was like, so that's what I

expected the counselors to do." The concern is when principals assign duties based on

personal experiences, and school counselors are assigned roles that are not appropriate

such as quasi-administrators (Johnson et al., 2011), hall monitors, lunchroom monitors,

test administrators, and master schedule developers (ASCA, 2012; Bardhoshi et al., 2014;

Edwards et al., 2014; Lowery et al., 2018), which take school counselors away from

directly supporting students. According to ASCA (2012), school counselors should (a)

provide academic support to students, (b) support social emotional learning of students,

and (c) provide opportunities to develop college and career readiness skills for all

students. Participants shared they assigned their school counselors inappropriate tasks

before understanding the difference a school counselor can make in a school. However, after implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, participants became more intentional in aligning the duties of school counselors to recommendations of ASCA (2012) to ensure they worked directly with students.

After comprehensive school counseling programs were implemented at the participants' schools, the role school counselors should be performing became apparent. The participants realized that school counselors do more than deliver classroom lessons. School counselors, operating under a comprehensive program, systematically deliver services in a developmentally appropriate manner to all students in their school (Johnson et al., 2011), not just a select few, thus assuring equitable access to opportunities and rigorous courses for all students (ASCA, 2012). The participants noted how the comprehensive school counseling program allowed counselors to focus their lessons and programs on the whole child (i.e., academic, social emotional, and career readiness).

The findings of this study show that schools see an improvement in student success when school counselors systemically provide services that support the academic, social emotional learning, and college career readiness of all students. Additionally, this study substantiated the need for school counselors to sometimes educate their principals on appropriate roles. The participants in this study discussed how they were "enlightened about the role of school counselors" through the advocacy of their school counselors and the implementation of the comprehensive school counseling program. School counselors stepping into the leader role to educate principals on the appropriate roles school counselors should be undertaking is supported in current literature (Amatea & Clark, 2005), as well as through the shared leadership concept of transformational leadership (Hallinger, 2003). Data from this study suggest that principals were willing to learn from

school counselors and adjust their processes for assigning duties that influence the role of the school counselor.

Strengthened School Counselors Leadership Skills

When thinking of school counselors, those without knowledge of school counseling may not consider leadership a critical role. However, Mason and McMahon (2009) assert that while leadership is not historically associated with school counseling, it is a foundational component of school counseling, and skills such as advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change require school counselors to have a certain level of leadership. Additionally, leadership is firmly embedded in the ASCA National Model. ASCA (2012) states, "Leadership is an essential skill for school counselors as they develop and manage a comprehensive school counseling program" (p. 1). Based on research and the statements by Mason and McMahon (2009) and ASCA (2012), participants were explicitly asked about the leadership skills of the school counselors in participants' schools.

In this study, participants were resolute in their recognition that school counselors are leaders in the school, which directly supports the literature that leadership is a necessary skill for school counselors (ASCA, 2005; McMahon et al., 2009; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Furthermore, this data from the participant interviews show that school counselors are involved in many aspects of the school. Each participant had a school counselor on their leadership team. Participants indicated having school counselor representation on the leadership team provides an opportunity to ensure that all key stakeholders in the building are working toward the same goal. Additionally, being on the leadership team allows school counselors to offer input and help problem-solve a myriad of issues. Having school counselors serve in this leadership role is

supported by Leithwood and Jantzi's (1999) conceptualization that transformational leadership is conducive to creating a productive school culture and a structure of shared decision-making.

Furthermore, participants indicated having school counselors on the leadership team allowed a dedicated time to discuss individual student issues and, as a team, develop possible interventions for working with the student. This supports ASCA's assertation that:

> Principals need school counselors' perspective and leadership in working together on behalf of the students in the school…. School counselors must be the ever-present voice to ensure student needs are recognized, and the staff knows how to access additional help or resources when needed. (p. 17)

Additionally, the findings of the study support the importance of leadership when school counselors are implementing a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2012). Data from the study showed how school counselors invoked leadership skills to convince principals that a comprehensive school counseling program would be beneficial to their schools. Participants reported that school counselors used student and school data to show the impact a comprehensive program could make on the data. Several participants noted it was the emphasis of the whole child that was the convincing argument to move forward with the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program.

A surprising piece of data was principals gave their school counselors leadership roles they "would never have considered" previously. Participants reported that they placed school counselors in charge of school-wide initiatives. One such action is the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS), which the majority of participants mentioned

having in their schools. MTSS provides academic, behavioral, and social supports to all

students, using a three-tiered approach (Cook, Lyon, Kubergovic, Wright, & Zhang,

2015; Harlacher, Sakelaris, & Kattelman, 2014; Sugai & Horner, 2009; Sugai &

Simonsen, 2012). School counselors, using MTSS, along with a comprehensive school

counseling program, work to ensure students school-wide are receiving tier-one level

interventions (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). School counselors provide these tier one

activities through classroom core curriculum lessons where they teach expected

schoolwide behaviors and social-emotional lessons (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016).

Additionally, school counselors continue to develop their leadership skills using

MTSS to collaborate with teachers about individual students (Ziomek-Daigle et al.,

2016). When school counselors have opportunities to speak at department meetings and

share their knowledge about students, their level of involvement with teachers is

enhanced. Sharing knowledge with teachers through collaborative activities, allows

school counselors to develop confidence in their skills as an educator and leader. In some

situations, school counselors developed lessons and trained staff on implementing the

curriculum content, some of which were outside the standard counseling topics. For the

participants of this study, it was a significant finding to realize how integral school

counselors are to the school environment.

Another significant finding was the participants' realization that school counselors

capable of assuming leadership roles that historically thought to be outside their scope of

practice. The participants came to realize that their school counselors were capable of

directing initiatives, writing lessons for the entire school, and training faculty. The

participants also learned that school counselors work with all stakeholders in the school

community and should help in making decisions that affect the community and impact school climate (ASCA, 2012; Ziomek-Daigle, 2016).

Influenced School Discipline

Consistent with research on comprehensive school counseling programs positively influencing schools' discipline data (Lapan et al., 2012), the participants in the study shared they had seen a "dramatic" decrease in behavior issues across all levels. Participants provided examples of school counselors providing classroom lessons that taught social emotional learning (SEL) skills (i.e., self-management, self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making) to all students. While school counselors have grown in this area of expertise by developing, delivering, and assessing classroom core curriculum lessons on SEL skills to help students be successful in school, work, and relationships (Bouffard, 2012; Ziomek-Daigle, 2016) additional support is needed.

According to Martens and Andreen (2013), student misbehavior has adverse consequences on the learning environment for all students due to the need for teachers to stop instruction to handle the situation. Furthermore, depending on the severity of the infraction, the consequence of the behavior harms the offending student's education due to office referrals or school suspension (Martens & Andreen, 2013). School counselors assist in teaching expected school behaviors using Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support (PBIS), to support their comprehensive school counseling programs. PBIS is a three-tiered approach of preventative, culturally responsive, evidence-based, data-driven interventions based on applied behavior analysis principles. PBIS aims to create a positive school climate, teaching measurable and appropriate behavior to all students and staff, reinforcing desired behaviors, and viewing the school as a system (PBIS, 2018;

Sugai & Horner, 2006). ASCA (2018) encourages school counselors to implement PBIS simultaneously with their comprehensive school counseling programs to support the academic and social emotional learning of students. With their unique training to see school-related situations and concepts in a holistic manner (Rich & Shiram, 2005), school counselors help guide the school-wide implementation of PBIS (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Martens & Andreen, 2013).

When needed, a more restrictive environment is utilized by inviting students to participate in small groups, which targeted specific SEL skills. Additionally, check-in/check-out programs are successful tier two interventions for elementary students (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Martens & Andreen, 2013; Ziomek-Daigle & Heckman, 2019). Check-in/Check-out interventions allow the school counselor to have quick checks with students to ensure the students are working toward their goals. The participants all recognized that while school counselors provided valuable assistance with overall discipline data through their comprehensive program, and in some schools PBIS, they should never be administering consequences as this would alter the school counselor, student relationship. Several participants discussed how they went out of their way to ensure school counselors were not serving in a disciplinarian role.

The findings of this study corroborate the importance of school counselors having the support of their principals to provide instruction on SEL (ASCA, 2018; Martens & Andreen, 2013; Ziomek-Daigle & Cavin, 2015; Ziomek-Heckman, 2019). Participants discussed ways their school counselors were involved in teaching these skills to students, many through using MTSS. More importantly, the data from this study also support school counselors teaching these skills to teachers. Research supports teaching positive behavior support strategies for teachers to help with classroom behavior issues and

reinforce lessons taught to students (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018; Ziomek-Daigle &

Cavin, 2015). The participants were clear that having school counselors deliver

professional learning to teachers on SEL, helped to reinforce those skills throughout the

school day in each classroom. Participants believe this ultimately had a significant

influence on the schools' discipline data. School counselors being able to teach SEL

skills to students and teachers, require the backing of principals. Still, the participants that

did assist school counselors in this role saw the most significant decrease in the discipline

data.

Additionally, the participants of the study felt that the most substantial

contribution to the reduction in discipline concerns was due to school counselors "drilling

down and finding the root cause of the behavior." An important finding, this serves as a

reminder that students do not merely misbehave. The majority of the time, there is a

reason for the behavior. As Solarek stated, "…the student isn't acting out because he's a

jerk. He's acting out because he's hurting." School counselors are uniquely trained to

work with the whole child. Through this work, school counselors help uncover those

deeply hidden issues that are causing students to act out. Data from the study showed to

accomplish this task. School counselors need time to build meaningful and trusting

relationships with students rather than being consumed with duties that could be

completed by other individuals.

The reduction in discipline concerns is essential as it showcases the impact school

counselors have on the culture of the school. A hallmark of education guarantees that

every student has the right to learn in an environment that is safe. When student

discipline is an issue, valuable instructional time is lost. School counselors teaching

lessons in classrooms, running small groups for more targeted interventions, and teaching

skills to teachers help ensure that schools provide a safe environment where students can learn and develop.

Developed School-Wide Respect

Participants in the study shared that after implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, their school counselors garnered more respect from members of the faculty. The literature about the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs does not suggest increased respect as a byproduct; however, participants' experiences bore this out as a significant finding. Some participants believed respect for school counselors increased due to counselors being seen as instrumental in the school. Other participants thought it was the intentionality of school counselors reaching out to teachers. According to Warren (2018), teachers often do not feel equipped or unsupported when facing issues with students; however, teachers also do not seek help through consultation. Participants reported that school counselors played a vital role in helping to create a climate that nurtured and encouraged teachers to seek help (Warren, 2018). Reggie stated:

> My counselors not only help students find solutions to problems, they help our teachers too. When I know a teacher is having a difficult time, I let the counselors know and they check on the teacher. They keep the conversations confidential. This helps build trust.

School counselors engaging in these intentional moments of showing care and concern, help develop trust and respect and assist in establishing a trusting school environment. To understand why school-wide respect developed for school counselors, we need to understand the root cause of the lack of respect. The data from this study imply that the career path of school counselors is a contributing factor to school counselors not being

respected as educational professionals. It is not that one profession is better than the other, rather "counselor education curriculum encourages thinking about school related situations and concepts in a comprehensive manner, and teacher education program have a more narrow focus, emphasizing student learning" (Rich & Shiram, 2005, p. 367). This study provided evidence that using differences to work toward student achievement brought about change in attitude and the development of respect.

A major source of confusion stems from school counselors not having been classroom teachers. As Mark stated, "School counselors are not teachers, and they are not administrators. So, what are they?" This is a consideration he, along with other administrators and teachers, had about school counselors. According Gysbers and Henderson (2012), Mark's statement is a commonly held perception by teachers and administrators. This leads to a frequent question, if school counselors are not teachers first, what are they (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012)? Nevertheless, according to ASCA (2020), the majority of states do not require teaching experience to obtain a school counseling certificate. This lack of teaching experience exacerbates the confusion over school counselors and the opinion that they do not understand what it is like being in the classroom. Data from this study showed participants witnessed this attitude from many members of their faculty before the implementation of the comprehensive program. Participants alluded to a teacher's club, and if a person had not been a teacher, they would not be accepted in the club. Rich and Shiram (2005) argue that while differences exists between teachers and school counselors, commonalities such as both having instructional components intended to improve student learning offer a shared familiarity of roles. This has significant implications for school counselors with no teaching background and working to build trust with faculty members. According to data from

this study, school counselors have to be intentional, consistent, and trustworthy to earn the respect of teachers.

The participants believed that school counselors becoming intentional and purposeful in their work with teachers, helped build respect (Edwards et al., 2014; Goulet et al., 2003; Rich & Shiram, 2005; Sink, 2008). The data from the study supplied several examples of school counselors' intentionality that support the participants' perception. Several participants used the visibility of school counselors as a way that increased their respect among teachers. Participants defined visibility as being present during meetings, being seen in classrooms, and having time dedicated to teachers. These meetings consisted of school counselors offering suggestions on handling issues teachers are seeing in class or merely sharing upcoming lessons with teachers. Sharing collaborative experiences where individuals listen to one another, value contributions, and enable each participant to have a sense of belonging (Goulet et al., 2003; Rich & Shiram, 2005) lead to mutual respect (Edwards et al., 2014; Goulet et al., 2003).

A second example was the necessity for school counselors to "follow through" on agreements made with teachers. Participants suggested follow-through is critical in building respect among staff. The data show this is particularly relevant for classroom lessons and the necessity for school counselors to show up when scheduled. Finally, being intentional in sharing information about the school counseling program, along with how the school counseling program supports teachers, the teachers' work is imperative to the development of respect. Transparency about *what* school counselors do is important for the development of trust and respect. In fact, ASCA (2012) provided a framework for what this looks like in the National Model. Accountability is one of the four components of the National Model. According to ASCA (2012):

School counselors analyze school and school counseling program data to

determine how students are different as a result of the school counseling program.

School counselor use data to show the impact of the school counseling program

on students achievement, attendance, and behavior. (p. xiv)

School counselor do not keep this data to themselves, rather, they hold advisory council

meetings consisting of students, faculty, staff, parents, administrators, and community

members to share their data (ASCA, 2012). School counselors know and share their data

whenever and with whomever. Discussing the school counseling program and the impact

the school counseling program has on the school, backed by data, is an important step is

dispelling the mystery surrounding their role.

According to the data from this study, when teachers have opportunities to

collaborate and share responsibilities, the development of mutual respect develops as

professionals see the share commonalities (Rich & Shiram, 2005). Additionally, school

counselors being intentional to find opportunities to share what the school counselor

program is and how it impacts students is important to dispelling myths about and

building trust and respect. Entering into relationships based on mutual respect and

common goals creates a process where individuals work together to effect change in the

culture of the school (Anderson, 2017; Sun & Leithwood, 2012).

Enhanced Working Relationships

Participants in this study indicated a good working relationship with their school

counselors was monumental to the success of the counseling program and the success of

the school. Additionally, participants reported that collaboration and communication are

significant components of a successful working relationship. An abundance of literature

support this finding that collaboration between school counselors and their principals are

vital to the success of school counselors (Clark & Stone, 2000; Dahir et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2014; Janson & Stone, 2009). While possibly inferred as a product of collaboration, the literature does not explicitly address the communication aspect of the findings. To that point, the participants addressed collaboration and communication separately, so for consistency and clarity, each will be discussed in isolation.

Collaboration. The importance of a collaborative relationship between school counselors and principals is well documented in research (ASCA, 2012; Clark & Stone, 2000; Dahir et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2014; Janson & Stone, 2009). Dahir et al. (2010) assert that collaboration is vital as the axis of the principal, school counselor relationship is a joining of shared goals about student achievement and school success. When a collaborative partnership is created between principals and school counselors to establish the focus of the school counseling program on goals for school improvement, the result will be increased student success (Dahir et al., 2010). Consistent with the literature, the participants in this study believe working with their school counselors has benefited students and the school.

According to the participants, the primary way the collaborative relationship has benefited students is that designated time is allotted for the principal and school counselor to discuss specific student concerns. During these collaborative meetings, plans for interventions for handling particular situations are established. Additionally, these designated times allow the participants and the school counselors, along with other school leaders, an opportunity to gain the same information about what is occurring throughout the school.

Communication. The other component participants defined as essential for a working relationship is communication. Communication is not addressed explicitly in

the literature surrounding comprehensive school counseling; however, it can be inferred in the existing literature about collaborating with principals (ASCA, 2012; Clark & Stone, 2000; Dahir et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2014; Janson & Stone, 2009). Having a good working relationship depends on clear and constant communication between multiple individuals. The participants in this study suggested that both formal and informal time to talk is critical to the relationship and building trust. Principals and school counselors need to work together to determine what each person is comfortable with, especially when it comes to unscheduled conversations. Some participants made a point to visit the school counselors office several times a day for updates. Others were not quite as comfortable with the impromptu conversation but did try to check in once or twice a week.

The literature supports the view that collaboration is vital to a successful working relationship, and data from this study supported this as well (ASCA, 2012; Dahir et al., 2010; Edwards et al., 2014; Goulet et al., 2003). The participants were clear that the school counselor played a vital role in the everyday functioning of the school. Without constant collaboration and communication, neither party could fulfill their duties effectively. Understanding the principal's vision and helping the principal carry out their vision is critical to the overall success of the school is essential for school counselors.

Conclusion

Current literature asserts that without principals' assistance, it is challenging for school counselors to manage a successful school counseling program, which includes being in classrooms, conducting small groups, assuming leadership roles, and supporting the faculty and staff (Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Chata & Loesch, 2007). The data from this study suggest that the participants support comprehensive school counseling

programs and encourage school counselors to be active in a myriad of roles throughout the school environment. While additional studies are needed to add to the literature on this topic, findings from this study have shown that principals' perspectives of comprehensive school counseling programs are overall quite positive. The 12 participants shared common experiences as principals of schools with a comprehensive school counseling program that should be transferrable to other school settings. The participants indicated if provided an opportunity to speak with colleagues about comprehensive school counseling programs, they would encourage the implementation of a comprehensive program to any school without a comprehensive program. The participants spoke of the overall benefit to the school, but more importantly, to student success. JJ stated, "A comprehensive school counseling program is simply doing whatever it takes to meet individual student's needs despite the barriers. To me, that is what we as educators are here to do."

Implications

The goal of this study was to understand principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. This study affirms that principals of schools with comprehensive school counseling programs see the relevance to their students and their school community. However, the findings of this study indicate principals' lack of knowledge about school counseling and the potential influence school counselors have on students are due to factors outside their control but can inhibit the work of school counselors. The participants in this study cited not being taught about school counseling during their pre-service educational leadership programs and basing their knowledge on their own experiences as a student which is supported by current literature (Dodson, 2004; Fitch et al., 2001 Finkelstein, 2009; Johnson et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018). If

educational leadership programs and school counseling program addressed the differing perspectives in curriculum, counselors and principals might be better able to bridge their differences. According to Shoffner and Williamson (2000), they "are trained separately and have few opportunities to learn about the roles, responsibilities, and perspectives of each other" (p. 129). Having this information during pre-service programs would prepare individuals in these programs to understand how to utilize school counselors to influence student success.

The findings of this study provide implications for counselor education program faculty, educational leadership program faculty, practicing school counselors, principals, and the use of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS). These implications focus on providing educational leadership and counselor education faculty, as well as principals and school counselors with information on how to best position their school counselors to influence student success and a successful school through the advocacy of school counselors. The implications are not meant to be generalizable, but rather to be transferrable (Creswell, 2014) to specific needs of individuals in counselor educator programs, educational leadership programs, and K-12 school settings.

Educational Leadership Program Implications

The majority of participants in this study noted that information about school counselors or comprehensive school counseling programs were not covered in their educational leadership programs and literature fully support the participants' experiences (Dodson, 2004; Finkelstein, 2009; Johnson et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018). Additionally, the literature proclaims that many principals utilize school counselors based on their personal experiences as a student (Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001). Participants of this study cited similar experiences. Therefore, one implication based on

prior research and the findings of the current research is a need for the addition of school counseling information into the educational leadership curriculum. One way this could be accomplished is joining classes from educational leadership and school counseling a few times during a term to cover specific topics through facilitative activities. Similarly, a more concentrated solution that would entail human, as well as financial resources, would be the creation of a course for educational leadership and school counseling students. Again, this would provide opportunities for individuals in each discipline to learn from others through collaborative experiences.

Collaboration between principals and school counselors is a common and important theme throughout literature. Dahir et al. (2010) stated, "the success of collaboration is rooted in the assurance that the beliefs and priorities of principals and school counselors are focused on a common goal, which is a passion for improving student outcomes" (p. 298). This statement is significant for faculty in educational leadership and counselor education programs and suggests that more collaborative opportunities should exist during the training phase of these pre-service programs. Participants in the current study noted the important role of daily collaboration with their school counselors and referred to many examples of how they engage in collaboration.

Counselor Educator Implications

A significant implication for counselor education faculty is collaboration opportunities with educational leadership faculty. Similar to the implications for the pre-service programs, counselor educator programs must create avenues to collaborate with educational leadership faculty. While the literature posits collaboration is vital for the work of principals and school counselors (Chala & Loesch, 2007; Dahir et al., 2010; Riddle, 2009), this study implies collaboration is critical for faculty members of

counselor educator and educational leadership programs. School counseling students are taught the importance of advocating for their roles; however, this researcher, based on the findings of this study and current literature, would argue it is essential that counselor educators advocate for school counseling through collaboration. As previously mentioned, joining educational leadership classes with counselor education classes a few times during a term or developing courses for doctoral students in counselor education and educational leadership programs would be beneficial. Not only would this help ensure information about school counseling is shared with the educational leadership students, but it also provides an opportunity for counselor education students to learn about the role of administrators. According to Zalaquett (2005), "it is important for school counselors and principals to form a partnership based on knowledge, trust, and positive regard for what each profession does" (p. 456).

Additionally, research shows that building relationships between school counselors and principals increases an understanding of the roles of each professional (Armstrong et al., 2010; Zalaquett, 2005). This level of knowledge is fundamental to overall student success (ASCA, 2012; Dahir et al., 2010). Understanding the complexities of each role should be a focus of the programs. Through advocacy, faculty from counselor education programs could ensure opportunities exist for students from each discipline to learn the roles of each other.

School Counseling and Counselor Educator Training Program Implications

Reviewing the results from the current study along with literature, reveal implications for school counseling as well as counselor education programs. These implications are nested within the curriculum area for both programs.

Leadership. According to literature, leadership is a necessary skill for all school counselors (ASCA, 2012; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). Mason and McMahon (2009) assert that while not historically associated with school counseling, leadership is a foundational skill for school counselors. Additionally, the third edition of the ASCA National Model (2012), continues to assert that leadership is a necessary skill for school counselors. It remains one of four themes of the National Model. The ASCA National Model (2012) states, "… Principals need school counselors' perspective and leadership in working together on behalf of the students in the school…." (p. 17). With the emphasis placed on the leadership skills of school counselors, university programs should add this to the curriculum. Participants in the current study indicated a dramatic improvement in the leadership skills of their school counselors after comprehensive school counseling programs were implemented. For the participants, the development of leadership skill was not only seen as ability to carry out tasks and to work with others. It was also seen with school counselors volunteering to lead or on school-wide committees.

However, several participants indicated that while they did see dramatic changes, their initial experiences with their school counselors were not favorable. Participants talked about school counselors coming to them as shy, reserved, and uncertain. Many of these new school counselors were new to the school setting, having never served as a teacher. The majority of states do not require teaching experience to become a certified school counselor (ASCA, 2020). The lack of teaching experience not only creates confusion about what school counselors do, but it also leads to uncertainty on the part of the new school counselor. A school environment is a strange place if you have no prior experience as an educator. Without knowledge of schools and specific education jargon,

new school counselors will not be prepared to assume the leadership role that is an assumption of many in the school and community. Developing leadership curriculum is a crucial need based on the results of this study.

Teaching Strategies. As previously noted, the majority of states do not require teaching experience for certification as a school counselor (ASCA, n.d.[b]). Nonetheless, school counselors are expected to teach classroom core curriculum lessons. Core curriculum lessons are clearly articulated in the National Model (ASCA, 2012) as an element of a comprehensive school counseling program. Several participants in the current study discussed their expectations that school counselors would be in the classroom teaching SEL lessons. According to Jones and Bouffard (2012), SEL refer to skills needed by individuals to success in school, work, relationships, and citizenship. School counselors are uniquely qualified to deliver these skills through classroom core curriculum lessons as well as small groups. Several participants discussed the implementation of MTSS, overseen by the school counselors, in their schools. Through classroom core lessons, school counselors provide tier one interventions to all students in the school. According to Ziomek-Daigle et al. (2016), the 80% of students benefit from these tier one interventions. For those students who need additional support to learn SEL skill, school counselors are equipped to provide tier 2 interventions through small groups.

Teaching classroom lessons, and conducting small groups, provide school counselors with valuable teaching skills (e.g., classroom management, lesson plan development, etc.); however, additional opportunities to develop teaching strategies is critical. An implication is to add teaching pedagogy to the school counseling curriculum. School counseling faculty would not be the ideal individuals to deliver this curricular. Rather, cross-departmental collaboration with teacher education faculty would be

essential. Students graduating from school counseling programs must have instruction in teaching strategies, along with learning how to differentiate instruction for their students. While the skill of teaching improves with experience, not having teaching strategies taught in the curriculum is placing new school counselors in a deficit position. One suggestion would be to have observations done by administrators or teacher education faculty during the internship experience, to give feedback on teaching strategies utilized during a classroom lesson. Students graduating from school counseling programs need to have experiences with any skill necessary for a successful transition from student to professional.

Principals

The purpose of this current study was to explore principals' perspectives of comprehensive school counseling programs. The literature is clear that without the support of the principal, it is difficult to manage a successful school counseling program (Carnes-Holt et al., 2012; Chata & Loesch, 2007). The findings of this study highlight several implications for principals.

First, principals are needed to help define the role of the school counselor. Participants in this current study, each discussed that through the implementation of the comprehensive school counseling program, they discovered what school counselors should be doing in their daily work. According to Bringman et al. (2010) and Leuwerke et al. (2009), when principals are exposed to appropriate roles of school counselors, the duties assigned to school counselors are positively impacted. After comprehensive school counseling programs were implemented, the participants in this study discussed realizing the impact school counselors had on the entire school community. Participants also discussed the realization they would need to assist in explaining the role to other

stakeholders. This realization was due to the confusion of school counselors' roles that have existed since the genesis of school counseling (Dodson, 2004; Gysbers, 2010; Leuwerke et al., 2009). Principals must assign school counselors roles and duties that are appropriate and allow them to work with all students in the school.

A second implication for principals is assisting in the development of leadership skills in their school counselors. Leadership is a foundational skill for school counselors to possess (Mason & McMahon, 2009); however, not all school counselors recognize their capabilities or how to develop these skills. Participants in the study reported a significant improvement in the development of leadership skills in their school counselors. Furthermore, several participants discussed how they gave their school counselors leadership opportunities after garnering an understanding of the impact school counselor have on the entire school community. As the findings of this study suggest and literature supports, principals should encourage the school counselors to assume leadership roles in the building. Many school counselors already sit on the principals' leadership team, which provides an opportunity to work with other leaders to further the mission of the school. It also gives school counselors the chance to share how the school counseling program is supporting the school.

Additionally, school counselors could be asked to assume the leadership role on school committees. Some of the participants in this study commented their school counselors were chairing committees examining issues that are typically outside the counselors' scope. Also, some participants indicated their school counselors sought opportunities to join committees or to chair committees. While data from this study show that counselors participate, and lead committees that are outside the normal scope of school counselors, the majority of participants reported their school counselors lead

initiatives more closely aligned with their expertise, namely the MTSS initiative. Within

MTSS, school counselors play vital roles ensuring that all students have access to lessons

to help develop a foundation for academic and behavior success. MTSS is an approach

built on a three-tiered framework (Ockerman et al., 2012; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016).

School counselors involvement with MTSS center around three specific roles: supporters,

interveners, and facilitators (Ockerman et al., 2012; Ziomek-Daigle et al, 2016). As

supporters, school counselors share data and increase awareness of equity gaps that may

exist at the school (Ockerman et al., 2012; Ziomek-Daigle et al, 2016). According to

Ockerman et al. (2012) and Ziomek-Daigle and Heckman (2019), as interveners and

facilitators, school counselors are active members of MTSS teams who develop

behavioral interventions based collected data. The role of facilitator on MTSS teams

place school counselors in a prominent role of leadership for school-wide initiatives. The

principals in this study were steadfast in their belief that after implementing a

comprehensive school counseling program, their school counselors showed evidence they

had the requisite leadership skills to facilitate school-wide programming of MTSS.

 Finally, the third implication for principals is to be intentional and increase

collaboration with their school counselors. Collaboration between school counselors and

principals is the central element to a successful comprehensive school counseling

program (ASCA, 2012; Chala & Loesch, 2007; Dahir et al., 2010; Graham et al., 2011;

Lowery et al., 2018). The findings substantiated the literature and the importance of

being intentional when collaborating with their school counselors. The collaboration

provided a means for them to discuss issues that each party saw with students, faculty, or

in the community. Through collaboration, participants indicated they were able to "be a

united front" with their school counselors when providing guidance and interventions for

solving issues. Principals need to discover ways to enter into meaningful collaboration with their school counselors.

School Counselors

While this study explored principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs, the findings provide several implications for school counselors. First, this current study suggests that it was the advocacy of the school counselors that led to principals understanding their role. One participant said that it was the "advocacy of her school counselors that managed to change the view of what their roles are in high schools." Other participants of this study gave similar statements. ASCA (2016) defined a school counselor advocate as "a person who speaks, writes, or acts to promote the wellbeing of students, parents/guardians, and the school counselor professional. School counselors advocate to close the information , opportunity, intervention, and attainment gaps for all students" (p. 9). Furthermore, school counselor advocates use data to identify advocacy issues and work toward individual and systemic change for a myriad of issues, including social justice concerns (Hatch, 2012; McMahon et al., 2009; Singh, Urbano, Haston, & McMahan, 2010). It is imperative for school counselors to not only advocate for the students in their buildings, but to advocate for the profession itself. Nevertheless, advocacy is can be daunting tasks for some. In a study by Beck and Lane (2019), found school counselors "felt trepidation and pressure to be the expert" (p. 180). Additionally, individuals new to the educational arena may feel unqualified to advocate for the themselves. Research has found advocacy is an evolving and ongoing journey that develops with more experience (Beck & Lane, 2019; Singh et al., 2010). The findings of this study emphasized that advocacy by the school counselors can influence change in principals' thinking about the role of school counselors in the schools. These examples

give credence to the power of advocacy and relationship in changing the trajectory of school counseling. The literature, as well as findings from this study, are clear that principals do not have an opportunity to learn about school counseling programs during their pre-service programs (Dodson, 2004; Finkelstein, 2009; Johnson et al., 2011; Lowery et al., 2018). It becomes incumbent on school counselors to educate principals on the roles school counselors should be playing in the school (Amatea & Clark, 2005). This current study provided support of the assertion that school counselors must work with principals to ensure an understanding of the school counseling program.

Secondly, the findings of this study strongly suggest that school counselors are seen as leaders by their principals. Participants of this study indicated they were the primary contact for several school-based initiatives. Additionally, participants discussed how school counselors lead school committees, taught professional development to faculty and staff, and served on school and district leadership teams. Additionally, several participants discussed how the school counselors implemented MTSS, along with comprehensive school counseling programs, to further enhance the academic, behavioral development of students. These findings support literature that highlights the importance of leadership skills for school counselors as they are called on to fulfill leadership roles in the school (ASCA, 2005; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Paisley & McMahon, 2001). An implication for school counselors, based on findings of this study and current literature, is school counselors must work to enhance their leadership skills. According to ASCA (2012), "Principals need school counselors' perspective and leadership in working together on behalf of the students in the school…." School counselors need to be confident in their ability to work with their principals to further the principals' vision for the school. Participants in this study commented after the implementation of a

comprehensive school counseling program, their school counselors began to ask for leadership opportunities. Due to these findings, if school counselors do not feel confident in their leadership skills, this study shows the importance for them to find opportunities to develop leadership skills.

Finally, school counselors, across all grade levels, are expected to teach classroom core curriculum lessons as part of their program delivery (ASCA, 2012). Additionally, several participants from this study discussed the importance of the lessons taught by school counselors. For many school counselors, teaching is an activity in which they have limited experience. As previously discussed, prior teaching experience is not a requirement to obtain school counseling certification in the majority of states (ASCA, n.d.[b]). Due to the importance of teaching in the program delivery, an implication for school counselors is to acquire additional experience and expertise in the skill of teaching. Not only is the skill of teaching relevant for the content delivery to students, but many school counselors are also now evaluated while teaching classroom core curriculum lessons. Due to the difference in training and experiences, evaluators, who are typically an administrator, will be looking for specific teaching strategies due to classroom lessons. It would behoove school counselors to collaborate with teachers or the administrator who will evaluate them to seek feedback and suggestions on their skills.

Furthermore, finding opportunities to participate in staff development focused on teaching strategies and techniques is an important implication for school counselors, including those with teaching experience. For school counselors who have classroom teaching experience, perhaps offering staff development on teaching strategies and engagement of students at school counseling conferences would be beneficial to the professional growth of new school counselors. Likewise, school counselors must

develop skills in classroom management. This is an area that can produce anxiety for new school counselors as they balance their role of non-disciplinarian. Without classroom management techniques, content learning by students could be in jeopardy if classroom disruptions abound. School counselors are encouraged to work with veteran school counselors, teachers, behavior specialists, and administrators to develop essential classroom management skills.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

This study has explored principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. The findings have shown that principals see value in a comprehensive program in not only how it supports the whole child, but also how it elevates school counselors as essential members of the school community. A final implication for school counselors and principals is the implementation of MTSS. According to Sugai, La Salle, Everett, and Feinberg (2019), multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) is an "overarching approach for a range of tiered systems of support" (p.2) that address the academic and behavior needs of students (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). According to Ziomek-Daigle et al. (2016), when MTSS and comprehensive school counseling programs are implemented together, a greater focus is placed on academic achievement and behavior, as well as other tenets such as collaboration, closing achievement gaps, and data collection. Participants of this current study discussed how these tenets are critical to the success of the school counseling program and its support of the school. Based on this, school counselors should learn more about MTSS and how MTSS can support their comprehensive school counseling program. In a 2018 position statement, ASCA encouraged school counselors to "align their work with MTSS through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program designed to improve

student achievement, career exploration, and behavior" (p. 45). This current study did not show that comprehensive school counseling programs had a positive influence on students' academic achievement. As suggested by research (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016), the alignment of both comprehensive school counseling programs and MTSS may help increase the academic achievement of students.

Limitations of the Study

While this study provided preliminary findings of principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs, there were a few limitations in the study. The first limitation is the geographical location of the participants. Six of the 12 participants were from Virginia, which is a state that mandates schools to implement a comprehensive school counseling program. Having half the participants from the same state could potentially impact the findings. Additionally, of the six participants, three were from the same district, and two other participants were from another district. This is considered a limitation as additional local oversight is involved with implementing the required comprehensive school counseling program and perhaps could influence participants' experiences.

A second limitation occurred with member checking. After transcribing the interviews, each participant received an electronic version of the transcript. Participants were asked to read the transcript to verify the transcript captured the conversation as they recalled and to make any changes or additions that would ensure their experiences were correct. Only three participants returned the transcripts. The remaining nine participants did not respond to additional follow up emails. Additionally, I was unable to reach any of the twelve participants to discuss the findings. These incomplete steps do influence

the trustworthiness; however, peer debriefing with the research team members was used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study was maintained.

A third limitation of the study was eliminating potential participants from schools that have received RAMP recognition more than once. A criterion for participation in this current study was that participants' schools had received RAMP recognition for the first time within the last five years. Having the perspectives of principals from schools that have received RAMP recognition more than once would provide long-term evidence of principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs.

The final limitation was the researcher and participant not being in the same location during the interview. All interviews, except for one-and-a-half, were conducted using Zoom video conferencing. While the researcher and participants were able to interact with each other, it was challenging to observe full body language, which could have offered evidence of reactions. Additionally, being physically present with the participant to see their body language could have guided the conversation in a different direction, at times. Those who were unable to use the online platform created a situation of the researcher attempting to determine engagement based on verbal cues (e.g., pauses in conversation, vocal inflections, quickly jumping in to respond).

Recommendations for Future Research

Currently, no studies have been conducted on principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs. The majority of research explores the perceptions principals have about school counselors (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Fitch et al., 2001; Graham et al., 2011; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Williams & Wehrman, 2010), but not the perspectives of the school counseling program. While this study only provided an exploratory look at the principals' perspectives about

comprehensive school counseling, several future research studies could build upon the findings of this study.

First, this study only examined principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs using schools that had received RAMP recognition. Future studies could examine the perspective of principals at schools that have not received RAMP recognition, but have a comprehensive school counseling program. This would allow a comparison of findings to determine if differences exist. Second, this current study focused on the experiences of principals whose schools have received RAMP recognition for the time within the last five years. A study to compare the findings between a one-time RAMP schools with schools that have received RAMP multiple times would allow a comparison of findings. This would provide evidence to show if the findings remain consistent across time. Additionally, it would allow an opportunity to see if principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs changed. Third, the elementary schools in this study had student enrollment under 1,000. Additional studies might look at elementary schools with larger student enrollment to examine any differences in principals'' perspectives. Fourth, six of the participants were from schools in the same state that mandates the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs. Additional research to examine the principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs in states where the Department of Education does not mandate it will be an interesting comparison to determine if any differences in perspective exist. Fifth, this was a qualitative study of 12 individuals. While additional qualitative studies are needed to learn more about the experiences of this population, quantitative studies would be useful in studying the principals' perspectives with a large sample population. Finally, additional research is needed to

examine if comprehensive school counseling programs have an impact on students'
academic achievement since this study did not support the literature.

Chapter Summary

Exploring principals' perspectives of comprehensive school counseling programs
have uncovered several findings that contribute to the current literature. The findings of
this study reveal that principals not only see value in comprehensive school counseling
programs, but through the implementation process they came to understand the role of
school counselors and how to collaborate with them to support the school vision and
enhance student success. Additionally, the findings provide a deeper understanding of
how vital and integral school counselors are to the overall functioning of a school.
Further, the findings illustrate that school counselors are trained to work with all
stakeholders in a school – students, faculty, administrators, parents, and community
members. The limitations of this study, along with the deficits in literature, indicate
additional research is needed to provide further information on principals' perspectives
about comprehensive school counseling programs. Counselor educators can use these
findings to understand how better to advocate for the school counseling profession.
Additionally, practicing school counselors can use the results to enhance working
relationships with their principals and administrative teams.

Although this study represents initial steps in understanding principals'
perspectives of comprehensive school counseling programs, and additional research is
needed, it is a step in the right direction. The principals were clear that comprehensive
school counseling programs changed their perspective about school counselors and
allowed them to see the vital role school counselors play in helping students succeed.
Additionally, when school counselors function in roles set forth by the ASCA National

Model, students are positively impacted, teachers gain a partner in working with students and families, discipline concerns decrease, and working relationships develop through intentional collaboration and communication. All of which provide a comprehensive program that focuses on the whole child.

Epilogue

I have just written the final word of my dissertation. A milestone I never thought I would achieve. As I sit with tears streaming down my face, I reflect on the process, the journey, the possibility my work may have on enhancing the school counseling profession, and what I have learned about myself. This journey toward my Ph.D. has been long and arduous. On multiple occasions, I have questioned why I began, if I wanted to continue, and if I even belonged in the program. However, I am thankful I remained on the path. Along this journey, I have grown to know myself differently. Not only am I a school counselor and an educator, but I also as a proud student and scholar. I stand with my head held high that I have new knowledge to share that can help move school counseling forward. I have made many sacrifices along the way as I found it challenging to balance home, work, friends, family, and my doctoral studies. I look forward to time with friends, more quality time with my partner, and down town for just me. However, I would not trade these past four years and the growth I have experienced. This is not the end; only the beginning of new adventures.

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Appendix A

Email Recruitment Letter

My name is Brent Henderson and I am a doctoral student in the Department of
Counseling and Human Development Services at the University of Georgia. I am
conducting a research study for my dissertation under the direction of Dr. Jolie Daigle,
and I invite you to consider participating in this study. The title of my study is, "A
Framework for Success: Principals' Perspectives About Comprehensive School
Counseling Programs." This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board
(IRB) at the University of Georgia (PROJECT00001226).

The purpose of this study is to explore the principals' perspectives about comprehensive
school counseling programs to determine if principals saw positive impacts to student
success and to the school. You are being invited to participate in the study as a principal
of a school that has received RAMP recognition within the last five years. Participants
need to have been principal prior to and during the RAMP application process as well as
one year after the recognition. If you meet these criteria, please consider participation in
one 45-60minute interview through the online video conferencing platform Zoom as well
as a second shorter follow-up interview after themes and interpretations are complete.
You will have an opportunity to read the transcription of your interview prior to my
engaging in data analysis. Interviews will be held at a mutually agreed upon time. Each
participant will receive a $25.00 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the study.

Participation in this research study is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate,
or may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. While the results may be
published, your identity and the identity of your school will not be shared. Also, no
specific school or student data will be collected. I am happy to answer any questions you
may have about this study. You can contact me at brentieh@uga.edu. Visit
https://research.uga.edu/hrpp/research-participants for information the University of
Georgia provides to help inform your decision.

If you would like to participant, please send an email to me as soon as possible. Please
include your contact phone number and the best times to reach you. I will call to further
discuss the discuss the details of the study.

Sincerely,

Brent
Brent Henderson
Doctoral Candidate
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
404.271.9313, brentieh@uga.edu
Principal Investigator: Dr. Jolie Daigle, Ph.D.
706.542.1812, jdaigle@uga.edu

Appendix B

PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

*Name: _____   Gender Identity: _____

Please select a pseudonym that will be used for the study: _____

*Email Address: _____

*School Name: _____

*School Phone Number: _____

Location of School (State only): _____

Level of School: ___ elementary   ___ middle   ___ high   other: _____

How long have you been principal of this school?   _____

How long were you principal prior to school counselors began the RAMP application

process? _____

In what year did your school receive RAMP recognition? _____

How many times has your school received RAMP recognition? _____

How many counselors are at your school? _____

*Your name, school name, email address, and school phone number will be kept by
researcher should it be needed for accounting purposes. If needed, the information will
be provided to the Business Manager in the Department of Counseling and Human
Developmental Services at the University of Georgia.

Appendix C

UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

CONSENT LETTER

PERSPECTIVES OF PRINCIPALS ABOUT COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL
COUNSELING PROGRAMS

Dear Participant,

My name is Brent Henderson and I am a student in the Counseling and Human
Development Services Department at the University of Georgia under the supervision of
Dr. Jolie Daigle. I am inviting you to take part in my dissertation research study entitled,
"Principals perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs."

I am doing research on the perceptions principals have about the comprehensive school
counseling programs that are implemented in their schools. I am conducting this research
due to the limited about information on comprehensive school counseling programs from
the perspective of principals. The research question that will guide this study is, "What
are principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs?"

You have been selected as a potential participant because your school has received
Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) for the first time within the last five years.
However, I am also looking for participants who were principal of the school prior to and
during the RAMP process and at least one year following RAMP recognition.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in two interviews
as well as review the transcript of your interview. The first session, which will be an
interview, will be approximately 45-60 minutes and the second session will be
approximately 30 minutes. Each session will be conducted using Zoom, a video
conferencing platform, and scheduled at a time convenient for you. After your interview
has been transcribed, you will receive a copy of the transcript through email and will
have the opportunity to ensure I correctly captured your responses and make any
corrections you deem necessary. A second follow-up interview, approximately 30
minutes, will be conducted where you may provide feedback on the findings of the study.
Each session will be recorded using an audio recording device. A $25.00 Amazon gift
card will be sent to each participant at the conclusion of the study. Your name, school
name, email address, and school phone number will be kept by me should it be needed
for accounting purposes. If needed, the information will be provided to the Business
Manager in the Department of Counseling and Human Developmental Services at the
University of Georgia.

This research involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort
will be been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however,
confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed.
Participation in this research study is strictly voluntary and you may refuse to participate,
or may discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Your decision to

discontinue participation will not impact the receipt of the gift card at the conclusion of the study.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research. Some questions may make you uncomfortable. You can skip these questions if you do not wish to answer them.

As a result of this study, school administrators, school counseling leaders, and school counselors will see the impact comprehensive school counseling programs have on schools and students. Most importantly, students not currently exposed to comprehensive school counseling programs may have the opportunity as principals read the study and support the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs.

Research records will be labeled with your selected pseudonym that are linked to you by a separate list that includes your name. This list will be destroyed once we have finished collecting information from all participants. The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. As a participant you will select a pseudonym that will be used in any publication or presentation. The name of your school will be changed by the researcher only the level will be accurate (e.g., elementary, middle, high, etc.).

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at 404-271-9313 or send an e-mail to brentieh@uga.edu. Dr. Daigle can be reached by email at jdaigle@uga.edu. If you have any complaints or questions about your rights as a research volunteer, contact the IRB at 706-542-3199 or by email at IRB@uga.edu.

Please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Brent

Brent Henderson
Doctoral Candidate
University of Georgia
Department of Counseling and Human Development Services
404.271.9313
brentieh@uga.edu

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Hello.

My name is Brent Henderson, and I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Georgia in the Department of Counseling and Human Development Services. The purpose of this study is to learn about the perspectives school principals have about the comprehensive school counseling programs in their schools.

With your permission, I will interview you today about your experiences as principal of a school with an implemented comprehensive school counseling program. You were selected as a potential participant since your school was designated as a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) recognition within the last five years. During the interview, I will ask you questions related to your experiences as principal of a school with a comprehensive school counseling program and what you believe to be the most salient about those experiences.

The information we discuss will be confidential and your identity will not be revealed in any documentation associated with this study. Indirect identifiers, such as the pseudonym you selected, will be used. A fictional school name will be selected by the researcher, but the level associated will be accurate.

I expect this interview to last no longer than one hour. I will audio record and video record the interview as well as take reflective notes during our conversation. I will transcribe this interview verbatim and will send you a copy of the transcribed interview to ensure the transcription reflects your recollection of the interview and your intended meaning.

You may end the interview at any point and you may decline to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. If you are unsure of a question, let me know and I will clarify the question. Do you have any questions for me before we begin the interview?

Research Question

What are principals' perspectives about comprehensive school counseling programs?

Demographic Information

1. At what level are you a principal?

2. In what state are you located?

3. For how long have you been a principal of your school?

4. How many school counselors serve your school?

5. Were you principal of the school during the RAMP process?

6. Were you principal of the school prior to the RAMP recognition?

7. What was your involvement in the RAMP application process?

Semi-Structured Interview

1. Tell me a little about your school.

2. What is your understanding of a comprehensive school counseling program?

3. How would you describe collaboration between yourself and your school counselor(s)?

4. What opportunities to do you have to collaborate with your school counselor(s)?

5. How did collaboration between you and your school counselor(s) change after the implementation of your comprehensive school counseling program?

6. Tell me about changes you have seen in student academic data since a comprehensive school counseling program was implemented.

7. Tell me about changes you have seen in student discipline data since a comprehensive school counseling program was implemented.

8. Tell me about changes you have seen in your school data have you noticed since a comprehensive school counseling program was implemented?

9. Tell me about changes have you seen in your school counselor(s) since they implemented a comprehensive school counseling program?

10. Tell me if you have seen development of leadership skills in your school counselor(s)?

11. What changes have you seen in how your faculty interact with school counselor(s) since a comprehensive program was implemented?

12. What changes have you seen in your school's culture or climate since a comprehensive school counseling program was implemented?

13. Tell me what you knew about comprehensive school counseling programs before your school counselor(s) brought it to your attention?

14. In your opinion, what benefits has the comprehensive school counseling program bring to your school?

15. What would you tell other principals about comprehensive school counseling programs?

16. Are there any experiences we have not discussed or thoughts you have regarding your perspectives of comprehensive school counseling programs that you would like to add?

Thank you again for your participation in this study. I want to remind you that you may withdraw from participation at any time as previously discussed. If you have any questions about the study or feel like you need assistance after your participation in this

interview, please do not hesitation to contact me or my committee chair, Dr. Jolie Daigle.

I can be reached at brentieh@uga.edu and Dr. Daigle at jdaigle@uga.edu. I will send you

a copy of the transcribed interview through email and will ask that you verify I have

transcribed it as you remember the conversation. Once I have completed the data

analysis and interpretation of the data, I will contact you to schedule a follow up

interview. The follow up interview will allow you an opportunity to offer feedback and

provide any additional relevant information. Again, thank you for your time and have a

great rest of your day.

Appendix E

Memo Summary Sheet

Interviewer: Brent Henderson

Interviewee Pseudonym: _____

Today's Date: _____

1. Summary of interview.

2. What were the main issues or themes that stuck out for you in this contact?

3. What discrepancies, if any, did you note in the interviewee's responses?

4. Anything else that stuck out as salient, interesting, or important in this contact?

5. General comments about how this interviewee's responses compared with other interviewees: