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School leaders' perceptions on comprehensive school counseling (CSC) evaluation processes: Adherence and implementation of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model

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Abstract

Throughout their K-12 educational experience, students should have access to resources, educators, counselors, and specialists to help meet their academic, social, emotional, college, and career needs. When school leaders or principals work in collaboration with school counselors, often school climate is more positive for students, faculty, and stakeholders. However, many school leaders do not receive proper training to evaluate school counselors. The purpose of the study is to explore school leaders' perspectives of processes, policies, and trends in school counselor evaluation. The amount and type of support school counselors receive from their school leaders is important in developing and maintaining a progressive comprehensive school counseling (CSC) program for all students, but leaders must be familiar with CSC in order to appropriately evaluate school counselors. The results indicate that while delivery of a CSC program may be important, the evaluation process may be limited in its utility to help school counselors adhere to and implement the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model, which includes foundation, management, accountability, and delivery components. More research is needed regarding what content should be included in a school counselor evaluation.

Keywords: *School counselor evaluation; school principal role; American School Counselor Association; ASCA National Model; comprehensive school counseling*

Introduction

Trends in school counselors' roles and responsibilities vary throughout the United States. In order to effectively and appropriately meet the needs of *all* students in a school, positive collaboration, consistent communication, and appropriate evaluation between school counselors and leaders are critical. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2012a; 2012b) provides a framework for comprehensive school counseling (CSC) that guides professional school counseling practice. The appropriate and inappropriate roles and responsibilities of school counselors are outlined in the framework; however, school leaders may not have training related to or exposure to the ASCA National Model as they work with school counselors in their schools,

and this lack of exposure to the ASCA National Model may, in turn, negatively affect the school counselor's ability to perform their role within the school, as well as the principal's evaluation of their performance (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009; Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001).

Knowledge of the ASCA model can have a significant impact on how principals view and evaluate counselors in their school, with more ASCA-adept principals assigning more role-appropriate tasks to their counselors than those principals with little ASCA knowledge (Leuwerke, Walker, & Shi, 2009). In studies about principals' perspectives of the roles of school counselors, researchers found that principals view school counselor evaluation to be the same process as evaluation of teachers or other staff in the school (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Cisler & Bruce, 2013). However, evaluating counselors in the same manner or using the same criteria as the evaluation of teachers may lead to inappropriate evaluation and unethical practice (Janson, Militello, & Kosine, 2008; Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010).

The purpose of our study was to explore school leaders' perspectives of processes and trends in school counselor evaluation. Our rationale for the study was to examine the ways in which school counselor evaluation strategies and methods are designed, implemented, and assessed from perspectives of school leaders.

Literature review

School counselors' roles and responsibilities

While school principals or leaders handle the leadership and management of the school as a whole, school counselors often act in the complementary role of supporting and advocating on behalf of individual students within the school (Evans, Zambrano, Cook, Moyer, & Duffey, 2011). According to the ASCA guidelines, appropriate tasks for school counselors can include direct service to students, such as counseling students or leading counseling-based programming; consultation with teachers and parents; social justice reform, such as advocating for students facing potential identity-based discrimination; and crisis intervention (ASCA, 2012a). However, due to a wide variety of school leaders' understandings, expectations, and evaluation methods of a school counselor's role, the counselor's responsibilities may look very different depending on the school at which they are employed (Fitch et al., 2001; Zalaquett & Chatters, 2012).

Many of these roles and responsibilities are determined, in large part, by the leaders and their perception of the school counselor role. Amatea and Clark (2005) found that principals held four distinct perceptions of school counselors: innovative leaders, collaborative case consultants, responsive direct service providers, and administrative team players. Based on which conceptions of the school counselor they have, the school leader may dictate that the counselor play a more involved role in some schools, or a more general support role in others (Amatea & Clark, 2005). Many school counselors find themselves being assigned inappropriate or less useful tasks,

such as administering tests and disciplining students (Evans et al., 2011), while other ASCA-recommended responsibilities, such as student counseling services and social justice advocacy, fall by the wayside (Elam, Geesa, Mayes, & McConnell, 2019). The assignment of inappropriate counselor tasks can become troublesome when these tasks restrict the counselor's ability to provide their intended skills and services to the school community (Johnson & Perkins, 2009).

School leaders' support of school counselors

Much of a school counselor's success within their school depends upon the support they receive from their principals or school leaders, which is often contingent upon how the principal is perceiving and evaluating their job performance (Stone & Clark, 2001). The support of school counselors can make or break a school counseling program. Not only are counselors who feel supported more satisfied in their jobs and less likely to leave their position, but when counselors and school principals or leaders work together, school climate overall is more positive (Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009; Rock, Remley, & Range, 2017). Stone and Clark (2001) assert that school leaders and counselors partnering together offers the best opportunities for students and for the school as a whole, as supporting school counselors allows them to implement their skills for the benefit of the students. One of the best ways in which principals can show support for and build collaboration with school counselors is by acting as an advocate for the school counselor's role and demonstrating respect and a willingness to work with the counselor for the betterment of the school (Edwards, Grace, & King, 2014; Johnson & Perkins, 2009).

In contrast, school counselors who do not feel supported by their administrators are at higher risk of burnout. Bardhoshi, Schweinle, and Duncan (2014) found that school counselor burnout was predicted by heavy caseload, inappropriate task assignment, perceived lack of support from administrators, and general job dissatisfaction. By restricting counselors' abilities to perform their jobs as they have been trained and/or evaluating counselors based on inappropriate criteria, administrators may unintentionally create stressed and discouraged school counselors who feel unappreciated and ineffective in their roles (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). Administrators and counselors tend to agree that there is a lack of communication and understanding between the two roles which leads to conflict and misunderstandings, as well as the desire to have better relationships with one another through the means of better communication and more respect (Lowery, Quick, Boyland, Geesa, & Mayes, 2018; Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010; Finkelstein, 2009).

Evaluation of school counselors

For many administrators, the evaluation of their staff members is an important and necessary part of their job. School counselors are often included in the staff which the principal is tasked with evaluating. However, many school leaders are not properly trained or educated on how to evaluate someone in as unique a role as a school counselor, and may not even be familiar

with the standards to which school counselors are to be held (Lowery et al., 2018; Zalaquett & Chatters, 2012). In a study of administrators' perceptions of their principal preparation training, participants indicated that their program's lack of training on the school counselor role affected their ability to make hiring and evaluation decisions of counselors within their schools (Lowery et al., 2018).

Cinotti (2014) reports that school counselors often receive inadequate or inappropriate evaluations when school leaders attempt to evaluate them under the same standards and expectations as teachers. Evaluation forms and processes should differ between school counselors and teachers because of their unique roles. School counselors are experts in counseling services which focus on all students' success and providing CSC programs throughout the school (Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers & Henderson, 2006), while teachers typically focus on teaching and learning in their classrooms with their students. Elam et al. (2019) found that school counselors experienced evaluation by principals to be largely ineffective and unhelpful in the implementation of and adherence to ASCA standards within their jobs. Inappropriate expectations for evaluations, along with the imbalance of power between principals and counselors, may cause undue stress and pressure on the school counselor to meet sometimes unfair or even unethical expectations (for example, performing duties for which they are not trained, or being pressured to enforce principal ideas which are not optimal for students) in order to satisfy leaders and retain their jobs (Janson et al., 2008; Wingfield et al., 2010).

In order to maintain a fair and effective system of evaluation for school counselors, Zalaquett and Chatters (2012) suggest that school leaders should familiarize themselves with the ASCA guidelines so they can not only evaluate their school counselors effectively, but also use this knowledge to influence the decision to dismiss and hire school counselors. Rather than being influenced by irrelevant factors, Chata and Loesch (2007) recommend that by leaders familiarizing themselves with the school counselor's role, they may more accurately evaluate them.

ASCA and national trends in school counseling

The ASCA National Model is a set of widely accepted, research-based standards designed to assist school counselors in providing the most effective service to their students. Pre-service and in-service school counselors study and refer to the national model in their professional practices. The standards in the national model include guidelines for counselors to establish counseling programs, manage their counseling programs, and deliver quality counseling services.

In addition to providing guidelines for practicing school counselors, the model is also designed to assist school leaders in the hiring and evaluation of competent school counselors. However, research has shown that many leaders are not trained in and not familiar with the ASCA standards and do not know how to effectively implement them within their school's counseling

program (Lowery et al., 2018; Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009; Fitch et al., 2001; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Lowery et al., 2018). School leaders who are aware of the ASCA model and standards are often educated by the school counselor themselves rather than receiving formal training on implementation of ASCA standards (Leuwerke et al., 2009).

Conceptual framework

We used the ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (2012a; 2012b) in this study. The framework includes four components: Foundation, Management, Delivery and Accountability. These components come together to form a comprehensive school counseling program that focuses on the academic, personal/social, and career development of all students. We studied school leaders' beliefs in how the school counselor evaluation process helps school counselors implement and adhere to comprehensive school counseling programs through the components of the ASCA National Model.

ASCA (2012b) identifies *Foundation* as a school counselor's ability to "create comprehensive school counseling programs that focus on student outcomes, teach student competencies, and are delivered with identified professional competencies" (p. 2).

ASCA (2012b) identifies *Management* as a school counselor's ability to "incorporate organizational assessments and tools that are concrete, clearly delineated, and reflective of the school's needs" (p. 2). Assessments and tools include but are not limited to: school counselor competency and school counseling program assessments, use of time assessment, annual agreements with leaders, advisory councils, use of data, action plans, and annual and weekly calendars.

ASCA (2012b) identifies *Delivery* as a school counselor's ability to "provide services to students, parents, school staff and the community" in school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and indirect services such as referrals, consultation, and collaboration (pp. 3-4).

ASCA (2012b) identifies *Accountability* as a school counselor's ability to analyze school and school counseling program data "to demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program in measurable terms" (p. 4). "The performance of the school counselor is evaluated on basic standards of practice expected of school counselors implementing a comprehensive school counseling program" (p. 4).

Research questions

Based on the review of literature and the conceptual framework, which incorporates the four components (i.e., Foundation, Management, Delivery, Accountability) of the ASCA National Model, we designed research questions focused on school leaders' perceptions of school counselor evaluation and counselors' abilities to implement and adhere to CSC programs based on the evaluation. We investigated the following questions in our exploratory study.

- To what extent do school leaders believe the evaluation process helps school counselors to *implement* comprehensive school counseling programs?
- What differences exist based on school characteristics?
- To what extent do school leaders believe the evaluation process helps school counselors to *adhere to* comprehensive school counseling programs?
- What differences exist based on school characteristics?

Methods

Participants

Participants comprised 324 school leaders throughout three states, including school principals, assistant principals, and district level leaders. In regard to race and ethnicity, the majority (91.7%) of the respondents identified as white. Gender identity included 50.2% men, 49.5% women, 0.3% self-identifying as other: gender awesome. Participants worked in a range of educational levels: 35% elementary; 19% middle/junior high; 30% high school; and 16% various grade levels (i.e., K-8, K-12, 6-12 settings, etc.). Their respective student populations were fairly diverse, with the majority of participants serving schools where less than half (50%) of the student population came from low income backgrounds. Further, 64% of participants served schools with student populations consisting of 25% or less students of color.

Measures

School Counselor Evaluation Survey. The school counselor evaluation survey consisted of 17 Likert-type questions focused on experiences and perceptions around the school counselor evaluation process. Survey questions were created based on literature around school counselor evaluation, the ASCA National Model, and school counselor school principal collaboration. A total of eight questions focused specifically on the adherence and implementation of the four components (Foundation, Management, Delivery and Accountability) of the ASCA National Model (2012a) as it relates to evaluation processes (e.g. To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps school counselors implement the Foundation component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs? To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps school counselors adhere to the Management component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?). These questions were on a 5-point Likert scale where ratings of 1 indicated “not at all” and ratings of 5 indicated “a great extent”. Additionally, six questions were added to understand perceptions around the evaluation process (i.e., To what extent do you believe the evaluation process can help your school counselor to develop professionally? What is your overall perception of the counselor evaluation system?).

School leaders were also provided with a general description of the component being addressed in the subsequent survey questions. ASCA (2012b) identifies Foundation as a School Counselor’s

ability to “create comprehensive school counseling programs that focus on student outcomes” as identified by the school counseling vision and mission statements, “teach student competencies” such as ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success, State School Counseling Standards for Students, and “are delivered with identified professional competencies” including ASCA School Counselor Competencies, ASCA Ethical Standards, and State School Counselor Competencies (ASCA, 2012b, p. 2). Finally, three questions were added to understand how well-prepared participants were by their university training program, current employer, and state department of education to help their school counselors meet the highest expectations based on the counselor evaluation system.

Demographic questionnaire

A demographic questionnaire consisting of 15 questions was included to understand participant background, educational and professional experiences, as well as current school setting.

Procedures

This exploratory study is a part of a larger research project, which examined perceptions, attitudes, and experiences around school counselor evaluation among school leaders and school counselors. The design for this research is an exploratory study of school counselor evaluation processes, policies, and trends. After IRB approval, state Departments of Education, national and state-level school leader associations, and school districts were contacted to distribute the invitation to participate to school leaders. Invitations included a link to the survey information via Qualtrics. Once participants viewed the survey link on Qualtrics, they were presented with informed consent and invited to complete the rest of the survey.

Data analysis

Guided by the research questions, descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze responses to survey questions. First, descriptive statistics were used to understand the extent to which the evaluation process helps school counselors to *implement* as well as *adhere* to each of the four components of the ASCA National Model (*Foundation, Management, Delivery and Accountability*). Inferential statistics were used to understand whether there were differences in responses based on school characteristics (i.e. student demographics, school size).

Findings

The descriptive statistics (see Table 1) indicate that while CSC may be important, the evaluation process as a whole may be limited in its utility to help professional school counselors adhere to and implement the ASCA National Model of CSC. In regard to *implementation*, the lowest level agreement among participants was the extent to which the evaluation process helps school counselors implement the management component of the ASCA National Model (M=2.90).

Table 1: School leaders’ perceptions on comprehensive school counseling (csc) adherence and implementation

Likert Scale Items	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor <i>implement</i> the Foundation component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	322	2.97	0.969
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor <i>adhere</i> to the Foundation component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	324	2.93	0.961
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor <i>implement</i> the Management component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	324	2.90	0.922
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor <i>adhere</i> to the Management component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	322	2.92	0.918
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor <i>implement</i> the Delivery component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	323	3.04	0.996
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor <i>adhere</i> to the Delivery component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	324	3.06	1.01
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor <i>implement</i> the Accountability component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	320	2.93	0.991
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor <i>adhere</i> to the Accountability component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	320	2.91	0.981

Note: The five-point Likert scale ranged from 1 = Not at All to 5 = A Great Extent. There were 324 total responses. Some participants did not respond to all of the items, but we included their responses to the items they completed.

Participants reported similarly in regard to the implementation of the accountability (M=2.93) and foundation (M=2.97) components. The highest level of agreement for the participants was the implementation of the delivery component (M=3.04). Essentially, participants felt that the evaluation process was “somewhat” helpful in implementing each component of the ASCA National Model.

Adherence to the ASCA National Model of CSC provided similar results. The lowest level of agreement for participants was the extent to which the evaluation process helped school counselors adhere to the accountability (M=2.91) component. Additionally, participants reported similarly in regard to adherence to management (M=2.92) and foundation (M=2.93) components of the ASCA National Model of CSC. The highest level of agreement for participants was the adherence to the delivery component (M=3.06). As with implementation, participants rated the evaluation process to be somewhat helpful in the adherence to the 4 components of the ASCA National Model CSC.

Pearson correlations were used to explore how demographic (independent variables) may be correlated to responses about the adherence and implementation of the four components of the ASCA National Model. The demographic variables included were the following items: school size, student population information (% of students on free and reduced meals, % of students of color, where these items were on a 4-point Likert scale where ratings of 1 indicated less than 25% of student population and ratings of 4 indicated more than 75% of student population.), and urbanicity of school setting (e.g. 1 indicates urban settings, 2 indicates suburban settings, and 3 indicates rural settings). Pearson correlations were completed for each demographic independent variable and each survey item concerning implementation and adherence to the four components of the ASCA National Model. None of these variables was found to be significantly correlated to the implementation or adherence to the four components of the ASCA National Model (see Table 2 for significance values of Pearson correlations).

Table 2 Significance levels of Pearson correlations between school characteristics and adherence and implementation to comprehensive school counseling (csc)

ASCA Components Survey Items	<i>Students on FARMs</i>	<i>Students of Color</i>	<i>School Size</i>	<i>Urbanicity</i>
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor implement the Foundation component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	<i>P= 0.61</i>	<i>P=0.31</i>	<i>P=0.22</i>	<i>P=0.24</i>
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor adhere to the Foundation component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	<i>P=0.177</i>	<i>P=0.43</i>	<i>P=0.86</i>	<i>P=0.27</i>

ASCA Components Survey Items	<i>Students on FARMs</i>	<i>Students of Color</i>	<i>School Size</i>	<i>Urbanicity</i>
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor implement the Management component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	<i>P=0.71</i>	<i>P=0.95</i>	<i>P=0.18</i>	<i>P=0.84</i>
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor adhere to the Management component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	<i>P=0.63</i>	<i>P=0.86</i>	<i>P=0.39</i>	<i>P=0.72</i>
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor implement the Delivery component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	<i>P=0.47</i>	<i>P=0.66</i>	<i>P=0.70</i>	<i>P=0.15</i>
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor adhere to the Delivery component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	<i>P=0.34</i>	<i>P=0.86</i>	<i>P=0.70</i>	<i>P=0.66</i>
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor implement the Accountability component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	<i>P=69</i>	<i>P=56</i>	<i>P=83</i>	<i>P=63</i>
To what extent do you believe the evaluation process helps your school counselor adhere to the Accountability component of the ASCA National Model of comprehensive school counseling programs?	<i>P=28</i>	<i>P=55</i>	<i>P=99</i>	<i>P=64</i>

Note. FARMs stands for “free and reduced price meals.”

Discussion

This exploratory study provides more insight into the perspectives of school leaders toward school counselor evaluation. Based on the survey results, school leaders found the evaluation process to be slightly more helpful in implementing and adhering to responsibilities related to counselors' most direct service to students, parents, school staff, and the community. This may indicate that the evaluation of school counselors is more useful in regard to the Delivery component of the framework, or it may be that this component is easier to conceptualize than the others. However, the agreed level of usefulness of this evaluation on promoting the Delivery component is only slightly different from the agreed upon levels of the other framework components.

Interestingly, a related study by Elam et al. (2019), focused on the perceptions of those in a school *counseling* role rather than a principal role, found the evaluation process to be more helpful in implementing and adhering to responsibilities related to the Delivery component of the ASCA framework. Specifically, school counselors' level of agreement regarding the extent to which the evaluation process helps school counselors implement the delivery component of the ASCA National Model (M= 2.80) exceeded their level of agreement regarding the foundation (M=2.51), management (M=2.44), and accountability (M=2.63) components. School counselors' level of agreement regarding the extent to which the evaluation process helps school counselors adhere to the delivery component of the ASCA National Model (M= 2.82) exceeded their level of agreement regarding the foundation (M=2.53), management (M=2.47), and accountability (M=2.66) components. However, in the case of both the related study and the current one, participants generally perceived the evaluation process to be limited in its ability to help with implementation of and adherence to comprehensive school counseling programs.

The limited helpfulness of the counselor evaluation process represents a missed valuable opportunity for school leaders to collaborate effectively with counselors, and to ultimately serve the interests of students, through the counselor evaluation process. McCarty, Wallin and Boggin (2014) found that the collaboration and combined expertise of principals and counselors provide broader and more comprehensive support to students. Furthermore, stronger relationships between principals and counselors correlate with higher job satisfaction and lower turnover for counselors (Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009), and correlate with a positive overall school climate (Rock, Remley, & Range, 2017). Students, counselors, and the school overall can also benefit when counselors are given the opportunity to assume leadership roles related to the implementation of and adherence to comprehensive school counseling programs.

The survey results indicate a need for a renewed emphasis on training principals to effectively facilitate the evaluation process (Chata & Loesch, 2007) whether in preparatory programs at the university level, and/or at the state/district level. Results also indicate a need to improve counselor evaluation systems to meet their intended aims.

A principal preparation program can better prepare school leaders to effectively collaborate with school counselors by further emphasizing this important aspect of school leadership (Boylard et al., 2019). Specifically, principal preparation programs can go beyond instilling general leadership skills that are applicable to supporting school counselors, and can also focus more directly on content related to the appropriate roles of a school counselor, skill-building for how to collaborate with a school counselor, the social-emotional needs of students, and the development of socially just schools (Boylard et al., 2019; Lowery et al., 2018; Lowery et al., 2019).

Of course, principal preparation programs can most directly remedy an *underemphasis* on the role of school counselors by displacing time and focus where some other aspect of the principalship is currently being *overemphasized* in the program. Identifying that aspect would require very careful, but necessary, consideration. Appropriate shifts in school principal training may allow for more opportunities to understand the whole school enterprise, including the ways school counselors can enhance the academic, personal/social, and career development of all students. These shifts in principal training programs would need to be guided by shifts at an even more fundamental level – by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration, with an added emphasis on understanding comprehensive school counseling programs within their Professional Standards for Educational Leaders.

This renewed emphasis by principal preparation programs will likely lead to improved collaboration between future school leaders and current/future school counselors. School leaders currently in the field, who might not have benefited from such an emphasis on school counselors while completing their principal preparation program, should continue to seek support from their own employer regarding professional development opportunities to strengthen their ability to collaborate with school counselors. Furthermore, by committing to enabling school counselors to adhere to appropriate responsibilities, school leaders should continue to seek support from their own employer in providing the necessary resources to address certain responsibilities – those unrelated to comprehensive school counseling programs - that school counselors had previously been unfairly asked to go above and beyond to address.

Interestingly, in this study, no statistically significant differences emerged in perceptions among school leaders based on school size, student population information, or urbanicity. Lowery et al. (2018) found statistically significant differences in principals' perceptions of the school counselor role on various items, including:

- Principals of large schools believed counseling had a greater impact on the school's performance than leaders from medium-sized schools;
- Principals of large schools reported that the school counseling program better addressed the needs of students for college and career readiness;

- Principals of large schools reported that counselors spend more time on academic scheduling;
- Principals of small schools reported that counselors spend more time facilitating classroom guidance lessons, which might address topics such as self-image, conflict resolution, etc.;
- Principals of large schools reported that counselors spend 25-50% of their time using data to assess school needs.

These differences found by Lowery et al. (2018) might be explained in part because survey items included language very specific to certain responsibilities, whereas this particular study included survey items with language aligning with broader ASCA components. Separating responses by school *size* is likely to indirectly separate responses by school *grade level* (because high schools are often larger than elementary and middle schools), where counselors often fulfill different specific responsibilities from setting to setting.

In the study at hand, all survey items pertained to the *evaluation process* for school counselors. A school leader's rating to a survey item does not necessarily reflect perceptions about his or her own performance, or about the school counselor's performance. In this case, school leaders' lukewarm responses indicate not only a need for leaders themselves to renew their commitment to enabling school counselors to implement and adhere to comprehensive school counseling programs, and a need for principal preparation programs to renew their commitment to instilling the skills and knowledge for principals to do so, but also the need for educational governing bodies to introduce and improve evaluation systems to effectively promote these aims.

Just as importantly, when introducing or renewing counselor evaluation systems, educational governing bodies must provide the support necessary for principals to facilitate the process effectively. This may include providing meaningful professional development and training, including modeling effective school counseling in appropriate roles related to the four components of comprehensive counseling (*Foundation, Management, Delivery and Accountability*). It is important to note that revamping counselor evaluation systems should be completed with intentional collaborations between experts in school counseling.

Limitations

One of the key limitations of the study is that it did not measure leaders' general awareness of the ASCA standards. Their levels of awareness may have influenced how questions regarding the ASCA National Model (2012a) were answered, as those with a better understanding may have been able to answer the questions with a more accurate perception of the framework in mind. As previously discussed, leaders who are aware of the ASCA model and standards are often educated by the school counselor themselves rather than receiving formal training on them

(Leuwerke et al., 2009). Thus, many school leaders may have struggled to conceptualize each component of the framework as they took this survey. Since this study is exploratory in nature, it may not be applicable widely. Instead the focus of the study is to provide some insight to this topic and invite more research to be done regarding school leader perceptions of school counselor evaluation.

Additionally, participants' levels of agreement regarding the effectiveness of school counselor evaluation in the implementation of and adherence to the framework components were similar across the board, as measures regarding Foundation, Management, Delivery and Accountability received similar scores in reference to both implementation and adherence. Means of these scores ranged from 2.90 to 3.06, indicating the small range in which participants responded. These findings limit the potential to infer differences between the effectiveness of school counselor evaluation in promoting these four areas. However, it may be that the efficacy of evaluation is simply similar in all of these areas. More research would be needed to more fully understand the reasoning behind the similarity of responses.

Finally, a limitation of the study is that a majority (91.7%) of the respondents identified as white. Including school leaders of various races and cultural/ethnic backgrounds would have been ideal, as it would have aided in the process of developing a better understanding of what populations see school counseling evaluation as effective in supporting the ASCA National Model (2012a). As was stated previously, no statistically significant differences emerged in perceptions among school leaders based on school size, student population information, or urbanicity, but this does not mean that significant differences would not be found among leaders of different races. There are many factors that could influence school leaders' perceptions, and it is important to look more deeply into these in future research.

Conclusion

As mentioned, comprehensive school counseling is vitally important to improving the lives of K-12 students. More specifically, school counselors create and implement comprehensive programs to address the holistic needs of children and adolescents in their respective schools. A key component in accountability and professional practice is the evaluation process which provides feedback on the function and practice of professional school counseling. Adequate and appropriate evaluation measures are still needed to capture comprehensive school counseling models which are in alignment with the ASCA National Model (2012a). Without such, evaluation measures have limited utility to promote the professional growth and practice of school counselors.

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