

Educating future leaders: Integrating leadership into an introductory school counseling course

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Abstract:

Evidence suggests school counselors are not getting sufficient leadership training within their graduate programs. In this pilot study, the authors explored the effectiveness of an 11-week leadership training intervention within an introductory school counseling course. Results indicated notable changes for students' perceived frequency of leadership practice and school counseling self-efficacy. A discussion follows with implications for school counselor educators.

Keywords: School counselors | leadership training | pedagogy | self-efficacy

Article:

Leadership has emerged as a key component of a school counselor's professional identity, so much so that the school counselor relies on leadership to accomplish essential tasks and goals (Kneale et al., 2018; McMahan et al., 2009). The need for leadership training is firmly established in current professional (American School Counseling Association [ASCA], 2019) and programmatic (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2016) standards. As a result, researchers have suggested that school counselor educators need to address leadership practices with greater emphasis in their curriculum (e.g., Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Janson, 2009; Mullen et al., 2019; Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). Indeed, training experiences can lead to new school counselors having more favorable views of themselves as leaders and establishing themselves as leaders more easily in their schools (Robinson et al., 2019).

Some researchers have seen limited involvement of new school counselors in leadership (Mullen et al., 2019), highlighting a disparity between veteran and novice counselors in perceived leadership practice (Lowe et al., 2017; Mason & McMahan, 2009). Others have discussed concerns with school counselors' leadership practices, programmatic delivery, and systemic work, especially with influencing others to share in the vision of the counseling program – an

important point in the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019; Janson, 2009; Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). “On the job” experiences may be the primary means by which school counselors develop leadership as part of their professional identities (Janson, 2009; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Mullen et al., 2019; Shillingford & Lambie, 2010; Young et al., 2015). Mullen et al. (2019) further supported this assertion by linking leadership self-efficacy to age and experience. School counselor educators should engage preservice school counselors in leadership practice within their graduate coursework for earlier leadership development (e.g., Mullen et al., 2019). Leadership training in an introductory school counseling course was the focus of this study.

School Counseling Leadership

ASCA (2019) broadly defines leadership as school counselors’ capacity for influencing others, emphasizing their use of leadership skills in creating and running a school counseling program. The recently revised ASCA National Model situates leadership skills as integral in actions related to each of the model’s four components: Define, Manage, Deliver, and Assess. For example, school counselors who have collected data and taken appropriate action on identified areas of improvement use leadership skills in the Assess component (ASCA, 2019). Researchers have demonstrated how leadership skills are integral to other areas of school counseling work, such as political skills and intentional relationship building involved in advocacy (Singh et al., 2010), school-family-community partnerships (Bryan et al., 2018), and programmatic interventions (e.g., bullying prevention programs; Midgett et al., 2018). Leadership also plays a role in school counselors’ use of data to manage school counseling programs (Sink, 2009), their implementation of school-wide interventions (Ryan et al., 2011), and their impact on student achievement (Young et al., 2013).

School counselors may have little success in leadership practice without the support of the school’s principal (Young et al., 2013). The principal often has differing perceptions of the school counselor’s role (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dahir et al., 2010; Fitch et al., 2001; Janson, 2009) and may ask school counselors to perform many non-counseling tasks (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Zalaquett & Chatters, 2012). Principals’ perceptions may reflect their limited training on school counselors’ roles (Dollarhide et al., 2007), pointing to the need for increased use of interdisciplinary education around school counselor leadership practices. In short, although leadership has a strong emphasis within school counselors’ professional identities, new counselors may only learn how to practice leadership through subsequent years of “on the job” experiences. School counselor educators need to consider how preservice school counselors begin to develop that foundation within their training programs, which would include how to secure a strong working partnership with school principals.

Experiential Learning Theory, Self-Efficacy, and Leadership Training

One prevailing pedagogical approach underlies the present literature on leadership training for preservice counselors: experiential learning theory (ELT). In essence, ELT provides a framework that includes not only real-life practice (i.e., what many practicing counselors get through years of “on the job” experience) but also places value in learning from reflection, conceptualization,

and simulated practice. The ACES Teaching Initiative Taskforce (2016) cited ELT as one of several learning theories best suited for guiding counselor educators' teaching practices. Kolb (1984), a prominent theoretical contributor to ELT. He described four adaptive modes within which the learner moves forward in the learning process. *Abstract conceptualization* allows the learner to integrate observations into a theory. *Active experimentation* relates to learners trying out their theories to solve problems. *Concrete experience* denotes a complete involvement in a new experience. *Reflective observation* involves looking at an experience from multiple perspectives. According to Kolb (1984), the learner ideally enters different modes best suited for the given situation and uses different modes to develop fully formed knowledge.

The concept of self-efficacy logically connects to leadership practice and the experiential learning process. Bandura's (1994) concept of self-efficacy (i.e., people's beliefs about their performance influence performance outcomes) consistently has been linked to enhanced counseling performance for some time (e.g., Larson & Daniels, 1998). Bodenhorn et al. (2010) linked school counselors' self-efficacy specifically to their ability to address achievement gap and equity issues in their schools (a leadership activity). Related to the experiential learning process, Van Dinther et al. (2011) reviewed studies of students' self-efficacy in higher education settings. Putting students in practical and demanding situations that required applied knowledge, they surmised, had the most powerful influence on learning. Role plays and simulations, examples of mastery experiences that also serve as activities within experiential pedagogy, influence self-efficacy (Association of Counselor Education and Supervision Teaching Initiative Taskforce, 2016; Bandura, 1994; Van Dinther et al., 2011). Therefore, self-efficacy, a teachable quality, has a role in enacting leadership practices (e.g., considering oneself a leader) (Mullen et al., 2019; Young & Bryan, 2015). Altogether, students' capacity for leadership practice grows with increased self-efficacy, and an experientially focused training intervention supports enhancing students' self-efficacy related to job performance (i.e., leadership practice).

Two studies directly involving leadership training – and one concerning preservice school counselor-principal collaboration – espoused aspects of the ELT framework. Briggs et al. (2009) created The Girls' Leadership Experience Camp (GLEC), a program for preadolescent girls that promoted personal, social, and academic topics. Within the GLEC experience, school counseling students served as program facilitators and used leadership skills such as understanding the mission behind the GLEC curriculum, implementing the curriculum with students, and collecting feedback from parents to adjust the program and evaluate outcomes. Participants reported they learned skills such as how to solve complex problems and collaborate with one another in teams. Students engaged in an immersive leadership experience that represented well the concrete experience mode of learning.

Michel et al. (2018) studied the “listen, evaluate, advocate, disseminate” (LEAD) training model for leadership skill development with students in a graduate school counseling program. Students learned skills related to collaboration, advocacy, and systemic change, and practiced within an action research framework (e.g., developed and delivered an academic study skills intervention). Themes from participants' experiences centered around data and systemic change (e.g., “data are our friend”). Findings illustrated how data helped to create collaborative relationships with others (e.g., principals, educators). Michel et al. (2018) had students learn through completing an action research project in internship, thereby using leadership practices to affect change in their

school internship sites (concrete experience). Though specifically focused only on collaboration, Shoffner and Williamson (2000) created a seminar in which pre-service school counselors and principals could better understand each other's roles in schools. Their cross-professional groups worked through case studies and vignettes within eight meetings to understand different points of view around critical issues in schools. In terms of ELT modes of learning in action, students in this experience better understood each others' roles (abstract conceptualization) and worked through case studies together (active experimentation). Experience served as an essential ingredient for learning in all of these studies involving leadership training.

The two leadership-focused studies relied solely on qualitative interviews with participants post-graduation, asking students' opinions about the educational experience some weeks (Michel et al., 2018) or years (Briggs et al., 2009) later. In Briggs et al. (2009), participants expressed wanting to learn more about certain practices earlier, particularly interprofessional collaboration, before taking part in the intervention (Briggs et al., 2009). From an ELT perspective, one might argue participants more disproportionately inhabited the mode of concrete experience without engaging in the other three modes. Current evidence, then, points to the need to infuse leadership training early in the school counseling curriculum (e.g., in an introductory course) and, using an ELT approach, allow students to practice more focused leadership behaviors before their first school counseling jobs (i.e., in practicum and internship). Such an approach was the focus of this study.

Purpose of the Study

Although the imperative for infusing leadership training in school counseling education exists, *how* to accomplish this remains an area of need. Kneale et al. (2018) recently stated the issue emphatically: "... little guidance exists about how to train [school counselors] to identify their leadership characteristics, cultivate their leadership skills, or measure the impact of their change agent practices" (p. 1). Although these researchers referenced the professional development needs of practicing school counselors, the same exhortation applies to preservice school counselors. Therefore, we focused this pilot study exploring the potential effectiveness of the extended training intervention, with potential implications for counselor educators on how to include explicit leadership training in their introductory school counseling courses. Thus, this study focused specifically on students' early formative leadership experiences rather than the summative (Briggs et al., 2009) or programmatic perspectives (Michel et al., 2018) reported previously. ELT (Kolb, 1984) served as the instructor's pedagogical framework for both in-class and external activities, allowing for alignment between theory and practice. We assessed this initial (pilot) implementation of the 11-week intervention through a pretest-posttest design and addressed the following two research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ 1): How do students' reported frequency of leadership practices change pre-post across the semester in an introductory school counseling course infused with leadership training?

Research Question 2 (RQ 2): How do students' perceptions of self-efficacy around school counseling practices change pre-post across the semester in an introductory school counseling course infused with leadership training?

Method

Participants and Recruitment

School counseling students in a CACREP-accredited introductory school counseling course in their first semester in a program in the Southeast United States comprised the population under study. Participants were 12 students enrolled in the course; the first author, an advanced doctoral student with formal training and experience in both teaching and school counseling, served as the primary instructor. Following IRB approval, a faculty member in the program, who had no formal role in the project, read a recruitment script while the instructor was out of the classroom. The reader discussed and answered any questions or concerns related to the instructor's dual role and emphasized that participation in the study would have no bearing on evaluation of students' work and that data analysis would occur only after the instructor posted grades. Students created unique participant IDs that remained anonymous to the authors throughout the process. The second author, who aided in the construction of the intervention but not its implementation, stored data until grades were posted.

All 12 students consented to participate. Nine participants self-identified as female, and three as male. Reported ages ranged from 21 to 28 years old ($M = 23.917$). Seven participants self-identified as White, four as Black or African American, and one as Latino/a. Most reported earning an undergraduate degree in psychology ($n = 8$); others named education, public relations, human development and family services, religion, philosophy, and literature (one participant reported more than one major). Most participants ($n = 10$) reported having prior work experience, six in K-12 education (e.g., teaching, coaching sports, substitute teaching, paraprofessional work in special education) and four in universities or colleges (e.g., peer advising, admissions). All 12 reported prior leadership experience in education (e.g., department chair, member of leadership team) and/or at the college or university level [e.g., fraternity or sorority chapters ($n = 4$), student organizations ($n = 4$), sports team ($n = 3$), interfaith organization ($n = 2$), and a research project ($n = 1$)]. Reports included additional leadership as a student in the K-12 setting: marching band leadership ($n = 3$), student government leadership ($n = 2$), and sports team leadership ($n = 1$). One each cited leadership in the military, summer camp, and mentoring.

Measures

Demographics

As part of the pretest, students self-reported their age, gender, race, and ethnicity, and undergraduate major(s). They also had opportunities to note previous work experience (i.e., field of work and job title) and previous leadership experience (i.e., type of organization and leadership role held).

Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI)

The LPI (Kouzes & Posner, 2017) contains 30 items that reflect different leadership behaviors. Participants rate items according to “How frequently do I engage in the behavior described?” (1 = *almost never*; 5 = *occasionally*; 10 = *almost always*). Items represent behaviors categorized within five practice (subscale) areas: Modeling the Way, Challenging the Process, Encouraging the Heart, Enabling Others to Act, and Inspiring a Shared Vision. Example items include “I praise people for a job well done” (Encourage the Heart) and “I actively search for innovative ways to improve what we do” (Challenge the Process). Posner (2016) reported acceptable face validity, subscale internal reliability ($\alpha = .810$ to $.901$), and construct validity with other instruments. They found no significant variations based on participants’ functional background (i.e., type of work) or ethnic background (Posner, 2016). Posner and Kouzes (1988) also used the instrument with the graduate student population, and several researchers have used the LPI with practicing school counselors (Mason & McMahan, 2009; Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). Young and Bryan (2015) connected the five factors of their School Counseling Leadership Survey (SCLS) to the LPI’s five practice areas in the following ways: Systemic Collaboration related most closely to Enabling Others to Act and Modeling the Way; Interpersonal Influence related most closely to Inspiring a Shared Vision and Encouraging the Heart; and both Social Justice Advocacy and Professional Efficacy related most closely to Challenging the Process. Young and Bryan (2018) found moderate ($r = .62, p < .001$) to strong ($r = .82, p < .001$) correlations between school counseling leadership factors and leadership factors within the LPI.

For the observed sample, we found reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s α) for the instrument as a whole during pretest and posttest administrations as well as for each subscale. Using $\alpha = .6$ as a threshold for internal consistency based on the small sample size (Ponterotto & Ruckdeschel, 2007), total instrument scores exceeded that threshold for the pretest ($\alpha = .872$) and posttest ($\alpha = .826$). On the subscale level, we combined pretest and posttest samples to capture a more precise reliability measure of the intended target population, given the small sample sizes (Charter, 2003; Henson & Thompson, 2002). All subscale scores met the criteria laid out ($\alpha = .623$ -.924) except for Encourage Others to Act ($\alpha = .368$).

School Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE)

The SCSE measures school counselors’ self-efficacy or confidence in performing school counseling-related behaviors (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2005). The 43-item measure has five subscales: Personal and Social Development (PSD), Leadership and Assessment (LA), Career and Academic Development (CAD), Collaboration and Consultation (CC), and Cultural Acceptance (CA). Participants rate their level of confidence (1 = *not confident*; 5 = *highly confident*) for performing a specific school counseling activity (e.g., “Consult and collaborate with teachers, staff, administrators and parents to promote student success”). Bodenhorn and Skaggs (2005) reported strong internal consistency correlations for the five subscales ($\alpha = .91$ (PSD), $.90$ (LA), $.85$ (CAD), $.87$ (CC), $.72$ (CA)). Divergent validity was supported by a correlation between the SCSE and the Social Desirability Scale (SDS) ($r = .296$), which the authors said also supported the accuracy of participants’ responses. Items in the SCSE also underwent a rigorous check by experts in the field (i.e., counselor educators and school counselors who held offices in the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), CACREP, and one author of the ASCA National Standards). Researchers have used the SCSE in a variety of studies around school counseling in several different contexts (e.g.,

leadership and closing the achievement gap, Bodenhorn et al., 2010; career counseling, Sanders et al., 2017).

We used the same criteria as for the LPI to assess internal consistency within observations from the SCSE. The total scale had strong reliability scores for the pretest ($\alpha = .973$) and the posttest ($\alpha = .962$). Combined scores for the subscales either met or closely approached the threshold ($\alpha = .599-.938$). Cultural Acceptance accounted for the low-end score, likely due to the small number of associated items ($n = 4$) and sample size (Ponterotto & Ruckdeschel, 2007).

Overview of Intervention

We (the first and second authors) developed the intervention to cover material related to the third edition of the ASCA National Model (2012) (most current version at the time) and foundational knowledge in the wide array of school counseling practices (e.g., individual and group counseling, collaborating with school personnel). In addition, students completed 50 hours at a department-approved K-12 school within a co-requisite observational field experience.

ELT served as the pedagogical framework that guided decisions around lesson planning. We intended to offer students educational experiences that reflected all four modes of learning. For example, students merged their prior experiences of general leadership practice with activities before class (e.g., readings) to develop an initial idea of school counseling leadership (abstract conceptualization), and then “tested” their conceptualizations in class discussion and simulations (active experimentation). Through their K-12 school observations, they had opportunities to practice their “theory” of leadership in vivo (concrete experience). Students also wrote journals specifically about their leadership practice and/or those of school counselors in the school (reflective observation).

Table 1 provides the course topics, modes of learning within the ELT framework we targeted, and a few relevant activities reflecting the leadership training components of the intervention. We created a 10-week approach; however, based on the length of the semester at the university and the course’s schedule, we modified it to stretch to 11 class by address school-wide crisis response in one class. Before implementing the intervention, we sought an expert review of the lesson plans. Expert inclusion criteria included practical school counseling and teaching experiences (presence of both, with a combined minimum of five years) and a demonstrated commitment to school counseling education through professional service. Selected reviewers had taught school counseling an average of 8.3 years and worked with all school levels. They had current or previous counseling-related leadership positions (e.g., president of ACA-affiliated branch, department chair, editorial board member for counseling journal), illustrating their commitment to counselor education. Of the five school counselor educators contacted, three responded. Their feedback chiefly concerned the following areas: allotting enough time for experiential activity during each class session, addressing multicultural competency and all levels (e.g., elementary, middle, high) of schooling in each lesson, assessing the developmental appropriateness of educational experiences (i.e., for first-semester school counseling students), and matching educational experiences to course content within each lesson. In response to feedback, the first author (course instructor) incorporated discussions of multicultural competency into class discussions and activities, considered multiple levels in planning

activities, and made decisions on which activities to prioritize due to time constraints of each class.

Table 1. Intervention by class meeting with leadership classroom activities and ELT modes of learning

Week	Topic	Leadership Classroom Activities (ELT Mode of Learning)
	School Counseling Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free association listing from students reflecting their thoughts on leadership (reflective observation) • Live lecture on leadership in ASCA Model and The Four Frame Model (abstract conceptualization)
	ASCA: Foundation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing workshop for developing mission statements (active experimentation) • Problem-solving team scenario related to structural leadership frame (active experimentation)
	ASCA: Delivery (Pt. 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem-solving team scenario related to developing and promoting group counseling interventions (active experimentation)
	Group Discussion 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed with doctoral student facilitator how their site supervisors exemplified leadership (reflective observation/abstract conceptualization)
	ASCA: Delivery (Pt. 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speaker (school counselor) discussing impact of “non-counseling” duties and professional advocacy (abstract conceptualization)
	ASCA: Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brainstorming ideas for essential elements of presentation to preservice principals (abstract conceptualization)
	Group Discussion 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussed with doctoral student facilitator needs they saw present in school • Brainstormed action research plan ideas • Discussed further their site supervisors as leaders (reflective observation/abstract conceptualization)
	ASCA: Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guest speaker (school counselor) discussing how she collects and uses data in her school (abstract conceptualization)
	Collaboration/Consultation (Pt. 1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing school-wide advocacy ideas and efforts (active experimentation)
	Collaboration/Consultation (Pt. 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem-solving teams working through real scenarios brought by several guest speakers (practicing clinical/school counselors) (active experimentation)
	Collaboration/Consultation (Pt. 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion with guest speaker on collaborative crisis response in schools (abstract conceptualization)
	Presentation to Preservice Principals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on roles of school counselors (reflective observation) • Discussing with students what will be important to emphasize in presentation (abstract conceptualization) • Collecting data from that presentation and leading discussion groups afterward based on scenarios observed in practicum sites (concrete experience)
	Action Research Proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting focus areas, literature review, data collection plans, and preliminary action plans (active experimentation) • Sharing proposals with site supervisors and/or school administrators (concrete experience)

The 15-week semester, minus two weeks for university breaks and two weeks for introductory topics, allowed for an 11-week intervention. After two classes concerning the roles of the school counselor and the history of the profession, the first author implemented the intervention (week 3), 11 sequential lessons in which the theme of leadership had a prominent place. Each lesson aligned with standards based on the ASCA National Model (3rd ed., 2012), The Four Frame

Model of leadership (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Dollarhide, 2003), and literature on specific school counseling leadership practices (e.g., Young & Bryan, 2015). In consideration of treatment fidelity, the first author followed detailed lesson plans and took field notes throughout the course of the intervention. The first lesson offered lecture and discussion content based on the aforementioned literature as well as a distributed leadership perspective (Janson et al., 2009). The next five lessons covered each component of the ASCA National Model in detail, emphasizing leadership implications in each component. At this stage, students worked together in teams to address problem-laden vignettes in class. These class activities were intended to provide students with “low stakes” (i.e., not formally graded) opportunities to act upon certain leadership practices and receive feedback from the instructor. The next three lessons focused on collaboration and consultation, particularly working with students with disabilities and special needs, school-wide crisis response, and managing relationships with parents. Here, ASCA themes of collaboration, advocacy, and systemic change were highlighted. The latter lesson had students work in class with licensed counselors who had experiences in schools. The school counselors brought a scenario rooted in their experiences and asked teams of students how they would have addressed the situations, then offered feedback.

The final two lessons offered students concrete experience in leadership practice. In the first, after collaboratively synthesizing content around the school counselors’ roles, functions, and responsibilities in a school, students presented their ideas (e.g., what constitutes a counseling versus a non-counseling duty) to principals-in-training on the same campus. For the second lesson, students presented action research proposals during the final class. For this assignment students drew from the co-requisite observational field experience at a local public school to identify an area of focus; they then reviewed relevant literature and proposed an appropriate intervention (e.g., implementing a new bullying prevention guidance lesson). Students also provided a list of data sources (e.g., surveys, observations) to support their approach and inform school personnel with whom they would likely collaborate. Overall, from an ELT (Kolb, 1984) perspective, the action research presentation assignment gave students an opportunity to reflect on issues at work in their school site (reflective observation), experiment with their ideas within an action plan (active experimentation), and create their own leadership-driven initiative (abstract conceptualization) – all within an immersive, real-life experience at their school sites (concrete experience).

Across the semester, students also participated in two hour-long group discussions facilitated by doctoral students concerning students’ impressions of leadership. The first group discussion centered on how participants saw their site supervisors as leaders. The second group concerned questions around needs participants noticed as present in their school sites and more impressions of their site supervisors. These group discussions allowed for additional reflection of leadership practice outside the classroom and aided students in forming their ideas of how leadership fits into actual school counseling practice.

Procedures

Pretest-posttest

Students completed the LPI by hard copy and the SCSE and demographics via an online survey (Qualtrics link) prior to the start of the intervention (Week 3) using a unique five-digit identification code they created based on instructions provided in class at each test administration. On the final day of the course (Week 15), we re-administered the unique ID questions and LPI posttests.

Data Analysis

All 12 participants completed paper copies of the LPI pretest and posttest. 10 participants completed the SCSE pretest and posttest online (two participants did not complete the online posttest). Preliminary analyses for group differences, conducted through independent *t*-tests, on the basis of student gender, race/ethnicity, and previous leadership experience, showed no statistically significant differences on any scale. A test for normality (“straight line” test) revealed a normal distribution, and boxplots showed no apparent outliers in either dataset.

To address both RQs 1 and 2, we conducted paired-sample *t*-tests to determine whether the means between groups had a statistically significant difference. Using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007), we conducted a post hoc test for power as a function of α (0.05), a population effect size parameter ($d = 1$, in this case), and the smaller of the two sample sizes ($n = 10$). The post hoc analysis with these parameters, which included a large effect size, established grounds for acceptable power ($\beta = 0.803$) (Heppner et al., 2008).

Table 2. Scores for *Leadership Practices Inventory* ($n = 12$) and *School Counseling Self-Efficacy Scale* ($n = 10$)

LPI Practice Area	Pretest	Pretest	Posttest	Posttest	\hat{d}	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Model the Way	40.5	7.598	48.5	3.03	8.0	-4.285	.001*
Inspire a Shared Vision	32.333	6.597	46.167	3.538	13.833	-11.248	.000*
Challenge the Process	37.333	6.065	48.75	4.938	11.417	-5.64	.000*
Enable Others to Act	44.833	5.952	52.667	3.499	7.833	-4.01	.002*
Encourage the Heart	37.083	11.836	48.333	8.446	11.25	-5.973	.000*
SCSE Total/Subscale Scores	Pretest	Pretest	Posttest	Posttest	\hat{d}	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Total Score	124.1	33.5378	188.8	19.871	64.7	-4.921	.001*
CC	34.6	9.617	48.9	4.533	14.3	-9.789	.000*
LA	20.3	7.602	38.1	7.602	17.8	-6.175	.000*
PSD	36.3	10.078	52.9	6.064	16.6	-6.970	.000*
CAD	21.0	6.164	31.4	3.026	10.4	-5.056	.001*
CA	11.9	2.885	17.5	2.173	5.6	-7.344	.000*

Scores for each LPI practice area range from 6–60. CC = Collaboration and Consultation; LA = Leadership and Assessment; PSD = Personal and Social Development; CAD = Career and Academic Development; CA = Cultural Acceptance. *Statistically significant.

Results

Table 2 shows means and standard deviations for pretest and posttest, change scores (\hat{d}), *t*-test statistic, and *p*-value of participants’ scores for the five practice areas (subscales) of the LPI. On average, participants had higher posttest scores in all practice areas. Variability (as indicated by

standard deviations) for those respective means decreased or remained consistent from pretest to posttest. The largest increases occurred in the following practice areas (three largest changes from pretest to posttest). Effect sizes (Cohen's d) for each practice area were large. Because all effect sizes exceeded the parameter established through post hoc analysis, we found grounds for power at an acceptable level.

The paired t -test conducted between total SCSE scores pretest-posttest (Table 2) revealed a statistically significant difference. On average, participants scored higher on the SCSE posttest than on the pretest. Subscale t -tests revealed similar statistically significant differences. Again, overall, variability (as indicated by standard deviations) for those respective means decreased from pretest to posttest. The subscale scores with the largest increase was LA ($d = 17.8$, 87.7% increase); other subscales saw a more comparable range of increase (range = 41.3%-49.5%). Effect sizes (Cohen's d) for total and subscale scores were all large. Based on our post hoc power analysis, we found grounds for acceptable power with the given effect sizes.

Discussion

Although a pilot study, the results offer initial promise for counselor educators considering the school counseling leadership intervention. Overall, participants reported a much higher frequency of leadership practice at the end of the intervention as compared to the beginning (RQ 1). Despite a small sample size, tests of significance revealed a substantial change in all five practice areas, with large effect sizes, pointing to the possible impact of infusing leadership training with an introductory course. Inspire a Shared Vision saw the greatest degree of change (qualified by both the difference between pretest-posttest mean scores and effect size) of any practice area. As participants presented to principals-in-training, they not only explained the role of school counselors in terms of the ASCA National Model (2019) (e.g., 80% of time should be allotted for delivery of services), but also chose to work through scenarios observed from their observational field experience in small groups with the principals-in-training. They divided themselves among the principals-in-training and, as the first author observed, heard from various participants about the presentation's impact (Inspire a Shared Vision). In particular, the increase in scores on the Inspire a Shared Vision subscale might speak to an increased efficacy around systemic practices – a noted area of deficiency in school counselors in an earlier study (Janson, 2009). For example, school counseling students often had to listen to each other's ideas and celebrated as they came to consensus on developing a group counseling intervention for K-12 students. Drawing on their observational field experience sites, participants united around a common cause and developed interventions they could celebrate (Encouraging the Heart). In their Action Research Presentations, participants took what they had noticed as deficient at their observational school sites and created an opportunity for positive change. Several participants spoke with their site's principal about the project and even affected change in the school as a result (e.g., sharing the implementation and data report on a bullying prevention guidance lesson). Students also frequently worked in groups during class activities, often challenging one another (Enabling Others to Act), and shared through class journals and discussion groups several ways they modeled behaviors at their sites (e.g., showing appreciation for faculty at their sites; Modeling the Way). Although we intended the Action Research Presentation to serve as the primary "concrete leadership experience," we noted that several students went beyond

minimum course requirements to effect meaningful change through leadership-informed practice.

Participants' school counseling self-efficacy scores also rose from pretest to posttest, a difference highlighted by large effect sizes within total and subscale scores (RQ 2). Of all the scores within this measure, none may reveal more about how participants perceived their confidence to act as leaders than the results for the Leadership and Assessment (LA) subscale. These results suggested that, on average, participants left the course with a higher sense of confidence for practicing leadership, including implementing a comprehensive school counseling program, creating accountability measures, contributing to a positive school environment, and working with other stakeholders (Bodenhorn & Skaggs, 2004). Considering the focus of activities within the intervention around these areas (e.g., action research presentation) and the emphasis on the ASCA National Model in the course curriculum, participants' higher scores, on average, in this area makes sense. Participants' exposure to practical school counseling situations, such as ones within their observational field experience or in the presentation to principals-in-training, also may have been a factor for the increased scores (Van Dinther et al., 2011).

Framing much of this course around leadership required a balancing act of the standard content of an introductory course and the leadership focus. The newest edition of the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019) emphasizes how themes like leadership are "woven" into the four components. Indeed, researchers have connected leadership practice to the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010) as well as a variety of other school counseling-related activities (e.g., Bryan et al., 2018; Midgett et al., 2018; Ryan et al., 2011; Singh et al., 2010). Results from the SCSE indicate that students may have developed efficacy in multiple areas as well as leadership practice. Given how leadership and other school counseling practices interact (e.g., implementing interventions based on disaggregated data, collaborating with school stakeholders), students may not have lost opportunities to understand other aspects of school counseling practice as a result of the leadership focus.

Limitations

Several limitations exist for this study. First and foremost is one of causation. Given the pretest-posttest design that framed this study, proving causation is not a within the study's scope. Second, we used convenience sampling, and the intervention occurred with only one small, relatively heterogenous group in the same school counseling program. A third limitation includes potential threats to internal validity. Participants also may have developed their ideas on school counseling leadership outside the confines of the intervention (e.g., discussed leadership in another class, participated in extracurricular leadership activities within the university, drew from prior leadership experiences). The threat of maturation (i.e., changes due to the length of the semester) may have affected internal validity, while reliance on self-report may have affected internal reliability. A fourth limitation concerns external validity. Power related to the assessment of group differences was also low due to the small sample size. Although participants fit sample criteria that could be generalized to a larger population (i.e., first year school counseling students in a CACREP-accredited program), their small number is still a hindrance to accepting adequate external validity (generalizability), and other programs may have different admission criteria that would impact students' responses to the intervention. Finally, the low

internal consistency score suggests approaching findings for the Encourage Others to Act subscale of the LPI with caution.

The first author served dual roles as facilitator and experimenter. Inhabiting this position created a potential for experimenter bias throughout the intervention. Even though we took steps throughout the planning process, especially in coordination with the IRB, to protect participating students and data collection, potential for the first author's preconceived notions or beliefs and in-class presentations for the topics (e.g., enthusiasm for school counselor leadership) could have influenced the results.

Implications for School Counselor Educators

Finding from this study may offer school counselor educators ideas for adopting a leadership-focused framework within their own introductory school counseling courses or other educational activities. First, the intervention, explicitly rooted in ELT (Kolb, 1984), offers guidelines for mapping classroom activities on each ELT mode of learning. Participants within this intervention observed and reflected upon leadership practices at school sites (reflective observation), adopted different viewpoints among their peer group after engaging in the course content (abstract conceptualization), worked in groups in simulated fashion to address problems at their sites and "tried out" their ideas (active experimentation), and even experimented with leadership practice in a school (concrete experience). School counselor educators may intentionally adapt these activities and ideas expressed to fit their graduate program context.

Many of the activities developed for this intervention speak to the values of interdepartmental collaboration and university-school partnerships. Engineering a seminar between principals and school counselors grew out of a partnership between the first author and faculty in another department. This collaboration required much planning and discussion but proved formative to all parties involved. Several principals-in-training, some of whom had decades of teaching experience, noted they never knew school counselors were trained to do as much they are. Moreover, this interdisciplinary endeavor addressed concerns raised by many researchers around the importance of the principal-school counselor relationship (e.g., Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Young et al., 2013) and echoed other interdisciplinary efforts (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Creating curricula that espouse the value of university-school partnerships also can contribute to the increased engagement of universities in school communities (Rowell, 2005; Young et al., 2014).

Future Research

This study offers several avenues for researchers to expand upon and further investigate pre-service training in school counseling leadership. First, researchers could replicate this pilot intervention with larger samples; it would be particularly important to include control groups. Additionally, a study focused on leadership development beyond the first semester (e.g., during internship) would contribute to knowledge around school counseling leadership development. As Kolb (1984) offered, learning is a continual process shaped by further experiences. Similar to approach of Dollarhide et al. (2008), experienced school counselor educators knowledgeable in school counseling leadership could mentor and guide students by helping them set and

accomplish leadership goals. Researchers conducting studies like this and similar ones (e.g., Michel et al., 2018) could work with previous participants to track how they begin to adapt their leadership approaches to their first school counseling jobs. They could track, through LPI or SCLS surveys, how participants view their leadership practice. Finally, values such as interdisciplinary and university–school partnerships are aspects of school counselor educators’ own leadership. School counselor educators could also explore their own leadership practices (e.g., through auto-ethnographic methods) or examine how students perceive their instructors’ leadership style and relate it their own leadership development.

Conclusion

Upon entering the field, new school counselors face a challenging transition. According to the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019) and research, school counselors must learn to collaborate with other professionals (Lewis & Borunda, 2006), advocate for students’ needs (Singh et al., 2010), and work toward systemic change (Shillingford et al., 2018) – all while balancing other aspects of their roles within a school. This list presents a tall order. Nevertheless, school counselor educators can prepare their students for such work through leadership training. The intervention within this study, structured for school counseling students in an introductory course early in their program, provided students with foundational knowledge for understanding what school counseling leadership is and how it will relate to their future practice. Students reported a higher frequency of leadership practice and greater sense of school counseling self-efficacy at the end of the intervention. However, this study reflects only one step in leadership development. Continued focus on leadership development throughout a school counseling graduate program – and beyond – is necessary to help students feel exceptionally prepared to face the challenges ahead.

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