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Toward a Theory of Action: Opportunities Embedded in Counseling Theory for School Counselors to Improve Their Perceptions of and Approaches toward Their Relationship with Their School Principals

Stephanie A. McHugh

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TOWARD A THEORY OF ACTION: OPPORTUNITIES EMBEDDED IN COUNSELING THEORY FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS TO IMPROVE THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF AND APPROACHES TOWARD THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Education

By
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May 2017
TOWARD A THEORY OF ACTION: OPPORTUNITIES EMBEDDED IN COUNSELING THEORY FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS TO IMPROVE THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF AND APPROACHES TOWARD THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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ABSTRACT

TOWARD A THEORY OF ACTION: OPPORTUNITIES EMBEDDED IN COUNSELING THEORY FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS TO IMPROVE THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF AND APPROACHES TOWARD THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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May 2017

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Connie M. Moss

This study employed perceptions of school counselors relative to their relationships with their principals in order to investigate a theory of action that employs the skills and strategies embedded in counseling theory to identify courses of action that counselors can use to improve the principal-counselor relationship. School counselors attending national and state counselor conferences (N=31) responded to a prompt asking for the perceived strengths and weaknesses of their principal-counselor relationship, and the barriers they perceived to improving the relationship. Responses were analyzed using a close reading process that applied a strengths-weaknesses-opportunities-threats (SWOT) framework to the responses and identified emergent themes across the 245 response statements. The analyses revealed that the participating counselors attributed the responsibility for the strengths and weakness of their principal-counselor relationship to their principals rather than to themselves. In nearly half of the
responses (47%) counselors attributed ownership of issues to principals while only 8.9% of the statements were attributed to counselor ownership. To gauge the utility of the theory of action the study also applied counseling theory to the responses from four counselor participants to highlight courses of action with a high potential for improving the principal counselor relationship. The study suggests that the application of counseling theory and the skills and strategies embedded in the theories may hold promise for helping counselors take ownership of their relationships with their principals through increased self-efficacy for relationship building and improvement.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful husband, David, and children, Jack and Maddie, without whose sacrifices and support it would not exist.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the countless educators, principals, counselors, teachers, friends, and colleagues, who provided inspiration and motivation for its contents. Mt. Lebanon, Upper St. Clair, and Baldwin-Whitehall School Districts deserve special mention for the inspiration to forge more respectful, professional, inclusive, and collaborative communities in schools.

I have been fortunate and honored to be a member of the Belle Vernon Area School District team. The leadership and dedication of John Wilkinson, Jason Boone, John Grice, and Sarah Switala are daily examples of excellence and evidence that the work of collaboration is valuable and important. I will ever be grateful for their unwavering professional and personal support. John Wilkinson, in particular, has been a true leader, mentor, and friend.

Special thanks to Dr. Liz Gruber, chair of the Counselor Education Department at California University of PA for serving as a colleague, friend, external reader, and my expert on Counseling Theory. Additional thanks to external readers Dr. Jill Perry and Dr. Lina Dostilio, who provided particular work and life inspiration through their ideas, instruction, and examples.

Finally, my Duquesne University family: The leadership and instruction of all of my professors (especially Dr. Rick McCown) were guiding lights in pursuit of these goals. My chair, Dr. Connie Moss was both mirror and flame in this work. Dr. Moss focused me on noble and clear targets, when to add more, when to captain my own ship, and when to Let it go! It has been my honor and privilege to work with her. And, heartfelt gratitude to every member of Cohort 3 – my brothers and sisters in mind, heart, and spirit – whose words have been the echo of my own heart’s beat – I am truly grateful for the blessings you all have been in work and life.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.................................................................................................................................................iv
Dedication.............................................................................................................................................. vi
Acknowledgements.......................................................................................................................... vii
List of Tables.........................................................................................................................................xi
List of Figures.........................................................................................................................................xii
Chapter One: Introduction..................................................................................................................1
   1.1 The Why: Habits of the Heart........................................................................................................3
   1.2 The How: Through Trust................................................................................................................4
   1.3 The Who: Partners in Leadership.................................................................................................5
   1.4 Partners: The Principal and the School Counselor................................................................. 5
   1.5 Perceived Barriers between School Counselors and School Principals.................................7
   1.6 Organizational Framework........................................................................................................11
Chapter Two: A Review of the Literature.........................................................................................13
   2.1 Introduction..................................................................................................................................13
   2.2 Operational Definitions..............................................................................................................14
   2.3 Section One: The Common Ground............................................................................................16
      2.3.1 Beliefs & Experiences...........................................................................................................16
      2.3.2 Professional Formation & Development...........................................................................25
   2.4 Section Two: Where Paths Diverge.............................................................................................26
      2.4.1 Power Turfs & Territories: A Barrier between Principals & Counselors.......................26
      2.4.2 Standards governing principals and counselors.............................................................30
2.4.3 An historical context of principals and counselors 36
2.4.4 Theoretical underpinnings of principals and counselors 43

2.5 Conclusion 80

Chapter Three: Designs for Action 82
3.1 Introduction 82
3.2 Purpose of the Study 83
3.3 Methodology 84
3.4 Data Collection Procedures 85
3.5 Data Collection Instrument 86
3.6 Selection and Recruitment of Participants 86
3.7 Method of Data Analysis 88

Chapter Four: Findings 89
4.1 Findings Introduction 89
4.2 Procedures and Methods 90
4.3 Analysis 91
4.4 Overview of Emergent Themes 93
4.4.1 Theme One: Time and Access 94
4.4.2 Theme Two: Communication Patterns 99
4.4.3 Theme Three: Role Expectations and Understandings 105
4.4.4 Theme Four: Trust/Respect 110
4.4.5 Theme Five: The Principal-Counselor Relationship Assessment 115
4.4.6 Theme Six: Power Over 123
4.4.7 Summary Conclusions from the Thematic Analysis 127
4.5 Overview of Case Study Analysis

4.5.1 Case A

4.5.2 Case B

4.5.3 Case C

4.5.4 Case D

4.6 Conclusions

4.6.1 Limitations of the Study

4.6.2 Summary of Findings

4.6.3 Implications for Future Research

References

APPENDIX A: Informed Consent & Bell Ringer Activity

APPENDIX B: Conference Agenda Materials
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Time and Access</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Communication Patterns</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Role Expectations and Understandings</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Trust/Respect</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Principal-Counselor Relationship Assessment</td>
<td>116-117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Power Over</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.1</td>
<td>Organizational Framework for the Literature Review</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.1</td>
<td>Distinguishing between Climate and Culture</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.2</td>
<td>American Educational System Timeline Relevant to Principals and Counselors</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.3</td>
<td>A Comparison of Counseling Theories</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.4</td>
<td>Counselor Approaches &amp; Actions Framed by Psychoanalytic Theory</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.5</td>
<td>Counselor Approaches &amp; Actions Framed by Adlerian Theory</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.6</td>
<td>Counselor Approaches &amp; Actions Framed by Existential Theory</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.7</td>
<td>Counselor Approaches &amp; Actions Framed by Person-Centered Theory</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.8</td>
<td>Counselor Approaches &amp; Actions Framed by Gestalt Theory</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.9</td>
<td>Counselor Approaches &amp; Actions Framed by Behavior Theory</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.10</td>
<td>Counselor Approaches &amp; Actions Framed by Cognitive Behavior Theory</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.11</td>
<td>Counselor Approaches &amp; Actions Framed by Reality or Choice Theory</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.12</td>
<td>Counselor Approaches &amp; Actions Framed by Feminist Theory</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2.13</td>
<td>Counselor Approaches &amp; Actions Framed by Solution-Focused Brief Theory</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3.1</td>
<td>Sample Sizes for Instrument #1</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.1</td>
<td>Emergent Themes</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.2</td>
<td>Time and Access</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.3</td>
<td>The Double-edged Sword of Communication</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.4</td>
<td>Communication Continuum</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.5</td>
<td>Issue and/or Opportunity Attribution</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4.6</td>
<td>SWOT Responses for Case A</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.7: SWOT Responses for Case B ................................................................. 133
Figure 4.8: SWOT Responses for Case C ................................................................. 135
Figure 4.9: SWOT Responses for Case D ................................................................. 138
Chapter 1: Introduction

Schools matter. According to Social Reproduction Theory (Adams, Blumenfeld, Castañeda, Hackman, Peters, & Zúñiga, 2010), schools perpetuate or reproduce the dominant culture of society at large. What’s more, there are those who believe that schools operate as microcosms of society (Adams, et al., 2010). It is a chicken-or-the-egg argument: regardless of whether schools create society or society plays out within schools, schools matter and all educators are in a key position to effect societal change well beyond the confines of the classroom. In that respect, schools “have civic and public purposes,” (Saltmarsh, Hartley, and Clayton, 2009, p. 3). What educators do is important and the way they do it is also important. It is not only the human product outcomes (i.e. whether students go on to become successful graduates and members of society) but also the manner by which these “outcomes” are brought about that matters. If schools are inclusive and collaborative, then perhaps society may become the same.

Framing the role of schools as society-shapers underscores the pivotal role that effective school leadership plays in societal change. “Effective leaders are social architects who create a ‘social space’ that enhances or inhibits the effectiveness of an organization” (Block, 1993, p. 47). The beams supporting strong social architecture in schools (and eventually society) comprise inclusion, participation of both professionals and lay persons, task sharing, reciprocal behavior in solving problems, and “equality of respect for the knowledge and experience that everyone contributes to education and community building” (Saltmarsh, et al., 2009, p. 6). Yet, even as schools cope with mounting society-influencing responsibilities, they must deal with the daily politics between teachers, administrators, policy-makers, parents, and the public – a tug of war that often pits stakeholders against one another with students as the rope! The everyday politics
connected to education pose challenges for educational leaders that may be overcome through authentic collaboration in schools.

This collaborative leadership would encourage partnerships within the school and with the community to improve educational outcomes for students. Years of research overwhelmingly support collaboration as a means to improve student achievement (Bore & Bore, 2009; Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010; Froeschle & Nix, 2009; Janson, Stone, & Clark, 2009; Leithwood, 2005; Leithwood, 2008, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2010; Leithwood & Britain, 2006; Leithwood & Day, 2007, 2008; Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005a, 2005b, 2006; Leithwood & Mascall, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2007; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood* et al., 2004; Leuwerke, Walker, & Shi, 2009; Mascall, Leithwood, Straus, & Sacks, 2008; Mulford, Silins, & Leithwood, 2004; Silins & Mulford, 2004; Zalaquett, 2005), school climate (Dahir et al., 2010; Froeschle & Nix, 2009; Janson et al., 2009; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Price, 2011; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000), and social justice in school settings (Edwards, Thornton, & Holiday-Driver, 2010; Janson et al., 2009; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010).

Knowing that schools should collaborate and knowing exactly how to collaborate, however, are two different things. “While there is expansive literature about what school structures, [programs], roles, and processes are necessary for [improvement], we know less about how these changes are undertaken or enacted by school leaders” (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004, p. 4). “[T]he what of leadership is essential; but without a rich understanding of how leaders go about their work, and why leaders do and think what they do, it is difficult to help school leaders think about and revise their practice” (Spillane, et al. 2004, p. 8). “Activity is a product of what the actor knows, believes, and does in and through particular social, cultural, and
material contexts” (Spillane, et al., 2004, p. 10). Therefore, knowledge, belief, and action (or the *what* and *how*) are important tools to foster true collaboration. This study proposes what may be a valuable tool in promoting school collaboration and social justice by focusing specifically on perceptions and beliefs.

1.1 The *Why*: Habits of the Heart

Parker Palmer, in *Healing the Heart of Democracy: The Courage to Create a Politics Worthy of the Human Spirit* (2011) concludes that, “communities of congruence help people develop the habits of the heart that agents of social change, and all engaged citizens, must possess. They help people master the information, theories, and strategies that will allow them to advance” (p. 187). The “habits of the heart” (a phrase coined by Alexis de Tocqueville) are deeply ingrained ways of seeing, being, and responding to life that involve our minds, emotions, self-images, concepts of meaning and purpose. It is habits of the heart that make sustained democracy, as well as the pillars of democracy possible and firm: improvements in education depend on these pillars. (Palmer, 2011)

Agents of social change who possess these habits of the heart may be the “heroes” who embody leadership effectiveness and are able to promote meaningful educational improvement. A “hero is great not only because of what he does but because of what he is – because of his traits” (Burns, 2003, p. 11). Indeed, “empirical work suggests that …leader traits do indeed increase the likelihood of a leader’s effectiveness” (Spillane, et al., 2004, p. 6). So both who educators are and what they do matter: approaches are equally as important as actions. In fact, Leithwood and Britain (2006) found that a “small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leader effectiveness” (p. 1). Being “open-minded and ready to learn from others, flexible rather than dogmatic within a system of core values, persistent,
resilient, and optimistic” (p. 14) yields success. Even so, the heroic leader’s approaches or ways of being must be work in concert with the leader’s behaviors and actions to demonstrate an authentic congruence between the two (Spillane, et al., 2004).

1.2 The How: Through Trust

Heroic leadership does not occur in isolation. Leadership is relationships and effective leaders engender a culture of trust. In consideration of the present culture resulting from the standards movement in schools, Anrig (2013) cautions that, “[the what] has evolved without any accompanying strategies that improve the way [the how] school systems work, …[resulting in] relatively little progress” (p. 12). Anrig goes on to say that “better student outcomes will emerge from concerted efforts to build school culture on trust” and specifies that it is relational trust specifically that leaders must promote (p. 13).

Although the literature emphasizes that trust is a non-negotiable ingredient without which no recipe for success can work – Price (2011) found that trust was woefully “underexplained in the literature” (p. 42). Price was able to use the literature, however, to construct an argument that frames the process for building relational trust by (1) sharing expectations, (2) persuading instead of coercing, and (3) using a team approach. Sharing expectations requires a shared definition of expectations surrounding how relational trust is built collaboratively. Price sees this as crucial for successful “relationship outcomes” for educators (pp. 65-66). Once people operate with a shared definition, the leader must concentrate on persuading instead of coercing. “People are beginning to learn, however haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways” (Greenleaf, 1977, p. 20). Rejecting “coercion in favor of the slower process of persuasion” is the hallmark and “critical skill” of trust building (Greenleaf & Spears, 1998, p. 44). Finally, the leader must use the team. Research on schools has suggested that
leadership is not the sole purview of the school principal; teacher-leaders and other professionals also play important roles in leading instructional innovation (Smylie & Denny, 1990; Heller and Firestone, 1995). To echo that point, Sergiovanni (2007) advocated that it “is not the principal of a school who sustains a good school, but the principles of education” that mingle followers and leaders on meeting needs rather than maintaining roles (p. vii). Effective school cultures evidence a tone of equity through rigor and relevance as their most important relationship tool. “Wise decisions are best made when leaders and followers are one and the same (p. viii).

1.3 The Who: Partners in Leadership

The hard work of building relational trust and collaboration across a school community does not fall squarely upon one person, but on the team, working, sharing, and persuading in concert. “Partnerships add tremendous value to school districts seeking to improve and sustain high levels of student achievement… [and] are designed to create solutions for improving teaching and learning” (Rubenstein, 2013, pp. 27-28). Effective collaboration is a team endeavor requiring educators to harness the resources and partners that already exist within school buildings, districts, and communities. School counselors, with their facilitation and communications skills, are “critical [assets] to the new inclusive leadership team” “because of their influence on all members of the school community,” making them “invaluable” and a tremendous tool in promoting social justice and collaboration (Walker, 2006, School Counsellors for Social Justice section, para. 1).

1.4 Partners: The Principal and the School Counselor

The partnership between school counselors and principals “can be a complementary and inclusive relationship that can serve students and families well” (Walker, 2006, Relationship between Counsellors and Principals section, para. 1). In fact, the principal-counselor relationship
has the capacity to leverage tremendous collaboration and inclusion in the school setting and collaborative efforts between counselors and principals may hold promise for successfully anchoring a leadership team with skills in consensus building, problem solving, decision making, inquiry and dialogue, human relations and team building. Counselors are “ideally” and “pivotal” positioned for the collaborative work due to their formal training in developmental issues and concerns, collaboration, facilitation, and communication skills. Because of these skills, counselors represent professional supports for teachers, and serve as student and family advocates, conduits of community resources, and challenge confronters (Walker, 2006, School Counsellors for Social Justice section, para. 2). Indeed, school counselors

...deftly intervene when the intricacies and insensitivities of the bureaucracy become barriers for students and their families. Using their facilitative skills, [counselors] frequently bridge the gaps between educators, who knowingly and unknowingly impinge upon student success. [School counselors] must grapple with the organization's hierarchy and help families navigate the system to access support, while hurdling the barriers for language and culture concerns (Walker, 2006, Multicultural Competence Varies section, para. 4).

What’s more, counselors and principals may become strong and collaborative change agents acting as the core of complementary inclusive leadership teams, with each professional contributing to a richer and more culturally responsive and culturally proficient environment. This new leadership team needs to learn new techniques and skills for understanding, motivating, teaching, and empowering each student, regardless of race, gender, religion, or creed. These teams need to utilize democratic practices and empower their community members. They need to boldly
exercise ethical and equitable decision-making, while transforming school culture into socially just environments. We are a nation of diverse populations. The future of our society, and certainly our educational systems, depends on our ability to effectively collaborate, to reach mutual respect and understanding, to realize that in diversity there is strength. Most of all, it depends on our ability to deeply care. (Walker, Conclusion section, para. 1)

Teaming counselors and principals is not without challenge. Barriers exist between principals and counselors who know that it makes sense to work together but who struggle to lead together nonetheless because of barriers and misconceptions regarding each other’s roles and responsibilities. “Too frequently, [counselors] do not comprehend the complexity of the administrator's job, and too few principals understand the role and functions of the [counselor]” (Walker, 2006, Relationship between Counsellors and Principals section, para. 1). Often, these two professionals work past each other rather than with each other, each perceiving barriers (real or imagined) that are never addressed.

1.5 Perceived Barriers between School Counselors and Principals

In 2009, the College Board Advocacy, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) joined forces to investigate the principal-counselor relationship. Their study began with a web-based survey that invited existing members of the ASCA and NASSP to share their perceptions. The study reported on the insights of 343 school principals and 1,957 school counselors, representing a 14 percent response rate, who had been in their positions between three and nine years. Although the responses were skewed toward professionals who value membership in professional organizations rather than a random sample of school counselors, key findings in five categories
illustrated where principals and counselors converge and diverge. Categories included perceptions of the most important elements and biggest barriers to a successful principal-counselor relationship, in general; perceptions regarding respondents’ own principal-counselor relationship, specifically; views on counselors’ activities focused on improving student outcomes; insights on the biggest challenges for equity; and roles of the principal and counselor in education reform efforts (Finkelstein, 2009). A summary of these key findings presented here, sheds light on the perceptual strengths, weaknesses, barriers, and opportunities regarding the principal-counselor relationship.

The first category of the study (Finkelstein, 2009) looked at the principal-counselor relationship in general. Principals and counselors agreed that communication and respect were the most important elements to their relationship with principals ranking communication highest and counselors ranking respect highest. With regard to communication, principals articulated a desire for quality communication, while counselors most frequently mentioned frequency or the quantity of communication with their principal. In general, principals sought respect for their vision and goals while counselors framed respect as important regarding themselves personally and for their professional expertise. A point of agreement occurred when principals and counselors considered barriers. Both principals and counselors agreed that time – not enough time, interruptions, too much to do, daily decisions that must be made too quickly, no time to reflect and dream together, being overwhelmed – all contribute to the time barrier between principals and counselors (Finkelstein, 2009).

The second category of the study attempted to quantify respondents’ own principal-counselor relationship. Two elements were rated highest in importance: mutual trust and mutual respect. When participants were asked what one thing they would change if they could to
improve their own relationship, the most frequently mentioned response was communication, with respect/understanding being the second most frequently mentioned. Principals said weekly meetings, open communication, inclusive decision-making, shared vision, amplifying counselor voices, honesty, and eradicating the barrier that principal evaluation and authority poses for counselors would help. Counselors looked to mutual respect and consistent communication, the atmosphere, trust, listening openly, and support from the principal (Finkelstein, 2009).

The third category considered how assessing counselors’ activities could be a tool to improve student outcomes. While principals and counselors agreed about the counseling activities necessary to improve student outcomes (and those counselor clerical and administrative tasks having less of an impact), they diverged on time. Principals’ perceived amount of time administrative and clerical tasks take for counselors as less than the actual time that counselors reported: actual counselor time spent in record-keeping, scheduling, and test coordination was greater than the principals perceived. These administrative and clerical tasks represent valuable time that could be used for activities that both counselors and principals agree are more important in promoting student achievement (such as vertical teaming for student transitions, increasing the number of students enrolled in high-level classes, increasing graduation rates, and helping first-generation students) (Finkelstein, 2009).

Finally, principals and counselors saw the greatest challenge to equity as state test scores (especially where gaps between subgroups prevail) and they were clear about their roles in educational reform: the principal as leader and the counselor as advocate. The study concluded “it is encouraging that the basic priorities of both principals and counselors were so well aligned” (Finkelstein, 2009, p. 12). As the College Board Advocacy-ASCA-NASSP study suggests, counselors and principals have more in common than not and articulated the goal of inspiring
“principals, counselors and other educators to examine the principal-counselor relationships in their own schools and determine how they might be able to best help each other work together effectively to improve the educational outcomes for all students” (p. 2).

The College Board Advocacy-ASCA-NASSP study yields important considerations regarding the perceived barriers or boundaries that exist between principals and counselors. According to some theorists, the purpose of boundaries is twofold: to connect and to separate (Perls, F., 1969a; 1969b; Perls, L., 1976). Using this framework, then, perceptions of time, respect, communication, and roles might be better understood as boundaries that both connect and separate counselors and principals and are formed and developed through personal and collective beliefs and experiences. These boundaries can also be attributed in part to the differences in professional governing standards, historical contexts, and theoretical underpinnings of counselors and principals, an examination of which can illuminate the barriers as ties that bind causing positive outcomes, or walls of separation leading to alienation and disenfranchisement.
1.6 Organizational Framework

As both a trained and certified K-12 principal and trained and certified school counselor, the author of this study enjoys a rare perspective regarding the perceived barriers to a successful principal-counselor relationship. This rare perspective contributed to the organizational framework that frame’s the study’s literature review. Figure 1.1 represents that organizational framework advancing the study’s argument that school counselors may profit from using their tools to addressed perceived barriers to meaningful collaboration with their principals in order to promote more socially-just outcomes in schools.

![Organizational Framework for the Literature Review](image)

*Figure 1.1: Organizational Framework for the Literature Review*

The figure depicts the factors that contribute to the perceived boundary between school counselor and school principal. As illustrated, beliefs formed through professional development and career experiences influence the barriers for both professionals. Each profession’s historical context, theoretical underpinnings, and standards or expectations of practice may contribute to
the perceived barriers. Leadership theory and the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015 (formerly known as the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards) frame the preparation of school principals. For the counselor, counseling theory and standards articulated by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) and Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) provide the foundation. The organizational framework represented in Figure 1.1 illuminates the goal of the literature review: To examine the factors that help explain collaborative and thriving counselor-principal relationships as well as those relationships seen as struggling or toxic.

Aristotle’s warning that, “the whole is more than the sum of its parts,” however, has particular influence in this study. Although the following literature review dissected the barriers between these professionals into component parts, it is important to note that the parts intersect and influence each other. The work of boundary crossing in relationships can be sensitive, requiring tailored approaches, strategies, and skills. The purpose of this study is to further illumine counselors’ perceptions of barriers with principals to suggest approaches and actions the counselor may use to address those barriers. It specifically focuses on the use of counseling theory as a powerful tool so that counselors may improve perceptions and beliefs and become better collaborators with principals.

Chapter 3 unveils a design for action that grew out of the literature review and utilizes counseling theory and the strategies therein to blur counselors’ perceptual boundaries and promote positive self-efficacy for forming relationships with their principals. Chapter 4 suggests collaborative tools that might help counselors span those boundaries to work as liaisons in leadership with principals to form relationships that may potentially leverage more collaboration in the school setting.
Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

The primary goal of this study is to investigate opportunities for school counselors to address their belief barriers in order to foster a better relationship with their principals. It is designed to inform the following research question: *How can the strengths and skills embedded in counseling theory help counselors address their perceived barriers with their principals?*

The literature review that follows examines common influences shared by counselors and principals (professional formation, development, experiences, beliefs) and notes the unique, individual factors that separate the distinct professions (standards, history, theory). The literature review assumes that these influencers contribute to the perceptions that counselors may hold regarding collaborative boundaries with school principals. Understanding then reframing these perceptions may hold promise in fostering collaboration, turning boundaries that separate into boundaries that connect.

The literature review begins by investigating common influences—what principals and counselors share—to substantiate the important roles of school climate and culture, the experiences that shape self-efficacy beliefs, and the influence of professional formation/development on practicing educational leaders. Then, the review presents a brief overview of the unique standards and expectations governing current practice for principals and counselors that give each profession its distinct character and skillset. Next, the literature review provides an historical context for the evolution of principals and counselors throughout the history of the United States educational system. The review concludes with an examination of theory, turning a discerning eye toward the utility of the strategies, strengths, and skills embedded in counseling theory to address counselor perceptions. The review intentionally offers
support for the argument that counselors possess crucial collaborative tools that, if leveraged, could help to span and even break down perceived barriers. The following operational definitions support the literature review.

2.2 Operational Definitions

Collaboration/Collaborative Practice: For the purposes of this study, collaboration and collaborative practice are defined as respectfully and cooperatively valuing each other and working together to decide upon and achieve educational goals as a habit and the norm.

Inclusion: Inclusion shall be defined as the behavior of educators to take every potential stakeholder into account and to include all perspectives held by people and relevant to the educational matter or goal at hand. The heart of inclusion lies in educators asking the question, “who is missing from the table?” and then acting in a democratic manner to include those who have been missing. Thus, inclusion will have a people-orientation, rather than a thing- or idea-orientation.

Leveraging: “Finding the smallest number of high-leverage, easy-to-understand actions that unleash stunningly powerful consequences” is offered as goal of innovative change theory or Motion Leadership (Fullan, 2010, p. 16). For the purposes of this study, leveraging will mean using a relatively small action to yield high-impact results or exponentially-multiplied outcomes. For example, the author argues that leveraging the school counselor as a principal liaison in leadership will improve overall school collaborative practices as a matter of social justice.

Process: Schwahn & Spady identify process as “means” and use words like “motivational, empowering, supporting, and…galvanizing human resources by inclusion,
participation, and empathy” (2010, p. 57). How educators go about the business of working toward ends, outcomes, goals, or results is referenced in this work as process.

**Product:** For the purpose of this study, “product” is defined as what educators seek: the ends, outcomes, goals, or results sought and obtained through educational practice.

**School Climate:** For the purposes of this work, school climate will mean those external qualities of the school setting visible to the clientele served (all stakeholders in education) and impacted by internal structures under the umbrella of school culture.

**School Culture:** For the purposes of this work, school culture will mean those internal or intrinsic qualities of schools that are affected by and have an impact on the external school climate viewed, felt, and experienced by all stakeholders.

**Social Justice:** For the purposes of this study, social justice will be used to describe those actions (such as valuing multicultural diversity, common humanity, human rights, and fairness in allocating resources and privilege) that provide the greatest amount of social equity in schools as microcosms and reproducers of society.

**Stakeholders:** Anyone with a legitimate interest or concern in education or educational processes who currently may or may not have a voice.
2.3 Section One: The Common Ground

2.3.1 Beliefs & Experiences.

*Dispositions, mindsets, and attitudes.* Whether they are called dispositions (as in ISLLC/Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015), mindsets (as in ASCA, 2012), or attitudes, both personal and psychological beliefs “precede and condition” employee satisfaction, cohesion and commitment levels with the organization. These, in turn, bear on personal health, happiness, and job “devotion” to spill from the individual and influence the entire work climate (Price, 2011, p. 47). Morale is “the degree of happiness among school staff”; it is particularly reflective of a school’s culture and has a very strong effect on school climate” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 11). An understanding of school culture and climate informs an understanding of beliefs and experiences.

*Distinguishing between school climate and school culture.* Steve Gruenert and Todd Whitaker (2015) provide a clear delineation between the school climate and school culture in Figure 2.1. Their distinction is supported by additional voices in the literature.

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<th>Culture…</th>
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<td>…is the group’s personality.</td>
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<td>…gives Mondays permission to be miserable.</td>
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*Figure 2.1: Distinguishing between Climate and Culture*

A school climate hospitable to education is a healthy environment that is tangibly safe and orderly but also intangibly permeated by a supportive, caring, and responsive attitude (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2007, pp. 7-8). Additionally, value and respect for every member of the community and “an upbeat, welcoming, solution-focused, no-blame, professional environment” (Portin, Knapp, Dareff, Feldman, Russell, Samuelson, and Yeh, 2009, p. 59). Trust is always mentioned when scholars operationalize climate.

School culture, on the other hand, is made up of internal structures of the school environment, governed by the stewards of education. “Culture is manifest in school structures such as how students or teachers are grouped for learning or work, [their] relative social positions, the commonly held beliefs of teachers, students, and principals that guide learning activities, grouping practices, and the way that teachers talk with each other and evaluate student achievement” (Fiore, 2001, p. 4). Said another way, culture is “the values and rituals that provide people with continuity, tradition, identity, meaning, and significance, as well as to the norm systems that provide direction and that structure their lives” (Fiore, 2014, p.5).

Just as intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are linked in an individual, school culture is inextricably linked to school climate and, as such, the terms are often used interchangeably. “Culture conveys to its members what they ought to celebrate, ignore, or anticipate” so culture, therefore, “defines what it means to be normal” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 13-14). Climate is the “culmination of the collective attitudes of the members of a group. It is how most of us feel most of the time in certain situations” (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 18). “The relationships of principals, as the school leader, strongly and directly affect teachers’ attitudes, which define the schooling climate” (Price, 2011, p. 40).
To use metaphor to further delineate between climate and culture, one should think of the climate as that which is visible outside. We check the weather every day as it changes frequently: is it raining, windy, snowy, or sunny? One should consider the culture as structures held and operated within: Do we have a raincoat with a hood or an umbrella; a scarf or hat to keep the wind from blowing our hair in our face; snow boots that fit, sunglasses and sunscreen to protect us? And, are we applying these structures as the weather or climate dictates and as good stewardship demands? Instantaneous changes in climate reflect actions (what you do); changes in culture are a slow evolution of values and approaches (why you do what you do). (Gruenert & Whitaker, 2015, p. 23)

The argument may be made that positive work climate cannot possibly exist when structures like health, happiness, devotion, satisfaction, cohesion, and commitment are not present. If school climate is the business of leadership, then the components of school climate (both extrinsic and intrinsic, like beliefs) must be the business of leadership, as well.

**How school climate, culture, and beliefs lead to self-efficacy.** Successful educational partners—or Peter Block’s architects of “social space” (1993, p. 47)—attend to the components of school culture and school climate, to focus on the interactive relationship of morale and beliefs.

[Educators] operate collectively within an interactive social system rather than as isolates. The belief systems of staffs create school cultures that can have vitalizing or demoralizing effects on how well schools function as a social system. Schools in which the staff collectively judge themselves as powerless to get students to achieve academic success convey a group sense of academic futility that can pervade the entire life of the school. Schools in which staff members collectively judge themselves capable of promoting academic success imbue their schools with a positive atmosphere for
development that promotes academic attainments regardless of whether they serve predominantly advantaged or disadvantaged students. (Bandura, 1994, p. 13)

Those educators who believe students’ motivation and cognitive development can be increased by confident and competent professional “capabilities” have high levels of what Bandura calls “self-efficacy” (1994, p. 13). Conversely, those educators who have a low sense of self-efficacy “favor a custodial orientation relying heavily on negative sanctions” (1994, p. 13). Indeed, the power of beliefs among school staff makes a difference in both defining school climate and school culture and shaping the individual self-efficacy and collective agency of the staff.

*What is self-efficacy?* Bandura defines self-efficacy as “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (1994, p. 2). These beliefs are not general and overarching, but rather they are task specific. That is to say, a counselor may have a high positive self-efficacy for counseling troubled students, but have low self-efficacy for providing insights to the principal on how school structures contribute to the level of distress of at-risk students. Beliefs factor prominently in self-efficacy since the ways that people think and feel about certain tasks influences their motivation to engage in certain tasks and avoid others. These same beliefs, therefore, shape how people behave and generate cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes and consequences.

People with high levels of self-efficacy in certain areas of their life can realize high levels of achievement and health in those contexts. Their confidence and assurance leads to competence in facing specific challenges and their high levels of commitment lead to an efficacious outlook. They tend to employ grit and resiliency and view setbacks as temporary
aspects of life that often result from insufficient effort, knowledge, or skills that are perfectly and sometimes easily acquirable. As a result, high levels of self-efficacy can lead to lower levels of stress and vulnerability in people who believe in their own ability to control specific situations. (Bandura, 1982; Bandura, 1994)

In contrast, low levels of self-efficacy lead to doubt, avoidance of difficult tasks, defensiveness and the perception of challenges as threats. People with low self-efficacy for a specific task approach it with low aspirations, weak commitment, and struggles. When failure occurs, victims of low self-efficacy focus on personal deficiencies, obstacles, and possible negative consequences. Because grit is not part of their make-up, when setbacks occur, they quickly give up and are not resilient. It doesn’t require much failure for people with low self-efficacy for a specific situation to lose faith, experience stress, or fall into depression. (Bandura, 1982; Bandura, 1994)

*How can people develop higher levels of self-efficacy as a tool to improve their relationships and partnerships?* Bandura (1977; 1994) offers four ways to develop positive perceptions of self-efficacy, while cautioning that each opportunity is accompanied by diminishing returns on the influence. First, the influence of success through mastery experiences can breed self-efficacy just as failure at a task can undermine it, especially if self-efficacy isn’t yet firmly in place for the task. Easy successes often yield impatience and an unrealistic expectation of quick results. When this happens, low self-efficacy can result and the person may become easily discouraged by failure. But, when perseverant effort and determination are part of the experience and success is the result, the experience promotes high self-efficacy for that task. People who experience this kind of success go on to believe that their sustained effort leads to success and they find it easier to rebound from setbacks.
Second, Bandura argues that learning is social and that when people vicariously observe other people – models—who are like them and who are self-efficacious, they can develop self-efficacy themselves. It stands to reason though that the opposite effect is possible. Observing others who fail at a task, despite high effort, can lower one’s judgment of one’s own self-efficacy and breed discouragement that can undermine effort and diminish confidence and resiliency. These impacts on self-efficacy, both positive and negative, increase with a stronger perception of one’s similarity to the model. Successes and failures are “more persuasive”, given greater similarity with the model (Bandura, 1994, p. 3).

Third, social persuasion or verbal reinforcement of one’s capabilities from another (especially a more experienced, yet similar, mentor) is a powerful galvanizer of sustained effort and self-efficacy. In gathering ammunition against self-doubt and personal deficiencies, socially-persuasive boosts can make the difference in confidence and, thus, competence. Those who are most successful in building self-efficacy in others provide both positive verbal appraisals and structured situations where readiness and success are scaffolded and people are stretched just beyond where they think they will succeed. Success is measured in terms of personal triumph and improvement, rather than victory over others. (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1982; & Bandura, 1994)

Cautions relative to this third influence on self-efficacy include “unrealistic boosts [that] are quickly disconfirmed” by failure (Bandura, 1994, p. 3). This has both an impact on self-efficacy and also the credibility of the persuader, leaving the person even more vulnerable. By “constricting activities and undermining motivation”, self-efficacy can be reasonably sabotaged socially, as well (Bandura, 1994, p. 3).
Finally, moods and emotional states play a role in belief development of one’s capabilities in specific contexts. Those who are positive tend to have higher levels of self-efficacy, while those who are depressed, negative, or despondent, lower levels. Physical tension and stress can be perceived as vulnerability especially when strength and stamina are required. When one is fatigued and suffers aches and pains, those with low self-efficacy perceive these as debilitating. By reducing perceptions of stress and altering a negative perspective toward the positive, self-efficacy can be grown. (Bandura, 1977; Bandura, 1982; & Bandura, 1994)

How can self-efficacy play a role in professional collaboration? This question is best answered by viewing the partnership of professionals through the four dimensions of the self-efficacy lens. Each of the four dimensions will be discussed in turn.

- **Cognitive Processes.** Forethought and goal-setting beget behavior and, according to Bandura (1977; 1982; 1994), one’s self-appraisal of capabilities is vital to these processes. Thought allows people to predict events. Those who have high levels of self-efficacy for a specific task set high goals for accomplishing that task and have a firm commitment to achieving them. These people are able to anticipate and visualize success to breed confidence. Those with low self-efficacy for a specific task set lower goals, possess less commitment to achieving those goals, and—as a result—tend to perpetuate even-lower levels of self-efficacy. They visualize failure for the specific task that leads to increased self-doubt.

- **Motivational Processes.** The power of beliefs over motivation and, thus, outcomes cannot be denied when viewing self-efficacy through the motivational lens. Three aspects of motivation are central to Bandura’s (1977; 1982; 1994) work. Causal attributions of motivation address how failure is perceived. Individuals with low
levels of self-efficacy for the task at hand, perceive failure as a result of one’s low ability. In those whose self-efficacy levels are high for the task at hand, failure is simply due to insufficient effort and thus easily correctable. Outcome expectancies focus on the relationship of behavior to consequences and the value of the perceived anticipated consequences. For example, if a person predicts a negative consequence, but the consequence is of little value, the behavior will be adjusted depending upon the level of self-efficacy of the actor. Those with high levels of self-efficacy will adjust their behavior with confidence. Those with low levels of self-efficacy will allow self-doubt and mistrust of themselves and their perceptions to impact behavior. This bears out in the goals that individuals set for the task at hand, the third aspect of motivational process. The cognized goals that the individual will set are influenced by the individual’s perception of the level of challenge, the individual’s perceived ability to persevere to attain the goal (the effort expended to achieve the goal plus the length of time committed to goal attainment), and finally the actor’s resiliency to setbacks.

• Affective Processes. An individual’s coping strategies, ability to self-regulate feelings, and the individual’s perceptions of both are determined by individual self-efficacy for the task at hand. While everyday stressors and anxiety may not be avoided, humans can determine their level of control over these influencers. Those with strong self-efficacious feelings are able to exhibit boldness in taking on stress-inducing challenges and self-control when things get out of hand. Those who are reticent to take on challenge because of uncertain levels of self-control may realize unfulfilled aspirations, social inefficacy (manifested in unsatisfying relationships),
and immune system issues or other biological effects. (Bandura, 1977; 1982; & 1994)

- **Selection Processes.** Simply put, human choices and selections are in direct result of individual perceptions of self-competency, self-interest, and negotiated social networks. Career pursuit is a perfect example of the role of self-efficacy on a Selection Process. (Bandura, 1977; 1982; & 1994)

**Self-Efficacy: How does self-efficacy impact principals and counselors?** “The higher the sense of self-regulatory efficacy, the better the occupational functioning” (Bandura, 1994, p. 13). So, the ability of counselors to self-regulate their own efficacy for working with principals – the task at hand—has implications for the success of their collaboration to leverage more widespread collaboration in schools. With the right tools in place, self-efficacious professionals may galvanize change and improvement:

In sum, the successful, the venturesome, the sociable, the non-anxious, the non-depressed, the social reformers, and the innovators take an optimistic view of their personal capabilities to exercise influence over events that affect their lives. If not unrealistically exaggerated, such self-beliefs foster positive well-being and human accomplishments. Many of the challenges of life are group problems requiring collective effort to produce significant change. The strength of groups, organizations, and even nations lies partly in people's sense of collective efficacy that they can solve the problems they face and improve their lives through unified effort. People's beliefs in their collective efficacy influence what they choose to do as a group, how much effort they put into it, their endurance when collective efforts fail to produce quick results, and their likelihood of success. (Bandura, 1994, p. 9)
Clearly, intrinsic factors (like self-efficacy) are important and are made up of factors and variables outside of the locus of control of leaders. Factors like staff beliefs are “non-school influencers” (Price, 2011, p. 67). Thus, self-efficacy is “less readily able to be managed by principals and administrators to improve school climate” (Price, 2011, p. 67). Instead, school leaders may influence, encourage, and enhance self-efficacy in their staff. Counselor formation and development attends to the power of influence and encouragement in growing self-efficacy.

2.3.2 Professional Formation & Development.

In providing a context for the relationship between school counselors and principals, consideration of where these professionals converge and diverge is relevant. Although barriers to success are evident and quantified by the College Board Advocacy-ASCA-NASSP study (Finkelstein, 2009), the standards and expectations of present practice that are crucial to the formation of developing professionals provide common ground.

Two camps argue the role of professional formation: some scholars discount formation altogether (Boyte, 2009; Furman & Greunewald, 2004; Herrity & Glassman, 1999; Marshall, 2004; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2013; Price, 2011; Saltmarsh, et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2007; and Walker, 2006) and others call it mission critical (Block, 1993; Brazer, et al., 2014; Herrity & Glassman, 1999; & Orphanos & Orr, 2013). Regardless of scholarly division represented by the opposing camps, almost all agree that formation would benefit from the following improvements: integration of a systems approach, critical discourse and civic democracy, multiculturalism, and social justice. That is because formation provides the vehicle through which educators receive contextual anchors such as standards, history, and theory. These contextual anchors, because of the unique roles that principals and counselors play, are unique to each profession and provide a context for power and influence.
2.4 Section Two: Where Paths Diverge

This section of the literature review begins with an analysis of power and influence noting how the paths of principals and counselors diverge: the standards governing the practice of principals and counselors, an historical context of the evolution of principals and counselors throughout the history of the United States educational system, and, finally, the theoretical underpinnings of practice for both principals (leadership theory) and counselors (counseling theory). It is the theories, and specifically counseling theory, that have particular utility to this study.

2.4.1 Power Turfs & Territories: A Barrier between Principals & Counselors

Like principals, counselors “face overwhelming challenges, making their jobs impossibly complex” (Walker, 2006, Abstract). Both educators must use “their complementary skills and areas of expertise in shaping the core of an inclusive leadership team” (Walker, 2006, Abstract).

[Counselors are] typically trained in communication skills and facilitation skills; they have a background in working with problem-solving and decision-making processes with various groups of people. They have access to assessments and data, and frequently are the conduits between community resources and families and schools. Principals have training in issues of management, leadership, and curriculum/instruction. They have training in decision-making and public relations and are acquainted with the legalities of governance and special needs programming. The skills and areas of expert knowledge of each leader are crucial in the work of a complementary leadership team; [but first,] they must abandon their power turfs and territories. They must acknowledge and utilize their unique skills and expertise for the good of students and families. (Walker, 2006, Leadership Team section, para. 1)
Regarding principal power and influence, the literature is split threefold: hierarchical power of position, power through service, and power of influence. This section uses those three categories to organize the literature debate relevant to counselors and principals.

**Leadership is power by position.** The might of the principal is mission-critical to influence schools and implement collaborative practices (Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Price, 2011; Zalaquett, 2005). Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, through their work for the Wallace Foundation’s 2004 review of research, yielded well-documented conclusions about the quality of leadership in schools and its influence on student learning. Specifically, these researchers note that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn,” and that “…much of the existing research actually underestimates its [school leadership] effects” (p. 5).

Almost a decade later, The Wallace Foundation underscored that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning in school,” (2013, p. 5). “Administrators are the gatekeepers for school-wide excellence, even for those children who have poor or different life experiences and who consequently suffer under the bias of tests” (Walker, 2006, Upheaval in the Status Quo section, para. 2).

Even though the literature supports the impact of principals on schools and student learning, Price warns that principals possess “little enforcement authority despite their oversight role and leadership position in the school hierarchy” (2011, p. 45). What’s more, Price views schools as “organizational anomalies because of the weak power related to [their] hierarchical role structure” (2011, p. 68).

**Leadership is power through service.** “People are beginning to learn, however haltingly, to relate to one another in less coercive and more creatively supporting ways” (Greenleaf, 1977,
p. 20). Individuals are chosen as leaders “because they are proven and trusted as servants… [that they] want to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions. For such it will be a later choice to serve—after leadership is established.” (p. 20, 22). Greenleaf & Spears (1998) use Shakespeare’s 94th sonnet to illustrate the servant-leader’s view of power: “They that have power to hurt and will do none. (Not very little, but none.) …For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds; lilies that fester smell far worse than weeds” (p. 46). The point: “the servant needs to learn to stand against the culture on two critical issues: power and competition” (p. 46).

Greenleaf warns against power turning into arrogance and corruption. “Potential servant-leaders should be advised to shun any power-wielding role which is not shared with able colleagues who are equals” (1998, p. 48).

Greenleaf (1998) also framed trustee leadership as servant leadership; a position that aligns with the literature on stewardship. This position, however, is challenged when principals do not spend enough time in their current assignment. The Wallace Foundation (2013) found that principals spend on average spend 3.6 years in one position. This short time period prevents the principal from developing a strong sense of stewardship and consistency over time, resulting in situations where the leader’s vision lacks credibility. “Administrators, important and necessary as they are, tend to be short-range in their thinking and deficient in a sense of history—limitations that preclude producing visions” (Greenleaf & Spears, 1998, p. 18). If the argument is made that counselors and teachers are the “long-termers”, they may have a greater sense of vision. Long-standing board members, who are “involved enough to know, yet detached enough from managerial concern, that their imaginations are relatively unimpaired” (p.
18) may be the ideal stewards/trustees, and more credible as servants. Whether it is principals, counselors, teachers, or board members, the role of the trustee is “to lead a process out of which the design for the [institution] may evolve” and implore trustees to be inclusive: “all of the several constituencies of each [institution] should be full participants in the evolution of that design” (p. 39). “Humility is one of the distinguishing traits of the true servant—as willing humbly to accept service as to give it” (p. 41).

Greenleaf, in “The Servant as Leader”, offers the following queries to illustrate what is meant by serving/servant leadership: “Do those being served grow as persons: do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and likely themselves to become servants? And what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will she or he benefit, or, at least, not be further deprived?” In 1998, Greenleaf & Spears added: “No one will knowingly be hurt by the action, directly or indirectly” (p. 43). “Hurting people, only a few, is not accepted as a legitimate cost of doing business” (p. 45). The hallmark of the servant leader, therefore, is rejection of “coercion in favor of the slower process of persuasion”. Persuasion is the “critical skill” of servant leadership (p. 44). Both principals and counselors have this capacity.

“Leadership is influence” (Schwahn & Spady, 2010, p. viii). “Aspects of leadership can be described metaphorically as forces available to administrators, supervisors, and teachers as they influence the events of schooling. Force is the strength or energy brought to bear on a situation to start or stop motion or change” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 7). Todd Whitaker says, “When the principal sneezes, the whole school catches a cold” (2003, p. 30). The principal sets the tone and, if the principal focuses on collaboration, so goes the school.

That said, “there is no loss of power and influence [on the principal’s part]…when the power and influence of many others in the school increase” (Leithwood and Britain, 2006, p. 13).
Price’s study (2011) bears this out as power dynamics moderated her outcomes: “as the power between principal and [employee] balances, the size of the relational effects increases” (p. 65). Price (2011) summarizes the literature of the power of principals by delineating between their influence on “informal school processes”, stipulating that these educator supervisors “directly influence informal school processes, such as teacher attitudes and behaviors, while indirectly influencing” student outcomes, specifically achievement (p. 65).

Regardless of the distinction between influence or position, in discussing power, the supervisor-subordinate power differential demands attention. Trust issues linking to power and authority abound in the data from the College Board Advocacy-ASCA-NASSP 2009 Study (Finkelstein, 2009). Trust, in fact, may be the lens through which the quality of the supervisor-subordinate differential may be judged (Price, 2011). Thus, trust and power differentials cannot be overlooked between and among school counselors and principals.

2.4.2 Standards governing principals and counselors.

Current expectations of principals: Manager and leader. According to The Wallace Foundation (2013), attending to leadership “has become all the more essential” as federal and state agencies attempt to transform schools, “a task that depends on the skills and abilities of thousands of current and future school leaders,” (p. 5). In fact, researchers note that the “leadership of principals is central in initiating and sustaining the organizational changes needed to improve student learning. Improvement must be grounded in continuing efforts to build trust across the school community. School improvement rests in a social base, …so building relational trust remains a central concern for leadership” (Anrig, 2013, p. 7). A shared definition between principals and teachers (and, ostensibly, counselors) of expectations is important for

Principals can no longer afford to toggle between manager and leader but must do both effectively and in concert. According to The Wallace Foundation (2013), principals “can no longer function simply as building manager, tasked with adhering to district rules, carrying out regulations, and avoiding mistakes” principals now must hit five high-impact targets:

1. Shaping a vision of academic success for all students, one based on high standards.
2. Creating a climate hospitable to education in order that safety, a cooperative spirit and other foundations of fruitful interaction prevail.
3. Cultivating leadership in others so that teachers and other adults assume their parts in realizing the school vision.
4. Improving instruction to enable teachers to teach at their best and students to learn to their utmost.
5. Managing people, data, and processes to foster school improvement (2013, pp. 6-7).

And the charge is to carry these tasks out in an orchestral manner, because “all five tasks need to interact with the other four for any part to succeed” (2013, pp. 6-7). Similarly, the *Vanderbilt Assessment of Leadership in Education* tool suggests six methods that effective principals use when carrying out their “most important leadership responsibilities: planning, implementing, supporting, advocating, communicating, and monitoring,” (Porter, Murphy, Goldring, Elliott, Polikoff, and May, 2008, p. 13).

Principals’ always-difficult job has become impossible with career-ending implications: overwhelming expectations, ownership of every student’s performance on high-stakes tests, every teacher’s effectiveness in the classroom in moving students toward that achievement, and
the day-to-day managerial tasks of running the building – all with an eye on continuous improvement. Jan Walker (2006) emphasizes challenges for school leaders: “School leaders are already facing an overwhelming job, one that grows in complexity and expands in responsibilities. Principals' daily work is fragmented, fast-paced, and plagued by constant interruptions” (Complexity of the Job section, para. 1).

Furthermore, principals bear the burden of role conflict, toggling between program management expectations and their role as instructional leaders. When educational leaders are juxtaposed alongside medical care administrators, an argument is easily made for the reconceptualization of educational leadership roles to mimic hospital leadership with the hospital administrator paralleling the school administrator/program manager and the hospital chief of staff paralleling the instructional leader. Kelehear’s action research (2005) involving 14 novice school leaders concludes that a clear need exists for an individual who “manages the “business of schools” and one who mentors instruction (p. 11). The study also notes considerable reluctance for the paradigmatic shift in this thinking is not a “reflection on the quality or applicability of the notion” but rather a “lack of central administrative support and the deep resistance to change within the school culture” (Kelehear, 2005, p. 11). Too little authority, too many tasks, and too few hours in the day add up to insurmountable pressure and even exemplary leaders wonder how long they can manage the isolation and stave off burnout.

According to The Wallace Foundation (2013), it takes five to seven years for a principal to have a “beneficial impact on a school,” yet the average stay in the Minnesota-Toronto research was 3.6 years. “The lives of too many principals, especially new principals, are characterized by ‘churn and burn,’” and even though the lesson is, “effective principals stay put,” principals are burning out and getting out before they see the fruits of their labor (pp. 15-16). Spillane,

This revelation that bridging and buffering are critical to principal longevity and impact aligns with the distinction between management and leadership described by Greenleaf & Spears (1998). Leaders, in their view, must “manage and administer, along with the ceremonial aspects of office [including] the maintenance functions [that] help keep the institution running smoothly—as it is. Important as maintenance is in the current performance of any institution, it does not assure adaptation to serve a changing society. That assurance can come only from leading—venturing creatively. (1998, p. 31). “[L]eadership is initiating – going out ahead to show the way” (1998, p. 32).

Likewise, Sergiovanni (2007) argues “it is not the principal of a school who sustains a good school, but the principles of education that allow followers and leaders to intermix roles and responsibilities to achieve what is needed for students” (p. vii). “Wise decisions are best made when leaders and followers are one and the same (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. viii).

“Though school leaders must be many things to many people and school leaders must pay attention to educational, management and political roles, at the heart of their work they are ministers. Minister, after all, is the root word in administer. Whatever else principals do they must first minister to the purposes of the school, minister to the idea structure that provides a source of authority for what people do, and minister to the needs of those who day by day do the work of the school” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. 3).
The standards unique to principals. The evolving role of principals is clearly articulated in the new Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015 (formerly the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium or ISLLC Standards drafted by the Council of Chief State School Officers or CCSSO; governing principal preparation, professional development, and practice). These standards frame a transformed public education system as the brass ring, requiring “a new vision of leadership, one that goes beyond management and asks leaders to maintain a laser-like focus on student learning as they pursue a course of continuous improvement in their day-to-day work” (2015, p. 4). The Council’s purpose in reframing the standards was to “raise the bar for the practice of school leadership; therefore, the standards and indicators reflect the magnitude of the importance and responsibility of effective school leaders” (Walker, 2006, Lack of lived experience and preparation, para. 5).

The 2015 Professional Standards differ from prior versions and have undergone an 18-month revision process coupling empirical research, input from practitioners, and gap analysis between “real, day-to-day work of education leaders and the 2008 standards and functions” (2015, p. 5). A major change in the new standards is the addition of more collaboration. To wit, beginning in the introduction, the standards brand educational leadership as a “collaborative effort distributed among a number of professionals in schools and districts” (2015, p. 3). The standards go on to employ language regarding team building, and shared and distributed responsibilities.

The standards not only inform practicing principals, but also have a bearing on aspiring principals and potential new hires for school districts: “The standards can also inform how schools and districts recruit and cultivate leaders who can build teams that share and distribute the responsibilities required for high levels of student learning and achievement to occur” (2015,
Recruiting, growing, and supporting leadership teams are clearly at the forefront of the standards and key practices of transformational leaders, in fact, the standards articulate “Fostering a collaborative work environment and developing productive relationships with staff, particularly in regards (sic) to implementing local, state and national reforms” as one of the key practices for success (2015, p. 5). Collaboration in principal standards is echoed throughout standards that govern school counselors and, as such, the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders may prove a tool in breaking down barriers between counselors and principals but that is for a later study.

**The standards unique to counselors.** The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs or CACREP has been around since 1981, providing standards-based guidance and governance for the counseling profession, specifically for aspiring counselors through their preparation programming. Revised first in 2009 and again in 2016, CACREP Standards mirror closely the leadership standards defined by ISLLC (now called Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015). They also operate within the context of summative evaluation, aligning with what has come to be known as Danielson’s rubrics (Adams, Danielson, Moilanen, & ASCD, 2009) for both principals and counselors to help structure post-secondary preparation institutions to best prepare professionals.

The component sections of the CACREP standards include The Learning Environment, Professional Counseling Identity, Professional Practice, Evaluation, Entry-Level Specialty Areas, and Doctoral Standards for Counselor Education and Supervision. In the Entry-Level Specialty Areas, CACREP standards are customized by professional position. These standards shape the preparation and formation of school counselors, as well as other school and mental health professionals. Like all standards, they undergo constant revision in an effort at continuous
improvement. Like standards governing principals and school leaders, the CACREP standards also emphasize collaborative work practices for school counselors.

Just as the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015 govern both principal preparation and practice, and CACREP governs counselor preparation, counselor practice falls under the purview of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Standards. The ASCA Model provides standardized structure (with flexibility) for school counselors to successfully engage in the practice of school counseling. The model articulates three domains of counseling (Academic, Career, and Social/Emotional), through a comprehensive framework for delivery (Core Curriculum, Individual Planning, Responsive Services, and Systems Support) to engender mindsets and behaviors in students. Ancillary structures (Foundation, Management, and Accountability Systems) support counselor programming. The four over-arching themes of the ASCA Model are advocacy, collaboration, leadership, and system change agency (ASCA, 2004). Just like the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015, and the CACREP standards governing counselor preparation, the ASCA standards also emphasize collaboration in counselor practice.

2.4.3 An historical context of principals and counselors.

Since Horace Mann’s time more than a century ago, American education has struggled to reconcile increases in diversity with the call to social justice and equality for all. The paradox of schools as both the great equalizer for all children, while also functioning as crucibles of constant change regarding societal inequality has produced challenge at best and conflict at worst (Walker, 2006, Introduction section, para. 1). All educators, but especially school leaders are in a position to referee this conflict. An historical context of the principal and counselor promotes better understanding of how each role emerged and was shaped by the political, societal, and
economic forces that were also shaping schools. This historical examination draws heavily on the work of Joel Spring (2011) who wrote extensively on this topic. Figure 2.2 below provides a timeline of events in the development of the American Education System pertinent to principal and counselor evolution.

**Figure 2.2: The American Educational System Timeline Relevant to Principals and Counselors**

*Understanding schools through the lens of principal history.* Prior to the 1800’s, American education was characterized by schooling in the home as children learned the trades of their parents, relegating all to a narrow track. By the 1800’s, the Common School movement attempted to blur caste boundaries and made education a general proposition of sameness—a “common” experience in schooling for all—providing equality of opportunity so everyone could compete in the labor market. Leaders like Mann choreographed America’s evolution from one-room school houses by searching for bright-spot models of educational excellence, often finding them abroad. In 1843, after visiting Prussia, Mann touted the Prussian system in his Seventh Annual Report. The Prussians, forsaking the large, ungraded and undifferentiated, mixed classroom, favored classification of pupils by age into graded classrooms. When this model
emigrated to the states (and specifically to the Quincy School of Boston, MA) it did so with an American twist: incorporation of a “pedagogical harem of a male principal and female teachers” (Spring, 2011, p. 153).

This American twist can be better understood by examining the context of the United States in the early twentieth century. By the early 1900s, attempts to scientifically manage schools, alongside the industrialization and Taylorism of the United States, had gained a foothold. It makes sense then, that the early twentieth century school administrator was conceptualized as more businessman than educational philosopher or curriculum leader – and adopting a business-model meant adopting a status for educational leaders that was equal to that enjoyed by members of the business-world elite. These educational leaders were typically men, since women were not politically supported as leaders in business or in education (Spring, 2011).

As standardized testing, professionally-trained administrators, and university-based educational researchers merged to galvanize factory-model reform in schools, a method of internal organization, based on meritocracy in schools, forged a hierarchical administrative structure wherein certain positions were held by professionals depending upon their training and abilities. As the movement toward scientific management of schools prevailed, school boards came to be part of this hierarchy resulting in an increase in the number of duties and the powers assigned to school administrators. As schools moved past the political management of ward bosses and boards into the scientific management of school administration, the power, status, and income of school administrators grew and standardization became the trend, impacting planning, conditions and operations, instructions, schedules, forms, evaluations of students and staff, attendance, personnel decisions, and record-keeping (Spring, 2011).
Understanding schools through the lens of counselor history: Vocational counseling.

During the turn of the century (late 1800s-early 1900s) in what is considered both the American Industrial Age and the age of urban expansion, two things occurred resulting in the birth of the school counseling profession:

1. Large numbers of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe, many having a wide variety of social-service needs, migrated to the United States bringing culture wars and the need for community-building social centers with them.

2. Because of rapid industrialization, vocational training was separated from academic training and with this split came vocational guidance where counselors matched students to their respective career paths based upon labor market demands and an industrial efficiency model (Spring, 2011, pp. 247-249).

While school counselors have been characterized as personal and social service agents who address a diverse variety of societal needs, they can trace their beginnings via the context of vocational and career guidance roles that were first juxtaposed and later prioritized relative to academic counseling.

Historically, American education has had many objectives leading to the goal of shaping society, not the least of which was the management and training of human capital (the “character, brains, and muscle of the people”) to support the U.S. economic system. Growing the economy from within was just as high a priority as competing with other real or perceived world powers, (Spring, 2011, p. 244-245). During the 1900s, teaching the arts of production and distribution became the priority, so the U.S. could rival feared-and-admired Germany. The result was that tracking took hold with vocational education in order to meet individual student need, favor project-based learning-by-doing, validate education’s utility, and –in theory- reduce worker
discontent and social unrest. A new brand of equal opportunity: differentiating by future occupation emerged and marked a significant ideological shift toward differentiation at the turn of the century. (Spring, 2011, pp. 245-246).

Vocational training was separated from academic training and vocational guidance focused on matching students to their respective career paths based upon labor market demands and an industrial efficiency model. Different types of education were provided so that students could be “tracked” into their future careers. This philosophy galvanized the establishment of junior high and comprehensive high schools along with the belief that education was a panacea that would cure any and all economic problems. “Preparation for jobs [became] the major function of American high schools,” and schools yet again became proponents and perpetuators of the class or caste-based structures of society that still persists today (Spring, 2011, pp. 245, 247).

In order to place students in differentiated tracks, a vocational guidance bureau (or agency) was created to funnel students into their academic or vocational tracks, in effect choreographing the exchange of human capital. Quite quickly in this work, assessments such as interviews, self-analyses of personality traits, and take-home questionnaires were necessary and used as appraisals for placement. These assessments soon evolved into vocational aptitude testing. “The role of the vocational guidance counselor, as it emerged from these more general social goals, was part labor specialist, part educator, and part psychologist,” and training for counselors toward reconciling the scientific management and vocational guidance movements soon followed establishment of the career in guidance counseling, (Spring, 2011, p. 248).

A major tenet of counselor formation and effective practice was based on the view that “the major function of education [was] to guide students into their proper place in the corporate
structure and socialize them for that structure through the social life of the school” – Spring depicts the school social structure as having five levels with a lone-wolf principal-leader at the top of the hierarchy (2011, p. 248), illustrating that from their very inception, counselors and principals have existed in the context of a hierarchical, top-down leadership schema rather than a multi-tiered, shared, or distributed one.

**Understanding schools through the lens of counselor history: Social/emotional counseling.** Today, a three-pronged approach to school counseling is used, with academic, career, and social/emotional counseling holding equal court in the standards. When school counselors were just coming into existence, however, priorities were skewed. To serve students in selecting educational programs corresponding to their interests, abilities, and future occupations, educational guidance provided a framework elevating the occupational goals of students over even curriculum. “Ideally, the guidance counselor would match a student to an occupation and then to a course of study that would prepare the student for his or her vocation” (Spring, 2011, p. 249).

At the same time schools were seen as sorting organizations, serving the industrialization of the country, schools were also seen in parallel to be social service agencies and community centers for immigrants, industrial workers, and urban dwellers. The influx of vast numbers of immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe meant schools found themselves operating as socializing agencies similar to institutions like family, church, and community, fighting culture wars, poverty, crime, corruption, and immorality. Kindergartens began; home economics (now called family and consumer science education) educated women in the domestic sciences to free them to pursue education and cast a net wider than the home to reform society; school cafeterias were established; processed foods were invented; bathing/showering facilities were created;
school nurses and social workers were hired to mimic the structure of the settlement house movement; night classes, moveable desks, and the use of schools as polling places made schools into community centers; and solutions like playgrounds, parks, and sandlots addressed healthful living and reduced juvenile crime. The school had become a social agency (Spring, 2011).

The patterns of leadership toggling between instructional leadership and management and the counselor balance between vocational guidance and social service agency repeats throughout American educational history. During the space race precipitated by Sputnik’s 1957 launch, for example, a resurgence in vocational counseling echoed refrains from the Industrial Age factory-model schools. This reverberated again through No Child Left Behind legislation passed in 2002 with high-stakes standardized testing again taking center stage and a subsequent national push toward STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) education. This 21st Century push was spurred by media outcries about the failures of the American public school system galvanized by test scores and America’s ranking on competitive international school systems ratings scales – not unlike the USA’s early 1900’s attempt to emulate and compete with German schools but now expanding farther and looking toward Korea, Finland, and Singapore to name but three modern examples (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

Clearly the institutional epistemology of school engagement has a long history of dominant privilege repeatedly granted toward expertise applied externally through community activities like work (Saltmarsh, et. al, 2009). This epistemology is an inarguable root of the multi-layered role of the principal and school counselor and scaffolds the evolution of current standards and expectations, beliefs and experiences, power and influence, and barriers to collaboration between these two professionals, principals and counselors.
2.4.4 Theoretical underpinnings of principals and counselors.

Theory can be abstract and thus perceived irrelevant in practice, leading to a common disdain for theory as being the impractical obsession of academia. Theory will not and cannot provide answers to issues and problems; it can provide insight into choices and decisions leaders need to make. (Brazer, Kruse, & Conley, 2014, p. 259)


Throughout American history education has been inextricably and undeniably tied to business in practice and philosophy. Business- and educational-leadership theories are arguably relevant to promote balanced leadership in schools. Dominant theories argue that process is just as important if not more important than product. But, just as the maverick lone-wolf leader may struggle with the overwhelming responsibilities of both instructional leadership and management, a product-process balance in leadership may also be out of reach without strong partnerships in place.

Despite strong leadership ties between business and education, leadership theory and training is given only light treatment in modern-day principal development programs (Hale & Moorman, 2003; Hess & Kelly, 2007; Lashway, 2003; Orr, 2006; & Vanderhaar, Munoz, & Rodosky, 2006). Furthermore, even though the ASCA devotes one-quarter of its National Model themes to leadership (Bowers, 2012), counselor preparation programs fail to consciously and adequately develop counselor leadership skills (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Fitch, Newby, Ballesteros, & Marshall, 2001; Hayes, & Paisley, 2002; & Perusse, Goodnough, & Noel, 2001).
An argument may be made to innovate the formation programs for both educators, given the strong similarities between leadership and counseling theory and the potential to assist principals and counselors in speaking the same theoretical language. Additionally, delving into leadership theory may show some utility in working with principals to address the barriers between principals and counselors.

Given this study’s focus on counseling theory and the strategies embedded therein as a potential tool to assist counselors in experiencing higher levels of confidence in partnership with principals a lighter attention is given to leadership theory. What follows is an overview of the linkages and connections between counseling and leadership theory to illustrate connecting common ground between principals and counselors.

**Prevalent leadership theories for practicing principals: The quest to balance product and process.** Because business-model leadership theory is often leaned upon in education, it is provided in brief overview in this study. “Organizational theories on efficiency or ‘product’ quality are unlikely to operate similarly in school organizations since the tenets underlying efficiency and quality theories assume material products [and] material products are not equivalent to the goal of educating children,” (Price, 2011, p. 67). Even so, today’s educational leaders are urged to keep a specific eye on product and outcomes, similarly to their business-leader counterparts. What, when, supportive data, evaluative data, and accountability consequences are all frequently discussed and validated in the media and are thus a focus in the formation and on-going professional development for educational leaders operating in the Age of Accountability (Schwahn & Spady, 2010).

Accompanying the push toward product results, comes the pull of process: “effective leaders are social architects who create a ‘social space’ that enhances or inhibits the effectiveness
of an organization” (Block, 1993, p. 47). Some prefer the term “Emotional Intelligence” to describe this type of social engineering (Caruso, Mayer, & Salovey, 2002). “Decisions must incorporate emotions to be effective. Emotions follow logical patterns. Emotional universalities & specifics exist. Emotional intelligence is the key, if you don’t have it, you need it, or you need to compensate in another way” (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2004, pp. 197-215).

Other theoretical perspectives give significant attention to decision-making balance between product outcomes and processes using terms to categorize those who primarily focus and operate from the right-side (the side that conceptualizes and synthesizes, the emotionally-connected, meaning-seeking, processing side) and the left-side (the concrete, product-oriented, linear side) of the brain, respectively. Pink (2006) strongly advocates for a combination of both sides to navigate what he calls the Conceptual Age with a whole mind that balances the process or the how and the product or the what. Other leadership theorists advocate similarly for discipline in thought and action and for the balance of process and product in decision-making. For example, the works of Jim Collins in Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap... and Others Don’t (2001) and Stephen Covey in First Things First (1995) and The Seven Habits of Highly-Effective People (2011) promote the balance between process- and product-orientation existing in leadership theories supporting collaboration in both business and educational practice.

This tension—the quest to balance product and process—provides a way to examine dominant theories of leadership in later studies. Leadership theories best suited to this lens include Total Leadership Theory (Schwahn & Spady, 2010), Transformational Leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006), Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), Moral Leadership (Sergiovanni, 1992), Total Quality Management (Deming, 1986; 2000), Distributive Leadership (Spillane, Halverson,
Leadership theorists throughout time and across the philosophical span of Total Leaders, Servant Leadership, Moral Leadership, Total Quality Management (TQM), Transformational Leadership, Motion Leadership, Distributed Leadership, and Organizational Leadership have woven the common thread of balance between the what of product outcomes and accountability and the collaborative and inclusive how of successful leadership. It stands to reason, then, that there is space and need for this balance and need for collaboration in the description, formation, and development of school leaders. Werlinich and Graf (2014) concur, “The process … becomes as important as the [what] selected by the faculty because staff and administration have engaged in a collaborative effort in which they all have a part….” (p. 18). In so many ways education is taking its cue from the business world in learning, applying, and leveraging balanced leadership and collaborative practice.

And while principal preparation programs may promote leadership theory, different programs may favor one theoretical perspective over the other. That is not the case, however, when it comes to the preparation of school counselors. Counselors are trained to use counseling theory to support and mediate relationship issues that often block the academic progress of the students in their building. In other words, they are trained to use counseling theories as relationship-building tools. The next section of the literature review focuses deeply on both product and process fostered by counseling theory to warrant the argument that counseling theory may be a useful tool to address the counselors’ perceived barriers preventing a productive partnership with principals.
Prevalent counseling theories for practicing school counselors. The prevalent counseling theories reviewed in this section represent the theories most commonly used in counselor training and practice. They include Psychoanalytic Theory, Adlerian Theory, Existential Theory, Person-Centered (or Rogerian) Theory, Gestalt Theory, Behavior Theory, Cognitive Behavior Theory, Reality (or Choice) Theory, Feminist Theory, and Solution-Focused Brief Theory. Figure 2.3 serves as a concept organizer for the discussion of individual theories as well as a comparison of the theories to each other. The matrix is organized by the following headings for each theory: Counseling Theory (and predominant theorists), Determinants of Behavior (factors that motivate people, influencing how they make decisions and take action), Consciousness (how the theory frames the role of human consciousness, emphasizing either the unconscious/subconscious, the conscious, the hyperconscious, or a combination); Time or Tense (how the theory views the concept of time and emphasizes human experience from either the past, present, future, or a combination); Dimensions of Being Human (a summary of the theory’s view on the human condition and what it means to be human); and Potential Consequences (highlighting the outcomes, both positive and negative, of subscription to the theory and those strategies embedded therein).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Counseling Theory</th>
<th>Determinants of Behavior (decisions &amp; actions)</th>
<th>Consciousness</th>
<th>Time or Tense</th>
<th>Dimensions of Being Human</th>
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<td>Psychoanalytic Theory</td>
<td>Irrational forces, unconscious motivations, biological drives, instinct</td>
<td>The sub/unconscious: The <em>superego</em> imagines the expectations of parents and parental figures and subconscious defense mechanisms search for relationships that match early patterns</td>
<td>The past has great strength. The present is influenced by the past and by imagining the future.</td>
<td>Stages: (1) free from parental influence; (2) capacity to care for others; (3) intimate relationship-ships; (4) generative impact Seek meaning, fulfillment, to avoid anxiety &amp; punishment.</td>
<td>Rewards: pride and self-love; Punishments: guilt and inferiority Crises: life’s turning points promoting advancement or regression. Fear of danger, control, one’s own conscience</td>
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<td>Adlerian Theory</td>
<td>Relational, social, and cultural factors shape us. Imagined life goals or fictions – views of how the world should be. Drive and motivate humans.</td>
<td>Conscious: Humans are creators and creations of their own lives. The whole person: context, social constructs, and community (plus component parts)</td>
<td>The past is not as important as future goals. The past is only important as “where we’ve been” in the context of where we are now and where we want to go. Birth order plays a role in this theory.</td>
<td>The whole person: Two parts: (1) social relations; (2) purpose (goal-directed behavior). Universal life tasks: (1) building friendships (social); (2) establishing intimacy (love-marriage); (3) contributing to society-occupation.</td>
<td>Inferiority can be a wellspring of creativity and motivation. We are not sick or flawed, just in process… humans are ever-evolving.</td>
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<td>Existential Theory</td>
<td>Awareness of alternatives, motivations, factors of influence, and personal goals. Freedom/purpose - adventurousness vs. limits, death, responsibility - anxiety: Reconcile internal creativity with need to be social/connected/motivate others’ expectations.</td>
<td>Values the conscious and sub-conscious equally as they cannot be disconnected in the conflict of authenticity vs. inauthenticity. Preserve internal uniqueness, centered, freedom, choice vs. the need to relate socially to outside beings and nature.</td>
<td>All or none: We are free to make the choice to be limited by past, present, and future or to be empowered by them. Seek balance between freedom and responsibility in six dimensions: (1) Capacity for self-awareness; (2) freedom vs. responsibility; (3) striving for identity vs. relationship to others; (4) the search for meaning; (5) anxiety as a life condition; (6) awareness of death.</td>
<td>Isolation, alienation, and meaninglessness. Inauthenticity/not accepting personal responsibility leads to fixed/static thoughts and eventually bad faith and guilt. Authenticity: the courage to be who we are. Choice: Limited/ anxious vs. brave/ free.</td>
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<td>Person-Centered Theory</td>
<td>Power and control: how do people obtain, possess, share, surrender? Way of being. Relationships/ process over product outcomes. Resolve discrepancy: self-perception vs. reality.</td>
<td>Hyper-conscious: are humans consciously or unconsciously using facades or being authentic? Present: significant positive personality change does not occur in a silo, only in relationship.</td>
<td>People are trustworthy, can understand and resolve their own issues, and can engage in self-directed growth and self-healing if involved in healthy relationships. Unconditional positive regard.</td>
<td>Focus on joy, creativity, and self-fulfillment or on anxiety, hostility, and neuroses. Acceptance is not approval but it reconciles perception and reality.</td>
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<td>(Rogers, 1942; Rogers, 1951; Rogers, 1961; &amp; Rogers, 1980)</td>
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<td><strong>Gestalt Theory</strong> (Perls, F., 1969a; Perls, F., 1969b; Perls, Hefferline, &amp; Goodman, 1951; &amp; Perls, L., 1976)</td>
<td>Emergence of needs, sensations, or interests disturbs equilibrium. Restore equilibrium through interpersonal contact and insight, dialogue and relationship. War and conflict between the “top dog” and the “underdog”.</td>
<td>Hyper-conscious: Figure (awareness) and ground (out of our awareness) are equal. Additionally, directly experiencing the Field (a dynamic system of inter-relationships) in the here-and-now (not the abstract) is paramount. Attend to the obvious.</td>
<td>Present or the Now: Internal and external environments are equal and the best work is often done at the boundary between the person and environment. The Field only exists in the present. A focus on past and/or future is a form of avoidance.</td>
<td>Social: both internal and external dimensions are equal. Self-regulation must be used to be actively aware and use capacity-building emotion. Greater awareness leads to greater choice and greater responsibility. The whole person is more than the sum of one’s parts.</td>
<td>People in the process of “becoming”. “Unfinished business” manifest in rage, resentment, hatred, pain, anxiety, grief, guilt, abandonment. Emotional debris clutters awareness, seeks completion indirectly: pre-occupation, compulsive behavior, wariness, oppressive energy, and self-defeat.</td>
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<td><strong>Behavior Theory</strong> (Bandura, 1969; Bandura, 1997; Lazarus, 1989; Lazarus, 1997; Skinner, 1948; Skinner, 1953; &amp; Skinner, 1971)</td>
<td>Cause-and-effect: observable, objective, environmental conditions (external) and internal motives Consequences of past behavior Social, observational learning Clear, concrete, goals and plans Resistance is honored or fought Antecedents and consequences</td>
<td>Hyper-conscious: Human cognitive processes govern how environmental influences are perceived and interpreted. Understanding oneself.</td>
<td>Present: Current, observable determinants not past or future which cannot be seen</td>
<td>Environment, personal factors, and individual behavior Humans are self-directed, self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, and regulating beings A = antecedents; B = behaviors; C = consequences. Consequences are concrete and observable.</td>
<td>Individual agency Self-efficacy Resiliency Warmth, empathy, authenticity, permissiveness, and acceptance (or their opposites) are necessary as consequential reactions to behavior. Product over process.</td>
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<td><strong>Cognitive Behavior Theory (CBT)</strong> (Beck, 1967; Beck, 1976; Ellis, 2002; Ellis, 2004a; &amp; Ellis, 2004b)</td>
<td>Emotions stem from beliefs, influence evaluations and interpretations of reactions</td>
<td>Subconscious and conscious together: we are negatively biased and hard on ourselves – automatic thoughts persist even though they are contrary to objective evidence.</td>
<td>Past: our own repetition of early indoctrinated irrational beliefs, can keep dysfunctional attitudes alive and operative in the present.</td>
<td>Emotions, beliefs</td>
<td>Distress is a disturbance in cognitive processing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Predispositions of self-preservation, happiness, thinking and verbalizing, loving, communion, growth, and self-actualization</td>
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<td></td>
<td>The realization that life doesn’t always work out the way we want it to, but we still accept ourselves</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Propensities of self-destruction, thought avoidance, procrastination, repetition of mistakes, superstition, intolerance, perfectionism, self-blame, and avoiding growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overgeneralization, magnification/minimization, personalizing, labeling and mislabeling, and dichotomous thinking (everything is black and white)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reality Theory or Choice Theory</strong> (Glasser, 1965; Glasser, 1968; Glasser, 1998; &amp; Glasser, 2001)</td>
<td>Connections to people resulting in happiness</td>
<td>Conscious choice – we are not waiting to be motivated by the world around us.</td>
<td>This isn’t measured on a time continuum but on a hyper-consciousness of the present: What we want, what we do, how we evaluate the self, and designing plans for improvement (Robert E. Wubbolding, b. 1936)</td>
<td>Humans have choice; not “blank slates”</td>
<td>Happiness in connecting with others; Unhappiness and frustration resulting from unsatisfying relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five genetically-encoded needs motivate us.</td>
<td>People have more control than they perceive. All choices and behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and physiology. Inner control is critical. Discrepancies between what we say and the steps we take to bring about change</td>
<td></td>
<td>Genetically-encoded needs: (1) survival or self-preservation; (2) love and belonging; (3) power or inner control; (4) freedom or independence; and (5) fun or enjoyment.</td>
<td>We have difficulty with priorities, especially if we unsatisfactorily relate to someone in our Quality World.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Love and belonging is the primary need.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Love and belonging is the primary need.</td>
<td>Behavior is our language - it is purposeful and designed to close the gap between wish and reality.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Fictions craft our Quality World comprising our vision/wants/dreams: specific images of people, activities, events, beliefs, possessions, and situations. Reconcile Quality World with Reality through choice</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling Theory</td>
<td>Determinants of Behavior (decisions &amp; actions)</td>
<td>Consciousness</td>
<td>Time or Tense</td>
<td>Dimensions of Being Human</td>
<td>Potential Consequences</td>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feminist Theory</strong></td>
<td>The intersections of gender, social location, and power</td>
<td>Hyper-conscious: Concious, subconscious, unconscious all intertwined but more of a focus on context than consciousness</td>
<td>Deterministic social relationships and historical contexts that deserve to be uncovered and addressed/confronted</td>
<td>Identity development, self-concept, goals and aspirations, and emotional well-being</td>
<td>Non-hierarchical structures, equal sharing of resources and power, empowerment, mutuality, self-acceptance, self-confidence, joy, authenticity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Enns, 2004; Worell &amp; Remer, 2003)</td>
<td>The social, cultural, and political contexts of a person</td>
<td>Women giving away their power in relationships depending upon the situation</td>
<td>This theory has a lifespan perspective and is not fixed during childhood (humans are becoming and in-process)</td>
<td>A spiritual dimension of being human; thinking, feeling, and behaving dimensions</td>
<td>Bias-free work and social environments; feminization of the culture to enhance society to be more nurturing, intuitive, subjective, cooperative and relational through the infusion of feminine values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patriarchal system, multiple oppressions, multiculturalism, and social justice</td>
<td>Sometimes women being in privileged groups</td>
<td>Conflict in what’s been taught as socially-acceptable and desirable and what is actually healthy</td>
<td>Connectedness and interdependence are critical components and sense of identity and self-concept develop in the context of relationships</td>
<td>Humans not flawed; distress reframed as flags about unjust systems — coping and survival strategies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Interventions are strengths-based</td>
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<td>Biopsychosocial</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Social relationships and historical contexts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Neutrality and objectivity are false—subjectivity is an important dimension</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Change in the sense of social activism, not in the sense of victim blaming and adjusting the self</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Institutional barriers and inequities often limit self-definition and well-being</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Transparency and partnerships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Insight, introspection, and self-awareness are springboards to action</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Solution-Focused Brief Theory</strong></td>
<td>Hope, optimism, resiliency, self-directed goals, empowerment</td>
<td>Conscious and subconscious linked through dialogue: talk about problems produces more problems; talk about change creates change. We produce what we talk about.</td>
<td>Eschew the past in favor of the present and the future: what is possible</td>
<td>People are healthy and competent and can construct solutions.</td>
<td>Negativity begets more negativity; being positive creates more positivity in an individual’s world.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DeJong &amp; Berg, 2008; DeShazer, 1985; &amp; Murphy, 2008)</td>
<td>Choosing self-directed goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social: relies heavily on dialogue</td>
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*Figure 2.3: A Comparison of Counseling Theories*
What follows is a discussion of each theory in turn in the order that they appear in the above organizational matrix. The discussion features, although sparingly, the work of Gerald Corey (2014), who wrote extensively on counseling theory and who is considered the premier expert in framing counseling theory. At the conclusion of this section, connections are drawn between the counseling theories and leadership theories to show a common ground between principals and counselors.

*Psychoanalytic Theory*, put forth by Sigmund Freud (1949), and advanced by Erik Erikson (1963), and Carl Jung (1961), posits unconscious and irrational forces, motivations, drives and instinct determine behavior. One’s past is the dominant influence on present decisions and actions: the *superego* or conscience imagines the expectations of parents or parental figures. Subconscious defense mechanisms are used to search for relationships that match early patterns in an attempt to resolve unaddressed conflict. The dimensions of being human are framed as progressive stages in Psychoanalysis: (1) freedom from parental influence; (2) capacity to care for others; (3) intimate relationships; (4) generative impact or leaving a legacy for future generations. Humans look for meaning and fulfillment or the realization of talents and experience either pride and self-love or guilt and inferiority, depending upon how these benchmark stages are attained. Often anxiety, fear, and crises are turning points in life, promoting the individual’s advancement or regression through the stages. (Freud, 1949; Erikson, 1963; & Jung, 1961)

Alfred Adler’s *Adlerian Theory* (Adler, 1958; Adler, 1959; Adler, 1964; & Adler, 1978) opposes Psychoanalysis at almost every turn. Behavior is determined by outside social and cultural factors like relationships. Consciousness, rather than the subconscious, is dominant as humans are both creators and creations of their own lives. Future imagined aspirations, life
goals, or fictions (views of how the world should be) drive and motivate humans. Thus, past information is only considered important in a where-we’ve-been context-setting manner. For example birth order can provide a clue to how humans relate to others socially. In this theory, the whole person is considered: context, social constructs, community, and component parts make up the two-pronged approach to (1) social relations and (2) purpose (or goal-directed behavior). Similar to Psychoanalysis, Adler believed in benchmarks called Universal Life Tasks: Building friendships (social); establishing intimacy (love-marriage); and contributing to society (occupational). Yet, Adler’s tasks are not progressive stages and can occur concurrently. In Adlerian thought, subjects do not advance or regress; inferiority is welcomed as a wellspring of creativity and motivation. Humans are not sick or flawed, but are instead in process and ever-evolving. (Adler, 1958; Adler, 1959; Adler, 1964; & Adler, 1978)

Existentialists include Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Medard Boss (1903-1991) but arguably the most famous in connecting Existentialism to psychiatry and psychology were Jean-Paul Sartre (1971), Viktor Frankl (1963), and Rollo May (1950; 1953; & 1983). Man’s dominant Existential conflict is adventurous freedom versus anxious responsibility. Decisions are made and actions are taken to reconcile internal unique purpose and the external human need to relate to nature, be socially connected to other beings, and meet others’ expectations. Behavior is determined by awareness of alternatives, motivations, external factors of influence, and personal goals. In this battle, the conscious and subconscious are locked and past, present, and future can either be limiting or empowering. The boundaries of this battleground are six-dimensional: (1) the capacity for self-awareness; (2) freedom and responsibility; (3) striving for identity and relationship to others; (4) the search for meaning; (5) anxiety as a condition of living; and (6) awareness of death and non-
being. The outcomes can be positive: brave, courageous, authentic freedom; or negative: isolating, alienating, meaningless, fixed, static, guilt-ridden inauthenticity. Humans have choice. (Frankl, 1963; May, 1950; May, 1953; May, 1983; & Sartre, 1971)

In Carl Rogers’ *Person-Centered Theory* (1942; 1951; 1961; & 1980), behavior is determined by how people obtain, possess, share, or surrender power and control. External relationships and one’s internal way of being may create a discrepancy between reality and self-perception. Reconciling this discrepancy occurs through present relationships and the use of either authenticity or facades. People are trustworthy, can understand and resolve their own issues, and can engage in self-directed growth and self-healing if aware and authentically involved in healthy relationships. Though description of man’s conflict is similar to Existentialism, Person-Centered Theory’s lexicon is infinitely more positive and uplifting: joy, creativity, and fulfillment. Carl Rogers is arguably most famous for the concept of “unconditional positive regard”—in three words, encapsulating the importance of safe space, trust, and relationship over all else (Corey, 2014, p. 169). Unconditional positive regard suspends judgment and argues acceptance is not approval. Thus, process, rather than product, is critical in how humans become or evolve. (Rogers, 1942; Rogers, 1951; Rogers, 1961; & Rogers, 1980)

*Gestalt Theory* (Perls, F., 1969a; Perls, F., 1969b; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951; Perls, L., 1976) focuses on process over product outcomes, as well. Human equilibrium may be disturbed through emergence of a need, a sensation, or an interest. Behavior is used to restore equilibrium through interpersonal contact and insight, dialogue and relationship. This is done in a hyperconscious way both internally and externally. Corey clarifies the Gestalt belief that humans are in internal, subconscious conflict between two entities struggling for power in

Externally, people negotiate between *figure* and *ground* in the *field*. Figure is what humans are consciously aware of. Ground includes aspects of human presentation or the environment that are often out of people’s awareness in the subconscious. The field is a dynamic system of inter-relationships that can only be experienced in the present here-and-now, not the abstract, so focusing on the past or future is a distracting and often a form of avoidance. Most people can only be fully present for short bits of time. Humans use distractions and interruptions to interrupt their presence. Yet, Gestalt Theory argues that changes in behavior occur by being present and attending to the obvious at the boundary between internal and external dimensions of the field. Concrete dimensions of being human are social relationships, self-regulation, capacity-building emotions, and awareness leading to greater choice and responsibility. The whole person is more than the sum of one’s parts. People make choices in negotiating figure and ground in the field, in the process of becoming. Consequences of not restoring equilibrium leads to unfinished business and emotional debris, manifesting in rage, resentment, hatred, pain, anxiety, grief, guilt, and abandonment, all of which can continue to clutter awareness and lead to self-defeat. (Perls, F., 1969a; Perls, F., 1969b; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951; & Perls, L., 1976)

*Behavior Theory* (Bandura, 1969; Bandura, 1997; Lazarus, 1989; Lazarus, 1997; Skinner, 1948; Skinner, 1953; & Skinner, 1971) and the determinants of behavior are a cause-and-effect
between observable, objective, environmental conditions (the external) and internal states of mind and motives. These determinants are the antecedents in the Behaviorist equation: A (antecedent) + B (behaviors) = C (consequences). Antecedents to behavior might include consequences of past behavior, social learning, observational learning, goal-setting, and the decision to honor or fight resistance. Understanding the role of antecedents in the A+B=C equation requires a hyperconscious understanding of oneself in the present tense, where concrete, current, observable determinants exist both internally and externally. People who are more product- than process-oriented will gravitate toward this theory. Humans are self-directed, self-organizing, proactive, self-reflective, and regulating beings. Consequences are concrete and observable and might include individual agency, self-efficacy, resiliency, warmth, empathy, authenticity, permissiveness, and acceptance (or their opposites). This theory applies a product/outcomes orientation to process. (Bandura, 1969; Bandura, 1997; Lazarus, 1989; Lazarus, 1997; Skinner, 1948; Skinner, 1953; & Skinner, 1971)

**Cognitive Behavior Theory (CBT).** Mind over matter. Emotions and beliefs determine behavior according to Cognitive Behavior Theory, advanced by Albert Ellis (1913-2007) and Aaron Temkin Beck (Beck, 1967; Beck, 1976; Ellis, 2002; Ellis, 2004a; & Ellis, 2004b). Humans evaluate and interpret reactions (our own and the reactions of others) to life’s situations. These evaluations and interpretations elicit emotions and cause people to generate beliefs. Humans are predisposed toward self-preservation, happiness, thinking and verbalizing, loving communion with others, growth and self-actualization. Sometimes people misread a situation and skew the evaluation and interpretation of the reaction. When this happens, humans can become self-destructive and fraught with avoidance of thought, procrastination, endless repetition of mistakes, superstition, intolerance, perfectionism, self-blame, and avoidance of self-
actualizing growth. In this theory, the subconscious and conscious cannot be separated. People can be negatively biased, with persistent automatic thoughts contrary to objective evidence. They may repeat early-indoctrinated irrational beliefs from the past, keeping dysfunctional attitudes alive and operative in the present. The dimensions of the human experience, according to CBT devotees include emotion, beliefs, and the potential for both rational and irrational thinking. Cognitive Behaviorists tweak the Behaviorist ABC equation: A (Activating Event) + B (Belief about the Event) \( \Rightarrow \) (leads to) C (Emotional Consequence). Distress, and there are several forms of distress (see Potential Consequences in Figure 2.5), is a disturbance in cognitive processing but these theorists argue if thinking changes, improvement can occur. For example, if the internal dialogue can change from “stubborn victim” to “tenacious survivor”, even when life disappoints, humans can still accept and move forward. (Beck, 1967; Beck, 1976; Ellis, 2002; Ellis, 2004a; & Ellis, 2004b)

William Glasser’s *Reality or Choice Theory* (Glasser, 1965; 1968; 1998; & 2001) is captured in the concept of “challenge by choice” for in this theory, choice determines fate. The belief is to change the choice is to change the consequence. Choices in human behavior are determined by three factors: connections to people, needs, and our Quality World. Relationships matter in this theory. What people want, do, how they evaluate the self, and how they plan to improve, are all bound by five governing, genetically-encoded needs. The needs are (1) survival or self-preservation; (2) love and belonging; (3) power or inner control; (4) freedom or independence; and (5) fun or enjoyment. The five genetically-encoded needs all motivate people, but the most important need of the five is love and belonging. This need, along with the other four, feeds the details of our Quality World, Glasser’s term for fictions that people craft from visions, wants, and dreams. The Quality World is motivational as it comprises specific
images of people, activities, events, beliefs, possessions, and situations. Choice allows humans to reconcile the Quality World with reality, thus this theory is rooted in the conscious control people have – more control that humans perceive. Inner control is critical in resolving discrepancies between what one says and the steps taken to bring about change. This theory is not measured by time or tense but a hyperconsciousness in the present. Consequences of human choice may include happiness in connecting with others, unhappiness and frustration resulting from unsatisfying relationships, difficulty with priorities, and –through behavior—satisfaction in closing the gap between wish and reality. (Glasser, 1965; 1968; 1998; & 2001)

All of the theories above were founded by White males from Western cultures (American or European). Most of them contain bias (using male-oriented constructs, proposing different paths, framing “normal” in dominant ways, assuming early-stage determinism, and attributing behavior to internal causes resulting in victim blaming). Connectedness and interdependence were virtually ignored in counseling theory development, until Feminist Theory. (Corey, 2014)

In Feminist philosophy (Enns, 2004; Worell & Remer, 2003), behavior is determined at the intersection of gender, social location, and power. A person’s social, cultural, and political contexts are defined through social relationships and history. A patriarchal system of multiple oppressions gives way to multiculturalism and social justice through strengths-based behavioral interventions. Insight, introspection, and self-awareness are springboards to change but this theory calls for change in the sense of social activism (not victim blaming and adjusting the self) through transparent partnerships. The conscious, subconscious, and unconscious are all intertwined but are secondary to a hyperconsciousness of context. This might be women giving away their power in relationships or enjoying membership in a privileged group. Regardless, deterministic social relationships and historical contexts deserve to be uncovered and addressed
or confronted, resolving the conflict between what has been taught as socially-acceptable and desirable and what is actually healthy. The dimensions of being human can be limited by institutional barriers and inequalities. Nevertheless, they are biopsychosocial and include identity development; self-concept; goals and aspirations; emotional well-being; the spiritual dimension; thinking, feeling, and behaving dimensions; subjectivity; and connectedness and interdependence. Feminist Theory can play out in outcomes like non-hierarchical structures, equal sharing of resources and power, empowerment, mutuality, self-acceptance, confidence, joy, and authenticity. Benefits might also be bias free work and social environments and feminization of the culture to enhance society to be more nurturing, intuitive, subjective, cooperative, and relational, through infusion of feminine values. These values include cooperation, altruism, and connectedness. Humans are not seen as flawed but their distress as both a means of communicating and coping with unjust patriarchal systems characterized by multiple oppressions. (Enns, 2004; Worell & Remer, 2003)

Feminist Theory makes a sound argument for collaboration, as all can benefit from “creating collaborative relationships at work and with significant others that are not based on a ‘power over’ model of relating” (Corey, 2014, p. 348).

The Post-modern approaches of Solution-Focused Brief Theory and Narrative Theory borrow from several other theories in crafting counseling practice in a new century. Although Narrative Theory is used more frequently in private practice than in schools, Solution-Focused Brief Theory is often both the strategy of choice and convenience for school counselors, practicing with little time and few resources.

Behavior is determined by hope, optimism, resiliency, self-directed goals, empowerment, and choice in Solution-Focused Brief Theory (DeJong & Berg, 2008; DeShazer, 1985; &
This theory relies heavily on dialogue and is, thus, social in nature. The conscious and subconscious are tightly linked in dialogue: talk about problems produces more problems; talk about change creates change. Humans produce what they talk about. This theory favors the present, the future, and what is possible over the past. People are seen as healthy and competent in constructing their own solutions; distress is an indication of a lost sense of direction or lost awareness of competency. Negativity begets negative consequences, while being positive creates more positivity in an individual’s world. (DeJong & Berg, 2008; DeShazer, 1985; & Murphy, 2008)

As an amalgam of theories, Solution-Focused Brief Theory has significant potential in schools, as it combines in balance both a focus on process and on solution-focused product outcomes. It is exactly that combination and balance that can blur boundaries and lead to collaboration between counselors and principals, fostering a more collaborative environment in schools. In order to move forward, however, a bridge must be built between the theories governing counseling practice and those that govern the leadership practices of school principals.

**Theoretical common ground between principals and counselors.** Here, only brief links and connections are made through thematic analysis of the counseling and leadership theories. These connections illustrate common ground between principals and counselors that may bear deeper examination in further studies.

One example, gender, is an obvious theme when juxtaposing counseling’s Feminist Theory alongside Sergiovanni’s Moral Leadership and Schwahn & Spady’s Total Leadership.

**Leadership theory and gender.** Sergiovanni used a gender-specific barometer in critiquing early leadership theorists: “Maslow and Herzberg didn’t study females, so they espoused motivational theories that had to do with achievement [outcomes] and competitiveness;
they didn’t think about caring and nurturing [processes in developing] relationships…

McClelland provided us with a male model of achievement that focused on internal criteria for excellence and individual success rather than on community building” (2007, p. xii). A male model of “hierarchical control is the antithesis of what is needed in schools for today and tomorrow… schools do not need heroic, charismatic, and take-charge leaders” but should be “guided by a community… work[ing] together to sustain a better future” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. vii).

Schwahn & Spady also employ a gender lexicon similar to Sergiovanni’s in moving forward by advocating “a shift from the individual as hero to the synergistic and collaborative power of teams” (2010, p. 11). The “feminine factor” has “changed every fabric of our society—business, politics, education, religion, marriage, and family relationships” (2010, p. 11). “Women represent a new, congenial, relationship-oriented approach to leadership that balances the command-and-control approach… they naturally get relationships, teaming, cooperation, and networking” (2010, p. 12).

Given American education’s historical origins and Joel Spring’s reference to European models of education emigrating to America but with the twist of a “pedagogical harem of a male principal and female teachers” (2011, p. 153), gender emerges as a theme in the evolution of the American education system. “Women [who define success and achievement through community and sharing] are underrepresented in principalships [and] are overrepresented in successful principalships” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. xii).

Counseling theory and gender. Similar to Sergiovanni’s critique, Corey argues that most of the historical and still-relevant counseling theories were founded by White males from Western (American or European) cultures and contain some bias. Although the social aspect of
humans has been attended to, connectedness and interdependence have been virtually ignored in the other theories. Corey mentions Jean Baker Miller (1928-2006) and a few contemporaries, however “no single individual can be identified as the founder of [the Feminist] approach, reflecting a central theme of feminist collaboration” (2014, p. 331).

*Feminist Theory* rails against patriarchal systems, multiple oppressions, deterministic historical contexts, and institutional barriers and inequities which often limit self-definition and well-being. This theory looks toward social reconstruction through insight, introspection, and self-awareness at the micro-level to generate multiculturalism, social justice, non-hierarchical structures, and equal sharing of resources and power at the macro-level. A journey such as this would circle back to individual empowerment, mutuality, self-acceptance, self-confidence, joy, and authenticity. Feminist Theory frames the social reconstruction journey through bias-free work and social environments and feminization of the culture to enhance society to be more nurturing, intuitive, subjective, cooperative, and relational, through infusion of feminine values (cooperation, altruism, and connectedness) (Enns, 2004; Worell & Remer, 2003). Given that the American School Counselor Association membership is 84% female and 16% male (S. Wicks, personal communication, March 3, 2016). Women being overrepresented in school counseling roles further warrants the claim that, moving forward, collaboration between principals and counselors can lead to more successful schools.

**Addressing barriers: Counselor strategies, strengths, and skills.** Principals and counselors have theoretical foundations that both foster and encourage collaboration with others. This section of the literature review focuses on the approaches and actions that school counselors, armed with the theories that frame both their professional preparation and their
approach to their professional practice, can take to address perceived barriers between themselves and their building principals.

As previously discussed, counselors are well versed and nuanced in their ability to assess relationships. A deep understanding of counseling theories contributes to the mindsets that counselors use to assess barriers to success. These mindsets help the counselor discern the approach to be used to most effectively build relationships in context. Counseling skills are the concrete tools in the counselor’s metaphorical tool belt that can be used to blur or even break barriers. Counseling theories are instrumental to counselor formation and development throughout their professional preparation. Counselors take multiple courses on the theories, engage in problem-solving experiences where the strategies embedded in each theory are modeled, practiced, critiqued, and then further practiced in both individual and group settings before counselors are certified. Unlike the brief overview of leadership theory that is provided in principal preparation, for counselors, each theory is painstakingly unpacked, examined, and applied to various counseling scenarios both in laboratory and real settings and evaluated and honed before counselors are released into independent professional practice. Furthermore, consultation in application of the theories (and the strategies embedded therein) throughout one’s career is strongly encouraged in counselor preparation to ensure that each counselor is working in collaboration to apply the theories accurately and with fidelity.

What follows is a brief discussion of counseling theories drawing out the approaches (ways of being) and the actions (ways of doing) that frame the potential for counselors to become powerful collaborators who not only can meet principals half way, but who can actually build collaborative relationships using their strengths and skills. Each theory, along with illustrative examples using the specific theoretical approach and its strategic actions are discussed in turn.
Psychoanalytic Theory

In this theory, the past and the subconscious prevail. People address four life stages: (1) freedom; (2) care for others; (3) intimate relationships; (4) generative legacy. People recreate their past experiences in order to resolve conflicts or unfinished business. Depending upon how they master the four stages and how they resolve unfinished business, people experience either pride or anxiety.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselor Strengths: Ways of Being The Approach</th>
<th>Counselor Skills: Ways of Doing The Actions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Know that our own conflicts may be triggered</td>
<td>• Strengthen the role of reality over instinctual cravings and irrational guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be wary of unconscious “triggers”, transference and countertransference; we all project.</td>
<td>• Integrate awareness of past situations into the present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand traces of childhood needs and traumas may never be erased</td>
<td>• Take steps to reduce defensiveness and explore resistance (ideas, attitudes, feelings, or actions that block improvement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness of timing and readiness and their importance in the process</td>
<td>• Use familiarity and consistency as common ground to scaffold awareness of resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The things we do not talk about are just as significant as the things we discuss.</td>
<td>• Be consistent in expected routines and climate and show visible effort to minimize departures from consistency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Set an intentional climate that is: Safe, non-judgmental, consistent, patient, promoting independence and healthy attachment</td>
<td>• Respectfully identify attraction, anger, competition, avoidance by clarifying, translating, and collaborating on interpretations</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Respect defensiveness as a protection against anxiety and fear of change</td>
<td>• Ask about dreams, visions, and reconcile the present</td>
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Figure 2.4: Counselor Approaches & Actions Framed by Psychoanalytic Theory

In Psychoanalytic Theory (Freud, 1949; Erikson, 1963; & Jung, 1961), the past and the subconscious prevail and people recreate their past experiences in order to address the four life stages and resolve unfinished business. The resolution of unfinished business results in either pride or anxiety. Counselors who understand that past conflicts, traumas, and needs may never be erased might behave with non-judgmental patience toward principals as, for both principals and counselors, the past may be triggered and projected or transferred. Thus an awareness of timing, readiness, the role of the past, and the ability to consider that things unspoken are just as significant as those discussed provides the counselor with the strength to set an intentionally safe and consistent climate for the principal.

To enhance collaboration, the counselor can apply strategic skills rooted in Psychoanalytic Theory. The theory has an emphatic focus on the unconscious and subconscious.
This suggests that the counselor direct focus back to the present reality when moments of irrational instinct appear in order to guide both halves of the team to consciously address each other. In addition, Psychoanalytic Theory reminds us that respectfully shining the spotlight on connections between past relationships and current ones is an important first step to explore resistance and identify anger, attraction, competition, and avoidance, all of which strengthen barriers. Counselors should consider actions such as clarifying, translating, and collaborating on interpretations – when applied under conditions of familiarity and consistency – in order to reduce defensiveness. Specifically, counselors can ask about principals’ dreams, visions, and ideas to reconcile the present with what may be in the future, and in doing so, the counselor evidences intent to partner with the principal. (Freud, 1949; Erikson, 1963; & Jung, 1961)
Adlerian Theory

The whole person and social learning are critical components of Adlerian Theory. People have agency and are constructivist creators and creations in their own lives. Humans are both purposeful and goal-directed, yet social, so imagined life goals are shaped by individual process and perception (self- and others’ perceptions). Three Universal Life Tasks are highly motivational: (1) building friendships (social); (2) establishing intimacy (love-marriage); (3) contributing to society (occupational) and people are always in process in consciously accomplishing these tasks.

Counselor Strengths: Ways of Being
The Approach

- Seek to understand the principals’ purpose and the goals toward which he/she is working
- Knowing, understanding, and respecting the principal’s guiding self-ideal or interpretation of perfection (vision) can provide insight into current truths, behaviors, and interpretations – it is the lens through which all is seen.
- Understand agency: humans are all actors, creators, and artists, building their personalities around set goals.
- Perception is reality.
- Seek to understand people within their system (the whole person).
- Assume life competence
- Understand the principal’s goals
- Discouraged people do not act in line with social interest. The counselor should maximize his/her social impact through positive reinforcement.

Counselor Skills: Ways of Doing
The Actions

- Ask about the principal’s vision for the school and his/her life.
- What role might birth order play in the counselor-principal dynamic? Ask questions about childhood/family
- Provide strong encouragement.
- Encourage the view of equality and universality among people. Point out important contributions being made to society, rather than individualistic successes.
- Wonder aloud to encourage insight and self-understanding.
- Encourage everyone to act as if they are already the people they want to be.
- Respectfully challenge others to modify goals as a matter of choice.
- Other techniques: immediacy, humor, advice, silence, paradoxical intention, spitting in one’s soup, catching oneself, externalization, reauthoring, avoiding the traps, confrontation, use of stories/fables/metaphor, task setting, and commitment

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Figure 2.5: Counselor Approaches & Actions Framed by Adlerian Theory

Approaches inherent in Adlerian Theory (Adler, 1958; Adler, 1959; Adler, 1964; & Adler, 1978), that counselors may use include the counselor’s assumption of life competence in the principal, which is congruent with the constructivist philosophy of agency. When counselors know, understand, and respect principals’ guiding self-ideal or vision, they employ a strategic lens through which they may more accurately be able to perceive the principal’s behavior. When counselors seek to understand the whole principal, within the principals’ system, their perception becomes more closely reconciled to reality. Counselors can help their principals also see the
system by asking questions about their principal’s vision and future goals, providing strong encouragement in order to amplify the social bond, and spotlighting universality and equality. The counselor may employ modeling skills like wondering aloud to encourage insight and self-understanding, leading others to act as if they are already the people they want to be, and challenging others to modify goals as a matter of choice. Clearly, counselors have an abundance of Adlerian action strategies that could yield improvement in the counselor-principal relationship, if applied. (Adler, 1958; Adler, 1959; Adler, 1964; & Adler, 1978)

### Existential Theory

More philosophical approach than traditional theory, Existentialism asks deep questions about meaning, love, life, and creativity in order to reconcile limitations and the tragic dimensions of being human with the freedom, possibilities, and opportunities of human existence. Six propositions provide a framework foundation for Existentialism: (1) the capacity for self-awareness; (2) freedom and responsibility; (3) identity and relationship to others; (4) the search for meaning; (5) anxiety as a life condition; (6) death as a limit. The ultimate goal of Existential work is living an authentic life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselor Strengths: Ways of Being The Approach</th>
<th>Counselor Skills: Ways of Doing The Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Belief in agency and competence in individuals</td>
<td>• Focus on choice; help the principal reclaim and re-own his/her life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus on presence and authenticity (counselor’s own and that of others)</td>
<td>• Ask questions that test limitations and boundaries to encourage expansion; what if?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Think big; encourage expansion</td>
<td>• Collective accountability is powerful: when it seems as though the principal is avoiding responsibility or blaming others, ask, “How could we have prevented this?” or “How did we contribute to this?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Openness and awareness</td>
<td>• Offer other options: many times people get mired in the problem and are too stuck to generate alternate solutions. Counselor creativity can push others to see possibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counselors create their own authentic ways of being attuned to the principal with the vision of being on the journey together.</td>
<td>• Model and encourage authenticity in the present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Strive to understand the subjective world of another person.</td>
<td>• Assist in identifying blocks to presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Shy away from judgment: no labels</td>
<td>• Challenge others to claim responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Focus on communication skills to facilitate description, understanding, and exploration</td>
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*Figure 2.6*: Counselor Approaches & Actions Framed by Existential Theory

More of a philosophical approach than a traditional theory, Existentialism (Frankl, 1963; May, 1950; May, 1953; May, 1983; & Sartre, 1971) asks deep questions about meaning, love,
life, and creativity in order to reconcile limitations—the tragic dimensions of being human—with the freedom, possibilities, and opportunities of human existence. Six propositions provide a foundation for Existentialism: (1) the capacity for self-awareness; (2) freedom and responsibility; (3) identity and relationship to others; (4) the search for meaning; (5) anxiety as a life condition; (6) death as a limit. The ultimate goal of Existential work is living an authentic life. (Frankl, 1963; May, 1950; May, 1953; May, 1983; & Sartre, 1971)

Existential counselors employ approaches with students that, when employed with building principals, offer utility for bridge-building efforts to support the counselor-principal partnership. Counselor beliefs could generate widespread capacity in principals (and others). For example, the belief in the competence of individuals supports agency and the ability to suspend judgment. The belief in expansion grows openness, awareness, and authenticity. The belief in the power of communication skills facilitates understanding of goals, vision, and the subjective world of another. Counselor beliefs can enable an approach of attunement to the collaborative journey through decision-making, actions, and behavior in the school setting. (Frankl, 1963; May, 1950; May, 1953; May, 1983; & Sartre, 1971)

Based on the Existential mindset or approach, counselors can help principals reclaim and re-own life through decisions, responsibility, and possibilities. Their modeling of accountability can set the stage for collective accountability in school settings. Counselors can ask questions that test boundaries and limitations and create a climate of abundant creativity, rather than a climate of scarcity and being stuck, so that other options may be considered. Finally, but most importantly in Existential thought, acting authentically in the present (including identifying blocks to true presence and authenticity) can blur boundaries. Authentic action can certainly be challenging, but an Existential approach encourages trust and safety in a judgment-free space, to
authentically generate and strengthen trust. (Frankl, 1963; May, 1950; May, 1953; May, 1983; & Sartre, 1971)

### Person-Centered Theory

Person-Centered theorists believe in people and their potential for self-understanding and growth. Unconditional positive regard and the deep belief that acceptance is not approval is the anchor of this theory. Thus, counselors provide a safe space for authentic dialogue without judgment. Power is currency to be obtained, possessed, shared, or surrendered but people are seen as allies, not opponents. Positive change occurs socially in relationship with others. Authenticity wins over facades and acceptance bridges the gap between self-perception and reality.

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<th>Counselor Strengths: Ways of Being The Approach</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Focus on strengths and resources, not deficits</td>
<td>• Validate</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Honor each person’s inherent power</td>
<td>• Reflect and clarify: avoid advice,</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understanding others’ subjective, internal perspective</td>
<td>suggestion, direction, persuasion, teaching,</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Be open and trusting</td>
<td>diagnosis, and interpretation as they</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Authentic empathy for the principal’s work and world; genuine, non-judgmental acceptance</td>
<td>suggest inequality and power imbalance</td>
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<td>• Growth attitude and constructive belief systems</td>
<td>• Ask, “Have you considered…?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Understand when others are empowered, they can use their power for transformation (personal and social improvement)</td>
<td>• Communicate realness, support, caring, and non-judgmental understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Keep one goal in mind: to promote less defensive and more open, pro-social behavior</td>
<td>• Use a discovery-oriented approach where, through inquiry, the counselor excavates others’ experiences</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Over-emphasis on professionalism can be a boundary: be present and accessible to focus on immediate experience</td>
<td>• Intentionally build, define, and clarify principal goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Think equality and fellow travelers on a shared journey</td>
<td>• Ask pointed questions regarding resources and support needed to achieve individual goals: “What do you need?” or “How can I help?”</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Earn the trust to challenge constructively</td>
<td>• Ground people who may be in crisis by hearing and understanding them – calm them in the midst of turmoil – this enables them to think more clearly and make better decisions</td>
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**Figure 2.7: Counselor Approaches & Actions Framed by Person-Centered Theory**

Counselors begin to use a Person-Centered (Rogers, 1942; Rogers, 1951; Rogers, 1961; & Rogers, 1980) approach with their principal through the application of unconditional positive regard. Even though a counselor may not approve of a principal’s behavior, the counselor’s acceptance of that behavior along with an unflagging regard for the principal as a person, provides a safe environment to positively promote strengths, resiliency, resources, and power.
Understanding that when principals feel empowered, rather than judged, that power can be used for transformation would allow counselors to bypass egos and other boundaries created by position and title. Counselors who clearly comprehend transformation and the stages of change can transform their role with their principal. For example, a principal in the pre-contemplative stage of change might benefit from a counselor adopting the role of a nurturing parent. Other counselor roles, such as Socratic teacher, experienced coach, or consultant have their place in the process of change, too, depending upon the person, situation, and stage of change. By adopting the critical mindset of fellow travelers on the journey, the counselor can use actionable strategies like validating, reflecting, questioning, excavating, grounding, and clarifying, all of which set the stage for counselors to earn trust in order to challenge their principal constructively. (Rogers, 1942; 1951; 1961; & 1980)
Aristotle’s words, “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts”, characterizes this theory. That which humans are aware of in figure and ground and those things falling above or beneath awareness in the field are all potentially significant. Holistic New Age ideas like the whole, the zeitgeist, the universe, God or the divine, “The Now”, and infinity capture the concept of the Gestalt. Humans are never done; they are constantly becoming. Distress occurs with the emergence of a need, interest, or sensation. The best work is done at the boundary between the person and the environment in restoring equilibrium.

Counselor Strengths: Ways of Being

The Approach

- Authentic leaders need authentic contact; model and breed authenticity
- Interact without losing individuality (zest, imagination, creativity)
- Principals have been conditioned to work hard to maintain emotional control. Meet them where they are
- Focus on the Now; suspend preconceived ideas, assumptions, interpretations
- Understand that boundaries serve two purposes: to connect and to separate
- Notice when things are incongruent
- Counselors should be aware of their own projections: in some cultures, it is considered highly inappropriate to express any negative feelings toward a parent. Do counselors have this block with their principals?
- Attend to the obvious
- The relationship is important to both counselor and principal; it should be invented collaboratively
- Be present, aware of one’s own needs, willing to be non-defensive and revealing
- Have courage
- Be kind
- Be the alert counselor: story telling (flesh out a flash), and metaphors (hidden clues) are powerful

Counselor Skills: Ways of Doing

The Actions

- Encourage principals to be (not “should be”)
- Attend to the obvious; make the Now transparent; observe what is happening but do not make things happen; just go with it
- Do not force or confront; no harsh conflict
- When an impasse occurs, accompany without rescuing or frustrating; journey with
- When the past comes up, bring it more fully into the present; directly process connections to the present
- Move the principal from environmental support (extrinsic) to self-support (intrinsic)
- Assist in reintegrating the disowned parts of one’s personality by framing vulnerability as a strength or resiliency factor
- Provide disclosure and feedback in gentle, respectful ways
- Language is important: reframe “it” into “you” or “I” messages; gently reframe questions into statements of assumed responsibility
- Tactfully call out ambivalent qualifiers (I guess, suppose, maybe)
- Consciously substitute “won’t” for “can’t” to own and accept personal power
- Invite reflection: “How you block your strengths”
- Encourage deeper reflection: “Stay with the feeling….”
- Dreamwork: ask “What is your vision?” or “How would you script the future?”

Counselors who argue that strength paradoxically lies in vulnerability will gravitate toward this theory as a tool to improve relationships with their principals. Gestalt Theory (Perls, F., 1969a; Perls, F., 1969b; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951; & Perls, L., 1976) is rooted in authenticity and individuality but it is arguably the most polite of the theories, stressing kindness,
gentleness, tact, courage, and a shying away from bald-faced confrontation of incongruencies, favoring quiet truth instead. Counselors are urged to meet principals where they are and keep the focus on present boundaries as the function of boundaries is to both connect and separate. A concerted awareness of the obvious in collaboratively building the relationship is most powerful as the first step toward action characterized by flexibility and tact. Actions include attending, reframing, modeling, encouraging, reflecting, accompanying, processing connections, re-integrating instead of compartmentalizing, story-telling, metaphor, disclosure, and feedback.

(Perls, F., 1969a; Perls, F., 1969b; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951; & Perls, L., 1976)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Behavior Theory</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavior Theory applies scientific and mathematical principals to human decisions and actions in the equation A (antecedent) + B (behavior) = C (consequences). In cause-and-effect scientific manner, the present, conscious, observable characteristics of the human condition trump all that is internal or unseen. Individual agency, self-efficacy, and resiliency matter. Relationships and feelings are second to antecedents and consequences in determining behavior.</td>
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<th><strong>Counselor Skills: Ways of Doing</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Approach</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Actions</strong></td>
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</table>

- People can develop effective social skills after they are in contact with other people who effectively model interpersonal skills.
- Consider how counselor behaviors are positively or negatively reinforced by the principal.
- Consider how principal behaviors are reinforced.
- People are both producer and product of environment.
- Intentionally assume an active not passive role; this is an action-oriented approach.
- Stay present; be mindful of the A + B = C equation.
- Increase personal choice.
- Create new conditions for learning.
- Transparency and courage are required.
- Be careful not to see what is expected; be active, directive, and function as consultant/problem-solver based on empirical evidence.
- Flexible and versatile; be prepared to change the interaction cadence depending upon reinforcement.

- Modeling and finding other good leader-mentors is important.
- Ask questions or pose challenges to modify thoughts to change behaviors.
- Seek to alter external factors that lead to behaviors so that new behaviors emerge.
- Give control over and provide more response options.
- State goals in concrete, objective, observable terms.
- Check in on demonstrated effectiveness (consequences): “What’s working for you?” and “What’s not?” Ask the hard assessment questions; always speak in the language of assessment.
- Provide data to increase awareness.
- Operationally define internal processes by thinking aloud.
- Pay close attention, summarize, reflect, clarify, ask open-ended questions for deeper understanding and to promote awareness.

| **Figure 2.9:** Counselor Approaches & Actions Framed by Behavior Theory |
Some counselors adopt a passive role when they enter their principal’s office with a problem, keep their idea of a solution secret, and then experience disappointment when the principal makes a decision that differs from what they expected or desired. Behavior Theory (Bandura, 1969; Bandura, 1997; Lazarus, 1989; Lazarus, 1997; Skinner, 1948; Skinner, 1953; & Skinner, 1971) calls for the counselor to actively enter the principal’s office with transparency, flexibility, and openness about a few shared acceptable solutions. The latter approach requires courage and the relinquishing of some control. The potential benefits to principal partnership, however, far outweigh the risk. When it goes well (i.e. the consequence is positive), the counselor may see the principal create a new antecedent as he or she enters the counselor’s office in search of a trusted thought partner in rounding out shared solutions to the next problem. (Bandura, 1969; 1997; Lazarus, 1989; 1997; Skinner, 1948; 1953; & 1971)
Cognitive Behavior Theory (CBT)

Mind over matter. Humans have the ability to change thoughts and thus change behaviors. Similar to Behavior Theory but without the staunch scientific stance, CBT emphasizes often-unseen beliefs over concrete, visible behavior. So the $A + B = C$ equation comes to represent activating events, beliefs, and emotional consequences. One version of CBT is Rational-Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT). This version argues people contribute to their own dissonance between interpretations and reality through irrational thinking. Negative thoughts persist, even contrary to objective evidence. Rational thinking decreases the dissonance. Self-acceptance and changing the internal dialogue plays a role.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Approach</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Actions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Understand each person is not the center of the universe; counselors should stop self-blame and fully and unconditionally accept themselves. *</td>
<td>* Actively monitor self-talk and work on cognitive restructuring; identify maladaptive self-talk and substitute adaptive for negative self-talk. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Others are not interested in judging. *</td>
<td>* Rescript self-defeating sentences: “That was then; this is now. You have the power to re-script the play of your life.” *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Humans have a strong tendency no only to rate their acts and behaviors but to rate themselves as a total person on the basis of performance. These ratings constitute a main source of emotional disturbance. *</td>
<td>* Identify and dispute irrational beliefs. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Be alert to catastrophizing *</td>
<td>* Squelch venting; it is not productive. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Realize dogmatic “shoulds”, “musts”, “ought tos” and other demands and commands are destructive; ban this language. *</td>
<td>* Focus on thinking and acting rather than expressing feelings. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Visualize success *</td>
<td>* Actively challenge cognitions to produce desired changes in affect and behavior. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Breed unconditional self acceptance (USA) and unconditional other acceptance *</td>
<td>* Teach strategies for straight thinking. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Foster self-enhancing not self-defeating beliefs *</td>
<td>* Confront and challenge. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Focus on the present here-and-now *</td>
<td>* Encourage less emotionally-reactive behavior and more cognitive behavior. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* A warm relationship is not required; trust is. An egalitarian relationship may work better. *</td>
<td>* Defining and accomplishing tasks combats self-criticism and feelings of overwhelm and perfectionism. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Open, direct communication *</td>
<td>* Attack shame and self-fulfilling prophecy. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Assertiveness skills are helpful. *</td>
<td>* Use humor. *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Target goals *</td>
<td>* In the ABC Framework, reframe B (beliefs) by adding a “D”: dispute the belief. *</td>
</tr>
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| Figure 2.10: Counselor Approaches & Actions Framed by Cognitive Behavior Theory |

Just as school counselors reassure teens that everyone is actually not looking at them (arguing each teen is too consumed with him or herself to have the time or energy to focus outward), a strong approach for counselors to take with principals is the approach that the
principal is not actually the center of the universe, others are not judging the principal, and there is no room for language that includes “musts” or “shoulds”. According to Cognitive Behavior Theory (Beck, 1967; Beck, 1976; Ellis, 2002; Ellis, 2004a; & Ellis, 2004b), the positive power of visualizing success can be employed to combat negativity. This theory emphasizes often-unseen beliefs over concrete, visible behavior. So the A + B = C equation comes to represent activating events, beliefs, and emotional consequences. Counselors may add a collective “D” to the ABC Framework: detect the faulty, negative belief; debate whether it is in fact useful; and apply discriminating choices in discerning beliefs. Assertively calling people out or blowing the whistle when someone expresses negativity requires a safe environment of trust. This is an important first step in re-scripting the relationship between the counselor and the principal. Taking action to squelch negative venting, attack shame, and discredit self-fulfilling prophecy can be done with a focus on cognitive, rational, objective goals and outcomes or, alternatively, humor. This can be challenging but empowering for both the counselor and the principal. Another option for action is to change behavior first, in order to change thinking – it is a reversal of action steps, however, the phrase “Fake it ‘til you feel it!” indicates that it may yield success. (Beck, 1967; Beck, 1976; Ellis, 2002; Ellis, 2004a; & Ellis, 2004b)
Reality Theory or Choice Theory

Reality Theory is one of the more concrete ways of encouraging humans to reconcile their vision or “Quality World” with reality. Because this theory is based on the premise that people have a great deal more control than they perceive, strategies under this theory work to amplify agency and power (inner control) in humans. Five, genetically encoded needs motivate humans: (1) survival (self-preservation); (2) love and belonging; (3) power (inner control); (4) freedom (independence); and (5) fun (enjoyment). Of the five, love and belonging is the primary human need showing a congruence with social learning. This theory is often referred to as Choice Theory: people choose to shape their reality. Behavior is purposeful and designed to close the gap between what humans have and what they want.

### Counselor Strengths: Ways of Being

**The Approach**
- Find out about the Quality World of the principal and be someone in it.
- Be in the “lifeboat”; be on the principal’s “side” as a trusting relationship is critical.
- Warmth, sincerity, congruence, understanding, acceptance, concern, respect for the principal, openness, and the willingness to be challenged.
- Create a climate: use attending behavior, listen, suspend judgment, do the unexpected, use humor appropriately, be yourself as a counselor, listen for metaphors and themes in self-expression, focus, allow silence, allow consequences.
- Manifest a fair, friendly, firm, trusting environment.
- Be an ethical practitioner.
- Avoid ineffective behaviors: complaining, blaming, criticizing.
- Avoid arguing, attacking, accusing, demeaning, bossing, coercing, encouraging excuses, holding grudges, instilling fear, and giving up.
- Be yourself – authentically.
- Reject transference; though the past may have contributed to the current problem, the past is never the problem.
- Live and plan in the present with a focus on the future.
- Mindset: people do not have problems, they just have solutions that have not worked yet.
- Have hope, despite others’ choices.

### Counselor Skills: Ways of Doing

**The Actions**
- Ask about the picture album or Quality World of principals to glean the vision for the future (especially if the principal is not transparent about vision and expectations).
- Engage in facilitative self-disclosure to model open authenticity.
- Summarize.
- Provide guidance toward more effective choices in dealing with others.
- Deflect when there appears to be blaming or fault-finding; ask how effective the other person’s choices are.
- Focus on the self as the only person each of us can control. Focus principal agency: “What could you have done differently?”
- Deflect symptom-talk as it distracts from the reality of unsatisfying present relationships.
- Mildly confront with care.
- Reframe diagnostic categories and negative behavior (this is the search for more effective solutions than the ones previously attempted).
- Ask, “How’s that working for you?” or “Is what you are choosing to do getting you what you really want and need?”
- Challenge others to examine actions; evaluate behavioral direction, specific actions, perceptions, wants, level of commitment, possibilities, and action plans.
- Spotlight the difference between what is said and what is done.
- Find ways to show evidence of hope.

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**Figure 2.11:** Counselor Approaches & Actions Framed by Reality or Choice Theory

“If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always gotten.” Glasser (1965; 1968; 1998; & 2001) argues that Reality or Choice Theory holds promise in the agency or capacity to change one’s choices in order to change one’s life. Counselors poised for success.
with their principal have accomplished two goals: understanding the Quality World of the principal and creating a safe and trusting climate between principal and counselor. It is in this context that the counselor is able to challenge and confront when principal choices do not reconcile with articulated goals. This is most effective when the counselor has engaged in authentic disclosure, as well, because an illuminated gap between idealized goals and actions in reality can make principals feel vulnerable. When the counselor follows the confronting challenge with hope, the counselor employs a powerful tool in the service of the self-efficacy of both the counselor and the principal. (Glasser, 1965; Glasser, 1968; Glasser, 1998; & Glasser, 2001)
Feminist Theory evolved as a response to centuries of patriarchal, hierarchical models and how they’ve shaped society and members of it (both men and women) through multiple oppressions. Individual psychological distress is not seen as a human flaw, but as a signal that change is necessary in social, cultural, and political contexts. The assumption that society would benefit from feminization and inclusion of several feminine qualities to become more nurturing, intuitive, subjective, cooperative, altruistic, and connected provides a foundation for this theory and work with individuals.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Approach</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Actions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intention to uncover and confront deterministic social relationships and historical contexts</td>
<td>• Encouraging insights, introspection, and self-awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Awareness of institutional barriers</td>
<td>• Reframe victim-blaming terms into social activism; calling out oppressions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Biopsychosocial awareness of multiple human dimensions like spiritual, thinking (cognitive), feeling (emotive), and behaving</td>
<td>• Ask critical questions regarding women giving up their power or enjoying privileged status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Advocacy for victims and willingness to address the influence of society on individuals</td>
<td>• Spotlight the discrepancy between what is taught as socially-acceptable and desirable and what is actually healthy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perspective of distress as a red flag for systems change, not individual change</td>
<td>• Focus on identity development, self-concept, goals and aspirations, emotional well-being, subjectivity, and connectedness and interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Nurturing</td>
<td>• Address multiple dimensions of the human experience: spiritual, thinking, feeling, behaving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intuitive</td>
<td>• Modeling non-hierarchical structures, equal sharing of resources and power, and empowerment of women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Subjective</td>
<td>• Partnership and mutuality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Cooperative</td>
<td>• Tailor interventions to strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relational</td>
<td>• Power analysis: Respectfully questioning authority and doubting experts to confront stereotypes of power and advocate for diverse ways of knowing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Never take a neutral stance; life is value-oriented</td>
<td>• Empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Valuing cooperation, altruism, and connectedness and intending to infuse the culture with these values</td>
<td>• Self-disclosure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lifespan assessment to address an embedded context</td>
<td>• Transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We are all experts of our own lives.</td>
<td>• Gender-role analysis and intervention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Insight, introspection, and self-awareness beget action which begets empowerment, self-acceptance, self-confidence, joy, and authenticity.</td>
<td>• Bibliotherapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assertiveness training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reframing concepts and relabeling self or behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Social action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasize and evidence power-with models instead of power-over models</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 2.12: Counselor Approaches & Actions Framed by Feminist Theory*
Intentionally collaborative in nature, Feminist Theory (Enns, 2004; Worell & Remer, 2003) advocates for best-case outcomes in schools like non-hierarchical structures (a flattening of the Organizational Chart), equal sharing of resources and power, empowerment, mutuality, self-acceptance, confidence, joy, and authenticity. This theory is especially relevant in principal circles when we know that “women … are underrepresented in principalships [and] are overrepresented in successful principalships” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. xii) and that the American School Counselor Association membership is 84% female and 16% male (S. Wicks, personal communication, March 3, 2016). Given the statistics about the high number of male principals and the high number of female counselors, this is arguably the trickiest theory to implement in approach and action as it makes gender matter in the implementation of strategies. An amalgam of other theories, Feminist Theory draws from an extensive repertoire of strategies, strengths, and skills to challenge patriarchal mindsets that can occur at a multitude of levels and in subtle and sophisticated ways. For example, the counselor may verbally notice and challenge the principal when a power-over, rather than power-with, stance is adopted. The counselor may point out or compliment the subjective contributions of female members of the principal’s sphere, specifically noting positive feminine attributes such as nurturing, intuitive, cooperative, and relational strengths in others. Social action (hosting a women’s leadership conference for students is one example) provides an opportunity for bibliotherapy and group work if the principal and counselor are learning alongside the students. The stereotypical role of the principal (firm “bad cop”) and that of the counselor (empathic “good cop”) in disciplining students may also be an opportunity for divergent strengths to be noticed, employed, and appreciated. (Enns, 2004; Worell & Remer, 2003)
Solution-Focused Brief Theory

Most expeditious for school counselors and perhaps most efficient for principals, this theory is based on the premise of limitations in time and energy. The hallmark of Solution-Focused Brief Theory lies in the power of human capacity through positive thought creating positive outcomes (while focus on problems begets negativity and more problems). People in crisis have just lost their sense of direction or awareness of their competencies. Thus, this strengths-based model promotes creativity and resiliency when optimism, hope, goals, and self-empowerment are applied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselor Strengths: Ways of Being The Approach</th>
<th>Counselor Skills: Ways of Doing The Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Assume the intention and capability of behaving effectively</td>
<td>• Goals: concentrate on small, realistic, positive, achievable changes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mutual respect and affirmation to allow principals to author their own stories</td>
<td>• Change the viewing, the doing, or both, through tapping strengths and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Patience: allow the story of the problem to be told</td>
<td>• Examine another side of the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No problem is constant; change is inevitable</td>
<td>• Pay attention to the exceptions in the problem patterns; “When was there a different outcome?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intend to act so that solution momentum outpaces problem momentum</td>
<td>• Identify what is working; encourage replication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adopt a cooperative stance; when cooperation exists, resistance does not occur. Be curious, interested, engaging, encouraging</td>
<td>• Experiment with “What if?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Avoid the stance of the expert; conversations should be cooperative and empowering</td>
<td>• Find out what people want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be clear; lack of clarity can result in rifts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask scaling questions: “On a scale of one to ten…” or the miracle question: “If a miracle happened and the problem were solved overnight, how would you know? What would be different?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sandwich-approach feedback: compliments, bridge of rationale, then suggesting tasks</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Paradoxically, Solution-Focused Brief Counseling (DeJong & Berg, 2008; DeShazer, 1985; Murphy, 2008) assures us that the limitations of time can be an asset in motivating counselors and principals to generate creative solutions to problems. If talk about problems produces more problems, a counselor who approaches a principal with thought-through potential solutions to problems appears capable, positive, and effective. Conversely, counselors who approach principals in a manner of venting, or dumping problems at the feet of the principals for solving appear needy, demanding, and hardly a liaison in leadership. A solution-focused approach builds on the mutual respect of a thought-partner in leadership. Empowerment from
small, realistic, positive, achievable improvements engenders trust and cooperative partnership between the counselor and the principal. Time-strapped professional educators may appreciate the strategies in this theory as they are built on assumed capacity for effectiveness. (DeJong & Berg, 2008; DeShazer, 1985; Murphy, 2008)

2.5 Conclusion

The theme of collaborative practice emerges in every aspect of the literature exploring the work and development of principals and counselors. The common-ground aspects of these professionals: beliefs, school climate, school culture, self-efficacy, and formation and development, hold promise for collaboration between principals and counselors. Even in those aspects that illustrate where counselors and principals diverge from one another (power and influence, standards, history, and theories) the clarion call for collaboration rings no less clearly. What emerges from this review is the conclusion that theoretical foundations that both foster and encourage collaboration with others exist for both professions.

Counselors in particular, through their unique formation are equipped with skills and ways of being that make them natural collaborators. It is through counseling theory that the concrete tools to blur the boundaries and reduce barriers between counselors and principals lie. “Since schools are organizations in need of serious reform, if organizational theories on workplace climates can help scholars understand how to improve school work environments, then it appears to be a viable case in which to apply these theories” (Price, 2011, p. 68). Thus, this study examines the use of counseling theory to inform how school counselors can partner better with school principals.
Chapter 3: Designs for Action

3.1 Introduction

Social Reproduction Theory (Adams, et al., 2010) tells us that schools have the crucial responsibility of shaping society by reproducing and perpetuating culture. The actions schools take result in product outcomes. Both outcomes and the processes that schools use to yield the outcomes are equally important. If leaders are truly “social architects who create a ‘social space’ that enhances or inhibits [organizational] effectiveness” (Block, 1993, p. 47), it then follows that school leadership should foster collective collaboration, the social space must be –architect-like— intentionally and systematically addressed and not left to accident. Intentional and systematic leadership is comprised of a “rich understanding” of the why and how (Spillane, et al., 2004, p. 8). The approach of using habits of the heart and the action of building relational trust through teams become especially relevant in framing not just what must be done by why and how leaders should do it. Opportunities abound for teaming in schools but the literature is replete with potential connections between two especially leveraging teammates: principals and counselors. Although barriers to collaboration exist between principals and counselors (Finkelstein, 2009), obstacles are often opportunities in disguise if the right tools are brought to bear on them. In fact, Perls (1969a) argues that boundaries serve two purposes: to both connect and separate. It is valuable work applying the right tools at the boundaries between principals and counselors that may yield the strongest relationships. Counselors have sophisticated tools in their arsenal: their minds, beliefs, and experiences. Using these mental tools, counselors may discern the proper approaches, produce a rationale for their choices, and devise specific strategies and actions to partner with their principal.
Though several potential tools emerge from review of the literature and analysis of the principal-counselor relationship, the researcher proposes to analyze one particular tool: the use of counseling theory (and the strategies embedded therein) to remove barriers between school counselors and school principals. The procedures explained in this chapter, and analyzed in Chapter 4, were designed to foster and encourage relationship building between counselors and principals and help to answer the research question: *How can the strengths and skills embedded in counseling theory help counselors address their perceived barriers with their principals?*

### 3.2 Purpose of the Study

The study suggests that the strategies (strengths and skills) embedded in the counseling theories may help counselors address their relationship with their principals. In particular, the study examines one way that counseling theories, learned in counseling preparation programs, can not only be used to help others, but can also be used to approach perceived barriers with increased positive self-efficacy to nurture successful relationships with building principals. This proposed process may improve the leveraging relationship between principal and counselor in ways that promote greater collaboration in schools. In pursuit of that outcome, the study frames the counseling theories as available tools in each counselor’s toolbox. These tools constitute the approaches (ways of being) and the concrete and observable actions (ways of doing) that counselors might take to address perceived barriers. The procedures described and examined in this study are designed to help counselors use the lenses provided by counseling theories to first analyze the perceived strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of their relationships with their principals and then to carefully select specific theoretical tools that they can use to address their perceived barriers to foster meaningful relationships with their principals.
Although all of the counseling theories are at each school counselor’s disposal as valuable tools in the counselor toolbox, it is understood that school counselors have certain preferences or go-to theories with the highest utility in the school setting. For example, while private therapists may prefer Existentialism or Psychoanalytic Theory, these may be unwieldy in the school context, when time constraints support a Solution-Focused Brief approach or frequency of contact supports a Gestalt understanding of total context. Thus, because school counselors may not prefer all ten of the theories examined in the review of literature, particular attention will be given in the case study analysis to those theories with the most utility for school counselors. Furthermore, only one theory will be chosen per case for its prescriptive value in improving the principal-counselor relationship. The theory will be chosen for the strength of its alignment to the themes embedded in the case.

3.3 Methodology

This study examined extant data that was collected from school counselors during two workshop presentations at two conferences within a seven-month span. The first conference, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) National Conference, was held on June 29, 2015, and the second conference, the Pennsylvania School Counselors Association (PSCA) State Conference, was held on February 19, 2016. The study used close reading, latent semantic analysis, and constant comparative analysis to look for emerging themes in the data, with a focus on opportunities to infuse the most prevalent counseling theories for school counselors to equip those counselors to examine their own beliefs and perceptions regarding their relationship with their principal.
3.4 Data Collection Procedures

During the two workshop presentations at the ASCA National Conference and the PSCA State Conference, I gathered data from school counselor attendees at four different points during each workshop:

- Prior to the start of the workshop, participants were asked to describe their relationship with their school principal in writing (See Appendix A).
- During the workshop, participants broke into small groups and were asked to tell or listen to a story of counselor-principal interaction and then apply counseling theories to collaborative situations focused on the counselor-principal relationship.
- Participants were asked to keep notes of their important decisions/conclusions. Each small group was invited to report out to the whole group about how the discussion went and to describe their take-away learnings from the story and application of a theory to the vignette.
- At the end of the workshop, participants were asked to respond to a short prompt focused on summarizing their learning from the workshop to provide feedback to the researcher.

All procedures utilized in the June ASCA Conference were replicated for the February PSCA Conference, save one. Verbal feedback and an initial perusal of data from ASCA attendees indicated that the story-telling and small-group discussion were arguably the most valuable portion of the workshop. In the PSCA iteration, additional time (as the confines of the workshop schedule allowed) was provided for attendees to engage with one another in small-
groups. Additionally, a lengthier PSCA whole-group debrief session permitted the whole group to process the value of the small-group experience.

In both the ASCA and PSCA workshops, responses were completely anonymous and counselors were asked to place their responses in a drop box that was located in the back of the room as they exited the session. The original plan was for the researcher to exit first and another counselor to collect the drop box and deliver it to the researcher. In both presentations, however, I remained at the front of the room to answer questions and talk privately with attendees who lingered with questions and comments. After the room was empty, I then gathered the drop box in the back of the room upon exiting.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

This study focuses only on the data collected in the first part of each workshop via Instrument #1 that asked attendees to take two minutes to respond to the prompt: *Think about your own principal-counselor relationship. What are its strengths and weaknesses and why?* And the second prompt question: *What might be preventing you from improving or enhancing your relationship with your principal?*

Counselors were given approximately two minutes to respond on a lined sheet of paper for voluntary sharing out during the session and for collection at the end of the session (See Appendix A).

3.6 Selection and Recruitment of Participants

The study used a convenience sample of those school counselors who attended the ASCA and PSCA Conferences who self-selected to participate in the workshop presented by the researcher. Seventy-five counselors chose to attend the workshop session presented at ASCA and 83 counselors attended the session presented at PSCA. The sample size for the study was
determined by the number of session attendees from both conferences who self-selected to share their responses on Instrument #1 via the drop box in the back of the room upon exiting the sessions. Figure 3.1 below illustrates the sample sizes for the data collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Collection Instrument</th>
<th>ASCA (National) Workshop</th>
<th>PSCA (State) Workshop</th>
<th>Total Sample Size Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrument #1 (Appendix A)</td>
<td>n = 21</td>
<td>n = 10</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3.1: Sample Sizes for Instrument #1*

**3.6.1 Recruitment of participants.**

At the start of the session, participants were asked to consider granting consent for the researcher to use their workshop responses as part of the study.

**3.6.2 Informed consent procedures.**

All attendees at both workshop sessions were notified that, by placing the research instruments in the box at the back of the room upon exiting, they would indicate their voluntary consent to participate in the study.

All attendees were informed that there were no risks are associated with their voluntary participation in the study other than those encountered in everyday life and that no financial reward or incentive was offered. Attendees were told that they could remain in the session and engage in all activities even without choosing to participate in the research. Attendees were notified of their right to exit the session at any time during the workshop without any type of penalty. Attendees were told that their responses, should they choose to share them and participate in the study, would be both confidential and anonymous since the responses did not ask for nor require identifying information. Attendees were informed that they had the right to participate in the study by placing their anonymous responses in the drop box at the end of the session. Finally, attendees were told that once they placed their responses in the drop box their
responses could not be eliminated from the study since all responses were anonymous and could not be identified for removal from the study.

3.7 Method of Data Analysis

The theoretical framework developed in the review of literature will frame the analysis of the data gathered from the first instrument that asked participants to describe their relationship with their principals. Close reading and constant comparative analysis to determine emergent themes were used to analyze the responses from that prompt.

Borrowing the SWOT model (Bradley, Ervilus, Hingson, Lex, Sunago, & Protokowicz; & Rothwell, 2010) framework commonly used in business, these methods of analysis were used to mine the participant reported perceptions for perceived strengths, weaknesses, and barriers (or threats preventing better relationships between principals and counselors). SWOT is based on the work that emerged in the 1960’s from Albert Humphrey and the Stanford Research Institute and is traditionally used to identify business planning strategies with the purpose of eliminating “threats and weaknesses, while safeguarding your strengths and [capitalizing] on your opportunities” (Rothwell, 2010). The researcher noted opportunities to infuse counselor skills and strengths (from counseling theory) that emerged from analysis of the workshop data. These opportunities informed the discussion of generative impacts and suggested future research that highlights the utility of using counseling theory as a first step for counselors who seek to improve the principal-counselor relationship in order to leverage collaborative practice in schools.
Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Findings Introduction

Schools matter. Their outcomes and the processes by which those outcomes are derived matter. Research shows collaborative school climates and cultures yield better educational outcomes but research tells educators less about how to create a collaborative school climate. This study focused on the perceptions school counselors have regarding their relationships with their principals and the factors they mention that contribute to that relationship. Specifically it examined counselors’ perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of their relationships with their principals and the barriers or obstacles that they perceive as the causal explanation for their current relationship status.

This study was designed to address the following research question: How can the strengths and skills embedded in counseling theory help counselors address their perceived barriers with their principals? The study argues that counselors may be able to employ counseling theories, and the strengths, skills, and strategies embedded therein, to analyze their own perceptions of their professional relationship with the school principal. It further argues that counselors may be able to take strategic relationship-building actions informed by not only their self-analysis of the situation but also by selecting a relevant counseling theory or set of theories that inform improvement efforts. This theory of action may increase both individual counselor self-efficacy and collective agency tied to relationship building and relationship improvement efforts with principals. In this way, the findings may inform school counselors who seek to become liaisons in leadership with principals.
4.2 Procedures and Methods

The study employed data gathered from two convenience groups of school counselors who attended two separate workshops presented by the researcher. The workshops were titled: *Bridge-Building: School Counselors as Liaisons in Leadership with School Principals*. All participants in the workshops self-selected their attendance at the sessions based on the title and the brief explanation of the workshop’s focus printed in the Conference Agenda Materials (See Appendix B).

The two identical workshop sessions occurred within a seven-month span. Seventy-five counselors chose to attend the workshop session during the American School Counselor Association National Conference held in July of 2014. Eighty-three counselors attended the workshop session during the Pennsylvania School Counselor Association State Conference in February of 2016. This resulted in a total number of possible participants of 158.

The data were collected prior to the beginning of each workshop via a short pre-write that asked attendees to respond to two prompts:

1. *Think about your own principal-counselor relationship. What are its strengths and weaknesses and why?*

2. *What might be preventing you from improving or enhancing your relationship with your principal?*

Counselors attendees were given approximately two minutes to respond to the prompts on a lined sheet of paper and were told that they would have the opportunity to share their perceptions during the session. Attendees were informed that they could contribute their responses to the researcher as data for this study and provided with detailed informed consent information (See Appendix A). Of the 158 attendees for the two workshops, 31 counselors contributed their
written responses upon exiting the sessions. These responses did not contain any identifying information and were therefore anonymous.

4.3 Analysis

The analysis of the responses occurred in two phases. First, close reading and constant comparative analysis yielded emergent themes across the 31 participants’ responses. During this phase, the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) model (Bradley, Ervilus, Hingson, Lex, Sunago, & Protokowicz; & Rothwell, 2010) was employed as a framework to mine participants’ reported perceptions of perceived strengths, weaknesses, and barriers operating in the relationships they have with their principals. The original purpose of the SWOT framework was to help leaders eliminate “threats and weaknesses, while safeguarding … strengths and [capitalizing] on … opportunities” (Rothwell, 2010).

The presentation of the findings from the first phase of the analysis begins with an overview of the six emergent themes. For each theme, the presentation includes the criteria used to identify what each theme is and what it is not. Following the thematic overviews, each theme is examined in turn, along with the coded responses within each theme, and noted support for the theme from the literature. Finally, one of the ten counseling theories reviewed in this study is chosen for its relevance to the theme to illustrate how that counseling theory could be used to create a strategic course of action for building or improving the counselor’s perceived relationship with the principal.

It is important to note, however, that themes represent an artificial parsing of issues that are present within the messy complexity of real-life professional relationships in schools. In reality, the themes occur as overlapping contributors to the relationships. To honor and address that complexity, the second phase of the analysis looks at the responses of four counselors as a
whole. These responses are presented as four case studies that contain multiple themes (often working at cross-purpose). The analysis of the four case studies promotes the utility of employing relevant counseling theory to suggest a course of action to improve the principal-counselor relationship.

It could be argued that this course of action allows for the use of several counseling theories, working in concert to address the complex nature of the principal-counselor relationship, the impact of personal bias, and the confounding elements embedded in the reality of school schedules, priorities, professional roles, and other distractions or obstacles to the work of relationship-building. For the purpose of this study, however, the case study analysis simplifies the application of theory by selecting one prevalent counseling theory that is preferred within the school context and that is aligned strongly with the themes of the case. Although all of the ten theories reviewed in the literature are at each counselor’s disposal, school counselors have certain preferences or go-to theories that work best in schools. Thus, only one theory is chosen for its prescriptive value for each case study. In each figure introducing each case study, responses are presented with their corresponding themes and the theories most closely aligned to the themes. The figure then notes the theory to be applied in the discussion of the case; the theory appearing most closely aligned to the case will be chosen. In this way, the case study analyses model how counselors might use a counseling theory as a lens to first analyze their relationships with their principals and then carefully select a specific theoretical tool to create relationship improvement. Uncovering theories as opportunities for relationship improvement in case examples can inform the theory of action, future research, and generative impacts.
4.4 Overview of Emergent Themes

Six themes emerged across 245 individual statements gathered from the 31 participants. An “Outlier” category was also created for those vague responses that did not fit neatly into a theme. These may warrant mention as they may indicate areas for future research. The themes, along with their qualifying criteria appear in Figure 4.1 to illustrate how responses were grouped throughout the first phase of the analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>CRITERIA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Time and Access</td>
<td>• References to time, availability, schedules and priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Communication Patterns</td>
<td>• Uses the word “communication”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Uses a descriptor of communication (a degree of the statement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• One-sided communication indicators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unclear communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A call for balanced communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Role Expectations and Understandings</td>
<td>• Principal expectations of the role of the counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal understanding or misunderstanding of the counselor’s professional role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Counselor understanding of principal’s role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Matters of Respect/Trust</td>
<td>• Items where these words are mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Items where qualifiers are added to these words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Issues of follow through; says one thing and does another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Principal-Counselor Relationship Assessments</td>
<td>• Counselor makes evaluative statements about the principal personally or professionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Counselor makes evaluative statements about self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Responses characterizing the relationship as either one of conflict or collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Power Over</td>
<td>• References to granting permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Must seek permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Principal assigns or delegates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Someone who has power over another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Someone who has power over self</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.1. Emergent Themes*

As Figure 4.1 illustrates, themes of time and access, communication patterns, role expectations and understandings, matters of respect and trust, principal-counselor relationship assessments, and power over emerged from the close reading and thematic coding. What follows is an analysis of each theme, along with the respondents’ perceived strengths, weaknesses, and threats to improvement or enhancement of the principal-counselor relationship. The participant
responses within each theme were coded based on workshop location. A code of “USA” signifies a respondent who attended the June 29, 2015, American School Counselors Association session. A code of “PA” indicates a state counselor respondent who attended the February 19, 2016, Pennsylvania School Counselors Association session. Following the location code, each response includes the number assigned to individual respondents so that responses by the same respondent can be noted and tracked. In the figures and narrative illustrating each theme, more than one code accompanying a response indicates that several counselors provided the exact same response. Responses within each theme are displayed using three columns – strengths, weaknesses, and barriers – to indicate where the statement occurred in relationship questions asked by the researcher. Each theme is presented in turn, accompanied by an explanation of the theme, the support from the literature, and an illustrative example of using a relevant counseling theory as an opportunity to build a relationship bridge.

4.4.1 Theme One: Time and Access.

The theme of Time and Access includes counselor responses that referenced perceptions of time, availability, scheduling, and priorities. Table 4.1 displays all of the responses that comprise this theme.
Table 4.1

*Time and Access*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselor Perception Responses Based on the Theme of Time and Access</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-02 Joint projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-02 Weekly meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-07 We do meet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-10 Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-14 Regular meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-03 Unavailability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-07 We do meet but need to have both agendas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-11 She's out A LOT!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-19 Most seem very distracted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-21 Not enough time to communicate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty respondents’ supplied 39 comments falling under the Time and Access theme.

Nine of the respondents (nearly half) yielded 12 responses without attribution to a particular professional, as a weakness or barrier to the principal-counselor relationship. In assessing the role of time in the counselor responses, counselors referred to the need to “carve out” time
(USA-01), a “lack of time” (USA-16, USA-18), “not enough time” (USA-21), “perceived time” (USA-18), “time constraints” (USA-21), with one counselor offering time, itself, as the only barrier: “the only thing preventing me from improving the relationship is more time,” (PA-03). What is most interesting to note is that not one counselor discussed time as a strength.

Counselors gave reported issues of physical presence in the buildings, busy schedules, distractions, and priorities as confounding variables to time available. Some responses, however, indicate a sweet spot where both principal and counselor are able to overcome these weaknesses and barriers and find a way to intentionally acting on access as a priority of the principal-counselor relationship. Figure 4.2 below illustrates this dynamic.

Relative to presence, respondents’ qualifiers included: “availability in the building,” (PA-05); “not present at school a lot,” (PA-01); and “she's out A LOT!” (USA-11). Busy schedules often keep principals and counselors geographically within their buildings but far from collaboration. Counselors perceive principals’ “busy schedule” (USA-17), being “overloaded” (USA-02) and being a “last minute planner” (USA-03) as weaknesses and threats to the
principal-counselor relationship. One counselor defended his or her principal’s busy schedule: “he is for collaboration, he just gets buried sometimes,” (USA-17). Distraction (USA-19) was also seen as an enemy to availability. Often, educators can be distracted from relationships by focusing on other priorities. When principals show a “lack of participation in [principal-counselor] teams meetings” (USA-14) and a focus on “multiple directives” (USA-05) coming from several stakeholders or “other district requirements keep us at bottom of priority,” (USA-18), counselors perceive it as a barrier preventing access to their principal. Complexities and realities of schoolwork relative to time were also considered. One respondent put it this way: “Door to his office is often closed, even though he is always open to communicating with staff,” (USA-17), while another noted, “we have 4 principals and getting all of them on the same page is sometimes difficult,” (USA-07).

And while principals are not the only school personnel hampered by distractions and other priorities, very few counselors attributed their perceived lack of time and access to themselves. Self-advocacy appears to pose a barrier when counselors respond, “We do meet but need to have both agendas,” (USA-07). One counselor confessed, “I don’t spend time working at it,” (USA-19).

Some counselors attributed perceived issues of access to a shared responsibility between the principal and themselves. Such perceptions yielded statements positively framed in principal-counselor partnership, such as recognition of “both so busy,” (PA-01), an absence of “time carved out to meet, share/align goals,” (USA-01), and that there’s “not always time to share out what [we’re] doing and how it connects to big picture,” (USA-01). Counselor use of language that connects, aligns, shares, and encompasses a sense of “we” is indeed promising, but
not as positive as those counselors who perceived themselves in the sweet spot of intentional action with access to each other as a principal-counselor priority.

When counselor perceptions were that both principal and counselor are intentionally acting on access as a priority of the relationship, the data yielded interesting results. Although only four respondents mention access as a strength of their relationships, these responses were consistent with regard to meetings as the barometer of measurement: “We do meet,” (USA-07); “Regular meetings,” (USA-14); and “Weekly meeting; joint projects,” (PA-02). Clearly, counselors look to meetings together and joint projects as a measure of bright-spot, strong principal-counselor relationships.

**Support from the literature.** The findings from state and national counselors on access and time enjoy support in the literature. In the College Board-Advocacy, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) study of 343 principals and 1,957 counselors, both principals and counselors agreed that time – not enough time, interruptions, too much to do, daily decisions that must be made too quickly, no time to reflect and dream together, being overwhelmed – all contribute to the time barrier between principals and counselors. Furthermore, disconnects in priorities bore out in the study and in the findings from this study: Principals’ perceived administrative and clerical tasks for counselors take less than the actual time that counselors reported. These tasks represent valuable time that could be used for activities that both counselors and principals agree are higher priorities in promoting student achievement (Finkelstein, 2009).

**Strategic action informed by relevant counseling theory.** Most obviously, Solution-Focused Brief Theory (DeJong & Berg, 2008; DeShazer, 1985; & Murphy, 2008) specifically
attends to time, the need for brevity, and a positive outlook toward problem-solving in collaborative fashion. Obstacles are often opportunities in disguise if the right tools are brought to bear on them. It is precisely these other priorities and distractions listed under weaknesses and threats that may provide opportunities for relationship building. An argument can be made that the agendas for these weekly and regular meetings perceived as strengths by some respondents are filled with items and issues that are perceived as weaknesses and distractions by others. “Joint projects,” (PA-02) may comprise barriers or obstacles that the counselor and principal intentionally collaborate to overcome. Thus, several theories with an optimistic bent similar to Solution-Focused Brief Theory may show utility in addressing the theme of access: Adlerian Theory, Person-Centered Theory, and the focus on presence evident in both Behavior Theory and Gestalt Theory. If the time dragon can be slain, if priorities and distractions can be perceived as meeting or project fodder for relationship building, and if solid communication skills can be employed, perhaps relationship improvement between principals and counselors may be realized.

4.4.2 Theme Two: Communication Patterns.

Responses with the following components were included in this theme: use of the word “communication”, use of a descriptor for the degree or type of communication, indicators of one-sided or unclear communication, a call for balanced communication, and any references to feedback. Table 4.2 below displays all of the responses for the Communication Patterns theme.
Table 4.2

Communication Patterns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA-01 Gives good feedback</td>
<td>PA-01 Disseminates too much</td>
<td>PA-02 Nothing, we are always communicating, open and honest with each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-02 Able to use humor</td>
<td>PA-07 Feels he doesn't listen/pay attention</td>
<td>PA-05 Meaningful feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-02 Open communication</td>
<td>USA-01 No forum for communicating</td>
<td>USA-04 Clear communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-03 Assertive communication</td>
<td>USA-03 Ambiguity</td>
<td>USA-04 How to articulate goals, needs, lack of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-03 Constant communication</td>
<td>USA-03 At times, he'll have specifics in mind and not communicate his wants.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-03 Feedback provided</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-05 Feel like he tells everyone what they want to hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-03 Open communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-10 He fired me without reason!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-09 Honest- able to discuss a variety of issues</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-10 Tells me what I &quot;want&quot; to hear but doesn't really listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-10 Candid about current issues (so I understand “why”)</td>
<td>USA-04 Does not listen at times</td>
<td>USA-14 Dependent on me to address topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-10 Responsive to emails</td>
<td>USA-05 Feel like he tells everyone what they want to hear</td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-10 Share realistic issues of the school</td>
<td>USA-10 He fired me without reason!</td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-01 Communicated as much as can (as needed)</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-02 We communicate effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-03 Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-05 He lets me vent/share with him</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-07 He communicates well</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-10 Humor - at times</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-11 She's willing to listen.</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-13 Listens when I have concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-13 We communicate fairly well</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-15 They are comfortable sharing with me.</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-20 Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-21 Open communication and good dialogue</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-21 Responsiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn’t.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty respondents made 39 statements relevant to the theme of Communication.

Communication patterns, a key component of the access principals and counselors have with one another, is characterized by often-confounding perceptual strengths, weaknesses, and threats.

Although nearly half (15 of the 31 total study respondents) listed communication as a strength, highlighting communication that is “open” (PA-02, PA-03), “constant” (PA-03), “assertive”
(PA-03), “effective” (USA-02), “good” (USA-21), “well/fairly well” (USA-07, USA-13), and “responsive” (USA-21), several participating counselors highlighted communication concerns as a perceived barrier with their principal. In fact, six of the 15 who listed communication as a strength also listed aspects of communication as a weakness, indicating conflicted counseling perceptions working at cross purposes regarding principal-counselor communication.

Communication patterns, for these counselors, may be a double-edged sword. Figure 4.3 below displays responses from individual counselors that illustrate this perceived dichotomy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA-01 Gives good feedback</td>
<td>PA-01 Disseminates too much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-01 Communicated as much as can (as needed)</td>
<td>USA-01 No forum for communicating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-03 Communication</td>
<td>USA-03 Ambiguity; at times, he'll have specifics in mind and not communicate his wants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-05 He lets me vent/share with him</td>
<td>USA-05 Feel like he tells everyone what they want to hear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-10 Humor - at times</td>
<td>USA-10 Tells me what I &quot;want&quot; to hear but doesn't really listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-15 They are comfortable sharing with me.</td>
<td>USA-15 I know things I shouldn't.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.3: The Double-edged Sword of Communication*
Much can be learned from drilling into statements of perceived weaknesses of principal-counselor communication patterns. These statements are displayed in the Communication Continuum in Figure 4.4 below.

**Figure 4.4: Communication Continuum: Communication as a Weakness**

The figure includes counselor statements about communication listed under weaknesses, and are plotted to illustrate the potential difficulties that the counselors perceive that their principals have in communicating with them. Counselor perceptions of communication with the principal are – at times- too much, unclear, one-sided, or too little.

At one end of the continuum, some counselors perceive that they have no communication with their principal: “no forum for communicating” (USA-01) and “he fired me without reason!” (USA-10). Some counselors feel that they have not nearly enough communication, whether through lack of clarity: “ambiguity; at times, he’ll have specifics in mind and not communicate his wants,” (USA-03) “I did not understand her expectations of me.” (USA-06)

“Disseminates too much” (PA-01)

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No communication</th>
<th>Unclear</th>
<th>One-sided</th>
<th>Too much communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“No forum for communicating” (USA-01)
“He fired me without reason!” (USA-10)

“Ambiguity; at times, he’ll have specifics in mind and not communicate his wants,” (USA-03)
“I did not understand her expectations of me.” (USA-06)

“Does not listen at times” (USA-04)
“Dependent on me to address topics” (USA-14)
communicate his wants,” (USA-03) and “I did not understand her expectations of me,” (USA-06) or one-way only discourse: “does not listen at times” (USA-04) and “dependent on me to address topics” (USA-14). While, at the other end of the continuum, some counselors feel they have too much communication with their principal: “disseminates too much” (PA-01).

Both the double-edged sword of strengths and weaknesses from the same counselor respondents and the communication continuum illuminate significant variability in counselor perceptions of principal-counselor communication patterns. Thus, an argument may be made that clear and balanced communication between principals and counselors regarding communication strategies may be a way to reduce barriers and improve the partnership between these two professionals.

**Communication patterns as a strength.** The literature is rife with what schools should do but not as forthcoming with how they should do it (Spillane, et al. 2004). The communication theme responses may be instructive in providing a “…rich understanding of how leaders go about their work,” (Spillane, et al. 2004, p. 8) in communicating effectively, or what counselors perceive as components of effective, balanced communication. The responses reveal that counselors value openness (PA-02, PA-03, USA-05, USA-21), realistic and honest candor (PA-02, PA-09, PA-10), frequency of communication (PA-02, PA-03, USA-01), humor (PA-02, USA-10), good feedback (PA-01, PA-03), responsiveness (PA-10, USA-21), listening (USA-11, USA-13), and assertiveness (PA-03). These communication pattern strengths, coupled with conclusions relevant to Time and Access data (and the importance of meetings and joint projects) provide insights for improving or enhancing the principal-counselor relationship through patterns of communication.
**Support from the literature.** Scheduled time for communication was also a critical finding of the College Board-Advocacy/ASCA/NASSP study (2009). Principals and counselors agreed that communication and respect were the most important elements to their relationship with principals ranking communication highest. With regard to communication, principals articulated a desire for quality communication, while counselors most frequently mentioned frequency or the quantity of communication with their principal. When the 2009 study participants were asked what one thing they would change if they could to improve their own relationship, the most frequently mentioned response was communication. Similar to the counselors in this study, 2009 principals said—among other factors—weekly meetings, open communication, and amplifying counselor voices would help the relationship. (Finkelstein, 2009)

**Strategic action informed by relevant counseling theory.** Interactions characterized by frequent, open, honest, authentic communication exchanges hold the most potential for principal-counselor relationship improvement or enhancement. Thus, theories anchored by authentic communication—and specifically those theories falling squarely under Existentialism—hold particular promise since they squarely address the human conflict of authenticity versus inauthenticity. Specifically, Gestalt Theory (Perls, F., 1969a; 1969b; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951; & Perls, L., 1976) attends to the obvious and seeks to resolve emotional debris cluttering up figure and ground in the field. This theory advocates for a hyperconscious attention to authentic communication and presence. Gestalt theoretical approaches and actions, when coupled with frequent meetings and joint projects (the what) show promise for success. As long as the meetings and projects focus on (the how) openness and realistic, authentic, and honest candor as the main ingredients, are peppered with humor, good feedback, responsiveness, and
listening, and are finished off with a dash of assertiveness, principals and counselors may find themselves in a context ripe for improvement or enhancement to their relationship.

4.4.3 Theme Three: Role Expectations and Understandings.

Qualifying criteria for this theme included counselor-perceived principal expectations of the role of the counselor, principal understanding or misunderstanding of the counselor’s professional role, and counselor’s understanding of the principal’s role. Table 4.3 below provides raw response data.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA-05 Does not rely on counselors for disciplinary decisions</td>
<td>PA-05 Does not always understand the counselor's role; does not know ASCA model</td>
<td>PA-04 Different ideas on counseling/education, roles, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-08 He has a school counselor in the family and therefore understands the benefits and limits of the counselor relationship with students.</td>
<td>PA-08 Asks me to do things/tasks not related to my role (such as call parents about discipline referrals)</td>
<td>PA-10 My expectations of the working relationship without prior discussion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-02 We understand each others' roles</td>
<td>PA-09 Doesn't truly understand my job</td>
<td>USA-06 Clear understanding of expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-09 We (counselors) are the HEART of the school.</td>
<td>USA-06 I did not understand her expectations of me; no clear role definition</td>
<td>USA-12 Principal needs to understand her role and not expect me to handle things.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-07 He thinks he understands the counselor role and does fairly well but needs a little remediation.</td>
<td>USA-13 Afraid to take that leadership role he expects from me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-09 She has little knowledge of how effective and beneficial school counselors are to the school as a whole and to the students; there are so many things that we can offer but it always gets shut down.</td>
<td>USA-19 I don't fully understand what they do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-10 Doesn't know what my job is</td>
<td>USA-20 Not understanding the role of a school counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-11 She's not aware of counselor's role.</td>
<td>USA-21 Lack of understanding of each other's roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-16 Ask me to do random things; don't ask/evaluate what I actually do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-18 Principals so often have to be reminded of what school support staff (counselors, social workers) do and don't do</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-20 Not understanding the role of a school counselor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-21 Lack of understanding of each other's roles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eighteen counselors provided 27 total responses that fell under the theme of Role Expectations and Understandings. Most responses can be characterized as counselor perceptions that principals either understand or misunderstand the role of the counselor: “does not always understand the counselor’s role; does not know ASCA model,” (PA-05), “asks me to do
things/tasks not related to my role (such as call parents about discipline referrals),” (PA-08), “doesn’t truly understand my job,” (PA-09), “doesn’t know what my job is,” (USA-10), “don’t ask/evaluate what I actually do; ask me to do random things,” (USA-16), “she’s not aware of counselor’s role,” (USA-11), “no clear role definition,” (USA-06), “not understanding the role of a school counselor,” (USA-20), “principals so often have to be reminded of what school support staff (counselors, social workers) do and don’t do,” (USA-18), and “she has little knowledge of how effective and benefi[cial] school counselors are to the school as a whole and to the students; we (counselors) are the HEART of the school,” (USA-09). One respondent alluded to slight principal understanding that counselors are not disciplinarians: “does not rely on counselors for disciplinary decisions,” (PA-05), but it should be noted that this strength could actually be a weakness if principal and counselor are missing opportunities to collaborate on tough disciplinary decisions. One counselor provided a back-story for his or her perception of the principal’s understanding: “he has a school counselor in the family and therefore understands the benefits and limits of the counselor relationship with students,” (PA-08), while another stated, “he thinks he understands the counselors role and does fairly well but needs a little remediation,” (USA-07). Some counselors evidenced a lack of understanding of the role of the principal: “I don’t fully understand what they do,” (USA-19). One counselor provided the simple strength: “we understand each others’ roles,” (USA-02), while another just as simply stated a relationship weakness: “lack of understanding of each other’s roles,” (USA-21).

Counselor perceptions of principals’ expectations also appeared to be a disconnect in the relationship between principals and counselors: “different ideas on counseling/education, roles, etc.,” (PA-04), “my expectations of the working relationship without prior discussion,” (PA-10), “clear understanding of expectations; I did not understand her expectations of me,” (USA-06).
Three responses provided deeper insights and hints that further research into role understandings and expectations may be warranted: “principal needs to understand her role and not expect me to handle things,” (USA-12); I am “afraid to take that leadership role he expects from me,” (USA-13); and “there are so many things that we can offer but it always gets shut down,” (USA-09).

**Support from the literature.** School counselors (or, as they used to be called, guidance counselors) and school principals have a long history of role confusion and often work at cross purposes. The paradox of schools as both the great equalizer for all children, while also functioning as crucibles of constant change regarding societal inequality has produced challenge at best and conflict at worst (Walker, 2006, Introduction section, para. 1).

Between the historical call for principals to replicate a business model of accountability and counselors historically and theoretically called to serve the needs of students, their families, and ultimately society, it is no wonder these two professionals find role confusion part of their professional make-up. Regardless of history and theory, the work of each professional—school principal and school counselor—is crucial if the leadership team is to be complete, but often roles continue to be confused, causing fracture in the principal-counselor relationship. Principals are “the gatekeepers for school-wide excellence” (Walker, 2006, Upheaval in the Status Quo section, para. 2). Like principals, counselors “face overwhelming challenges, making their jobs impossibly complex” (Walker, 2006, Abstract). Both educators must use “their complementary skills and areas of expertise in shaping the core of an inclusive leadership team” (Walker, 2006, Abstract). Walker further expounds on counselors’ skills along with myriad skills and manager-leader expectations for principals: “Too frequently, [counselors] do not comprehend the complexity of the administrator's job, and too few principals understand the role and functions of the [counselor]” (Walker, 2006, Relationship between Counsellors and Principals section, para.
1). Indeed, it is not surprising that misconceptions of each other’s role would be mentioned in the counselor statements gathered for this study.

**Strategic action informed by relevant counseling theory.** Feminist Theory (Enns, 2004; Worell & Remer, 2003) and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Beck, 1967; 1976; Ellis, 2002; 2004a; & 2004b) are the two theories most aligned to the theme of Role Expectations and Understandings.

In Cognitive Behavior Theory, people are believed to have the potential for both rational and irrational thinking. Emotions stem from beliefs, influence, evaluations, and interpretations of reactions where the ABC equation comprises an activating event, a belief about the event, and resulting emotional consequences. This theory focuses on the past in that repetition of early indoctrinated irrational beliefs can keep dysfunctional attitudes alive and operative in the present. For example, if a principal had a negative experience with a counselor when he or she was a student, those negative perceptions of counselors may persist to bias the present principal-counselor relationship. Thus, if counselors and principals can change their way of thinking or interpreting roles via some of the strategies in Cognitive Behavior Theory, they can work to improve their relationship. Corey (2014) frames this as changing “stubborn victim” to “tenacious survivor” (p. 291), however in the principal-counselor context it could just as easily be a change from “fly in the ointment counselor” to “advocate for other”, as just one example.

The ASCA Model calls for counselors to be leaders, advocates, collaborators, and system change agents (ASCA, 2004). Counselors and principals who have clear understandings and consistent beliefs about what each others’ roles mean may have a better chance of collaboration in their working relationship.
A second theoretical perspective, Feminist Theory, promotes consideration of the entire system as the social, cultural, and political contexts of each person are juxtaposed at the intersections of gender, social location, and power. Since the time of Horace Mann, a history of hierarchical structure and bias has characterized the U.S. Educational System. Therefore, modern-day improvement in relationships could begin with addressing and intervening in the patriarchal system of multiple oppressions by infusing strengths-based multiculturalism and social justice. Feminist Theory focuses on systemic context and argues that conflict has been taught to be socially acceptable and desirable; thus, if what is taught is changed, the outcome will change as well. Feminist Theory calls for the feminization of the culture to enhance society to be more nurturing, intuitive, cooperative, subjective, and relational through the infusion of feminine values like cooperation and altruism. Through this theory, connectedness and interdependence are developed in the context of relationships in order to minimize institutional barriers and inequities. Coupling Feminist Theory with Cognitive Behavior Theory, which also challenges people to reframe their beliefs, could lead to role interventions through an emotive, cognitive, and spiritual lens. It could result in non-hierarchical structures, equal sharing of resources and power, empowerment, mutuality, transparency, principal and counselor roles as true partnerships, and a bias-free work and social environment.

**4.4.4 Theme Four: Trust/Respect.**

This theme include any responses where the words trust or respect were mentioned, counselor perceptions where qualifiers are added to the words trust and respect, the conflating of trust and respect in counselor responses, and indicators of attention to trust and respect (for example, follow through, or where a principal says one thing and does another). Table 4.4 provides all of the counselor responses within the theme of Trust/Respect.
### Table 4.4

**Trust/Respect**

Counselor Perception Responses Based on the Theme of Trust/Respect

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA-02 Mutual respect</td>
<td>PA-04 No support with parents Respect?</td>
<td>PA-08 Mutual respect and an honest conversation about our roles - when we need to be working together and when we not to take certain tasks and just go with it</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-03 Mutual respect</td>
<td>PA-07 Mutual lack of trust?</td>
<td>USA-06 Earning trust and respect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-05 Trusts me as an authority in my career</td>
<td>PA-08 I feel at times that he feels that he would be a more effective counselor and he doesn't value my expertise.</td>
<td>USA-06 My only experience from last year was horrible. She never made time for me. She didn't believe in anything I had to offer (counselors in general).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-06 Respect one another</td>
<td>USA-04 Too easy for him to get things done</td>
<td>USA-08 I need to value her and her work.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-09 Willing to trust my suggestions</td>
<td>USA-06 She did not trust or respect me</td>
<td>USA-15 I do not trust them to play fair.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-10 Wants a person in the counselor role (thinks it's important)</td>
<td>USA-09 Our principal stated &quot;what do you do all day&quot;- so right there she does not respect the responsibilities of school counselors.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-01 Respect each other and each others' work</td>
<td>USA-10 Doesn't respect my (or others') time (late, emails and phones during meeting)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-03 Follow-up</td>
<td>USA-04-05 Doesnt respect my (or others') time (late, emails and phones during meeting)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-03 My principal trust(s) me and my decisions so he delegates a lot to me</td>
<td>USA-06-08 Our principal stated &quot;what do you do all day&quot;- so right there she does not respect the responsibilities of school counselors.</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA-03 Trust</td>
<td>USA-10 Doesn't value my professional opinion</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA-16 Are respectful to me</td>
<td>USA-10-12 Refers to me as an &quot;expert&quot; and then hates how I handle things and shares that openly with staff.</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA-21 Mutual respect</td>
<td>USA-13 I feel he doesn't trust me to do what I do</td>
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<td></td>
<td>USA-14 Maybe too trustworthy of the work = not as involved</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-19 I've never had one who understood or valued counselors</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Twenty-three counselors provided 31 statements relevant to the theme of Trust/Respect. Nine counselors used the word respect in capturing their perceptions. Five of the nine used the word “mutual” to qualify respect (PA-02, PA-03, PA-07, PA-08 USA-21) and an additional respondent alluded to mutual respect: “respect one another,” (PA-06). Another four respondents used some qualification of “valuing”, a term akin to respect for the purposes of this study: “I feel at times that he feels that he would be a more effective counselor and he doesn't value my
The mention of the word trust was comparably frequent in counselor responses regarding their perceptions of their relationships with principals: seven respondents with eight total responses mention the word trust as a strength, weakness, or threat to the relationship.

Two respondents saw trust and respect as so closely intertwined that they conflated the two in their responses: “she did not trust or respect me,” was listed as a weakness, and “earning trust and respect,” as a threat by the same respondent (USA-06). One counselor questioned the weakness he or she listed, “mutual lack of respect? trust?” (PA-07).

The concepts of trust and respect are deeply important when attempting to dissect and understand relationships and this is especially true between counselors and principals. Yet, how people define trust and respect and how they measure the application of each to a relationship is complex and difficult to quantify. Though most counselors simply responded that trust and respect do or should exist in the relationship, some counselors referred to actions or behaviors that indicated their principals’ trust and respect (or a lack thereof). Interestingly, counselors overwhelmingly provided insight into principal signs and behaviors surrounding trust and respect much more than their own behaviors. In fact, only one of the 23 counselors included within this theme attributed the level of trust/respect to the counselor, all others attributed the level of trust/respect to the principal or to a collective “we” – a prominent undercurrent for all of the themes that will be addressed later.

The trust/respect indicators described in the responses were not complex and arguably have prescriptive value for principals and counselors intent on improving or enhancing their
relationship. Principal time, support or follow-up, and attention to a match between what principals say and the actions they take create a climate of respect and trust between principals and counselors according to the respondents.

As shown in the responses grouped under both the Time and Access and Communication Patterns themes, counselors felt that making time for people is glue in a relationship. Further cementing this are two counter-examples, “My only experience from last year was horrible. She never made time for me. She didn't believe in anything I had to offer (counselors in general),” (USA-06) and “doesn't respect my (or others’) time (late, emails and phones during meeting),” (PA-10). In addition to making time and respecting others’ time, showing support and follow-through is important to counselors as the manifestation of principal trust and respect. One counselor listed “follow up,” (USA-03) as a strength, while another, “no follow through,” (USA-10) as a weakness. One counselor qualified the exact support he or she seeks from the principal as support “with parents,” (PA-04) while another bemoaned his or her principal is “maybe too trustworthy of the work = not as involved,” (USA-14). What principals say and do matters to counselors and counselors seek consistency between the two. “Refers to me as an ‘expert’ and then hates how I handle things and shares that openly with staff,” (USA-12) and “our principal stated, ‘what do you do all day’ – so right there she does not respect the responsibilities of school counselors,” (USA-09) both indicate deep-rooted counselor perceptions spurred by what principals say that are harmful to these principal-counselor relationships. Even when principals aren’t talking, counselors pay close attention to their actions: “too easy for him to get things done,” (USA-04), “willing to trust my suggestions,” (PA-09), and “my principal trust(s) me and my decisions so he delegates a lot to me,” (USA-03) show evidence that counselors are inferring messages of trust and respect (or an absence of them) from the actions of their principals. When
asked what is preventing an improvement or enhancement to the relationship, one counselor
pulled it all together, connecting communication patterns, actions, trust, and respect for roles:
we need “mutual respect and an honest conversation about our roles—when we need to be
working together and when we not to take certain tasks and just go with it,” (PA-08).

Furthermore, the counselor responses regarding the relationship-critical qualities of
Trust/Respect beg the philosophical question: can there actually be areas of gray? Or – like
pregnancy and death – is trust and respect a matter of black-and-white (you either have it or you
don’t)? Just as there is no such thing as being a little bit pregnant or a little bit dead, can you
have a little bit of trust and respect or is it a matter of being either all-in or all-out?

Support from the literature. Along with access and communication factors, matters of
trust and respect represented some of the strongest responses of the 2009 College Board-
Advocacy/NASSP/ASCA study. Two elements were rated highest in importance to those
respondents’ own principal-counselor relationships: mutual trust and mutual respect
(Finkelstein, 2009). In general, principals sought respect for their vision and goals while
counselors framed respect as important regarding themselves personally and for their
professional expertise: among other suggestions, counselors looked to mutual respect, a trust-
filled atmosphere, and support from the principal to improve relationships.

Strategic action informed by relevant counseling theory. All relationships are messy and
complex and professional relationships in schools are no different. In reality, trust and respect
impacts all principal-counselor relationships. Because trust and respect are so foundational to
relationships, and all ten counseling theories attend to relationships in some way, an argument
may be made to utilize all of the theories. However, the counseling theories that focus most
emphatically on relationship building appear to provide the best opportunities for improving or

The three theories each contain a framework built around life stages and tend to be overt about the quintessential need for relationships as milestones of life and thus focus on them intently in approach and action. Adlerian Theory’s (Adler, 1958; 1959; 1964; & 1978) first universal life task (social relations), frames the relational, social, and cultural factors that shape people as whole: including context, social constructs, and community (plus component parts). Existentialism’s (Frankl, 1963; May, 1950; 1953; 1983; & Sartre, 1971) third dimension (striving for identity vs. relationship to others) poses the challenge to reconcile internal creativity with need to be social, connected, and meet others’ expectations. And Reality or Choice Theory’s (Glasser, 1965; 1968; 1998; & 2001) second genetically-encoded and the primary need (love and belonging) leads to analysis of the happiness or unhappiness resulting from reconciling reality with the Quality World. These three theories represent the top-tier opportunities for quick and effective enhancement and improvement.

4.4.5 Theme Five: The Principal-Counselor Relationship Assessment.

Many counselor responses assessed the relationship between principals and counselors and characterized it as one of conflict or collaboration. Some statements assessed the history (or absence of shared experience and history – a budding relationship) between the principal and counselor. Some counselors expressed evaluative statements fraught with personal or professional judgments. Finally, several characterized the principal-counselor relationship by assessing how they interacted with one another in either a harmonious or dissonant way. Table 4.5 provides counselor responses generally relevant to the theme of Principal-Counselor Relationship Assessment.
### Table 4.5

**Principal-Counselor Relationship Assessment**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA-01 Sharp, smart; trying to make change in school climate and culture</td>
<td>PA-01 Had a few confrontations last year professionally; new principal last year</td>
<td>PA-07 My attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-02 Invested in the relationship; mutual goals</td>
<td>PA-03 Difference in philosophy of teacher communication</td>
<td>USA-03 He's a last minute planner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-03 Empowering each other; similar philosophy</td>
<td>PA-05 Unprofessional toward staff (cursing, jokes, etc.)</td>
<td>USA-10 I would have to do all the work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-05 Believes in professional development; flexible/understanding</td>
<td>PA-06 Counselors using data to get our way; disagree on how to handle certain situations</td>
<td>USA-11 New counselor to the building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-06 Supported; work well together</td>
<td>PA-07 Both of us tend to be defensive; different agendas; don't always agree</td>
<td>USA-19 I'm judgmental.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-07 I think we like each other</td>
<td>PA-08 In rolling out initiatives, I feel like he can be a roadblock and put staff concerns ahead of student concerns; my school principal supervisor (really an assistant) and I do not always have the most collaborative relationship.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-09 Believes in me more as a person than what I do; friendly-open to discuss any topic</td>
<td>PA-09 Focuses too much on one population of students</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>PA-10 Attempts to meet others' needs; renewed sense of collaboration; share sense of humor</td>
<td>PA-10 Freely speaks negatively about others in off-the-cuff manner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-01 Both committed; similar focuses/priorities; support each other</td>
<td>USA-02 We have found what works for us</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-02 We have found what works for us</td>
<td>USA-04 Same vision; worked together in different programs</td>
<td>USA-02 I'm still a bit disorganized.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-04 Same vision; worked together in different programs</td>
<td>USA-06 Common goals</td>
<td>USA-04 Poor decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-06 Common goals</td>
<td>USA-07 He is new this year and very knowledgeable about educational issues; he is not afraid to ask questions and get background and change things.</td>
<td>USA-05 Feel like he tells everyone what they want to hear; he avoids conflict while I like addressing issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-07 He is new this year and very knowledgeable about educational issues; he is not afraid to ask questions and get background and change things.</td>
<td>USA-08 I am new and energized; we are passionate.</td>
<td>USA-06 Did not know her learning style; did not see eye-to-eye on anything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-08 I am new and energized; we are passionate.</td>
<td>USA-09 Currently, flexibility is one of the few remaining strengths left in the principal-counselor relationship; my growth mindset and the principal's fixed mindset.</td>
<td>USA-08 I am older. She is tired. We advocate for the best interest of our students, she is driven by money :-( and not the best interest of our students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-10 Casual</td>
<td>USA-10 We advocate for the best interest of our students, she is driven by money :-( and not the best interest of our students</td>
<td>USA-09 Micromanaging doesn't allow us to live up to our fullest potential.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-10 We advocate for the best interest of our students, she is driven by money :-( and not the best interest of our students</td>
<td>USA-11 Commitment to our kids and families; she'll advocate for me; she'll back me up; similar sense of humor; we like each other.</td>
<td>USA-10 Wants to be the headpiece but not take the responsibility</td>
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</tbody>
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Table 4.5, Continued

**Principal-Counselor Relationship Assessment**

Counselor Responses Based on the Theme of Counselor Perceptual Assessment of the Principal-Counselor Relationship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Strengths</strong></th>
<th><strong>Weaknesses</strong></th>
<th><strong>Threats</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA-15 I feel competent in my role; she considers us friends.</td>
<td>USA-11 I'm more direct than she is; she's conflict avoidant. She's disorganized and talks too much!!</td>
<td>USA-12 Principal refers to herself as micro-manager. Hates that staff is friendly to each other and undermines with gossip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-17 We will work very closely this coming school year.</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-13 I feel he harbors past perceptions from when I was a teacher at our school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-18 I am a good people person - well liked; I am visible and accessible; I have data to support work being done - principals like</td>
<td>USA-15 I have more experience than him; she doesn't maintain professional boundaries.</td>
<td>USA-17 It is brand new: I have been a teacher the last 7 years and this is my first time working in this capacity so we have not built this relationship yet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-20 Support</td>
<td></td>
<td>USA-19 I think they need better people skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-21 Appreciating other's viewpoint; teamwork</td>
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</table>

Of the 31 total study participants, 28 counselors made statements that assessed their own principal-counselor relationship as a relationship of collaboration or conflict, yielding the 81 statements included in this theme.

**Shared history/Budding relationships.** If past performance is an indicator of future expectations then counselor perceptions of shared history is a warranted factor in counselor assessments of the principal-counselor relationship. On the other end of the spectrum, some principals are in a budding relationship, with newness to the school or role adding a dynamic to the relationship that counselors commented on. Nine counselors assessed their relationship using criteria that included
• The counselor either new to the school or the counselor’s role
• The principal is either new to the school or the principal’s role
• The principal and counselor have shared time, experience, and history together.

By mapping counselor statements based on respondents’ indications that the statement is a strength, weakness, or threat, the perceived shared history or budding relationship between principals and counselors can be seen as a barometer of either conflict or collaboration. One saw their shared history as a strength of a collaborative relationship: “I have known him for 5 years; [we] worked together in different programs,” (USA-04); while other respondents saw their shared history as a weakness: we “had a few confrontations last year professionally,” (PA-01); “I have more experience than him,” (USA-15); and “I feel he harbors past perceptions from when I was a teacher at our school,” (USA-13).

An absence of history or shared experience was also represented in the data as a factor impacting the principal-counselor relationship. Some statements indicated budding relationships as a threat or weakness, with counselors perceiving themselves in disconcerting uncharted territory. For example, “new counselor to the building,” (USA-11) was perceived as a threat to the relationship; and weaknesses included “new principal last year,” (PA-01) and “it is brand new: I have been a teacher the last 7 years and this is my first time working in this capacity so we have not built this relationship yet,” (USA-17). Some counselors saw the budding relationship as a strength, however: “he is new this year and very knowledgeable about educational issues,” (USA-07) and “I am new and energized,” (USA-08), indicating perceptions that may possibly lead to collaboration between these principals and counselors.

**Personal and professional judgments.** How counselors perceive principal-counselor interactions, whether in a context of collaboration or conflict, appears to be crucial. Throughout
the 47 responses, 25 counselors indicated some type of judgment of their own personal or professional qualities or those of their principal(s) as impacting the principal-counselor relationship. Counselor statements were included in this theme if the

- Counselor made evaluative statements about the principal personally (attitudes, temperament, intelligence, habits, ways of being, etc.)
- Counselor made evaluative statements about the principal professionally (professional behavior and decorum, style of decision-making, leadership judgments, etc.)
- Counselor made evaluative statements about self

_Collaboration._ Some counselors expressed evaluative statements of the principal’s personal strengths as positive contributors to the principal-counselor relationship. “Appreciating others’ viewpoint,” (USA-21), “friendly, open to discuss any topic,” (PA-09), “flexible/understanding,” (PA-05), “sharp, smart,” (PA-01), “she’ll advocate for me; she’ll back me up,” (USA-11), and “believes in me more as a person than what I do,” (PA-09), indicate counselor personal perceptions promoting an enhanced collaborative relationship with the principal. Similarly, counselors perceived the principal’s professionalism as strengths that yield more collaboration in the relationships with statements like: “attempts to meet others’ needs,” (PA-10), “believes in professional development,” (PA-05), “trying to make change in school climate and culture,” (PA-01), and “he is not afraid to ask questions and get background and change things,” (USA-07). Two counselors made evaluative statements about themselves indicating strengths present in the principal-counselor relationship: “I have data to support work being done – principals like; I am visible and accessible; I am a good people person – well liked,” (USA-18) and “I feel competent in my role,” (USA-15).
Conflict. Evaluative statements made by counselors indicating personal judgments of principals included statements relative to principal attitude, temperament, intelligence, and habits: “she’s conflict avoidant,” (USA-11), “she’s disorganized and talks too much!!” (USA-11), “I am older. She is tired,” (USA-08), and “I think they need better people skills,” (USA-19). Several counselors made statements judging principals’ professional behavior and decorum, style of decision-making, and overall leadership. Some counselors perceive their principals have too tight a grip on staff: “principal refers to herself as a micro-manager. Hates that staff is friendly to each other and undermines with gossip,” (USA-12), “micromanaging doesn’t allow us to live up to our full potential,” (USA-09), while others believe principals are too loose: “she doesn’t maintain professional boundaries,” (USA-15), “feels like he tells everyone what they want to hear,” (USA-05), “freely speaks negatively about others in off-the-cuff manner,” (PA-10), “unprofessional toward staff (cursing, jokes, etc.),” (PA-05). For others, decision-making came under fire: “poor decisions,” (USA-04), “in rolling out initiatives, I feel like he can be a roadblock and put staff concerns ahead of student concerns,” (PA-08), “focuses too much on one population of students,” (PA-09); as did leadership style: “wants to be the headpiece but not take the responsibility; I would have to do all the work,” (USA-10) and “he’s a last minute planner,” (USA-03). Five counselors took ownership of their role in their perceived conflicted relationship with their principal: “did not know her learning style,” (USA-06), “counselors using data to get our way,” (PA-06), “my attitude,” (PA-07), “I’m still a bit disorganized,” (USA-02), and “I’m judgmental,” (USA-19).

Harmonious versus dissonant dichotomy. Sixteen counselors perceived their relationship with their principal as either harmonious or dissonant. They did so by

- Describing the strength of common beliefs and approaches
Describing the weaknesses of opposing beliefs and approaches

Counselors provided the following 24 responses that can be characterized as Collaboration’s “We Zone”. Statements that fell into the “We Zone” indicated personal and professional qualities counselors shared with their principals: “casual,” (USA-10), “similar sense of humor,” (USA-11), “share sense of humor,” (PA-10), “she considers us friends,” (USA-15), “we like each other,” (USA-11), “I think we like each other,” (PA-07), “commitment to our kids and families,” (USA-11), “both committed,” (USA-01), “we are passionate,” (USA-08), “invested in the relationship,” (PA-02), and “empowering each other,” (PA-03). Some counselors specifically mentioned their perceptions of principal support: “support each other,” (USA-01), “support,” (USA-20), and “supported,” (PA-06). Finally, many counselors referred to their perceptions of being on the same page as the principal as important to the harmony of the relationship: “similar focuses/priorities,” (USA-01), “same vision,” (USA-04), “common goals,” (USA-06), “mutual goals,” (PA-02), “similar philosophy,” (PA-03), “work well together,” (PA-06), “renewed sense of collaboration,” (PA-10), “teamwork,” (USA-21), “we will work very closely this coming school year,” (USA-17), and “we have found what works for us,” (USA-02).

Dissonance. Four counselors described a conflicted relationship. In other words, they perceived that their principals possessed significant opposing personal or professional characteristics. Far from the “We Zone,” these judgments were framed as a gap between polar opposites: “we advocate for the best interest of our students, she is driven by money and not the best interest of our students,” (USA-08), “I’m more direct than she is,” (USA-11), “he avoids conflict while I like addressing issues,” (USA-05), and, “my growth mindset and the principal’s fixed mindset,” (USA-09). If not framed as a dichotomy, some counselors expressed perceptions of at-least partial responsibility for conflict: “both of us tend to be defensive,” (PA-07), “did not
see eye-to-eye on anything,” (USA-06), “difference in philosophy of teacher communication,” (PA-03), “disagree on how to handle certain situations,” (PA-06), “different agendas; don’t always agree,” (PA-07), “my school principal supervisor (really an assistant) and I do not always have the most collaborative relationship,” (PA-08), and “currently, flexibility is one of the few remaining strengths left in the principal-counselor relationship,” (USA-09).

What is encouraging is that counselor statements within this theme indicate that counselors are attuned to both their role and the perceived role of the principal in the conflict. This may indicate a fledgling foothold for collaboration or at least potential for improvement. We should temper our encouragement, though, by recalling that the theme itself represents an artificial parsing of issues present in messy, complex, real-life professional relationships. Without considering the responses of counselors as a whole, it is difficult to discern how hopeful these statements may truly be. The idea is treated in more depth later in the study during the second phase of analysis that provides a more holistic consideration of counselor responses.

Support from the literature. This focus on relationship assessment and judgments regarding personal characteristics aligns with the findings of research reviewed in this study. Despite complex relationships, history and shared experience, and issues of judgment, there’s no getting around the fact that

The skills and areas of expert knowledge of each leader [principals and counselors, both] are crucial in the work of a complementary leadership team; [but first,] they must abandon their power turfs and territories. They must acknowledge and utilize their unique skills and expertise for the good of students and families. (Walker, 2006, Leadership Team section, para. 1)
Indeed, though suspending judgment may be a difficult task, the abandonment of “power turfs and territories” demands it in order to improve or enhance relationships.

**Strategic action informed by relevant counseling theory.** Counselors’ assessments of their perceived relationship with their principals vary based on history or budding relationship, whether they are fraught with judgment, or are harmonious or dissonant in nature. Whether the relationship is conflicted or collaborative, this theme of Relationship Assessment points to the opportunity to apply Person-Centered Theory and Carl Rogers’ unconditional positive regard. Rogers (1942; 1951; 1961; & 1980) argued that acceptance is not approval, providing an opportunity for therapists to work with and even help clients whose behavior was diametrically opposed and flew in the face of the counselor’s personal value system. Though the counselor may judge and not approve of what he or she perceives as principal behavior (just as counselors often judge and not approve of student behavior), the counselor may accept the behavior and apply approaches and actions to advance change and improvement. Additionally, other non-judgmental theories such as Adlerian Therapy, Gestalt Therapy, and Cognitive Behavior Therapy allow for differences between individuals. Finally, Existentialism welcomes and expects conflict as a necessary condition of living, so it provides a natural framework within which to navigate improvement and enhancement.

**4.4.6 Theme Six: Power Over.**

General criteria qualifying counselor responses in this theme include any references to granting or seeking permission, comments where the principal assigns or delegates, someone who has power over another, or where someone has power over self. These statements, though somewhat brief, indicate counselor perceptions that principals and counselors are not equal and that principals are greater-than. Table 4.6 below provides raw response data for this theme.
Table 4.6

**Power Over**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Threats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA-05 Allows counselors the freedom to counsel students</td>
<td>PA-04 Boss mentality</td>
<td>PA-01 Nervous on how to approach and how it would be viewed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA-07 I can get permission to do things</td>
<td>PA-04 Good ol' boys club</td>
<td>USA-16 Want me to complete their tasks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-03 Delegation</td>
<td>PA-04 Power struggles/female identity</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-15 I have autonomy.</td>
<td>PA-08 I feel at times that he leaves me out of interventions and conversations that I should be part of.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-16 Ask me to complete important tasks</td>
<td>USA-03 He delegates a lot to me with unclear directions.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA-19 They have the opportunity to affect change.</td>
<td>USA-04 Exclusive behavior</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-07 Need to have a counselor on BLT (leadership team) meeting.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-10 Exclusive behavior</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>USA-12 Principal demanding and sometimes unreasonable in approach in terms of discipline and enforcing policies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>USA-15 Sometimes autonomy leads to blaming me.</td>
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<td>USA-16 Ask me to do random things</td>
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<td></td>
<td>USA-19 They hire staff.</td>
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</table>

A variety of statements shared by school counselors fit into the theme of the authority of the principal or the power of the principal over the counselor as a perceived boundary between principals and counselors. Some statements described the perception of counselors as below or beneath the principal. Language choice alluded to counselor self-efficacy as a critical component in the statements within this theme. Words such as *allows* and *permission*, even though listed as strengths, highlight the perception that the role of the counselor is subservient to the principal – that these two professionals are not partners: “allows the counselors the freedom to counsel students,” (PA-05), “I can get permission to do things,” (PA-06), “I have autonomy,” (USA-15), “delegation,” (USA-03), and “ask me to complete important tasks,” (USA-16) are examples.
Even in the strength, “they have the opportunity to affect change,” (USA-19), implies low self-efficacy and lack of power on the part of the counselor in that the principals can affect change but counselors (and perhaps others) cannot.

Further illustrations of low levels of counselor self-efficacy lie in the perceived threats counselors listed: “want me to complete their tasks,” (USA-16), and “nervous on how to approach and how it would be viewed,” (PA-01). Indeed, the perceived weaknesses listed by the respondents could also be grouped by counselor feelings regarding principals and their power over counselors. Some counselors perceived the principal’s exclusive behavior as a weakness of the principal-counselor relationship: “good ol’ boys club,” (PA-04), “exclusive behavior,” (USA-04, USA-10), “need to have a counselor on BLT (leadership team) meeting,” (USA-07), and “I feel at times that he leaves me out of interventions and conversations that I should be part of,” (PA-08). Other counselors perceive delegation through a “boss mentality,” (PA-04), “he delegates a lot to me with unclear directions,” (USA-03), and “ask me to do random things,” (USA-16). The perceived power of the principal is arguably strongest in counselor responses emphasizing principal authority, domination, and oppression: “power struggles/female identity,” (PA-04), “sometimes autonomy leads to blaming me,” (USA-15), “principal demanding and sometimes unreasonable in approach in terms of discipline and enforcing policies,” (USA-12), “they hire staff,” (USA-19), and “he fired me without reason!” (USA-10). Clearly, respondent perceptions are attuned to the real or perceived power of the principal and power over counselors.

**Support from the literature.** Regardless of the distinctions made in the literature defining power as influence or as position, the supervisor-subordinate power differential demands attention. Trust issues linked to power and authority abound in the findings from the
College Board-Advocacy/ASCA/NASSP 2009 study (Finkelstein, 2009). When participants were asked which thing they would change if they could to improve their own relationship, principals included in their responses eradicating the barrier that principal evaluation and authority poses for counselors, along with amplifying counselor voices, inclusive decision-making, and shared vision (Finkelstein, 2009). The outcomes of Price’s (2011) study argue for a shift in power dynamics to improve work relationships: “as the power between principal and [employee] balances, the size of the relational effects increases” (p. 65). Clearly, power differentials cannot be overlooked between and among school counselors and principals:

The skills and areas of expert knowledge of each leader are crucial in the work of a complementary leadership team; [but first,] they must abandon their power turfs and territories. They must acknowledge and utilize their unique skills and expertise for the good of students and families. (Walker, 2006, Leadership Team section, para. 1)

**Strategic action informed by relevant counseling theory.** With so much emphasis on power and efficacy, this theme is ripe for opportunities embedded in the approaches and actions of Bandura’s self-efficacy theory (1994) and Behavior Theory (Bandura, 1969;1997; Lazarus, 1989; 1997; and Skinner, 1948; 1953; & 1971).

“The higher the sense of self-regulatory efficacy, the better the occupational functioning” (Bandura, 1994, p. 13). So, the ability of counselors to self-regulate their professional actions and behaviors the higher their positive self-efficacy for working with powerful principals –the task at hand— by using cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes. This conclusion has implications for the success of principal-counselor collaboration to leverage more widespread collaboration in schools. By intentionally including mastery experiences, vicarious observations of positive models, verbal reinforcement through coaching,
and promoting positive emotional states as counselor goals, counselors have a greater chance of increasing their perceptions of efficacy to improve or enhance their relationships with their principals.

In addition, Behavior Theory encourages counselors to zero in on current, observable determinants not past or future perspectives that cannot be seen and are thus open to misinterpretation. Resiliency, individual agency, and self-efficacy provide context for the cause-and-effect ABC equation of antecedents, behaviors, and consequences, where consequences are concrete and observable. Behavior Theory further argues that warmth, empathy, authenticity, permissiveness, and acceptance (or their opposites) are necessary as consequential reactions to behavior. Humans are self-directed, self-organizing, self-reflective, and regulating beings, thus a hyperconsciousness of human cognitive processes governing how environmental influences are perceived and interpreted shows utility. Because the expectations for principals are so squarely on product outcomes like test scores, teacher evaluations, and other measurable outcome data (Kelehear, 2005; Price, 2011; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004; Stevenson & Bauer, 2010; The Wallace Foundation, 2013; Walker, 2006) and less on processes, and this Behavior Theory also emphasizes product over process, use of this theory is organic in navigating the principal-counselor power differential.

4.4.7 Summary Conclusions from the Thematic Analysis.

Thirty-one participants in the study contributed a total 245 statements pertaining to their principal-counselor relationships. In overviewing the response statements, one global conclusion is evident: Counselors overwhelmingly attribute issues with the principal-counselor relationship to the principal. A simple analysis of the language used in the counselor statements can be used to group the statements into four categories:
• “If only he/she/they would….” – indicating that the counselor attributed blame, or conversely, viewed an opportunity for improvement or enhancement as the responsibility of the principal.

• “If only we would….” – indicating that the counselor shared blame and opportunity for improvement or enhancement to the principal-counselor relationship.

• “If only I would….” – indicating counselor ownership of either blame or the chance to improve or enhance his or her relationship with the principal.

• Too vague to categorize – responses that were too vague or contained no assigned attribution were eliminated.

Figure 4.5 indicates how responses were grouped based upon the attribution language that was part of the response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselor “statement”</th>
<th>Strengths n=99</th>
<th>Weaknesses n=100</th>
<th>Threats n=46</th>
<th>Total N=245</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“If only he/she/they would….”</td>
<td>34 or 34%</td>
<td>68 or 68%</td>
<td>14 or 30%</td>
<td>116 or 47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If only we would….”</td>
<td>38 or 38%</td>
<td>20 or 20%</td>
<td>5 or 10%</td>
<td>63 or 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If only I would….”</td>
<td>6 or 6%</td>
<td>4 or 4%</td>
<td>12 or 26%</td>
<td>22 or 8.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Too vague/no attribution/eliminated</td>
<td>21 or 21 %</td>
<td>8 or 8%</td>
<td>15 or 32%</td>
<td>44 or 17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4.5: Issue and/or Opportunity Attribution*

As Figure 4.5 shows, nearly half of the responses (47%) were statements counselors made attributing ownership of issues (blame or opportunity for improvement) to principals while only 8.9% of the statements were attributed to counselor ownership. Clearly, the counselors in this study attributed a higher percentage of the relationship issues (whether positive or negative) to principals than to themselves. It is logical to conclude, then, that if counselors could utilize the approaches and actions in counseling theory to reframe their thinking and frame improvement as within their power as professionals, it could result in higher percentages of “If
only I…” statements leading to improvement or enhancement of principal-counselor relationships.

While thematic analysis and general conclusions provide an overview of general emergent themes of counselor perceptions obtained in the study, it is an artificial parsing of data, oversimplifying what are complex and messy relationships between principals and counselors. In the next section, Case Study Analyses, a deeper dive into specific cases provides the depth of examination necessary concerning the responses of a counselor treated as a case study. In doing so, these case study analyses take into account the context of the respondent as provided by the respondent’s total collection of statements. For counselors, the most valuable tool of analytic approach is found through the application of several counseling theories in concert as lenses of analysis and potential opportunities for improvement or enhancement. This is the approach taken for each case example in the analyses that follow.

4.5 Overview of Case Study Analysis

Based on the common themes that emerged as strengths, weaknesses, and threats, four cases were selected because they represented common themes and combinations of themes. Case A was selected because it illustrated direct conflicts in counselor perceptions; Case B shows a clear opportunity to increase counselor self-efficacy; Case C lists no perceived counselor strengths; and Case D lists no perceived counselor weaknesses. Each case presents clear opportunities to apply theoretical lenses of counseling theory to improve the principal-counselor relationship. For each case the participant responses were organized by strengths, weaknesses, and threats. Relevant themes were then matched to each response. Finally, the theory with the strongest alignment to the theme for each response was also noted. See Figures 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9. Each case is examined and then discussed using the theoretical lens that was most
frequently aligned to the responses. Thus, only one counseling theory will be applied as each case is discussed in turn.

4.5.1 Case A.

In this brief narrative, the counselor listed a variety of perceptions, some as strengths and some as weaknesses revealing direct conflicts in perceptions and providing opportunities to improve the relationship with his or her school principal.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Relevant Theme</th>
<th>Theory Most Closely Aligned to Each Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allows counselors the freedom to counsel students.</td>
<td>Power Over</td>
<td>Behavior Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not rely on counselors for disciplinary decisions.</td>
<td>Role Expectations &amp; Understandings</td>
<td>Feminist Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trusts me as an authority in my career.</td>
<td>Trust/Respect</td>
<td>Reality/Choice Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible/understanding</td>
<td>Relationship Assessment</td>
<td>Person-Centered Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Believes in professional development</td>
<td>Relationship Assessment</td>
<td>Person-Centered Theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weaknesses</th>
<th>Relevant Theme</th>
<th>Theory Most Closely Aligned to Each Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not always understand the counselor’s role</td>
<td>Role Expectations &amp; Understandings</td>
<td>Feminist Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unprofessional toward staff (cursing, jokes, etc.)</td>
<td>Relationship Assessment</td>
<td>Person-Centered Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not know ASCA Model</td>
<td>Role Expectations &amp; Understandings</td>
<td>Feminist Theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threats</th>
<th>Relevant Theme</th>
<th>Theory Most Closely Aligned to Each Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence/communication</td>
<td>Time &amp; Access</td>
<td>Solution-Focused Brief Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability in the building</td>
<td>Time &amp; Access</td>
<td>Solution-Focused Brief Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful feedback</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Gestalt Theory</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Theory Chosen for CASE A (PA-05) Analysis: Feminist Theory

Figure 4.6: SWOT Responses for Case A

Analysis of Case A: This counselor perceives the principal as a leader who allows counselors the freedom to counsel students, trusting the counselor as an authority. The principal also refrains from utilizing the counselor as a disciplinarian. This counselor, however, believes that the principal does not always understand the counselor’s role. The counselor perceives evidence of principal flexibility, understanding, and a strong belief in professional development.
Yet this counselor notes that the principal does not know the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model, indicating a belief that principals should know it. In addition, the counselor sees the principal as unprofessional toward other staff (the counselor cites cursing and jokes as examples).

These sets of dichotomous perceptions may be creating conflict within the counselor: the principal believes in professional development yet is sometimes unprofessional in behavior and commitment to standards. Also at direct conflict with one another is the counselor’s perception that the principal doesn’t understand the counselor’s role, and the statement that the principal demonstrates some understanding by offering freedom, trust, autonomy, and authority.

**Theoretical opportunities embedded in Case A:** Although two themes appear with equal frequency in Case A responses, the researcher used her discretion in choosing the theme of Role Expectations and Understandings and the corresponding Feminist Theory for its applicability in the school context and alignment to the case. Evident in the statements provided by Counselor PA-05 is this counselor’s perception that a gap exists between principal and counselor regarding the theme of Role Expectations and Understandings, leading analysis of the system creating this gap. Feminist Theory (Enns, 2004; Worell & Remer, 2003) argues for such institutional system analysis at the intersections of gender, social location, and power. Mention must be made regarding the presences of the Power Over theme in the counselor’s use of the word “allows” in the first statement, as it may indicate this counselor’s struggle with the conflict between what is taught as socially-acceptable and desirable and what is actually healthy behavior. Additionally, the counselor’s Relationship Assessment perception of the principal’s unprofessionalism (“cursing, jokes, etc.”) supports interventions possible through the application of Feminist Theory. Feminist Theory can be used to analyze the social, cultural, and political contexts of
both the counselor and principal to judge whether a patriarchal system with multiple oppressions is in place, creating such a gap and opportunities for strength-based multicultural and social justice interventions.

Interventions in this case may include the counselor’s intention to uncover and confront deterministic relationships and institutional barriers, while attending to the principal’s and his or her own spiritual, cognitive, emotive, and behavioral dimensions. This counselor may advocate for victims and address the principal’s influence in advocacy within the system; an emphasis on the system as oppressor, rather than an individual person, may make confrontations safer. Furthermore, two actions the counselor takes may show the way for this principal:

- Modeling and encouraging insight and introspection regarding one’s role in the system through transparent self-disclosure;
- Sharing, empowering, and displaying power-with instead of power-over behavior with others (students, faculty colleagues, other leaders).

Should these Feminist Theory interventions be successful, the principal and counselor exemplified in this case may enjoy non-hierarchical structures, equal sharing of resources and power, empowerment, mutuality, self-acceptance and self-confidence, joy, and authenticity in a bias-free work and social environment. If this relationship is improved, potential leveraging positives may include the feminization of the school culture toward more nurturing, cooperative, intuitive, and relational goals.

4.5.2 Case B.

Just as in Case A, where the conflicting perceptions revealed in the counselor’s responses may indicate internal turmoil, Case B reveals the inner workings of the counselor, ways the counselor’s perceptions may be impacted from within, and how these perceptions then may
outwardly impact the principal-counselor relationship. The Case B counselor reveals perceptions directly linked to concerns surrounding his or her self-efficacy: “believes in me more as a person than what I do”. This case was selected to provide an example of how closely counselor perceptions can be linked with a counselor’s feelings of agency in affecting the principal-counselor relationship.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE B (PA-09)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PA-09</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threats</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Theory Chosen for CASE B (PA-09) Analysis: Solution-Focused Brief Theory**

*Figure 4.7: SWOT Responses for Case B*

**Analysis of Case B:** The counselor in this case study would benefit from growing in self-efficacy for partnering with the principal. As self-efficacy is task-specific, and the counselor responses for this case are admittedly brief, this particular case begs further questions and additional discussion to determine whether self-efficacy theory may show utility for improving this principal-counselor relationship. Regardless, this case warrants a sensitive approach with the capacity to maximize the positive statements made by the counselor therein.
Opportunities embedded in Case B: Although two themes appear with equal frequency in Case B responses, the researcher used her discretion in choosing the theme of Time and Access and the corresponding Solution-Focused Brief Theory for its applicability in the school context and its specific alignment to the themes of this case.

The barriers or threats of counselor-perceived principal access, distraction, and a busy schedule would indicate a foothold for Solution-Focused Brief Therapy as a tool to improve or enhance this principal-counselor relationship by improving counselor self-efficacy. Successful approaches may be the positive assumption of principal and counselor capability to behave effectively, no matter the inevitability of change, and adopting a solution-focused, cooperative, curious, hopeful, interested, encouraging, and empowering stance. It is here that mutual respect, affirmation, humility, and patience provide a positive context for improvement. The counselor’s intention to act so that solution momentum outpaces problem momentum would lead to valuable action steps that may yield success: concentration on small, realistic, positive, achievable goals; examination of all sides of the story; attending to exceptions; clearly identifying what is working and encouraging replication; experimenting with “what if?” and the “miracle” question; and utilizing sandwich-approach feedback strategies like compliments, a bridge of rationale, and suggested tasks. The overarching goal of Solution-Focused Brief approaches and actions is to honor the time sensitivity of this case but to buttress this perceived already-positive relationship and build counselor agency with the principal.

4.5.3 Case C.

This case was chosen for the dearth of strengths (the counselor listed none) to illustrate that, even in “worst-case scenarios”, opportunities to re-imagine the principal-counselor relationship through the perceptions and beliefs of the counselor are present.
**CASE C (USA-06)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USA-06</th>
<th>Participant Responses</th>
<th>Relevant Theme</th>
<th>Theory Most Closely Aligned to Each Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
<td>None listed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
<td>None listed</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not know her learning style</td>
<td>Relationship Assessment</td>
<td>Person-Centered Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not see eye-to-eye on anything</td>
<td>Relationship Assessment</td>
<td>Person-Centered Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No clear role definition</td>
<td>Relationship Assessment</td>
<td>Person-Centered Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not understand her expectations of me</td>
<td>Relationship Assessment</td>
<td>Person-Centered Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She did not trust or respect me</td>
<td>Trust/Respect</td>
<td>Reality/Choice Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My only experience from last year was horrible. She never made time for me. She didn’t believe in anything I had to offer (counselors in general).</td>
<td>Trust/Respect</td>
<td>Reality/Choice Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear understanding of expectations</td>
<td>Relationship Assessment</td>
<td>Person-Centered Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earning trust and respect</td>
<td>Trust/Respect</td>
<td>Reality/Choice Theory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common goals</td>
<td>Relationship Assessment</td>
<td>Person-Centered Theory</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**Theory Chosen for CASE C (USA-06) Analysis:** Person-Centered Theory

*Figure 4.8:* SWOT Responses for Case C

**Analysis of Case C:** This case is an example of a “worst-case scenario” with the counselor perceiving no strengths in the principal-counselor relationship and several significant and dramatic weaknesses and threats. Evident in Case C is the discrepancy between self-perception and experience in reality: this counselor perceives him or herself as an efficacious professional with much to contribute, yet also perceives that this principal “didn’t believe in anything [the counselor] had to offer (counselors in general)”. An argument may be made in this case that there are only two ways to go: up or out. Before out is considered, the application of counseling theory may provide opportunities for the counselor to improve the relationship with his or her principal.
Opportunities embedded in Case C: For the purposes of this study, Person-Centered Theory is prescribed for its applicability in the school context and its strong specific alignment to the themes of this case.

An inquiry approach of discovery and taking intentional action to understand the principal’s own goals and the resources needed to achieve them appears in Person-Centered Theory. Being heard and understood helps to ground people, creating calm in the midst of turmoil, enabling them to think more clearly and make better decisions. Adopting strategies from Carl Rogers’ Person-Centered Theory (1942; 1951; 1961; & 1980) may yield improvement in this particular case. Carl Rogers advocates that people are essentially trustworthy, have vast potential for understanding themselves and resolving their own problems, and are capable of self-directed growth. Thus, the counselor in Case C has incredible power to put a more positive spin on perceptions. This theory hinges almost entirely on the importance of relationships and the strong perception that people are not opponents but are allies. By seeing the principal as an ally, instead of an opponent, the counselor may accept him or her and may be able to come up with strengths and resources of this relationship. Acceptance is the recognition of rights to beliefs and feelings rather than an approval of all behavior. Should this counselor cultivate acceptance, the discrepancy between the counselor’s perception of him or herself and the perception the counselor believes the principal holds may be reconciled. All of the principal’s overt behavior need not be approved of for the counselor to accept the principal. Rogers is arguably most famous for the term *unconditional positive regard*. Can the counselor utilize this stance – commonly accepted as easy to adopt with students—as the lens through which to view the principal? Can this counselor positively regard this principal, accepting him or her without necessarily approving of all behavior? If so, positive results may occur in the relationship.
Should the counselor employ a positive strategy of strengths and resources and genuinely honoring the principal’s inherent power as a person, several positive actions may contribute to improvement. The counselor should strive to de-emphasize “professionalism”, since getting lost in each other’s professional position and role definition can be an obstacle. Building the relationship person-to-person allows presence, authenticity, and the feeling of fellow travelers on a shared journey. The counselor should focus on developing an empathic understanding of the principal’s goals and world and communicate a validating, non-judgmental, accepting stance to create a growth-producing climate. The goal of promoting a less defensive and more open relationship is translated into actions the counselor may take such as reflection and clarifying questioning (E.g. “Have you considered…?” or “What do you need?” or “How can I help?”). It is better to use a growth attitude and discovery-oriented approach where, through inquiry, experiences are excavated, rather than alternatives like providing advice, suggestion, direction, or persuading, teaching, diagnosing, or interpreting, which may significantly backfire on this counselor as the principal may perceive these actions as highly judgmental and promoting inequity and power imbalances. Promoting more less defensive and more open, pro-social behavior is the goal: Where others are empowered, they may use their power for transformation of self and the surrounding cultural context.

4.5.4 Case D.

This case was selected because, at first glance, it would appear to be the “best case scenario” since no weaknesses were listed. In testing this theory of action, however, an argument may be made that all relationships (even potentially perfect ones) can be improved or enhanced. This case was selected to illustrate the power of delving under a cursory consideration
of the perfect relationship and applying counseling theory to enhance even those relationships with which counselors are happy or at least satisfied.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CASE D (PA-02)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PA-02</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Strengths</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Weaknesses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threats</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Theory Chosen for CASE D (PA-02) Analysis: Gestalt Theory**

*Figure 4.9: SWOT Responses for Case D*

**Analysis of Case D:** This case appears to be the ideal, healthy, principal-counselor relationship. Should this theory of action have utility to improve or enhance all principal-counselor relationships, the theories must also be applied to healthy, bright-spot relationships to uncover enhancements that might lead to an even stronger relationship.

**Opportunities embedded in Case D:** For the purposes of this study, Gestalt Theory is prescribed to create improvement in the principal-counselor relationship represented by Case D. Gestalt Theory was chosen for its applicability in the school context and its specific alignment to the themes of this case.
A hyper-conscious awareness of Figure and ground concepts are prominent in Gestalt Theory (Perls, F., 1969a; 1969b; Perls, Hefferline, & Goodman, 1951; & Perls, L., 1976). Figure (what we are aware of) and ground (aspects of our presentation that are often out of our awareness) are equally important in the field (a dynamic system of inter-relationships) or The Now. This counselor in Case D is attending to the obvious in focusing on communication in the present and may understand the principal in both internal and external environmental contexts. This understanding may be gained through a holistic approach taken in moments of interpersonal contact and insight gleaned through dialogue and relationship. Gestalt theorists would argue for active awareness of both what is being done (“weekly meetings”, “joint projects”) and how it is being done (“open communication”, “able to use humor”, “invested in the relationship”) – the counselor’s attention to both is evident in his or her responses. Additionally, this counselor – even in the very brief, two-minute response time – mentions neither the past nor the future. Gestaltists argue that focus on past and/or future is a form of avoidance and self-regulation is the best tool used in the service of becoming actively aware of capacity-building emotion. The statement, “I am very lucky,” indicates this counselor’s perceptual awareness of emotion.

Should this counselor apply approaches evident in Gestalt Theory to this principal-counselor relationship, he or she would model and breed authenticity through interactions characterized by individual zest, imagination, and creativity. This counselor will meet principals where they are, even if that is a state of suppressed or restrained emotional control. This counselor will suspend preconceived ideas, assumptions, and interpretations but will alertly notice when things appear incongruent and will attend to the obvious. Collaboration will characterize the principal-counselor relationship when Gestalt Theory is applied. Observable actions will include the counselor’s encouragement away from “should be” to “just be”, in a
climate of transparency with story telling, metaphors, appropriate disclosure, and gentle re framing and feedback. Subtle conflicts, framed more as an impasse or a journey-with, rather than a harsh conflict, are opportunities for reflective questions and even dream work (“How are we blocking our resources and strengths here?” or “What is the vision?” or “How would we script the future?”). In fact, the Gestalt counselor will frame even vulnerability as a strength or resiliency factor. With a counselor this focused on the positive, Gestalt Theory is a natural fit to grow and enhance this principal-counselor relationship.

4.6 Conclusions

4.6.1 Limitations of the Study.

Skewed population. This study utilized statements collected at the beginning of a workshop session and thus represents the views of a convenience sample of attendees who had an interest in improving or enhancing their principal-counselor relationship. The participants do not represent the global population of counselors since those who attended were naturally drawn to the workshop based on the title of the workshop, the brief description published by the hosting association, and the publicity surrounding the workshop.

Time/Brevity of Responses. Responses were shared in a brief, two-minute time span. Although this forced counselors to volunteer their gut responses to the prompts, providing counselors with increased time to think and respond may have yielded richer data.

SWOT Framework limitations. Application of the SWOT Framework presupposes that respondents have appropriately categorized their responses under the strength, weakness, or threat/barrier category. An inherent limitation, then, is the potential of misapplication of a category by a respondent. For example, counselor PA-05 considered “does not rely on counselors for disciplinary decisions” a strength in his or her principal-counselor relationship.
Given that the role of discipline is to change student behavior (Colvin, G., Kameenui, E. J., & Sugai, G., 1993; Lewis, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 2002), and that negotiating behavior change is firmly in the counselor’s wheelhouse, with all of the counseling theories relating in some way to behavior change, a principal who “does not rely on counselors for disciplinary decisions” (PA-05) may be bringing a weakness to his or her educational practice and may also be missing tremendous opportunities to educate students and to partner with counselors and collaborate on disciplinary decision-making.

**Counselor context.** Braden Allenby (1998) wrote “Context is Everything”. Context counts is a phenomenon certainly guiding this study as it was difficult to fully develop the meaning of each counselor statement without having a context for each counselor. Without significant insight into each counselor’s individual context, statements may have been misread or misunderstood.

**Researcher bias.** This study hinges on the researcher’s own perceptions of the meaning of counselor responses. Although the researcher took steps to limit reading too much into a brief statement, it is impossible to ensure that the researcher could always understand the intended meaning behind each brief statement. Should the participants be given the opportunity to analyze their responses, they would do so with the benefit of the context for and the intended meaning of their own statements. Thus, different conclusions than those drawn by the researcher may have emerged.

Furthermore, the researcher’s own perceptual bias impacts application of various aspects of counseling theory, as well. No two counselors apply counseling theories in the exact same way or with the same level of fidelity. The application of the theories, therefore is based on the researcher’s understanding and skill. The researcher, who is a certified school counselor and
principal, applied the theories to the best of her ability, acknowledging the presence of biased perceptual lenses that may hamper her conclusions.

**4.6.2 Summary of Findings**

Through thematic analysis, common emergent themes represent counselor perceptions of strengths, weaknesses, and threats, setting the stage for the final component of the SWOT framework: theoretical opportunities to be brought to bear on the principal-counselor relationship by those counselors seeking improvement or enhancement. Case Study analysis provided a context deeper than the thematic parsing of responses in order to illustrate how counseling theories may be woven together in complex ways to honor the complexity of relationships. Though several other opportunities for improvement in the principal-counselor relationship may exist beyond the treatment this study gives to counselor statements, this study nevertheless argues that the approaches and actions embedded in counseling theory may have utility for revealing counselors’ own assumptions and illuminating how counselors can change their own perceptions through varied approaches and actions. This alteration in perception has the capacity to both increase individual counselor self-efficacy with principals and build a bridge of collective agency to improve the principal-counselor relationship.

**Value of the SWOT Framework and application of theory.** This study borrowed the SWOT model (Bradley, Ervilus, Hingson, Lex, Sunago, & Protokowicz; & Rothwell, 2010) framework commonly used in business for mining the participant reported perceptions for perceived strengths, weaknesses, and barriers (or threats preventing better relationships between principals and counselors). SWOT is based on the work that emerged in the 1960’s from Albert Humphrey and the Stanford Research Institute and is traditionally used to identify business planning strategies with the purpose of eliminating “threats and weaknesses, while safeguarding
your strengths and [capitalizing] on your opportunities” (Rothwell, 2010). In other experiences with SWOT analysis, the researcher experienced a silo-effect approach to SWOT where strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were compartmentalized. In the course of this study, however, the boundaries between strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats were not as clear. In fact, at times strengths were framed as weaknesses and threats and weaknesses held opportunity at their core. Whether counselors negotiate perceptions from a vantage of strength or weakness, opportunities abound for improvement or enhancement to principal-counselor relationships. Indeed, strengths, weaknesses, and threats as revealed by counselor-expressed perceptions were the clues to embedded opportunities.

The application of counseling theory also showed surprising utility for providing opportunities to improve or enhance the principal-counselor relationship.

Theory can be abstract and thus perceived irrelevant in practice, leading to a common disdain for theory as being the impractical obsession of academia. Theory will not and cannot provide answers to issues and problems; it can provide insight into choices and decisions leaders need to make. (Brazer, Kruse, & Conley, 2014, p. 259)

Indeed it is insights into the choices and decisions of principals and counselors that arguably provide fodder for improvement by encouraging these professionals to “frame issues from multiple lenses, examine concerns and challenges from multiple viewpoints, and probe data for understandings. Theory catalyzes collaborative thinking and tests nascent conclusions” (Brazer, Kruse, & Conley, 2014, p. 261).

**The strained principal-counselor relationship.** It is not surprising that the principal-counselor relationship is often strained, given the historical formation of the U.S. Educational System and the schools therein (Spring, 2011), and the varied development and practice of
administrators and counselors (Adams, Danielson, Moilanen, & ASCD, 2009; ASCA, 2004; Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, 2015). In fact, several of the emergent themes of this study echoed the key findings of the College Board-Advocacy/ASCA/NASSP study that captured the responses of 343 school principals and 1,957 school counselors (Finkelstein, 2009). In fact, time as a barrier, the conundrum of appropriate levels of professional communication, and issues of trust and respect all appeared in the 2009 study, as well.

Principals and counselors agreed that communication and respect were the most important elements to their relationship with principals ranking communication highest and counselors ranking respect highest. With regard to communication, principals articulated a desire for quality communication, while counselors most frequently mentioned frequency or the quantity of communication with their principal. In general, principals sought respect for their vision and goals while counselors framed respect as important regarding themselves personally and for their professional expertise. A point of agreement occurred when principals and counselors considered barriers. Both principals and counselors agreed that time – not enough time, interruptions, too much to do, daily decisions that must be made too quickly, no time to reflect and dream together, being overwhelmed – all contribute to the time barrier between principals and counselors (Finkelstein, 2009).

The 2009 study also resulted in two elements rated highest in importance: mutual trust and mutual respect. When participants were asked what one thing they would change if they could to improve their own relationship, the most frequently mentioned response was communication, with respect/understanding being the second most frequently mentioned. Principals said weekly meetings, open communication, inclusive decision-making, shared vision, amplifying counselor voices, honesty, and eradicating the barrier that principal evaluation and
authority poses for counselors would help. Counselors looked to mutual respect and consistent communication, the atmosphere, trust, listening openly, and support from the principal (Finkelstein, 2009).

Finally, while principals and counselors agreed about the counseling activities necessary to improve student outcomes (and those counselor clerical and administrative tasks having less of an impact), they diverged on time. Principals’ perceived amount of time administrative and clerical tasks take for counselors as less than the actual time that counselors reported. Counselor administrative and clerical tasks represent valuable time that could be used for activities that both counselors and principals agree are more important in promoting student achievement (Finkelstein, 2009).

The study concluded “it is encouraging that the basic priorities of both principals and counselors were so well aligned” (Finkelstein, 2009, p. 12). The College Board Advocacy-ASCA-NASSP study suggests “principals, counselors and other educators … examine the principal-counselor relationships in their own schools and determine how they might be able to best help each other work together effectively to improve the educational outcomes for all students” (p. 2). The 2009 study’s concluding question is logical: if principals and counselors are so aligned, how can they collaborate better? Yet, an answer is still elusive, arguably because instead of these professionals working together in a systems-approach, principals and counselors are still independent silos in schools.

**Counselor attribution.** When taken altogether, the 245 counselor statements in this study point to a surprising conclusion that, when counselors attribute responsibility for the principal-counselor relationship, they point to the principal rather than themselves. Although counselors are thought to be the relationship experts, in this particular relationship, counselors
overwhelmingly give their power away to the principal. A brief response time, an absence of context, researcher bias – despite all of the limitations of the study, the participants comprised a group of counselors who skewed as having interest in improving the principal-counselor relationship yet these self-identified counselors expressed underwhelming ownership of the principal-counselor relationship and intention of improving themselves. Few counselors expressed their own role of reflective action in relationship improvement through the statements of strengths, weaknesses, and threats in the study. Though this study does not represent the entire population of counselors, rather those relationship-expert counselors with a keen eye on workshops designed to improve the principal-counselor relationship, participants overwhelmingly attributed weaknesses and even strengths to the principal.

*The power of the principal.* One potential explanation for why counselors would give their relationship-improving power away lies in understanding the power of the principal. The might of the principal is mission-critical to influence schools and implement collaborative practices (Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009; Orphanos & Orr, 2013; Price, 2011; Zalaquett, 2005). Leithwood, Seashore, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, through their work for the Wallace Foundation’s 2004 review of research note that leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn,” and that “…much of the existing research actually underestimates its [school leadership’s] effects” (p. 5). Almost a decade later, The Wallace Foundation underscored that “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning in school,” (2013, p. 5). “Administrators are the gatekeepers for school-wide excellence” (Walker, 2006, Upheaval in the Status Quo section, para. 2). Todd Whitaker says, “When the principal sneezes, the whole school catches a cold” (2003, p. 30). The principal sets the tone and, if the principal focuses on
collaboration, so goes the school. The power of the principal is certainly not lost on the perceptive school counselor.

*Counselor self-efficacy.* Besides the significant support in the literature for the actual power of the principal, a second explanation for the surprising outcome that counselors attribute significantly more relational power to the principal may lie in counselors’ own feelings of self-efficacy. If the dominant narrative of this study is “If only he/she/they would….”, and a sense of empowerment comes from an increase in “If only I would….” statements, then changing the narrative by changing task-specific self-efficacy for counselors (where relationship with the principal is the task) should logically yield relationship improvement. Though true that “the higher the sense of self-regulatory efficacy, the better the occupational functioning” (Bandura, 1994, p. 13), self-efficacy is “less readily able to be managed by principals and administrators to improve school climate” (Price, 2011, p. 67). Instead, school leaders may influence, encourage, and enhance self-efficacy in their staff. If counselors can self-regulate their own efficacy for working with principals—the task at hand—they may function better in their counseling role and use principal-counselor collaboration to leverage more widespread collaboration in schools.

Improving counselor self-efficacy for the task of principal relationship development may be done through counselor development, training, and wiring. Two camps argue the role of professional formation: some scholars discount formation altogether (Boyte, 2009; Furman & Greunewald, 2004; Herrity & Glassman, 1999; Marshall, 2004; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2013; Price, 2011; Saltmarsh, et al., 2009; Theoharis, 2007; and Walker, 2006) and others call it mission critical (Block, 1993; Brazer, et al., 2014; Herrity & Glassman, 1999; & Orphanos & Orr, 2013). Regardless of scholarly division represented by the opposing camps, almost all agree that formation would benefit from the following improvements: integration of a systems approach,
critical discourse and civic democracy, multiculturalism, and social justice. Because formation provides the vehicle through which educators receive contextual anchors such as standards, history, and theory that are unique to each profession, formation provides a context for the power and influence of principals and counselors. Thus, the potential for formation to anchor self-efficacy in these professionals must not be overlooked.

Bandura defines self-efficacy as “people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives” (1994, p. 2). Beliefs factor prominently in self-efficacy since the ways that people think and feel about certain tasks influences their motivation to engage in certain tasks and avoid others. These beliefs are not general and overarching, but rather they are task specific. Counselors are developed to feel high levels of efficacy in applying the approaches and actions of counseling theory in their work with students. If formation could also attend to counselor efficacy in utilizing theory to work with colleagues, namely the principal, relationship improvement may be realized. Revealing, understanding, and honoring the role of aspiring counselor past experience – counselors as students with principals at the helm – in the formation of counselors may be more than important, it may be necessary in resolving any past unfinished business that may re-emerge for counselors in present and future working relationships with principals.

Extending counselor formation into on-going professional development to improve counselor efficacy for the task of successful professional interaction with school principals follows logically. Anecdotally, the vernacular of counselor professional development, as noted at the 2014 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Conference, was peppered with phrases imploring counselors to institute student-centered programming with the blessing of the principal, permission of the principal, and admonishments not to go rogue, but to
get *administrative approval*. In fact, it is exactly this language that provided an undercurrent of counselor conference culture that arguably impacted counselor perceptions of their own self-efficacy and reinforced the power of the principal. Indeed, this language undercurrent and the resulting non-verbal reactions of the ASCA audience as noted by the researcher (knowing glances and eye-rolling, for example) were so strong that they, in part, spurred this study.

*Increasing principal self-efficacy through leadership theory.* Counselor mindsets developed in formation help the counselor discern the approach to be used to most effectively build relationships in context. Counseling skills are the concrete tools in the counselor’s metaphorical tool belt that can be used to blur or even break barriers. Counseling theories are instrumental to counselor formation and development throughout their professional preparation. Counselors take multiple courses on the theories, engage in problem-solving experiences where the strategies embedded in each theory are modeled, practiced, critiqued, and then further practiced in both individual and group settings before counselors are certified. Unlike the brief overview of leadership theory that is provided in principal preparation, for counselors, each theory is painstakingly unpacked, examined, and applied to various counseling scenarios both in laboratory and real settings and evaluated and honed before counselors are released into independent professional practice. Furthermore, consultation in application of the theories (and the strategies embedded therein) throughout one’s career is strongly encouraged in counselor preparation to ensure that each counselor is working in collaboration to apply the theories accurately and with fidelity. Although leadership theory does not provide the structured scaffolding for this type of work with principals that counseling theory does with counselors, efforts may be made to empower self-efficacy in principals as co-bridge-builders, through application of leadership theories and other actionable suggestions, as well.
Collective agency is a struggle when counselors often operate as independent islands with overwhelming expectations (Walker, 2006). Just as often, however, principals are islands as well (The Wallace Foundation, 2013; Kelehear, 2005; Porter, Murphy, Goldring, Elliott, Polikoff, and May, 2008; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004). Balancing product and process is no easy task. If “improvement must be grounded in continuing efforts to build trust across the school community [and] school improvement rests in a social base, … building relational trust remains a central concern” (Anrig, 2013, p. 7). Indeed, the skills and areas of expert knowledge of [principals and counselors] are crucial in the work of a complementary leadership team; [but first,] they must abandon their power turfs and territories. They must acknowledge and utilize their unique skills and expertise for the good of students and families. (Walker, 2006, Leadership Team section, para. 1)

While connections between and among counselors through formation and professional development are only a start in reframing task-specific counselor self-efficacy aimed at the principal-counselor relationship, this opportunity for improvement should not be overlooked. Whether principals believe leadership is power through position (Price, 2011; The Wallace Foundation, 2013; Walker, 2006) power through service (Greenleaf, 1977; Greenleaf & Spears, 1998), or simply influence (Schwahn & Spady, 2010, p. viii), principal preparation programs also have a role to play. Certainly, given counselor perception of role confusion among both counselors and principals – 18 counselors yielded 21 statements in this study and the 2009 College Board-Advocacy/ASCA/NASSP study also yielded role confusion – a deeper understanding of the role of the principal and the role of the counselor is called for in preparation programs and the on-going professional development of each professional. Fostering partnerships between aspiring counselors and aspiring principals in formation and creating joint
professional development opportunities between practicing principals and counselors may do much to dispel role confusion and create and enhance a culture of collaboration between these two professionals that extends into the school climate and culture.

4.6.3 Implications for Future Research

Digging deeper. Several counselor responses were insightful enough to beg deeper levels of questioning and research. If given the opportunity with these counselors to dig deeper, additional questioning and interviewing could eliminate the limitation of a short response time and yield deeper insights and conclusions that would benefit principals and counselors. In fact, in-depth interviews with counselors as case studies, with follow-up interviews of those counselors’ principals would provide the researcher with a holistic view of both sides of the relationship and the potential for comparison of counselor perception to principal perception to inform the idea of improvement and/or enhancement of the principal-counselor relationship. In continuing the thread of case study analysis, a researcher working with a select group of counselors who have strained relationships with their principals also may yield notable results. Coaching these counselors through the real-time application of the counseling theories as interventions in the principal-counselor relationship, with assessments and journaling instruments, would provide data regarding the evolution of applied theories and their effects on the professional relationship of principals and counselors. Continued work with counselors in case study-style may yield increases in self-efficacy through Bandura’s four methods: success through mastery experiences; vicarious observation of successful models; realistic encouragement offered by a mentor; and that positive moods and healthy attitudes can provide confidence leading to self-efficacious behaviors (1977, 1994). This study suggests that an examination of the impacts of programmatic application of counseling theory (approaches and
actions) on counselor self-efficacy would yield interesting results and implications for improvement.

**Counselor conference culture.** Nearly half of the counselor responses (47%) in this study were statements counselors made attributing ownership of issues (blame or opportunity for improvement) to principals while only 8.9% of the statements were attributed to counselor ownership. Clearly, the counselors in this study attributed a higher percentage of the relationship issues (whether positive or negative) to principals than to themselves. Counselors overwhelmingly attribute issues with the principal-counselor relationship to the principal. Given the researcher’s additional anecdotal observations of the vernacular of the 2014 ASCA National Conference and its support of the power of the principal in words like *blessing*, *permission*, and *administrative approval*, and the warning not to *go rogue*, an implication for future research would be analysis of conference titles and other forms of counselor professional development for language reinforcing the culture of the all-powerful principal.

**Gender study.** One particular area worth examining is the Feminist Theory perspective that the systems in place make it difficult for principals and counselors to navigate relationship terrain. Spring’s (2011) pedagogical harem of male principal and female staff sets the stage. Further warranting a study of gender as a factor between principals and counselors is the high quantity of male principals and female counselors according to membership rolls in modern-day professional organizations (the American School Counselor Association membership is 84% female and 16% male according to S. Wicks, personal communication, March 3, 2016). “Women [who define success and achievement through community and sharing] are underrepresented in principalships [and] are overrepresented in successful principalships” (Sergiovanni, 2007, p. xii). In fact, the researcher’s anecdotal account of conference attendance at both the ASCA and PSCA
conferences was an overwhelmingly female audience of counselors. Finally, the data from respondent PA-04 reported as weaknesses (“Good ‘ol boys club” and “power struggles/female identity”) all hint that further examination of the system through the Feminist lens is warranted. Special attention may be paid to whether issues of authoritarian leadership occur when genders are reversed as they are in cases with a female principal and a male counselor.

Additionally, the application of Multicultural Counseling Theory, as yet unaddressed in this work, may yield interesting conclusions as it advocates sensitivity to gender among race, age, culture, and socio-economic stratification. In fact, as the CACREP and ASCA Standards require, attention to multicultural factors is not only a tool that may be used in addressing the principal-counselor relationship, it is an ethical mandate in the standards and mission-critical to the successful execution of duties of the professional school counselor.

**Student outcomes and school climate and culture.** Once relationship construction is complete, the next logical step is coaching to move both principal and counselor from product outcomes, through the process of building a safe, comfortable relationship, then back to a product viewpoint. Assessing the impact of a healthy relationship enjoyed by the principal-counselor team on students and student achievement provides the opportunity to analyze how principals and counselors may toggle between product and process with equal balance of attention. While student achievement outcomes may be one possible measure of success, so too may be assessments of school climate and school culture. Whether or not there exists a correlation between student achievement, positive school climate and culture, and a positive principal-counselor relationship could yield interesting results.

**Collaborative community.** Additionally, application of the theories may yield suggestions and future implications for those counselors who enjoy a positive relationship with
their principals to promote leadership teams that leverage collaboration throughout the entire school community. Analysis of positive and collaborative principal-counselor teams and the impact they have had as a model for the entire school community and mapping collaborative school communities against the quality of the principal-counselor relationships in the schools in those communities may warrant further consideration.
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TITLE:
Strengthening Collaborative School Culture through the Principal-Counselor Relationship

INVESTIGATOR:
Stephanie A. McHugh, Director of Counseling Services, Belle Vernon Area School District; ProDEL Doctoral Candidate, Duquesne University.

ADVISOR:
Dr. Connie Moss, Co-Director ProDEL Program, Department of Foundations & Leadership, Duquesne University.

SOURCE OF SUPPORT:
This study is being performed as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the doctoral degree in Educational Leadership at Duquesne University.

PURPOSE:
You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to investigate how the principal-Counselor relationship impacts the collaborative culture in the school setting. In order to qualify to participate, you must be a practicing school counselor. You will be asked to provide your responses to items in a bell-ringer write (below), your group notes, and a closing exit ticket response at the end of the workshop. These are the only requests that will be made of you. No additional requirements beyond the workshop time and activities are anticipated.

RISKS AND BENEFITS:
There are minimal risks no greater than those encountered in everyday life. You will be able to engage in the workshop to the fullest regardless of your decision to share or not your responses for the study.

COMPENSATION:
No monetary compensation or incentive will be provided and participation in the project will require no monetary cost to you. A drop box is provided for return of your responses at the end of the workshop.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Your participation in this study will be maintained and kept confident at all times and to every extent possible. This consent will be detached at the dotted line and your name will never appear on any research instruments. No identifying data will be used in the data analysis. All written materials and consent forms will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home office for three years after the completion of the research and then destroyed. Your anonymous responses will only appear in statistical data summaries.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:
You are under no obligation to participate in this study and are free to withdraw consent to participate at any time.
SUMMARY OF RESULTS:
A summary of the results of this research will be supplied to you, at no cost, upon request.

VOLUNTARY CONSENT:
I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project.

I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Stephanie McHugh or Dr. Connie Moss or Dr. Linda Goodfellow, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board.

__________________________________________________________________________  ______________
Participant's Signature                                          Date

__________________________________________________________________________  ______________
Researcher's Signature                                          Date
APPENDIX A (continued): Bell-ringer, two-minute write

Think about your own principal-counselor relationship.  
What are its strengths and weaknesses and why?

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If you consent to participate in the study, please do not put any identifying information on this sheet and drop it in the drop box, along with your detached consent form, in the back of the room when you exit the session.
Excerpt from the ASCA Conference Program: June 29, 2015

All Stakeholders Matter: Enhancing the Counselor-Principal Relationship
Stephanie A. McHugh
Belle Vernon Area School District and Duquesne University
Greater Pittsburgh Area, PA, United States.

Counselors will use relationship-building skills grounded in counseling theory to enhance their counselor-principal relationship.

Counselors' attempts to advance advocacy, collaboration, leadership, and system change agency can be thwarted or enhanced depending on the counselor-principal relationship. Counselors, gain the principal perspective, refresh your theory-based skills, and apply solid skills to enhance your counselor-principal partnership!

Excerpt from PSCA Conference Program: February 19, 2016

Strengthening the School Counselor-Principal Partnership

Mrs. Stephanie McHugh, Belle Vernon Area School District, Administrator

School counselors' attempts to advance advocacy, collaboration, leadership and system change can be thwarted or enhanced depending on the school counselor/Principal relationship. Take a look at the issue from the principal’s perspective. Refresh your theory-based skills, and apply solid skills to enhance your school counselor-principal partnership. Gain a greater understanding of principal anthropology, leadership theory and counseling theory, and learn to apply counseling skills to principal collaboration.

COCOA ROOM 5 D4 Audience: All