SCHOOL LEADERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS AS LEADERS AS PART OF THE DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TEAM AND IMPACT ON THE DISTRICT WIDE CHANGE PROCESS

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Acknowledgments

One of the last class reflections I wrote used the imagery of a frog sitting on a lily pad in a pond. That frog was about to embark on a journey of self-discovery leaving his comfortable predictable life. The frog knew he was outgrowing the pond and was ready to start a new journey. As a student about to complete the Educational Leadership Program at The Sage Colleges, a journey is the only way this endeavor can be described.

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Abstract

This exploration focuses on school leaders' perceptions of school counselors as leaders and their involvement with district wide change. This study explores school counselor leadership, school counselors' role in district level change, and barriers to school counselor leadership. This is a qualitative study utilizing grounded theory design. Eighteen participants were interviewed that included school leaders and school counselors in urban, suburban, and rural school districts located in Upstate and Central New York. This study found that all school leaders in this study perceived school counselors as leaders. This study also found that school counselors are primarily involved in building level change and consulted with administration regarding district wide change as needed. Barriers to school counselors becoming leaders include internal, external, and organizational barriers. Barriers to school counselors serving on the district leadership team include membership in the teacher's union, little or no support from administration, and lack of flexibility due to amount of counselor job duties. This study concludes that school counselors would benefit from having more time in their schedules and flexibility in their role to function in a leadership capacity. School counselor leadership is determined more by the size of the school district than if the school is an urban, suburban, or rural school district. Finally, this study concludes that school counselors need to educate themselves and others on school counselor leadership. Keywords include school counselor leadership, district level change, and barriers to leadership.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Overview of Prior Studies

This is a qualitative study utilizing a grounded theory emerging design. Superintendents, principals, directors of guidance, and school counselors were participants from two urban, two suburban, and two rural schools. This study explored school leaders' perceptions of school counselors as leaders, role in the district leadership team, and impact on district wide change. The findings were based on the data and emergent themes are identified and discussed. Participants of the study included superintendents, principals, directors of guidance, and school counselors from urban, suburban, and rural school districts. This study concludes with recommendations for school counselors and suggestions for future studies.

This section provides a brief history of the school counselor field. A discussion of school counselors' roles is included. Past research and barriers to school counselors' leadership are presented. This section is important for gaining an understanding of the various roles school counselors serve and confusion that may be caused by those roles. This section is also important to develop a foundation to consider why school counselors as leaders are a topic of interest in the literature and research.

The literature shows that school counselors have been underutilized and, at times, given job duties that are not related to their role (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009; DeVoss and Andrews, 2006; Gysbers and Moore, 1981; Wittmer and Clark, 2007). The research shows that school counselors possess many of the skills needed to be effective leaders (Dollarhide, 2003; Hoyle, English, and Steffy, 2005; Lofton, 2010; Reeves, 2002; Stone and Clark, 2001; Wojeski, 2011). School counselors' roles and responsibilities are in a continued process of development. They are uniquely positioned to be a benefit as leaders, provide insight as team members, and influence the change process. School counselors' roles are continuing to develop and change

based on the needs of the school districts and society. The development of the American School Counselors' National Standards for School Counselors served as a call for school counselors to become school leaders (ASCA, 2005). This study has been encouraged by that call for school counselors to become leaders.

The history of school counseling, beginning with vocational counseling, and the potential that school counselors would perform duties not relevant to their training and skill set, has caused an ongoing issue of role confusion for school counselors (DeVoss & Andrews. 2006; Fitch 1936; Gysbers & Moore, 1981; Myers 1923; Wittmer & Clark, 2007). School counselors have regularly worked at defining their specific role through the development and implementation of comprehensive guidance programs (ASCA, 2005).

Over the last ten years, school counselors have been called to serve in leadership roles (ASCA, 2005; Schwallie-Giddis, Maat, & Pak, 2003; Sink & MacDonald, 1998). Research has been conducted showing that the training school counselors receive and the skills they develop are skills that many school leaders possess and utilize (Dollarhide, 2003; Hoyle, English, & Steffy, 2005; Lofton, 2010; Reeves, 2002; Stone & Clark, 2001; Wojeski, 2011).

There were two schools of thought regarding the function of the school counselor during the early history and development of the school counseling field. School counselors were identified as vocational counselors or educational guidance counselors (Brewer, 1918; Gysbers, 2001). The vocational counselors' focus was preparing students for work. Vocational counselors worked with students to ensure they were prepared for the work force (Brewer, 1918; Gysbers, 2001). Vocational counselors would help students find work and obtain jobs (Brewer, 1918; Gysbers, 2001). Educational guidance was focused on student success and academic growth (Gysbers, 2001). Educational guidance counselors worked with students to become goal

oriented while focusing on their academic growth (Gysbers, 2001). Obtaining employment was not the priority as with vocational guidance.

In the 1930's the clinical model of guidance influenced the role of the school counselor. The clinical model of guidance was developed as a result of the mental health movement and focused on students' personal issues, adjustment problems, and family issues (Gysbers, 2001). Personal counseling began to emerge and become part of the profession (Gysbers, 2001). The focus began to shift towards adjusting to individual concerns (Gysbers, 2001).

In the 1950's the focus was on college preparedness with school counselors' roles being influenced by national needs and concerns (Gysbers, 2001; Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2013). School counselors focused on national needs during the 1960's, 1970's, 1980's and 1990's (Gysbers, 2001). The national needs included social issues, school violence, family issues, and mental health concerns (Baker, 2000; Gysbers, 2001; Krumboltz & Kolpin, 2003; Wingfiled et al., 2010). Social problems, mental health concerns, familial issues, and violence in schools made it difficult to define the roles of school counselors due to the many different types of services offered by guidance programs and provided by school counselors (Gysbers, 2001; Wingfield et al., 2010).

The nature of the school counselor role is a collaborative role that provides counselors with the ability to work with faculty, administration, students, parents, and the community (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006). Daily, school counselors utilize skills that enable them to work collaboratively within the school and the community.

The area of school counselor leadership in research is growing. Research has focused on several areas of school counselors and leadership. This research includes how school counselors' view their leadership behaviors, distributed leadership and school counselors, leadership

practices of school counselors, and relationships between school counselors' leadership practices and the implementation of school counseling programs (Janson, 2009; Janson, Stone, & Clark, 2009; Mason & McMahon, 2009; Mason, 2009). Janson (2009) studied how high school counselors view their leadership behaviors. Janson et al. (2009) researched distributed leadership and school counselors. Mason and McMahon (2009) explored the leadership practices of school counselors. Mason (2009) studied school counselor leadership practices and school counseling program implementation.

Literature about the leadership of school counselors suggests that school counselors need to actively educate others on their role while pursuing and participating in leadership opportunities. The literature shows there is a need for school leaders to learn about school counselor leadership and that school administration literature is limited on the topic of school counselor leadership (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Mason, 2010). Amatea and Clark (2005) found that school leaders are not aware of school counselor leadership. They identify the importance of school counselors "taking a more proactive role both in preparing themselves to assume leadership roles in the school and in reshaping the role expectations of administration" (Amatea & Clark, 2005, p. 26). Mason (2010) recommends that "school administrators appoint school counselors to the school leadership team, gather data on interventions, and report on how their work connects to the school improvement plan" (p. 283). Dollarhide, Gibson and Saginak (2008) identified that successful school counselor leaders took responsibility as leaders, had clear district defined goals, self-defined their role as leaders, secured support from others, grew from resistance, and were willing to expand their leadership skills. School counselors who were not leaders did not take responsibility for their actions, had no control over district level goals, had

others define their role, had no support, and did not expand their leadership skills (Dollarhide et al., 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Research on school counselor leadership has identified several areas that need to be addressed by future research. This study is intended to add to the body of research on school counselor leadership by providing information to school counselors and school counselor educators regarding leadership and leadership practices. This study attempts to include input from school counselors, explore school leaders' perceptions of school counselor leadership, and learn about the roles of school counselors in the district change process

Past research has identified that previous models regarding school counselors as leaders were developed without input from school counselors (Curry & DeVoss, 2009). Research in the area of school administrators' perceptions of school counselors as leaders and the change process is limited. Mason (2009) concluded that "more research needs to be conducted to gain insight into the process of school counselors becoming leaders" (p. 114). Past research has focused on leadership practices of school counselors, perceptions of the roles of school counselors, school counselors' views of their leadership behavior, and school counselor leadership efforts (Mason & McMahon, 2009; Janson, 2009, Dollarhide, et al., 2008). There have been several studies of distributed leadership, how distributed leadership supports school success, and school counselors and distributed leadership (e.g. Burniske & Barlow, 2004, Harris & Spillane, 2008, Janson, et al., 2009).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore school leaders' perceptions of school counselors as part of the district leadership team and the counselors' roles in district wide

change. This research will explore the role of school counselors as leaders and how they can contribute unique input to the change process in the educational settings. This chapter began with a presentation of background information. The research questions used to address the problem of study will be introduced in this chapter. A definition of terms will be presented and this chapter will end with a brief summary.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this study and develop the interview questions asked of participants. The interview questions developed were used to collect data to address the research questions. The research questions provided a direction and focus for creation of the School Leadership Interview Protocol and the School Counselor Interview Protocol used to interview school leaders and school counselors who participated in this study. The research questions provided a framework to gather data that explored school leaders' perceptions of school counselors as leaders, who are part of the district leadership team, and their impact on district wide change process. The research questions regarding change provided insight into how school counselors participated in the school change process and explored how school counselors can be used in the change process. The research questions explored the barriers school counselors faced to be leaders and the obstacles school counselors encountered to serve as members of the district leadership team.

1. What are the perceptions of school leaders regarding school counselors as leaders?
2. What role or roles do school counselors serve in the district wide change process?
3. How do the roles of school counselors as leaders differ in urban, suburban, and rural school districts?

4. What barriers and/or obstacles keep school counselors from functioning in a leadership role?
5. What barriers or obstacles hinder school counselors from being part of a district leadership team?

Significance of the Study

This research adds to past studies on school counselors and the growing field of school counselors and leadership. This study considers school counselor leadership, distributed leadership, and change. This study explores barriers to leadership in school counseling adding to research on school counselor barriers to leadership. Findings of this study may guide the recommendations for the practice of school counselors regarding school counselor leadership.

. Data from this study provide information promoting more effective use of school counselors in leadership roles. The data suggest actions school counselors can utilize to increase their leadership roles in the school district. This study promotes a better understanding of the role of the school counselor as a leader within schools by providing recommendations for the future practice of school counselors. The data from this study encourages understanding and information for the further training of graduate students in the skills necessary to become leaders within the school districts they work.

Definition of Terms

The terms defined below will be used throughout this study. The terms may be defined differently within some school districts. The terms provide a common language used throughout this study.

Building Leadership Team (BLT) – The Building Leadership Team is a team of individuals comprised of building leaders, elementary, middle school, or high school, that

collaboratively work to implement district change initiatives at the building level, building level program development, and/or building level concerns.

Distributed Leadership – Distributed leadership is leadership that is spread out among more than one leader (Janson, et al., 2009).

District Leadership Team (DLT) – A DLT is a team of individuals comprised of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, principals, assistant principals, directors of guidance, other district administration based on the size of the school district, and potentially school counselors who collaborate on district level change initiatives, program development, and/or concerns.

School Counselor Educators – School counselor educators are educators at the college level who train school counselors.

School Leaders –For this study, school leaders will be superintendents, principals, assistant principals, and directors of guidance, P-12.

Limitations of the Study

This study included the opinions and perspectives of superintendents, principals, directors of guidance, and school counselors who participated in this study. Even though all participants volunteered, it is possible that they may have not been entirely forthcoming with responses due to possible concerns of upsetting other participants from the school district with whom they work. It may also be possible that participant responses may have been made to please or gain approval from this researcher. Another limitation to this study is that not all school counselors participated as full members or were aware of a district leadership team in the school district that they worked. This study explored school counselors' roles on the district leadership team and school counselors not fully participating as a member of the district leadership team could

potentially limit the scope of this study by not providing the data needed to understand how they function as part of the district leadership team.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was delimited to urban, suburban, and rural school districts in Upstate and Central New York. The sample size was small and may not generalize to school districts in other parts of New York or other areas of the United States.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of past studies and background regarding the changing roles of school counselors and research exploring school counselors as leaders in the educational setting. The chapter noted how this research will add to the field of study on school counselor leadership. Research questions were presented that provided the basis for this exploratory study. The significance of the study and a definition of terms were also provided.

Chapter two provides an in depth overview from the literature about the history of school counseling and school counselors' roles. The chapter will present literature that explains the changing role of school counselors, misuse of school counselor roles, and the school counselor leadership movement for school counselors to become school leaders.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

This chapter will review literature that focuses on school counselor roles, school counselors and change, leadership, and barriers to school counselor leadership. The sections of this chapter include the history of school counseling, school counselor roles, school counselors and change, distributed leadership, school counselors as leaders, and barriers to school counselors. Understanding the history of school counseling, the various roles of school counselors, and the transformation of the school counseling field from the past to the present may aid in understanding the difficulties school counselors face in being leaders in school. Literature will be presented about school counselors' roles and presents information about the confusion that exists with school counselors' roles in the education field. The chapter will include a discussion of the role of school counselors and change. This presentation will include a brief description of several change theorists and their models for leadership and change. A definition of distributed leadership will be included that relates to the leadership capacity of a group of individuals functioning as leaders. A review of the literature regarding school counselors as leaders will be presented. Finally, the barriers and obstacles school counselors face to becoming leaders in schools will be explored.

History of School Counseling

Learning about the past can aid school counselors in the present as well as prepare them for the challenges of the future (Gysbers, 2001). The role of school counselors has been influenced by specific historical events, societal concerns, and governmental programs (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006, Gysbers, 2001, Wingfield, Reese, & West-Olatunji, 2010). DeVoss and Andrews (2006) identify several of these influences that have shaped the development of the school counseling field as the industrial revolution and the exploitation of children, immigration

and migration, the educational reform movement, the evolution of counseling theory, and the national agenda.

During the early 1900's, school counseling was called vocational guidance (ASCA, 2005, Gysbers, 2001, Krumboltz & Kolpin, 2003; Wingfield et al., 2010). Vocational guidance developed out of the social reform movement of the late 1800's and public outrage due to child labor (Krumboltz & Kolpin, 2003; Wingfield et al., 2010). Brewer (1918) explained the role of vocational guidance in education as a way to help people prepare for an occupation of their choice. The vocational guidance counselors' main goal included ensuring people were successful in the occupation of their choice. Brewer (1918) explained that the role of the vocational counselor was to help students prepare for the workforce.

During the early 1900's, there were two different perspectives regarding the role of vocational guidance. One perspective was that individuals were preparing only to work (Gysbers, 2001). The other perspective focused on improving the current working conditions in industry while preparing students to make educated choices regarding occupation (Gysbers, 2001). These two perspectives grew out of a movement that worked to change the "negative social conditions associated with the Industrial Revolution" (Gysbers, 2001, p. 2).

In the early 1920's, there was a shift in focus from vocational guidance to educational guidance. Brewer (1918) defined educational guidance as being goal-oriented while focusing on working toward the academic growth of students. Obtaining employment was not the goal of educational guidance. The goal of educational guidance was to support the academic growth of the students (Brewer, 1918).

In the 1930's, the clinical model of guidance began to develop due to the mental health movement (Gysbers, 2001). During this time period, the educational guidance model continued

to be the main focus of guidance counseling. Even with continued focus and reliance on the educational guidance model, there was still emphasis on the vocational guidance model. Vocation remained a focus in schools due to the passing of the Further Development of Vocational Education Act in 1936 and the Vocational Education Act of 1946 (Gysbers, 2001). These two acts provided "funding for a federal office and state supervision of guidance" which supported and sustained vocational guidance programs (Gysbers, 2001, p. 99).

During the 1940's, guidance counseling was influenced by psychotherapeutic procedures and psychometrics (Gysbers, 2001, Krumboltz & Kolpin, 2003; Wingfield et al., 2010). Carl Rogers was a main influence on the psychotherapeutic procedures with the publishing of his book *Counseling and Psychotherapy* in 1942 (Gysbers, 2001, Krumboltz & Kolpin, 2003; Wingfield et al., 2010). The influence of Carl Rogers on the school counseling field began to shift the focus of school counselors from an educational guidance focus to the mental health needs of the students they serve (Schmidt, 1999). Even with the shift towards the mental health needs of students, educational guidance still remained the main focus (Gysbers, 2001, Krumboltz & Kolpin, 2003; Wingfield et al., 2010).

In the 1950's, guidance counseling was influenced by the National Defense Education Act of 1958. The purpose of the National Defense Education Act was to identify and counsel students who were talented in science (Herr, 2001). School counselors during the late 1950's directed their focus on encouraging students to pursue math and science (Baker, 2000; Gysbers, 2001; Krumboltz & Kolpin, 2003; Wingfiled et al., 2010).

Through the 1960's, 1970's, 1980's and 1990's, guidance in the schools continued to respond to national needs and concerns that included social issues, school violence, family issues, and mental health concerns (Baker, 2000; Gysbers, 2001; Krumboltz & Kolpin, 2003;

Wingfiled et al., 2010). Guidance in the schools was shaped by the many social problems students faced. Substance abuse, violence, mental health concerns, and changing family patterns are some of the social issues that continue to define the role of guidance in schools (Gysbers, 2001, Krumboltz & Kolpin, 2003; Wingfiled et al., 2010).

In 1997, the ASCA began the development of standards to define the role of the school counselor (Schwallie-Giddis et al, 2003). The movement to define the role of the school counselor was started by the national publication *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 (Schwallie-Giddis et al, 2003). *A National at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983) was a report on the quality of education in America by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (Gardner, 1983). This report did not discuss or explore school counselors as any part of the solutions to the issues schools faced (Schwallie-Giddis et al, 2003). This provided a "wake-up call" to the school counseling profession due to school counselors not being considered a part of the solution to the issues schools faced and the need for school counselors to be seen as more than an "ancillary service" (Schwallie-Giddis et al, 2003, p. 170).

One initiative to help the recognition of the school counseling profession was begun by The American School Counselor Association (ASCA). In1997, the ASCA began to develop standards for school counseling (Schwallie-Giddie et al, 2003). The ASCA also launched the exploration to determine what students needed prior to completing 12th grade as a way of developing standards for school counseling (Schwallie-Giddis et al, 2003, p. 170).

In 2001, The American School Counseling Governing Board "agreed that the development of a national school counseling program model was the next logical step to build on the National Standards" (ASCA, 2005, p. 9). In 2003, the ASCA developed a National Model

for School Counseling Programs with input from leaders in the field to create a framework for school counseling (ASCA, 2005).

School Counselor Roles

This section discusses the school counselors' roles throughout the history of school counseling. School counselors' changing roles will be explored along with confusion about their role. This section will end with suggestions from the literature regarding how school counselors can overcome role confusion.

In the early 1900's, teachers provided vocational guidance services (Gysbers, 2001, ASCA, 2005). There was no organizational structure for vocational counseling or formal training for teachers (Gysbers, 2001). Teachers would work with students to help them discover their strengths and aid them with obtaining employment. There were two major concerns of the 1900's for vocational counselors. These concerns grew out of teachers being assigned the task of providing vocational counseling along with their teaching duties (Gysbers, 2001). Vocational counselors being responsible for duties that had no relation to vocational counseling were one concern (Myers, 1923). The second concern was that vocational counseling did not require any specific counseling skills (Myers, 1923). Fitch (1936) expressed concerns that a counselor could be viewed as a "handy man" (p. 761) and given tasks that did not fall into the school counselor's role or tasks that others did not have the time to complete.

Pupil personnel work became the focus of the 1930's (Gysbers, 2001). The new structure for this focus included attendance officers, visiting teachers, school nurses, school physicians, and vocational counselors (Gysbers, 2001). This model continued through to the 1960s and became known as pupil personnel services. These services included guidance, health, psychological services, school social work, and attendance (Gysbers, 2001; Wingfield et al.,

2010). With the addition of guidance, health, psychological services, social work, and attendance, pupil personnel work evolved into pupil personnel services. Pupil personnel services became the dominant model used from the 1960's through the 1980's.

Since the early 1900's, school counselors' roles, functions and identity have not been clear (Bardhoshi & Duncan, 2009). Gysbers (2001) stated, "during the 1960s to the 1980s, guidance remained an undefined program" (p. 7). School counselors continued to find themselves in mainly supportive remedial roles within a pupil personnel service framework.

As the 20th Century ended, comprehensive guidance programs were implemented and began to grow nationwide. Comprehensive guidance programs identify the role of school counselors, which includes working with students and building skills in their own personal, social, educational, and career development (Sink & MacDonald, 1998). Sink and MacDonald (1998) stated "the work of establishing comprehensive guidance programs nationwide has advanced significantly during the past two decades" (p.89). Through the development of comprehensive guidance programs, non-guidance related activities including administrative and clerical tasks began to be deemphasized (Sink & MacDonald, 1998). During the 1990's, the ASCA recommended that the goal of school counseling was to help students grow into responsible, productive citizens (ASCA, 2005).

Role confusion for school counselors has been an issue since the early 1900's. Role confusion impacts the ability of the school counselor to be effective on a daily basis, limits their credibility, and how others view the school counseling profession (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006). Since the start of the vocational and educational guidance counseling movement there have been, and continue to be, concerns regarding the roles and duties school counselors have (Brewer, 1918). The literature discusses the causes of school counselor role confusion as being a function

of school counselors completing duties that are not related to their role (Stone & Clark, 2001). The literature also identifies school leaders' lack of understanding of the school counselor position as a source of counselor role confusion (Paisley & Borders, 1995). School counselors have a lack of control over their daily work activities which are dictated by the school administration who may not understand the role of a school counselor and have competing expectations of the school counselor (Paisley & Borders, 1995). School counselors "are often viewed as peripheral to the main function of schooling and academic achievement" (Stone & Clark, 2001, p. 46). Ameta and Clark (2005) point out that school counselor leadership is not a topic discussed in the school administration literature. Without a clear definition of role, school counselors' roles will be determined by the agenda of the administration and faculty (House & Hayes, 2002).

School Counselors and the Change Process

One of the change initiatives for the New York State Education System took place in April, 2012. The New NY Educational Reform Commission was created and included educational leaders, community representatives, and business leaders. The Commission's charge was to recommend reforms to the New York state education system. The goal of these changes is to improve student performance. As stated in The Commission's mission statement (Governor's Press Office, 2012):

> The Commission will examine the current structure of the state's education system through the lens of what is in the best interest of students. The Commission shall comprehensively review and assess New York State's education system, including its structure, operation and processes, with the goal of uncovering successful models and strategies and developing long term

> efficiencies that will create significant savings while improving student achievement and providing students a high quality education. The Commission will explore best practices and models from other states and nations that could be implemented in New York (para. 3).

Recommendation Two of the Education Action Plan: New NY Education Reform Commission Preliminary Recommendations is to "restructure schools by integrating social, health and other services through community schools to improve student performance" (Parsons, 2013, p.14). The goal of recommendation two of the Education Action Plan is to improve communication and coordination between the state and local agencies to ensure that students receive the needed social services and educational supports in an efficient organized manner to ensure that students are college and career ready (Parsons, 2013).

The ASCA (2005) recommended the systemic delivery of individual student planning to "help students establish personal goals and develop future plans" (p. 41). Individual student planning includes supporting students by working with them to become college and career ready (ASCA, 2005).

The literature in the area of systems change and school counselors gives attention to social justice change at the systems level (House & Hayes, 2002; Issacs, 2003; Lee, 2007; Ratts, Dekruyf & Chen-Hayes, 2007; Rowell, 2006; Singh, Urbano, Haston & McMahon, 2010; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Ward, 2009; Ware & Galassi, 2006). The social justice change literature suggests that school counselors expand their role from working with students' individual issues and focus on the larger external forces that have a negative impact on students' success (Kisclica & Robinson, 2001; Lee, 2007).

The literature also suggests the use of data to increase academic success for all students (House & Hayes, 2002; Issacs, 2003; Lee, 2007; Ratts, Dekruyf & Chen-Hayes, 2007; Rowell, 2006; Singh, Urbano, Haston & McMahon, 2010; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Ward, 2009; Ware & Galassi, 2006). Studies indicate that collecting and analyzing data by school counselors and using the findings can positively impact student academic success and show program effectiveness (House & Hayes, 2002; Issacs, 2003; Rowell, 2006; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Ward, 2009; Ware & Galassi, 2006). House and Hayes (2002) discuss the school counselors' use of monitoring student progress data of underrepresented students to develop and direct support efforts and interventions to increase success. Issacs (2003) suggests that school counselors disaggregate data to make individual student or group student comparisons to monitor progress over time. The literature also suggests that school counselors are in the position to obtain and utilize data that can promote or inhibit student success (Ameta & Clark, 2005; House & Martin, 1998; Stone & Clark, 2001). The literature also shows that not all school counselors are using data as a way to improve student achievement. Dahir and Stone (2009) state "school counselors have not universally aligned data-informed practice and accountability with equity and improving student achievement" (pg. 13).

The literature on school counselors and change suggests that the school counseling field needs to define how school counselors can work towards change (Colbert, Vernon-Jones, & Pransky, 2006; Perusse & Goodnough, 2001). Colbert et al. (2006) discuss that school counselor educators continue to place importance on traditional school counselor training models. The traditional school counselor training models place more emphasis on individual and group counseling than working on school wide change (Colbert et al., 2006, p. 72). Perusse and Goodnough (2001) suggest that school counselor educators "who believe that the role of the

school counselors is primarily that of the mental health professional may prefer to teach about counseling interventions rather than teach about systemic school wide change" (pp.106-107). Perusse and Goodnough (2004) suggest that a lack of agreement between school counselors and principals on what are appropriate or inappropriate tasks for school counselors continues to hinder how they are utilized in the school. The ASCA's (2005) recommends that the focus for school counselors as leaders is to continuously promote student academic success. The ASCA (2005) recommends identifying issues that need change and the development of change strategies to foster student academic success.

The literature on change and the school counselor focuses on utilizing data to promote the academic success of students. The ASCA (2005) identified the importance of utilizing the ASCA National Model to develop a comprehensive guidance program to foster academic success and work to identify areas that need to change and develop strategies to implement change. Research has shown that school counselors are able to obtain and use data to evaluate the effectiveness of programing and promote student success (House & Hayes, 2002; Issacs, 2003; Lee, 2007; Ratts et al., 2007; Singh, Urbano, Haston & McMahon, 2010; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Ward, 2009; Ware & Galassi, 2006). The literature also implies that school counselors need direction to understand how they can work towards change in the education system (Colbert et al., 2006; Perusse & Goodnough, 2001).

Janson et al. (2009) recommended that school counselors become effective leaders by educating themselves on leadership behaviors, practices, models, and theories. Colbert, Vernon-Jones, and Pransky (2006) stated that the "new role for school counselors includes a focus on addressing school system factors that influence student development" (p. 81). The literature

suggests that effective school counselors need to develop into effective leaders and focus on systemic change (Janson et al., 2009; Colbert et al., 2006).

This section presents three models of system change that may be informative to school counselor leaders. They include Kotter and Cohen's (2002) eight stage model for change, Bridges' (2009) three stage model about organizational transition, and Schein's (2010) framework for culture.

Kotter and Cohen (2002) described an eight stage model for change. To have a clear understanding of their model one needs to understand what is meant by see, feel, and change. The basic premise of see, feel, change in their model is that people need to see change "in a way that is as concrete as possible touchable, feelable, seeable" (Kotter & Cohen, 2002, p. 181). Kotter and Cohen's (2002) stages are:

- Increase Urgency – Increase urgency by increasing awareness to a point where people in the organization feel the need that change has to happen. They begin to talk to others and develop a "we must do something" (p. v) attitude.
- Build the Guiding Team – A team of respected goal directed people who have the ability to effect change utilizing trusting working relationship to guide the change at hand.
- Get the Right Vision – "The guiding team develops the right vision and strategy for the change effort" (p. 7).
- Communicate for Buy-in – The leader(s) communicate in a way that facilitates peoples' behavior to change as they buy into the new vision and begin working towards change.
- Empower Action – As change occurs and barriers to change are overcome, people feel empowered and begin to act on the vision. Momentum begins to build within the organization

- Create Short-Term Wins – To continue building momentum, and overcome feelings of cynicism and pessimism, small successes need to be realized.
- Don't Let Up – "People make wave after wave of changes until the vision is fulfilled" (p. 7).
- Make Change Stick – Changes made need to be sustained by overcoming tradition and making change stick by creating a new culture based on the vision.

William Bridges (2009) developed a three stage model for aiding how an organization navigates through transition. Bridges (2009) explained that the leader's role is to lead change. Bridges (2009) stated that "transition is psychological; it is a three-phase process that people go through as they internalize and come to terms with the details of the new situation that the change brings about" (p. 3). Bridges (2009) three phases are:

1) Ending, Letting Go - The organization needs to let go of the old ways of doing things and shed the old identity that it had. This is an ending. People in the organization need to grieve their losses.
2) The Neutral Zone - This is an "in-between time when the old is gone but the new isn't fully operational" (p. 5). Direction and communication from leaders is essential during this phase.
3) The New Beginning - A new identity is developed. The organization feels a new sense of purpose and the change made begins to work

Edgar H. Schein (2010) provided a framework for change utilizing organizational culture. Schein (2010) suggested the need to understand the development of organizational culture by identifying the connection between leadership and culture, and examining the process of cultural change within an organization. Schein (2010) identified three levels of culture that

provide a glimpse into the beliefs of an organization and provide a basis for the underlying assumptions. These underlying assumptions form the basis for how and why the organization operates the way it does.

Distributed Leadership

Janson, Stone, and Clark (2009) define distributed leadership as leadership that is spread to more than one leader. As times change and the education system evolves, the old leadership structure does not meet the needs for student success in the world of today (Harris & Spillane, 2008, p. 31). A distributed approach has "arisen because of increased external demands and pressure on schools" (Harris & Spillane, 2008, p. 31). One of the benefits of distributed leadership is that it allows for the individual team members' talents to be used more effectively (Janson, Stone, and Clark, 2009). The distributed leadership perspective provides a framework to aid in the understanding of how school counselors participate in leadership practices (Janson et al, 2009). Burniske and Barlow (2004) describe two distributed leadership models that have been used in schools. Their models are "the co-principal model, a model using small groups of parents and teachers who work with the principal, and a model organizing the school like a company and the principal acts like the CEO" (p.4). Burniske and Barlow (2004) state that when using a distributed leadership model there must be a shared vision paired with achievable goals for student achievement.

Ameta and Clark (2005) explain that counselor educators need to work with school counselors so they can understand how their skill set can be utilized as part of a leadership team. One of the issues school counselors face is that the school administration literature does not discuss school counselor leadership (Ameta & Clark, 2005; House & Martin, 1998). The

literature suggests that school counselors prepare themselves to take leadership roles and "reshape the role expectations of administrators" (Ameta & Clark, 2005, p. 26).

Janson et al. (2009) identified three domains where school counselors can serve as part of a leadership team. They are staff development, large group guidance, and college readiness and advising. School counselors, as part of a leadership team, focusing on staff development can co-develop and co-facilitate workshops and trainings for educators focusing on educational issues, student achievement, and/or areas of importance for the school district (Janson et al., 2009). School counselors can work with administrators to identify and address student behavioral issues and implement programing for both faculty and parents as an intervention to address those concerns (Janson et al., 2009). As part of large group guidance, school counselors can work with teachers and other school faculty to work towards specific academic goals and student success (Janson et al., 2009). Working as a distributed leadership team, school counselors, administrators, educators, and parents can promote college readiness by "building student college aspirations while also facilitating the application process" (Janson et al., 2009, p. 103).

School Counselors as Leaders

The ASCA National Model is "comprehensive, preventative, developmental and designed to support the academic mission of the school" (DeVoss & Andrew, 2006, p. 22). The ASCA National Model (2005) describes school counselors as student advocates, leaders, collaborators, and systems change agents. DeVoss and Andrews (2006) described the school counselors' role as that of a leader and agent of systemic change. School counselor leaders will need to take a broader view of a particular problem and begin developing system level solutions (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006). DeVoss and Andrews (2006) state "a systems perspective takes into account a broader view of a particular problem than a situation perspective and generates

system level responses" (p. 43). One of the ways that school counselors can support the mission of the school is by accepting the leadership and management responsibility of the school counseling program (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006). By accepting leadership and the management responsibility of the school, school counselors develop and maintain the school counseling program working to support the needs of the larger school system (DeVoss &Andrews, 2006). They also "partner, collaborate, and team with colleagues in the interest of supporting the local, state, and national mission of the public educational system" (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006, p. 26).

House and Sears (2002) identify a key role for school counselors is to advocate for high achievement of all students and work toward educational reform. School counselor leaders will need to advocate for the academic success of all students and work to remove barriers to student success (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006). They will need to analyze and utilize multiple sources of school data to gain insight and identify areas to target for systemic change (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006, p. 28). School counselors need to work toward systemic change by understanding and "influencing the social, cultural, and political dynamics that form the basis for academic success" (House & Sears, 2002, p. 155).

The ASCA (2005) describes leadership as part of four major themes of school counseling with collaboration, teaming, advocacy, and systemic change. DeVoss and Andrews (2006, p. 43) support the need for research on school counselor leadership as an important step for the transformation of the school counseling profession to meet the needs of the students of the 21st century. Mason and McMahon (2009) pointed out the need for more research to explore how school counselors characterize their leadership practices. There is a need for "further exploration of leadership concepts specific to school counseling in order to strengthen school counselor

practice" (Mason & McMahon, 2009, p. 107). Mason and McMahon (2009) point out that "little is known about the practices of school counselor leadership at the local school level" (p. 107).

Janson (2009) found that there was diversity in the ways that school counselors functioned as leaders. The literature suggests that there is no specific leadership theory or model to guide school counselor leadership and that school counselors function as leaders differently based on the context of the school they work (Janson, 2009). Janson suggests that school counselor leadership may best be taught by exposing school counselors to leadership literature from multiple disciplines. Past research shows school counselor age, experience, school population, and licensure predict leadership practices in school counselors (Mason & McMahon, 2009). Older, more experienced school counselors with years of experience in their particular school district view themselves more as leaders compared to younger inexperienced counselors (Mason & McMahon, 2009). School counselor development may be a factor as to why older more experienced school counselors view themselves as leaders compared to younger inexperienced school counselors (Mason & McMahon, 2009). Mason and McMahon (2009) suggest that older school counselors "may have a more crystallized sense of their own leadership identity" (p. 113). Older more experienced school counselors may also have a better understanding of their role and a better understanding of school counselor leadership practices (Mason & McMahon, 2009).

Another issue impacting school counselors concerns school counselor leadership models being developed without input from practicing school counselors (Janson, 2009). The school and administrations' view of the school counselors impacts how school counselors lead (Janson, 2009). If school counselors are viewed as leaders within a particular school district, then they are more apt to be in leadership type positions (Dollarhide et al., 2008). Research shows

successful school counselor leaders have clear focused goals, self-defined roles, secured support from others, grew from resistance, and were willing to expand leadership skills (Dollarhide et al., 2008).

Barriers to School Counselors Serving as Leaders

Mason and McMahon (2009) state that the research examining school counselor leadership is limited; however, several studies have addressed barriers to school counselors serving as leaders. Janson, et al. (2009), acknowledge that school counselors are in the perfect position to act as leaders. Even being in the perfect position to act as a leader, a large number of school counselors are not serving this role within their school districts (Janson, et al., 2009). Janson, Stone, and Clark (2009) identify school counselor role confusion, limited opportunity for leadership due to strained relationships with principals, and lack of leadership training as barriers to school counselors serving as leaders. Shillingford and Lambie (2010) discuss internal and external barriers that have slowed the evolution of the school counseling profession. These include role confusion, demands put on school counselors by administrators, and the lack of success of changing the current model of what a guidance program does (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). Potential solutions to overcoming these barriers include clarifying the role confusion, having a clear vision of the guidance program, and enlisting support through collaboration among all stakeholders (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010, p 209).

Summary

The five components of this literature review were: the school counselors' role, counselors and change, school leaders' perceptions of school counselors, distributed leadership, and barriers to leadership. The next chapter will describe the methodology used to plan and implement this study. The methodology describes the research questions that will be explored,

how the participants were chosen, the interview protocol that was utilized, data collection, and analysis of data.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore school leaders' perceptions of school counselors as leaders as part of the district leadership team and the counselors' role in district change. This study utilized face to face interviews of school leaders that included superintendents, principals, directors of guidance, and school counselors to explore the perceptions of the school leaders of school counselors as leaders.

The district leadership team includes more than one leader (Janson et al., 2009). A typical leadership team in this study included the superintendent, assistant superintendent, principal, and assistant principal, director of guidance, and business official. Not all school districts who participated in this study had all of these administrative positions. The composition of the leadership team varied from school district to school district. This study included interviews with school district leader participants. Participants in this study were from school districts in Upstate and Central New York.

Research Questions

Two interview protocols were developed and utilized to explore the research questions for this study. One interview protocol was developed for school leaders consisting of superintendents, principals, and directors of guidance. The other interview protocol was developed to be utilized with school counselors. The research questions explored by this study were:

1. What are the perceptions of school leaders regarding school counselors as leaders?
2. What role or roles do school counselors serve in the district wide change process?
3. How do the roles of school counselors as leaders differ in urban, suburban, and rural school districts?

4. What barriers and/or obstacles keep school counselors from functioning in a leadership role?

5. What barriers or obstacles hinder school counselors from being part of a district leadership team?

Research Design

The design utilized for this qualitative study was a grounded theory design. More specifically, the design is an emerging design. Creswell (2012) stated:

> Emerging design in grounded theory research is the process in which the researcher collects data, immediately analyzes it rather than waiting until all data is collected, and then bases the decision about what data to collect next on this analysis. (Creswell, 2012, p. 620)

Charmaz (2006) stated "grounded theory methods consist of systemic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves" (p. 2). Urquhart (2013) discussed grounded theory method and how "the focus is on building theory and how it encourages scholarship and innovation in all disciplines" (p.11).

This study used an emerging design in grounded theory to construct a theory based on the conceptualization of the data collected and analyzed. The rationale for utilizing this design was because it provided flexibility in the development of a theory that emerged out of the analyzed data. Data were immediately coded, categorized, and analyzed as the data was collected. Charmaz (2006) discussed how "grounded theorists begin studying the early data and begin to separate, sort, and synthesize the data through qualitative coding" (p. 3).

This researcher chose to use grounded theory design as a way of conceptualizing the multiple perspectives of the participants and create a theory grounded in the data. This design

enabled the researcher to study school leaders and their perceptions of school counselors as leadership in an in-depth manner. Grounded theory design also provided the researcher the flexibility to explore school counselors' leadership and change by enabling the data to guide the development of concepts and issues that arose during the analysis. This research design provided this researcher with the ability to offer recommendations based on the analysis that can be used in practice for school counselors and school leaders.

Population, Sample, and Participant Selection

Participants of the study included individuals who serve on school district leadership teams throughout upstate and central New York. Data were collected from two urban, two suburban, and two rural school districts.

The rationale for interviewing school leaders and school counselors from an urban, suburban, and rural educational setting was to gather multiple perceptions of school counselors' roles as leaders in the specific school districts. Data collected aided in the discovery of school counselors roles in this study. The data also aided in exploring when and how school counselors served on district leadership teams or did not serve on district leadership teams. The data provided information on how school counselors did or did not participate in the district level change process. Multiple perspectives from leaders provided an in-depth understanding of school counselor leadership roles and aided in the development of a theory of school counselor leadership and their role in the change process.

The sample was made up of eighteen volunteers who participated in individual interviews. The volunteers included leaders and school counselors from different educational settings. School leader interviews included three superintendents, six principals, one director of pupil service, one coordinator of guidance, one director of guidance, one school

counselor/director of guidance, and five school counselors. School counselors were interviewed even if they were not in a leadership position.

This study utilized pseudonyms to protect the confidentiality of the school districts that participated. School districts were identified as Urban School One and Urban School Two, Suburban School One and Suburban School Two, and Rural School One and Rural School Two. Due to scheduling issues there were no superintendent interviews for Urban School Two, Suburban School Two, and Rural School One. Table 1 shows the school districts that participated in the study, school district pseudonym, who was interviewed from each school district, student enrollment for each school district, and the geographic region the school district was located in.

The sampling method utilized for this research was a stratified random sample. Stratified random sampling entails dividing a sample into subpopulations and randomly selecting from each subpopulation. Urban, suburban, and rural school districts were the three subpopulations used in this study. Publicly available data regarding school district demographics was utilized to determine the size of the school district and identify them as urban, suburban, or rural schools districts. The demographic data consisted of school district size, and student enrollment. The data were obtained from the participating school district websites and New York State District and School Report Cards (https://reportcards.nysed.gov/). School districts drawn from the stratified random sample were from Upstate and Central New York regions. This research identified Upstate New York as a region of New York State north of Westchester County and east of the Catskill Mountains extending to Saratoga County. This research identified Central New York as west of the Catskill Mountains extending to and ending at Cayuga County. Western New York included any New York territory west of Cayuga County.

Table 1

School Districts Participating

School District	Pseudonym Abbreviation	Interviewed	Total Enrollment	Geographic Region
Urban School One	US1	Superintendent School Principal Director of Guidance School Counselor	1000-3000 Students	Central New York
Urban School Two	US2	School Principal Coordinator of Guidance School Counselor	5000-7000 Students	Central New York
Suburban School One	SUS1	Superintendent Principal School Counselor	500-700 Students	Central New York
Suburban School Two	SUS2	Principal Director of Pupil Services School Counselor	4000-6000 Students	Upstate New York
Rural School One	RS1	School Principal School Counselor	700-900 Students	Upstate New York
Rural School Two	RS2	Superintendent School Principal School Counselor/Director of Guidance	500-700 Students	Upstate New York

The school districts were identified as urban, suburban, and rural school districts and sorted into groups for specifically urban, suburban, and rural schools based on information from the New York State District and School Report Cards (https://reportcards.nysed.gov/). Two school districts were randomly selected from each urban, suburban, and rural group. The random selection was made by sorting all the school districts into three separate boxes for rural, suburban, and urban. After all the school districts were sorted into the designated box for the

criteria they matched, random selections were done lottery style. This researcher pulled two school district names from each box. Box number one contained the names of urban school districts throughout Upstate, Central, and Western New York. Box number two contained the names of suburban school districts throughout Upstate, Central, and Western New York. Box number three contained the names of rural school districts throughout Upstate, Central, and Western New York. The process was repeated for each demographic until two schools from each demographic were identified.

Those schools randomly selected for this study were contacted by both telephone calls and e-mails. If there was no response from either the telephone call or the e-mail, then a follow-up letter was sent in an attempt to contact the identified school district. If there was no response form the identified school district in a two week time period, then the researcher randomly selected another school district form the specific demographic needed for this study. When any school districts were contacted in any manner, telephone call, e-mail, and/or follow-up letter, the researcher explained the intent of the study and how the study would be conducted. If a school district did not agree to participate, then another school district from that specific box was randomly drawn. The rationale for utilizing a stratified random sample is to decrease the amount of bias and improve the representation of the urban, suburban, and rural school districts.

The term urban was used to refer to large, medium, and small city populations for purposes of this study. An urban school district was categorized as a school district located in large city, midsize city, or small city based on the National Center for Education Statistics (2006). A large city was identified as a territory inside an urbanized area with a population of two hundred fifty thousand or more. A midsize city was made up of a territory inside an urbanized area with a population made up of one hundred thousand people to two hundred fifty

thousand people. A small city was made up of a territory inside an urbanized area with a population less than one hundred thousand.

The term suburban was used to refer to large, midsized, and small suburb populations for purposes of this study. The National Center for Education Statistics (2006) identifies a suburban school district as large, midsized, or small. A large suburb was defined as the territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population of two hundred fifty thousand or more. A midsize suburb was defined as the territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population less than two hundred fifty thousand and more than one hundred thousand. A small suburb was defined as the territory outside a principal city and inside an urbanized area with a population less than one hundred thousand.

The term rural was used to refer to fringe, distant, and remote rural areas for the purpose of this study. The National Center for Education Statistics (2006) defines a rural school district as fringe, distant, or remote. A fringe territory was census-defined as a rural territory that is less than or equal to five miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is less than or equal to two and a half miles from an urban cluster. A distant school district was census-defined as a rural territory that is more than five miles but less than or equal to 25 miles from an urbanized area, as well as rural territory that is more than two and a half miles but less than or equal to 10 miles from an urban cluster. A remote school district was census-defined as a rural territory that is more than 25 miles from an urbanized area and is also more than 10 miles from an urban cluster.

Instrumentation

The instruments used in this research were developed by the researcher (see Appendix C). One interview instrument was developed for school leaders and a second one was developed

for school counselors. Both sets of interview questions were developed to align with and provide data to answer the research questions for this study. Interviews with school leaders focused on their perceptions of the leadership role of school counselors within the school district, school counselors as part of the district leadership team, and their role in the district wide change process. Interviews with school counselors focused on their specific leadership role within the school district, on the district leadership team, and role in the district wide change process. Questions for school counselors explored their thoughts on how they were perceived as leaders by the other members of the school district. Both sets of interview questions included open-ended response questions with follow up questions as needed. The questions were organized beginning with questions focusing on school district leadership design and responsibilities to more specific perceptions regarding views of school counselors as leaders. Interview questions ended with questions about change initiatives, obstacles, and barriers school counselors face regarding leadership in the school district.

Open-ended questions were utilized to elicit open-ended responses. Creswell (2012) stated that open-ended responses were analyzed to identify overlapping themes. The interview protocol was utilized with all participants during face to face interviews to ensure interview consistency.

A five member panel of experts was utilized to review the interview questions developed for this study and how they related to the research questions. The panels of experts were also used to help determine face validity regarding the leadership interview protocol and the school counselor interview protocol. Interviews were conducted face to face and recorded for transcribing.

Reliability and Validity

Triangulation and member checking were utilized to increase reliability. Creswell (2012) describes triangulation as "the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research" (p. 259). Triangulation was utilized by comparing the school leaders' interviews to the interviews of the school counselors. Triangulation was also used by comparing interview transcripts to school artifacts that document school counselor leadership duties within the school district. This included documentation of school counselor programing that was developed and implemented, documentation of school district responsibilities of the school counselor, and documentation of school run activities by school counselors in their school districts. The documentation utilized were school counselor developed plans for programing that included new student initiatives, anti-bullying programs, group counseling plans, school guidance plans, and school counselor job responsibilities. Data were drawn from "multiple sources of information, individuals, and processes to ensure study accuracy" (Creswell, 2012, p. 259).

After the interviews were transcribed, they were sent to the research participants to review for accuracy. Member checks were used to increase validity. Member checking is a way for researchers to check their study findings for accuracy by checking the accuracy of transcripts and findings with the participants (Creswell, 2012). A five member panel of experts consisting of two superintendents, two principals, and one school counselor was used to help determine face validity regarding the leadership interview protocol and the school counselor interview protocol.

Data Collection

Data were collected that included information regarding school district demographics, change initiatives, other school artifacts, and district leadership team make-up. Methods of data

collection included interviews as well as demographic data from school documents. Demographic information including school enrollment and ethnicity of student population was collected from school websites and New York State District and School Report Cards.

Face to face interviews were conducted. After permission was obtained from each school district and participants volunteered for interviews, the researcher scheduled a date and time to meet with the individual volunteer. The school district and individual were assigned a numerical value to ensure confidentiality. The numerical values assigned were two distinct numbers. One value represented the school district and the other value represented the individual. A separate list was developed utilizing the numerical values to aid in keeping track of the school districts that were participating and help identify the individual participants to aid in follow-up and member checks. This list is not a part of the study but was used to identify the school district and participant for transcripts and as a reference for the researcher.

Interviews were conducted at the participants' school district. The interview protocol included an explanation of the study, signatures of documents by the participant giving permission to be a part of the study, permission to interview, informed consent, a release of information for recorded interviews to be transcribed, and a procedure for follow-up as needed (see Appendix A). Face to face interviews lasted between twenty five and forty five minutes. Open-ended questions were utilized as part of the school leader interview protocol questions and school counselor interview protocol questions.

The interviews were audio recorded, transcribed, sent for member checks, and coded for analysis. "Audio recordings provide a detailed record of the interview" (Creswell, 2012, p. 225). Along with audio recording the participant interviews, hand written notes were taken. Member checks were also utilized to ensure transcription accuracy (Creswell, 2009).

Data Analysis

Creswell (2012) discussed open, axial, and selective coding to aid in the development of a theory grounded in the data to analyze the data. The transcripts of the face to face interviews were analyzed. The transcriptionist is a bonded transcriptionist in New York and signed a confidentiality agreement for the study. Digital audio recordings were utilized and placed on a USB drive and given to the transcriptionist to transcribe. After the transcriptions were completed they were deleted from the transcriptionist's computer and USB drive. Transcripts were sent back to the participants to verify the accuracy of their statements. Themes emerged and were identified from the coding.

Coding was completed in stages utilizing a broad focus to a more narrow focus. Coding "involved taking text data gathered, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) into categories, and labeling those categories with a term" in this study (Creswell, 2009, p. 186). First, each of the transcripts and audio recordings were read, listened to, and reviewed. Initial notes were taken and a diagram for that specific participant interview and school district was created.

The diagram was related to the research questions asked and the questions in the specific interview, leader or school counselor, interview protocol. The diagram consisted of a web starting with a circle in the center of the page that included the pseudonym name of the school district and participant being interviewed. Branching from the center circle were ten lines. The ten lines from the center circle were drawn to smaller circles that contained the questions from the school leader interview protocol or the school counselor interview protocol used for the individual participant interviews. Participant responses were then connected to the smaller circles of the question with the response. This diagram was completed for each of the school districts and participants.

After all respondent data from the specific school districts were analyzed and relationships were explored between the diagrams. Another diagram was developed utilizing the same format stated above that removed repetitive information and consolidated the similarities between interviewees within the same school district. Then a master diagram was created for that specific school district. The same process was completed for the reminder of the school districts until there were six diagrams. The six diagrams included two urban, two suburban, and two rural diagrams. The six diagrams were then reduced, to one final diagram for each urban, suburban, and rural school district. The diagrams were then analyzed for relationships and emerging themes. The themes that emerged were then mapped and labeled to aid in understanding the relationships between the school districts and participants within and between all of the school districts.

This process was beneficial to the researcher in several ways. It allowed for a large amount of data to be consolidated making it more manageable. Relationships were easily identified as were differences. Themes that emerged were easily identified and grounded in the data aiding in the data analysis.

Researcher Bias

This researcher is the director of guidance and the school counselor in a small rural school in Central New York. This researcher believes school counselors are also trained to work with others in a collaborative nature, making it ideal for them to function as part of a leadership team. This researcher also believes that school counselors have the ability to reach across boundaries and work with administration, teachers, students, families, and communities, to function in a leadership capacity and collaborate as members of the district leadership team.

This researcher worked to minimize personal bias during this study by constantly questioning if personal thoughts and feelings were influencing the research. Reflection was an important part of monitoring bias. This researcher used audio reflections and written reflections when coding transcripts and writing the analysis. While analyzing data, this researcher would write down thoughts or make audio recordings regarding school counselors and leadership and reflect on if the thoughts were opinion or emerging from the data. The audio recordings were listened to at a later time and notes were taken from the audio recordings.

The written notes on thoughts, data, and audio recordings were utilized as a way to minimize researcher bias. Charmaz (2006) suggested that the "researcher write preliminary analytic notes called memos about the codes and comparisons and any other ideas about data that occur to the researcher" (p.3). This researcher's memos were the notes from audio recordings and thoughts that included ideas that contained or were result of personal bias. This researcher worked to be cognizant and aware of asking questions in a way that could potentially influence how questions were answered by research participants. The researcher attempted to decrease bias by utilizing open-ended interview questions. Questions were asked in a manner to not lead the participants in any specific direction. This researcher was cognizant of body language and voice inflection while asking interview questions and follow up questions. When a participant was not clear when asked a specific question and asked for clarification, this researcher reframed the question in a way for the participant to understand without using examples.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore school leaders' perceptions of school counselors as part of the district leadership team and the counselors' role in the district wide change process. The design for this study was a grounded theory design. School districts were

identified that fit specific criteria for urban, suburban, and rural school districts. The areas investigated by the interview protocol used to answer the research questions explored several areas. These areas included the school leadership structure, district leadership team membership and/or building leadership team membership, current district change initiatives, the role of school counselor as leader, and barriers to school counselors as leaders. Face to face interviews were utilized to gather data from school leaders and school counselors in rural, urban, and suburban school districts. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed. The data were analyzed and the research questions were utilized to help frame this study and for the data analysis. The next chapters of this study discuss the findings, conclusions, and recommendations based on the analysis.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the data collected from the exploration of school leaders' perceptions of school counselors and the school counselors' impact on district wide change. This chapter provides a brief description on the demographics of the school districts studied followed by a presentation of research questions and an analysis of the data. This chapter includes a presentation of themes that emerged first and then a presentation of the data organized according to the order of the research questions asked.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used as a framework for analyzing the data obtained from this study. The research questions asked include:

1. What are the perceptions of school leaders regarding school counselors as leaders?
2. What role or roles do school counselors serve in the district wide change process?
3. How do the roles of school counselors as leaders differ in urban, suburban, and rural school districts?
4. What barriers and/or obstacles keep school counselors from functioning in a leadership role?
5. What barriers or obstacles hinder school counselors from being part of a district leadership team?

This section provides a brief description of the school districts that participated in this study. Table 2 presents data about the school district pseudonym, participants interviewed, total enrollment, average class size, and ethnicity.

Table 2

School District Demographics

School District	Interviewed	Total Enrollment	Ave. Class Size	Ethnicity
Urban School 1	Superintendent School Principal School Counselor Director of Guidance	1000 – 3000 Students	21 Students	94% White 3% Black/ African American 2% Hispanic/ Latino 1% Asian/ Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander 1% Multiracial
Urban School 2	School Principal Coordinator of Guidance School Counselor	5000-7000 Students	22 Students	41% White 26% Black/ African American 17% Hispanic/ Latino 13% Asian/ Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander 3% Multiracial
Suburban School 1	Superintendent Principal School Counselor	500-700 Students	20 Students	91% White 1% Black/ African American 3% Hispanic/ Latino 2% Asian/ Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander 3% Multiracial
Suburban School 2	Principal Director of Pupil Services School Counselor	4000-6000 Students	23 Students	77% White 6% Black/ African American 4% Hispanic/ Latino 11% Asian/ Native Hawaiian/ Other Pacific Islander 2% Multiracial
Rural School 1	School Principal School Counselor	700-900 Students	20 Students	98% White 1% Black/ African American 1% Multiracial
Rural School 2	Superintendent School Principal School Counselor/Director of Guidance	500- 700 Students	15 Students	94% White 1% Black/ African American 3% Hispanic/ Latino 2% Multiracial

Urban School One (US1) participants included the superintendent, principal, school counselor, and director of guidance. There are two counselors and one director of guidance at US1. The student enrollment range for US1 is 1000 to 3000. US1 has merged with a neighboring school district.

Urban School Two (US2) participants included the principal, coordinator of guidance, and school counselor. Due to scheduling issues, there was no superintendent interview for US2. US2 has thirteen school counselors and one counselor coordinator of guidance who also carries a student caseload. Student enrollment range for US2 is 5000 to 7000 students.

Suburban School One (SUS1) participants consisted of the superintendent, principal, and school counselor. The SUS1 school counselor also acts as the director of guidance. Student enrollment range is 500 to 700.

Suburban School Two (SUS2) participants included the school principal, director of pupil services, and school counselor. The superintendent was not interviewed due to scheduling conflicts. SUS2 has seven school counselors and one director of pupil services. Enrollment range for SUS2 is 4000 to 6000 students.

Rural School One (RS1) participants included the school principal and school counselor. There was no interview with the superintendent due to availability. RS1 has two school counselors with one acting as counselor coordinator. Student enrollment range for RS1 is 700 to 900.

Rural School Two (RS2) interviews consisted of the superintendent, school principal, and school counselor/director of guidance. RS2 has one school counselor who also acts as the guidance director. Student enrollment range for RS2 is 500 to 700.

US2 and SUS2 are the two largest school districts in the study and the ethnic makeup of students is not similar to the other school districts. Five of six of the school districts' student majority are white according to ethnicity reported from New York State Education Department School Report Card website (https://reportcards.nysed.gov/). SUS1 and RS2 are the two smallest school districts and are similar in student enrollment and ethnicity of the student body. See Table 2, School District Demographics that include interviewees, enrollment range, and average class size and ethnicity.

Research Findings

When examining leadership qualities and traits, participant responses were grouped by themes that emerged from the data. The themes were then grouped based on the connectedness and similarity. Once the themes were grouped, a code was developed. The themes that were connected in the same groups were given a code based on how they described the leadership roles of school counselors. These thematic codes for each grouping were

- others,
- action,
- computers/scheduling,
- and traditional school counselor roles.

The themes identified were then given a title that will be used throughout this study. The titles that will be used are designated as

- Others Oriented,
- Action Oriented,
- Logistically Orientated,
- and Traditionally Oriented.

Table 3 shows the emerging theme, words that identified the theme, and the terms used in this study to refer to each theme.

Table 3

Emerging Themes

Theme	Identifying Words	Terms
Others	Nurturing Caring Advocate Good Listener Empathetic Collaborator Inspires others	Others Oriented
Action	Risk Takers Goal Oriented Having a Vision Idea Generator Creative	Action Oriented
Computers/Scheduling	Focus on Student Data Master Schedule Period Schedule Coordinator Uses Technology	Logistically Oriented
Traditional School Counselor Roles	College Planning Counseling Student Issues College Exploration Career Exploration College Admissions	Traditionally Oriented

Others Oriented

The theme, others, in terms of school counselor leadership will be categorized as Others Oriented. Others Oriented is a theme that emerged from interview questions exploring school counselor leadership, school counselor roles, and school counselor involvement in the change process. Others Oriented describes how school counselors as leaders in this study are perceived by school leaders. Others Oriented school counselor leaders in this study work with students, parents, teachers, and administration. This orientation is defined as school counselor leadership traits, identified by this researcher, that focus on others. These traits include counselor leaders

that were identified as nurturing, caring, an advocate for those around them, listener, empathetic, collaborator, and inspiring of others in this study.

Principals and superintendents in both of the urban school districts discussed many skills possessed by leaders. For example, words such as nurturing, caring, considerate, collaborative, and empathy were used by school leaders and school counselors to describe school counselors as leaders. In Urban School One and Two school leaders and school counselors used Others Oriented words to describe school counselor leaders. US1 Superintendent described school counselors as leaders that were considerate, advocate, and collaborative (personal communication, March 25, 2013). US1 Principal described school counselors as leaders as caring, nurturing, great communicators and collaborators (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US1 Director of Guidance (personal communication, May 3, 2013) described school counselors as leaders as intelligent and able to build rapport with students, faculty, and parents. US2 Principal (personal communication, May 31, 2013) described school counselors as leaders being collaborators and mediators. US2 Coordinator of Guidance (personal communication, May 31, 2013) described the leadership traits of school counselors as being empathic, advocating for others, and great communicators. US2 Counselors (personal communication, May 31, 2013) described the leadership traits of school counselors as being collaborative, inspiring, and motivating others.

Suburban School One and Two school counselors used Others Oriented words to describe school counselors as leaders. SUS1 Superintendent (personal communication, March 25, 2013) described school counselor leaders as empathetic, collaborative, advocate, and rapport builder. SUS1 Principal (personal communication, March 18, 20130) used empathetic, collaborative, and concerned of others to describe school counselors as leaders. SUS1 School Counselor (personal

communication, March 4, 20130) described school counselors as leaders as listeners, advocates, and rapport builders. SUS2 Principal (personal communication, May 7, 2013) used the terms collaborative, communicators, and advocates to describe school counselors as leaders. SUS2 Director of Guidance (personal communication, May 7, 2013) described school counselors as leaders who were team builders and communicators. SUS2 School Counselor (personal communication, April 23, 2013) described school counselors as leaders who were good listeners, put others first, mediators, and connected to others.

RS1 and RS2 school leaders and school counselors used Others Oriented words to describe school counselors as leaders. RS1 Principal (personal communication, March 1, 2013) used the terms communicator, collaborative, and mediators to describe school counselors as leaders. RS1 School Counselor (personal communication, March 11, 2013) described school counselors as leaders who were mediators, team workers, and motivated others. RS2 Superintendent (personal communication, April 10, 2013) described school counselor leaders as understanding of others, communicators, empathetic, caring, and concern for others. RS2 Principal (personal communication, April 10, 2013) used the terms supportive, communicative, and advocate describing school counselors as leaders. RS2 Director of Guidance (personal communication, April 10, 2013) described school counselor leaders' as empathetic, listeners, and communicators.

The terms discussed above would fit the Others Orientation. These terms are communicators, empathetic, advocates, team builders, rapport builders, caring, inspiring and concern. All school leaders and school counselors who participated used Others Oriented words to describe school counselors when responding about leadership.

Action Orientated

The theme, action, in terms of school counselor leadership will be categorized as Action Oriented. Action Oriented is a theme that emerged from interview questions exploring school counselor leadership, school counselor roles, and school counselor involvement in the change process in this study. Action Oriented includes how school counselors are perceived by school leaders and school counselors in this study by exhibiting behaviors such as taking risks, being goal oriented, having a vision, going above and beyond what is expected of their role, and generating new/creative ideas

US1 and US2 school leaders and school counselors used action oriented words to describe school counselors. Action oriented words used by US1 Superintendent (personal communication, May 3, 2013) included efficient, idea generator, risk taker, and independent. US1 Principal (personal communication, May 3, 2013) described school counselors as having the ability to develop an action plan, facilitate meetings, and solve problems. US1 School Counselor (personal communication, May 3, 2013) described school counselors as leaders who see the big picture and are organized. US2 Principal (personal communication, May 31, 2013) used the action terms follow through, taking initiative, and big picture thinking as descriptions for school counselors as leaders. US2 Coordinator of Guidance (personal communication, May 31, 2013) identified school counselors as leaders as seeing the big picture and taking responsibility. US2 Counselor (personal communication, May 31, 2013) used the action terms, resourceful and problem solver, to describe school counselor leaders.

SUS1 and SUS2 school leaders and school counselors used action terms as a way of describing school counselors as leaders. SUS1 Superintendent (personal communication, March

25, 2013) used the terms resourceful, problem solver, seeing the bigger picture, and long term planner to describe school counselors as leaders. SUS1 Principal (personal communication, March 18, 2013) described school counselor leaders as having the ability to balance multiple tasks, take responsibility, and balance time. SUS1 School Counselor (personal communication, March 4, 2013) described school counselor leaders who are able to make tough decisions, take initiative, and are lifelong learners.

SUS2 Principal (personal communication, May 7, 2013) described school counselor leaders as being flexible, seeing the big picture, and going above and beyond what is expected of the school counselor role. SUS2 Principal (personal communication, May 7, 2013) also identified how school counselor leaders take advantage of opportunities that are presented to them. SUS2 Director of Pupil Services (personal communication, May 7, 2013) described school counselor leaders as seeing the big picture, being problem solvers, and taking initiative. SUS2 School Counselor (personal communication, April 23, 2013) described school counselors as leaders who are organized and willing to learn from their mistakes.

RS1 Principal (personal communication, March 1, 2013) described school counselors as leaders as creative out of the box thinkers, willing to step up, and use data to guide the decisions they make. RS1 School Counselor (personal communication, March 11, 2013) used the terms goal oriented, organized, having a vision and plan, big picture thinker, and facilitator to describe school counselors as leaders. RS2 Superintendent (personal communication, April 10, 2013) described school counselors as leaders who are big picture thinkers, organized, having a vision and plan, and knowledgeable about curriculum and classroom instruction. RS2 Principal (personal communication, April 10, 2013) identified school counselors as facilitators, knowledgeable of best practices of counseling and student achievement, and having a vision as

leaders in the school. RS2 Director of Guidance (personal communication, April 3, 2013) used the action term organized to describe school counselors as leaders.

The Action Orientation terms used by the school leaders and school counselors in this study were goal oriented, takes initiative, having a vision, stepping up, risk taker, and lifelong learning. Even though these terms were used to describe school counselors as leaders it does not mean this is the school counselors' only manner of functioning as a leader in a school district.

Logistically Oriented

The theme, computers/scheduling, in terms of school counselor leadership will be categorized as Logistically Oriented. Logistically Oriented is a theme that emerged from interview questions exploring school counselor leadership, school counselor roles, and school counselor involvement in the change process in this study. Logistically Oriented school counselor behaviors identified in this study include focusing on student data, working with the school master schedule, working with the school period schedule, coordinating exams, and school counselors use of technology. These terms encompass counselor leadership traits identified in this study that focus on student data and master scheduling. These traits include the ability for school counselors to have good organization skills, manage time, and meet deadlines. These terms apply to school counselor leaders who have a solid understanding of and work with the master schedule, class period schedules, coordinating/scheduling exams, and have a tendency to utilize technology.

US1 school counselors were described as Others Oriented and Action Oriented when discussing school counselor leadership, but are mainly involved in logistically oriented activities such as updating student management systems, creating new schedules, combining the master schedule from two newly merged school districts, and merging the data from two data

management systems. The Superintendent (personal communication, May 3, 2013), Principal (personal communication, May 3, 2013), Director of Guidance (personal communication, May 3, 2013) and the School Counselor (personal communication, May 3, 2013) in US1 identified working on and developing the master schedule and monitoring grades, behavior, and attendance as the responsibility of the school counselors. The US1 Principal (personal communication, May 3, 2013) identified school counselors' responsibility for monitoring student progress reports at five and ten weeks.

US2 school counselors tend to deal with large amounts of student data. US2 Principal (personal communication, May 31, 2013) discussed the school counselors' responsibility for the data management system, and the accuracy of the student data input. The US2 Principal (personal communication, May 31, 2013) described how school counselors manage their own files and are not located in a central guidance office within the school. They are stationed in separate offices throughout the school with no specific secretary and are responsible for their own record keeping. When discussing school counselors and the master schedule,US2 Principal stated:

> Due to the size of the school district several assistant principals and the counselor coordinator work on changes to the master schedule. School counselors are not part of this process and are responsible for course selection input for their caseload and making sure students course selections are met upon scheduling. (US2 Principal, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

US2 Coordinator of Guidance (personal communication, May 31, 2013) discussed the importance of school counselors' responsibilities with maintaining and ensuring that students meet graduation requirements, class sections fit, and students obtain the classes they need for

each academic year. US2 Director of Guidance (personal communication, May 31, 2013) explained that administrators develop the master schedule with input from the school counselors. US2 Counselor (personal communication, May 31, 2013) identified the major responsibilities for school counselors as scheduling students, monitoring attendance, and making referrals to the Instructional Support Team and referrals to community for support services.

SUS1 is a smaller suburban school district compared to SUS2. The school counselor serves many different roles and some of those roles would fall under the Logistical Orientation. SUS1 Superintendent (personal communication, March 25, 2013) discussed the school counselor and SUS1 School Counselor's responsibility for maintaining student data. SUS1 Principal (personal communication, May 3, 2013) also identified the responsibility of student scheduling and making sure students are meeting the graduation requirements. The principal indicated that scheduling students, class schedule maintenance, and balancing classes are responsibilities of the school counselor (SUS1 Principal, personal communication, May 3, 2013). SUS1 School Counselor identified developing the master scheduling, scheduling students, and monitoring students' transcripts to ensure all graduation requirements are meet as important duties for school counselors (personal communication, March 4, 2013).

SUS2 is a large suburban school. The SUS2 Principal (personal communication, May 7, 2013) discussed having a structured guidance plan for the school district and how that decreases counselor flexibility. No Logistically Oriented roles were identified in response to the interview questions during the interview with SUS2 Principal. SUS2 Director of Guidance (personal communication, May 7, 2013) did not discuss any Logistically Oriented terms or responsibilities of the school counselors. SUS2 School Counselor (personal communication, April 23, 2013)

identified SAT administration, modifying the period schedule, and monitoring student attendance as the Logistically Oriented responsibilities for school counselors in SUS2.

RS1 and RS2 are among the smaller school districts included in this study. School counselors, in this study, from the smaller school districts have multiple responsibilities that may include administrative roles when compared to school counselors in the larger school districts. RS1 and RS2 school counselors have multiple responsibilities; these include some that are identified as Logistically Oriented. The RS1 Principal (personal communication, March 1, 2013) discussed that the school counselor aids in the development of the master schedule. No other Logistically Oriented responsibilities were mentioned by RS1 Principal. RS1 School Counselor (personal communication, April 3, 2013) discussed the counselor's responsibility for coordinating the Advanced Placement Exams, development of the summer school schedule, scheduling students, and monitoring that they are in the correct classes. The RS2 Superintendent (personal communication, April 10, 2013) discussed the responsibility of the school counselor to aid in the creation of the master schedule for the high school. The school counselor who is also the guidance director is beginning to take on a larger role with helping with the elementary master schedule (RS2 School Counselor, personal communication, April 10, 2013). The RS2 Superintendent (personal communication, April 10, 2013) identified the school counselor as the main person to use the student data management system who is beginning to understand how to use and expand the system for the future. The RS2 Principal (personal communication, April 10, 2013) identified the school counselor's role in developing and implementing the master schedule. RS2 Director of Guidance is also the school counselor. RS2 School Counselor (personal communication, April 3, 2013) identified school counselor responsibilities as scheduling students, coordinating AP exams, ordering state exams, and managing student data.

The Logistically Orientated behaviors of school counselors in this study are based on specific responsibilities school counselors have in the school districts in which they work as reported in respondent interviews. All school counselors who participated in this study are responsible for student data management and scheduling to differing degrees. School counselors in the smaller school districts manage multiple responsibilities which include data management and scheduling. Compared to school counselors in larger school districts in this study, the smaller school district school counselors are more actively involved in the development of the master schedule according to the interview data. The school counselors in the larger school districts of this study spend more time on data management and scheduling than school counselors in smaller schools based on the interview data. School counselors from smaller school districts in this study are responsible for developing and implementing the master scheduling while school counselors from the larger school districts share the process with the principal or other administrators. US2 school counselors do not develop the master schedule but are responsible for course selections and individual student schedule development. The ordering of exams and tests is the school counselors' responsibility in the smaller school districts in this study. Ordering exams and tests is not a reported duty of school counselors in the larger school districts.

Traditionally Oriented

The identifying words or phrases, individual and group counseling, college planning, college preparation, and post graduate planning were categorized as Traditionally Oriented. This researcher defined Traditionally Oriented based on school counselors behaviors that describe counselors who meet with students for college planning, working through issues, career exploration, and course selections needed to meet graduation requirements. They work with

students to explore career and college options after high school. Traditionally Oriented school counselors will work to educate and aid students in the college admissions process and/or the career exploration process. For the purpose of this study, Traditionally Oriented school counselors may show potential for leadership, but their role does not require them to be leaders.

US1 Superintendent (personal communication, May 3, 2013) discussed the current two school merger with another school district and the school counselor role prior to the school merger. The school counselor role prior to the merger included meeting with students individually, college preparedness, serving on support teams, and resolving student issues (US1 Principal (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US1 Principal (personal communication, May 3, 2013) explained that the Assistant Principal coordinates the Advanced Placement exams and has the school counselors meet with the students to determine who is taking the exams and collect the exam fee. US1 Director of Guidance (personal communication, May 3, 2013) discussed the importance of meeting with students to update them on their academic progress and encourage them to succeed. The US1 Director of Guidance talked about the responsibilities of school counselors to coordinate meetings with teachers, teachers and students, and parent meetings to foster student success and plan for students' futures (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US1 School Counselor (personal communication, May 3, 2013) reported being a part of various teams including the crisis team and the CSE team. US1 School Counselor (personal communication, May 3, 2013) is responsible for counseling students, having parent meetings, and college admissions testing as part of to the US1 school counselor role. US2 Principal (personal communication, May 31, 2013) identified post-secondary planning, counseling support, college preparation, providing students with information on college scholarships, and making referrals to community agencies as responsibilities for school counselors in that district.

US2 Coordinator of Guidance (personal communication, May 31, 2013) identified setting up mini college fairs, meeting with parents to inform them of school procedures, and transitional support for students leaving high school. US2 School Counselor (personal communication, May 31, 2013) identified conducting student meetings and making referrals to community support services as important roles of the school counselors. US2 School Counselor would like to see more college planning and career planning work with students, collaboration with teachers, and workshops (personal communication, May 31, 2013). Due to administration expectations, scheduling deadlines, and administration set timelines, US2 School Counselor is limited in pursuing leadership opportunities (personal communication, May 31, 2013). This limitation is due to completing specific duties identified by the school administration to meet the needs of the school district (US2 School Counselor, personal communication, May 31, 2013).

SUS1 and SUS2 school counselors participate in roles that are Traditionally Oriented. SUS1 Superintendent (personal communication, May 3, 2013) identified parent meetings, being part of the CSE team, and providing counseling support as responsibilities of the school counselor. SUS1 Principal (personal communication, May 3, 2013) identified setting up and facilitating parent meetings, meeting with students to provide support, and support groups as school counselor responsibilities at SUS1. SUS1 School Counselor (personal communication, May 3, 2013) identified working with students on social issues and academic issues as important roles. SUS1 School Counselor (personal communication, May 3, 2013) facilitates parent meetings, consults with teachers, and implements anti-bullying programs. SUS2 Principal (personal communication, May 7, 2013) discussed college planning and college admissions as an important school counselor role. SUS2 Director of Pupil Services (personal communication, May 7, 2013) identified organizing parent information nights, setting up financial aid nights,

providing student support, and crisis counseling support as important school counselor responsibilities. SUS2 School Counselor (personal communication, April 23, 2013) identified parent/ student meetings, being a part of the CSE team, and being a member of the crisis team.

Both RS1 and RS2 identified Traditionally Oriented roles of school counselors. RS1 Principal (personal communication, March 1, 2013) identified being a member of the crisis team, coordinating college fairs, and providing workshops and other educational programs for parents and students. RS1 School Counselor (personal communication, March 11, 2013) identified being part of the crisis team and preparing students for college as important roles of the school counselor. RS2 Superintendent (personal communication, April 10, 2013) identified college and career planning as a major role of the school counselors. RS2 Principal (personal communication, April 10, 2013) discussed college planning, support students and parents, and referrals to community agencies as important roles for school counselors. RS2 Director of Guidance (personal communication, April 3, 2013) identified crisis counseling, being a member of the CSE team, and making referrals to community agencies as important school counselor activities.

The Traditionally Orientation describes school counselor roles and activities that include being members of school committees, providing student support, and college and career planning. School counselors fill the above mentioned roles to differing degrees based on their responsibilities in the specific school district that they work. Based on the interview data in this study school counselors functioned in all of these orientations, but showed strength or work in one of the orientations more than in other orientations.

Interview data in this study indicated that school leaders tended to identify Others Oriented and Action Oriented behaviors of school counselors with leadership. Fourteen of the

eighteen respondents interviewed identified school counselor visibility as a factor that increases the perceptions of school counselors as leaders. School counselors who exhibited Others Oriented and/or Action Oriented behaviors appeared to be seen as more visible by school leaders and school counselors in this study compared to school counselors who exhibited more Logistically Oriented and Traditionally Oriented behaviors. In this study, school counselors who function primarily as Other Orientated and/or Action Orientated exhibit behaviors that show them supporting others with whom they work, organized, setting goals, learning from mistakes, and willing to take risks are identified as more visible by school leaders and school counselors. When exploring change interview data indicated that school counselors in this study who were seen by the interview respondents as visible and who exhibited Others Oriented and/or Action Oriented behaviors were more involved in the change process than school counselors who exhibited more Logistically Oriented and/or Traditionally Oriented behaviors. School counselors who were visible in the school district tend to be seen as leaders compared to counselors who are seen as less visible based on respondent interview data. Fourteen of the eighteen respondents interviewed in this study identified school counselor visibility as a factor that would increase perceptions of school counselor leadership. School counselors who fit the Others Oriented and Action Oriented themes tend to be more visible than school counselors who fit the Logistically and Traditionally Oriented themes.

Figure 1 was developed out of the themes that emerged from the data in this study. It shows that school counselors who exhibit more Others Oriented and/or Action Oriented behaviors are perceived as leaders by school faculty and school administration due to being more visible compared to school counselors who exhibit Logistically Oriented and Traditionally Oriented behaviors. School counselors who exhibited more Others Oriented and/or Action

Oriented behaviors tend to be involved more in change than school counselors who exhibited Logistically Oriented and/or Traditionally Oriented behaviors. See Figure 1.

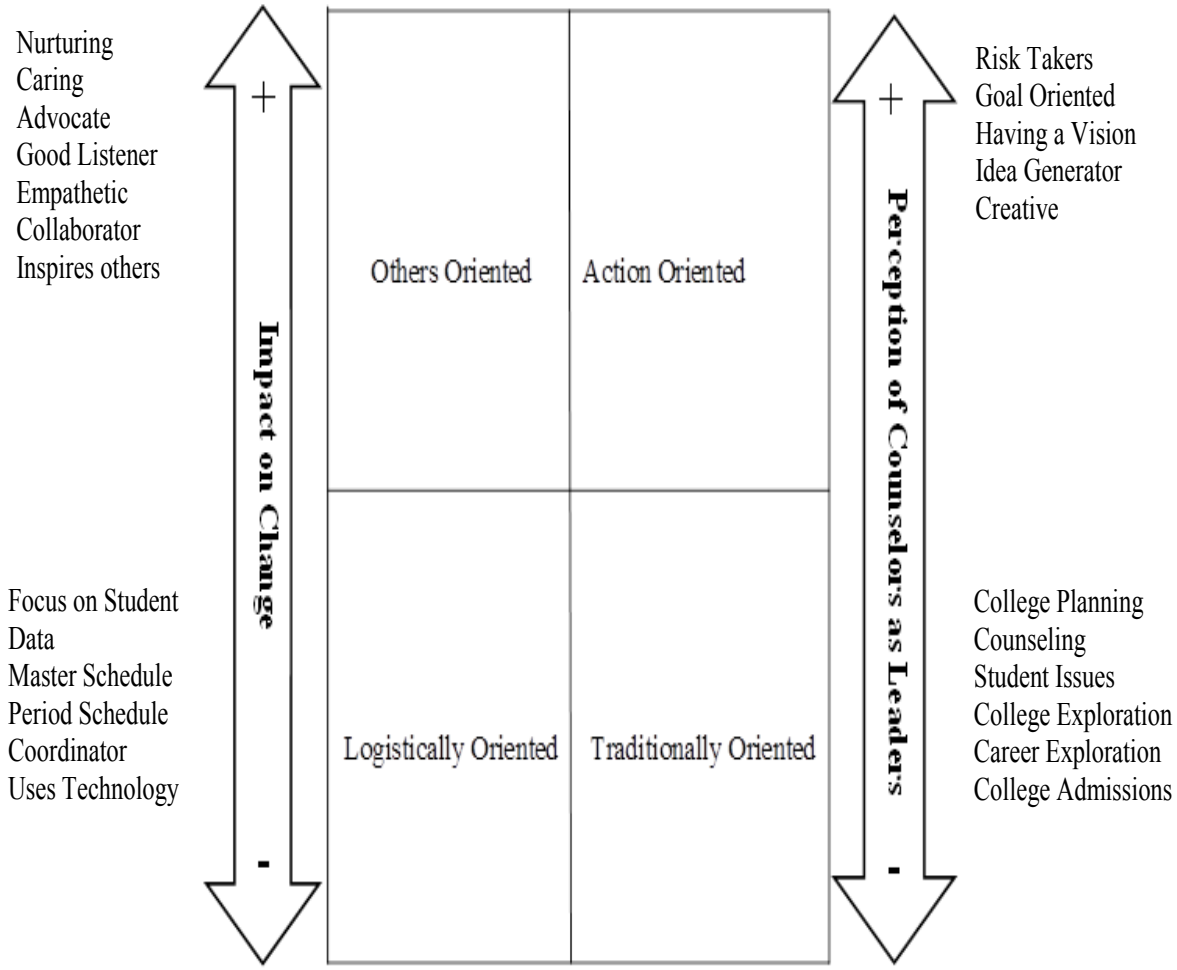

Figure 1. Perceptions of school counselor leadership and impact on change as influenced by school counselor orientation for this study.

Research Question 1 What are the perceptions of school leaders regarding school counselors as leaders?

Several interview questions were utilized to explore this research question in both the School Leader Interview Protocol and the School Counselor Interview Protocol. See Figure 2.

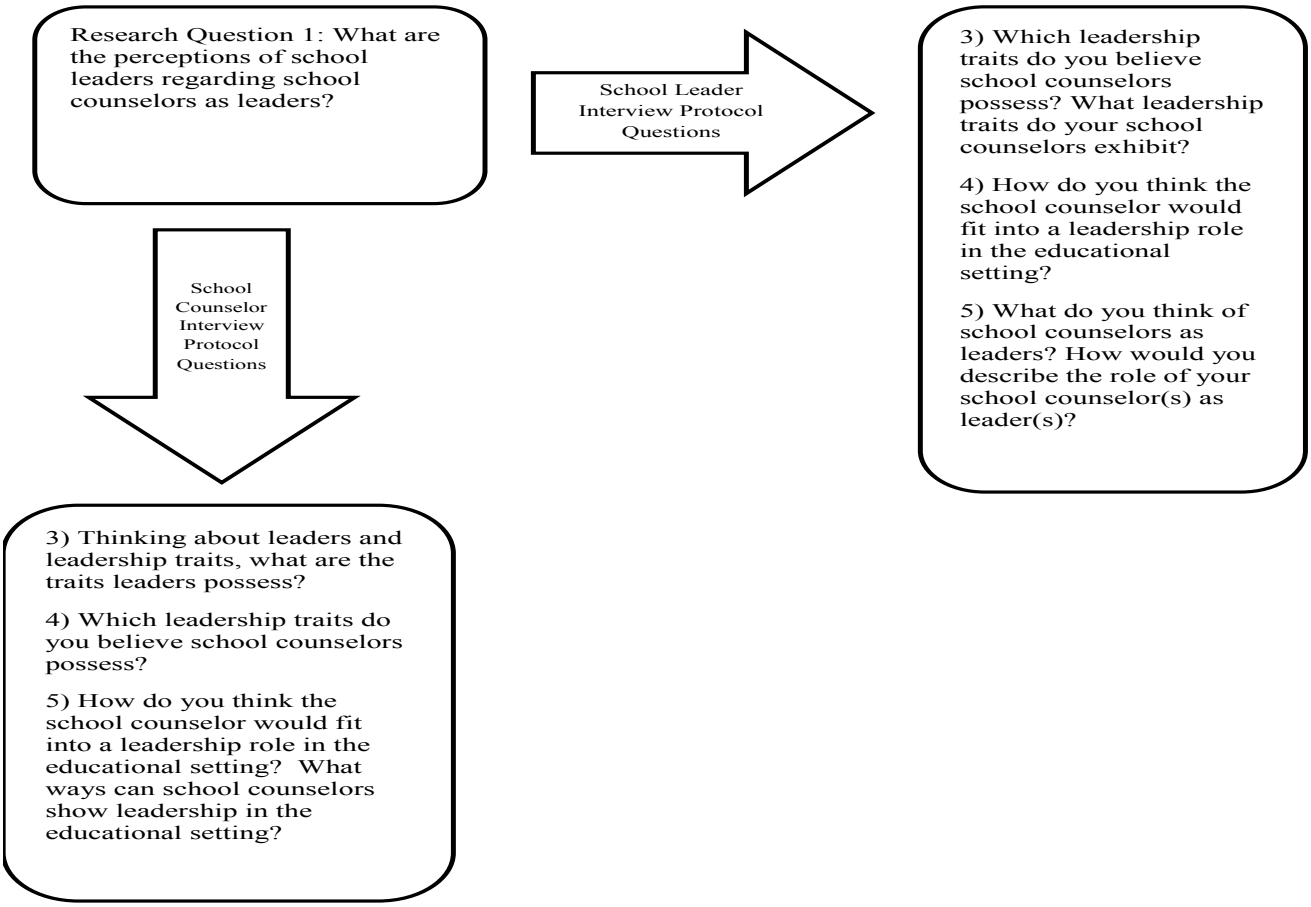

Figure 2. Research Question 1 and Corresponding Leader and School Counselor Protocol Questions.

School leaders in urban schools in this study think that school counselors would easily transition to an administration position and function as leaders in the school. US1 Principal when discussing school counselor as becoming a leader in the school district stated, "I think it is an easy transition because they have such a terrific knowledge of the workings of the building" (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US1 Superintendent stated:

> I think, they possess all of the leadership traits. Based on my experience school counselors who have those attributes results in a better run building, students are placed where they need to be, and teachers are placed where they need to be based on their strengths. (personal communication, May 3, 2013)

When asked which leadership traits you believe school counselors possess, US1 Principal stated:

> I think they are intelligent. I think they are caring, nurturing. I think they have great communication skills, and they are able to work collaboratively with students' parents, teachers, and administration. They're kind of the white of the Oreo cookie, as I put it. They're in the middle of everything. (personal communication, May 31, 2013)

US2 Principal discussed how school counselors would function as part of a leadership team and add an alternative perspective to the team. When asked how the school counselor would transition into a leadership role in the educational setting of the leadership interview protocol, US2 Principal stated:

> I think they fit very well. I think they add, particularly, if it is an administrative team. I think they add quite a bit to that dynamic. I think sometimes the guidance perspective is somewhat different than the classroom teacher perspective. Particularly in a smaller setting, Guidance Counselors serve in different capacities and at various points in the day

> may serve as a quasi-administrator. I think that gives the counselor a wider, more of a global look, at the overall functioning of a building. (personal communication, May 31, 2013)

US2 Principal noted the school counselors' exposure to the building functions on a day to day basis that teachers planning to go into administration do not always have (US2 Principal, personal communication, May 31, 2013). US2 Principal believes having a global view of how the school works positions school counselors to be a good fit to be a school leader (US2 Principal, personal communication, May 31, 2013). US2 School Counselor agreed and discussed school counselors having knowledge of the school procedures and exposure to administration decisions as benefit for school counselors to become leaders (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US2 Superintendent discussed school counselor as leaders and utilization as a resource. US2 Superintendent stated:

> I think more building level administration should take advantage of the resource that they have with their school counselors. They should be involved in all of the decision making that's taking place at the building level. The school counselor in my estimation is by definition a leader. (personal communication, May 3, 2013)

Both SUS1 and SUS2 school leaders identified leadership potential for school counselors. They think school counselors would function effectively as school leaders in the school. When discussing school counselor leadership traits SUS1 School Counselor stated:

> I think inherent in the job and for somebody who wants to be a school counselor, I think, they have to have the ability to listen and often take both sides of the story, but listen to other people's point of view too. They need to be able to make decisions, not always

based on personal opinion, but based on what others are telling you and how others are feeling. It's the ability to develop relationships and build rapport with people. (personal communication, March 4, 2013)

SUS1 Superintendent when discussing leadership traits of the school counselor stated:

> Our counselor has all the qualities of a great administrator, which I think is important in my role as well. You need to understand and be sympathetic to what's going on around you. The long-range planning is crucial. Our counselor is very intelligent, insightful, and those are important in any role especially when you're working with people. He/she is collaborative, cooperative, and asset building. Sharing what he/she knows and building those connections makes him/her a capacity builder. I think in any organization you need to continue to build capacity, not just for change, but for growth. So, I see him/her as a lifelong learner, as well as, someone who helps others, see the need for it, and helps bring the whole organization along, including me. (personal communication, March 25, 2013)

SUS2 Principal said school counselors are involved in all aspects of the operation of the school building and need to be flexible and eclectic as school counselor leaders:

> Counselors need to have their finger on the pulse of everything. They have to be eclectic. I think they have to be generalists. They have to be someone who can see the big picture. Flexibility is important. One of the biggest things, not only with the administrators in the building, but the other staff, teachers, and faculty, is they have to develop good working relationships good communication with those people so they can be effective (personal communication, May 7, 2013).

SUS 1 Principal (personal communication, March 18, 2013) stated about their school counselor, "Our school counselor is a leader in the building, without a doubt. People go to her constantly with concerns for students. She will take on those concerns. She is an important person in our building who carriers a lot of weight". SUS1 Principal continued to stress the importance of the school counselor's role in the school district:

> Our school counselor is an important person in our building that carries a lot of weight. We do not have an assistant principal in our building and I would not want to put them in that quasi light of the assistant principal doing the discipline piece. I would say they're like my right hand because they are so important to making this district run smoothly (personal communication, March 18, 2013).

SUS 2 is the larger suburban school in this study. SUS2 has a regimented guidance structure that lists specific expectations and job duties for school counselors and comprehensive guidance plan that may hinder school counselors from exhibiting leadership. SUS2 Principal stated,

> This district has a very defined guidance plan. That can be a double edged sword, because with a well-defined guidance plan you're really moving along and have a good calendar you can follow. Sometimes it doesn't give you wiggle room to have that flexibility to serve on a leadership team or help problem solve, or become part of ad hoc groups (personal communication, May 7, 2013).

The interview data from this study suggests that the larger the school district is the less opportunity for school counselors to have the time and flexibility for taking on leadership roles. Due to having a clearly defined guidance structure that defines the role of the school counselor in

SUS2 the school counselors tend to fill a more traditional guidance role and have less time to pursue leadership opportunities that may be presented.

When discussing leadership traits of school counselors and ability to participate in leadership roles, RS1 Principal stated,

> I think, at least in my experience, they do fit in a leadership role. They play an integral part and help me develop a master schedule. They play a great role mediating between students, teachers, and parents. They are more than willing to facilitate meetings with staff. I see a willingness to start new programs. (personal communication, March 1, 2013)

RS2 Principal (personal communication, April 10, 2013) responded, "I believe that they would have the benefit of seeing a lot of the inner workings of the offices that teachers do not have." RS2 Superintendent when discussing school counselors transitioning to a leadership position stated, "I would see that transition fairly easily." (personal communication, April 10, 2013). When discussing the school counselor RS2 Superintendent (personal communication, April 10, 2013) stated, "Our school counselor takes on leadership roles fairly naturally. I think that is because she brings a lot of skill and intelligence to the table." When discussing school counselor leadership and school counselors becoming leaders RS2 Director of Guidance stated,

> I think it's a good fit actually. Our teachers turn to me as an administrator or leader. I don't want to use the word administrator. We're in no man's land and sometimes, I feel like. I definitely fit more with that administration team than I do with the teacher team. (personal communication, April 3, 2013)

RS1 Principal discussed changes to the school counselor role and passing more responsibilities to the counselor in testing implementation. RS1 Principal stated,

> I've already had a conversation with my counselor about some potential changes for him/her. My role in the testing implementation for example, I could see, though I'd still be responsible because I have to be for the full oversight of it…….I could see passing more responsibility to him/her on that front. (personal communication, March 1, 2013)

The respondents in the urban school districts in this study reported that school counselors are respected for their ability to work with others, advocate, and take risks with new ideas. Even though they are viewed to have leadership potential, it is difficult for them to move out of their current role and show leadership due to the needs of the administration.

In suburban schools in this study superintendents and principals identified many traits of leadership that school counselors possess. Suburban school district superintendents, principals, and school counselors described school counselors as exhibiting Others Oriented and Action Oriented characteristics, even though they may complete the responsibilities and roles of logistically and traditionally Orientated. The Others Oriented traits that were discussed in this study included putting others first, collaboration, being an advocate, sharing knowledge, communication and listening. The Action Oriented traits included school counselors taking advantage of opportunities, going above and beyond, learning from mistakes, and building capacity for growth. Suburban school respondents in this study identified being organized and making data based decision as important.

Urban school leaders believe school counselors would make good leaders and can transition smoothly to administration. One of the reasons identified from this study for this

smooth transition were that school counselors have an understanding of the inner workings of the school and office.

Suburban school counselors in this study are perceived as leaders in both large and small suburban school districts. The smaller suburban school principal in this study relied more on the school counselor to fill in gaps and take on leadership roles.

In rural schools, superintendents and principals in this study used Others Oriented behaviors to describe counselor leaders. Terms used by school leaders and school counselors in the rural school districts included terms like empathetic, relates well to others, and shows care and concern as leadership traits of school counselor leaders. School counselor leaders were also perceived to be decision makers. Superintendents and principals used such decision making terms as sees the big picture, goal oriented, and having a vision as ways to describe school counselor leaders. Action Oriented terms included being involved in school activities, taking initiative, and going above and beyond. Due to the smaller size of the school districts, the school counselors and guidance directors in this study often found themselves in multiple positions. They are not only fulfilling the expected guidance role but may be acting principal when the principal is out of the building.

The size of the school district in this study determined the level of opportunities and flexibility school counselors have to pursue leadership activities. School counselors were perceived to have leadership traits and are viewed more as leaders when they are visible and exhibit Others Oriented and Action Oriented behaviors. Superintendents and principals from this study indicated that school counselors exhibit leadership through coordinating meetings, facilitating Instructional Support Team Meetings, collaborating with teachers, communicating

openly with the administration, and generating new ideas for programs to support student success.

Research question two: What role or roles do school counselors serve in the district wide change process? There are several interview questions in both the School Leader Interview Protocol and the School Counselor Interview Protocol utilized to explore this research question. See Figure 3.

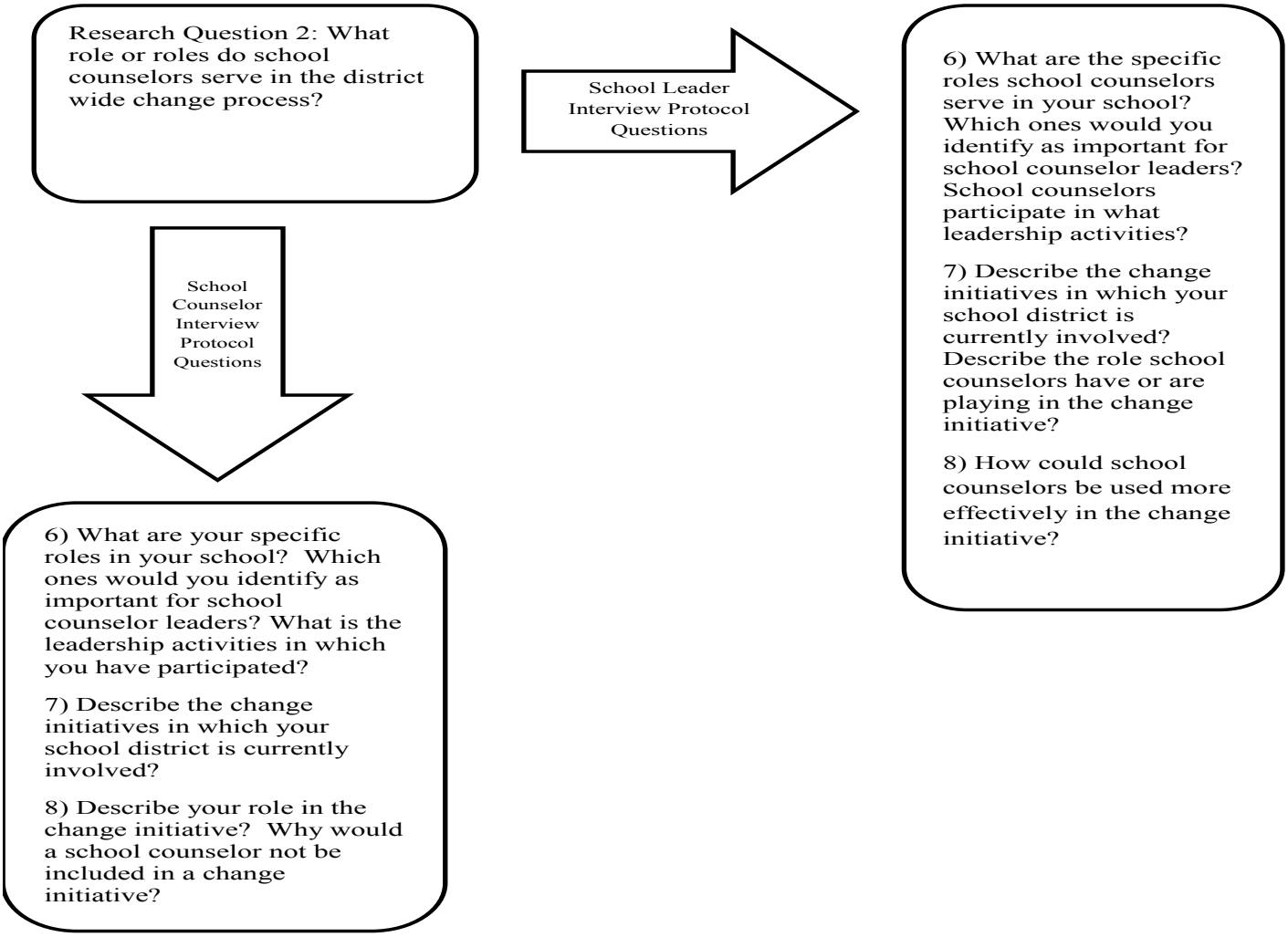

Figure 3. Research Question 2 and Corresponding Leader and School Counselor Protocol Questions.

The change initiatives discussed by participants in this study involved district and/or building changes within the last three years for each of the school districts studied. The changes were specific to the school counselors' roles or when school counselors were invited in to consult on the impact that a change made could have on the school district by the district leadership team. When exploring a change to the master schedule, period schedule, school programing, and adding or removing courses, school administrators in all school districts in this study would consult with school counselors directly or indirectly through the guidance director or coordinator to determine how a given change could potentially impact the students, teachers, and master schedule.

US1 is undergoing a district wide change that directly involves the school counselors from US1 and the school counselors in the merging school district. US1 Superintendent, who will also be serving as the new school superintendent, created a team of school counselors from both school districts prior to the merger to construct a brand new master schedule. US1 Superintendent encouraged the school counselors to be creative and provided them with "total freedom to develop a master schedule anyway they preferred" (personal communication, May 3, 2013). The other change counselors focused on, during the school merger, was combining the course catalogues of both school districts. The superintendent, school counselors, and principals continued meeting on a weekly basis throughout this change to discuss progress with the development of the new master schedule. US1 Superintendent stated:

> We're involved with the severe reformation of two school districts and here's a perfect example of how I depend on our school counselors. I've taken the secondary counselors from both districts and I've said to them this is what I want you to do, before you go create that five eight schedule and the nine twelve schedule, put it all together. You

> come back to me and show me what you have and it's a go. They had been given a little bit of direction. This is their baby. They can make it the way they want it to make it. So they have in this huge reformation that's taking place in our school district with our neighboring school district, they're playing a major role in how the secondary level is going to and how elementary is going to shake out and be reformed. So I'm depending on them to step up and demonstrate leadership (personal communication, May 3, 2013).

US1 School Counselor discussed the school merger as a major change initiative and the school counselors' role in the merger. US1 School Counselor discussed the large amount of responsibility to make sure that all students from both schools are scheduled with the newly merged course catalogue and that the student data system is streamlined and working (US1 School Counselor, personal communication, May 3, 2013) US1 School Counselor stated they met regularly with the District Leadership Team (DLT) to consult about a change, "The administration pulls us into the District Leadership Team meetings all the time" (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US1 Principal discussed the importance of the school counselors during the merger process and including them in weekly meetings to work collaboratively with the administration when creating the master schedule, course catalogue, and merge the student data system (personal communication, May 3, 2013).

In US2, school counselors are involved in change initiatives focused on streamlining the master scheduling, data management system, and data reporting of student grades and graduation requirements. Due to size of the school, US2 Counselor Coordinator acts as the liaison between the school counselors and the building leadership team. The Counselor Coordinator will meet with the District Leadership Team when called upon. When discussing US2 changes the US2 School Counselor stated, "the counselors have no input or conversations around any change

initiatives" (personal communication, May 31, 2013). US2 School Counselor discussed being directed to take on specific tasks by the administration directly or through the Counselor Coordinator (US2 Counselor, personal communication, May 31, 2013). When discussing the master schedule for US2 the principal stated:

> Due to the size of the school, district several assistant principals and the counselor coordinator work on changes to the master schedule. School counselors are not part of this process and are responsible for course selection input for their caseload and making sure students course selections are met upon scheduling. (US2 Principal, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

Change initiatives in the suburban school districts in this study involved school counselors in several different areas including scheduling, student programming, and student attendance. The administration in SUS1 and SUS2 were utilizing school counselors to implement the procedures and policies of the Dignity for All Students Act (DASA). This included utilizing school counselors to implement character education programs to combat bullying. School counselors were attending trainings and conferences to learn more about DASA, their role in reporting, record keeping, and following up on DASA related issues. SUS1 Superintendent utilized the school counselors to create a new class period schedule and relied heavily on input from the counselors to help avoid conflict and issues that could possibly arise. SUS1 Superintendent also relied on the school counselor for anti-bullying and character education programs. SUS1 Superintendent when discussing change initiatives and the school counselor stated:

> It all goes back to DASA and anti-bullying. SUS1 School Counselor was there. She infused some character education initiatives, The Pillars of Character. We spent a lot of time on initiatives what would pull kids in and motivate kids to choose to behave, He/she did bully-proofing your school training and was a real leader in infusing that. We started doing mediation with students and she trained that. (personal communication, March 25, 2013)

SUS1 Principal explained why consulting with the school counselors was important when changes to the class period schedule were being made. SUS1 Principal stated:

> A couple of years back the superintendent and I had to make sure the counselor was involved with the class period schedule time changes for a number of reasons. Are we going to end up with a lot of headaches? Are we going to end up with a lot of tardiness? Are we going to end up with a lot of issues from a social aspect with kids? We had a lot of discussion prior to even talking about it as a larger group. I use my counselors as my sounding board because they have probably the best feel for what's going on in the building. (personal communication, March 18, 2013)

SUS1 School Counselor indicated how the major focus of the SUS1 principal and teachers has been on APPR and common core. SUS1 School Counselor is not affected by these changes at this time (personal communication, March 4, 2013). The counselor noted how the school counselors are consulted when issues arise. SUS1 School Counselor stated "as more issues come up, you're consulted with more for assistance" (personal communication, March 4, 2013). SUS1 School Counselor also stated:

> I think it's hard as a school counselor for any change in the school not to be included. Particularly in a smaller district, just because any kind of change effects,

> you know, such a number of people that you're working with. Whether it just effects the student, well you're involved in that. If it just effects the teachers, well you're still involved with that. If it's something that might effect, you know, administrators or parents, you're still involved. I think that school counseling is evolving and an ever changing profession. It changes as these, you know, these change initiatives go. I don't think you can be isolated or put in a bubble for any of them. (personal communication, March 4, 2013)

In SUS2, the responsibility of attendance shifted from principals to the school counselors. School counselors are also involved in more discipline issues then in the past. SUS2 School Counselor stated, "We're doing more with attendance now. Discipline stuff has been pushed to us. That's big. It's just been a change in philosophy, a breakdown of traditional boundaries that were in place." (personal communication, April 23, 2013).

Change initiatives reported for school counselors in the rural schools for this study involving school counselors focused on changing the school schedule from a block schedule to a traditional single period schedule, student management system, dropout prevention programing, student eligibility, and summer school implementation. The change initiatives in RS1 included implementing summer school, changing and updating the student management system, and dropout prevention. The change initiatives in RS2 focused on changing the school schedule from a block schedule to a traditional single period schedule and student eligibility.

In RS1, the school counselor and principal reported meeting on a weekly basis to discuss and collaborate on the changes being implemented. The school counselors and principal worked collaboratively to implement a summer school program at the school. RS1 School Counselor explained the implementation of the summer school program:

> Summer school, we basically put it all in. I'm not going to say we just put it together. The principals did too. The school counselors were the main players coming up with the courses that they needed, making sure the students were in the correct classes, setting up the schedule for the summer school. Principals did the hiring of the teachers. (personal communication, March 11, 2013)

RS1 Principal discussed how the school counselors showed leadership during the change with assessments. RS1 Principal stated:

> When we were first getting ready to roll those MAP Assessments out, we had to sit down, because we had to administer them to grades seven through ten. We had to come up with a plan of how we were going to do that in the least obstructive way without interfering with instruction. School counselors are idea generators in terms of how we were going to set up that schedule, who was going to proctor exams, and what periods of the day we were going to do this. (personal communication, March 1, 2013)

The dropout prevention task force in RS1 is a team that included the school counselors. RS1 Principal stated:

> The dropout prevention task force, that one was a really important role because again, being a collaborative task force, our culminating activity was doing a presentation to the Board of Education, which we all had a part that we had to play in the presentation. (personal communication, March 11, 2013).

School counselors, as part of the dropout prevention team, have been working to implement strategies to reduce dropout rates. RS1 Principal further discussed how school counselors are important to consult with because they have an understanding of student needs. RS1 Principal stated, "Knowing what students need. School counselors have a pulse on what students need.

They are always trying to figure out a way to get students what they need." (personal communication, March 1, 2013).

RS2 Superintendent explained how school counselors are involved in change initiatives. RS2 Superintendent reported:

> With every change initiative we involve the school counselors. So, the scheduling he/she was involved in that. We've reassigned teachers in different roles and given them multiple duties. To make those things happen, that goes back to the schedule, by making time and resources available among our staff. It helps our counselor's ability to look at multiple solutions and come up with different staffing, different paradigms. That's how it paves the way for many change efforts**.** (personal communication, April 10, 2013)

RS2 Principal discussed the school counselor being involved in changing the schedule from a 74 minute block schedule to a 43 minute period schedule:

> The schedule change, he/she took a key role in that. We spent a lot of time doing research, meeting with the building level team, figuring out what the research says about different types of schedules and the impact on student achievement. He/she was active as part of the building leadership team and figuring out what the research says about the different types of schedules and impact on student achievement. (personal communication, April 10, 2013).

RS2 Director of Guidance discussed how being part of the building leadership team has enabled her to take an active role in the change process:

> I am part of the building leadership team, you know, we had an eligibility requirement for athletes, actually for all students. We revamped that and rewrote the handbook. Eligibility and attendance type of stuff come out of the building level team. We revamped denial of credit policies. We are in the midst of changing the child study team and we are looking at Response to Intervention (RTI). We also created a supportive study hall room which is a room of less than 10 students with teacher support. (personal communication, April 3, 2013)

US1 Superintendent sought out the school counselors and provided them with the opportunity to show leadership with a major change that will aid in the creation of a newly merged district. School counselors in US1 were responsible for the development and implementation of the newly merged district master schedule. They were consulted with and relied upon by school administrators. In US1, the school counselors are an important part of the district change process while they work towards the two school merger. Due to the merger, they have a role in change of the school district system and how it will function. The US1 Superintendent actively included the school counselors in a major change initiative. School counselors in this district met with the administration on a regular basis. US1 School Counselor reported feeling more valued and part of a larger leadership team (US1 School Counselor, personal communication, May 3, 2013).

Change initiatives that were reported in the suburban school districts were more student focused. DASA is focused on the safety of students and having a procedure for reporting, investigating, and following up on DASA related issues. The responsibility of reporting and investigating DASA related issues is being shared among administrators and counselors in the suburban school districts. School counselors build relationships and work with the students,

faculty, and administration. School counselors in the suburban school districts developed student schedules, course selections, and have an understanding of class periods that also put them in the position of designing a class period schedule that is effective and meets all the school district needs as reported by the interview data. Suburban school counselors in this study are relied on by the administration for input and as a resource during the student schedule development process or when considering changes to the student schedule.

In both rural schools of this study, interview data indicated that change involved school counselors being part of a building leadership team and or a specific leadership committee developed to create new programming or meet the specific needs of the school building. School counselors work at the building level and have a stronger impact on school building change than district wide change. The building level change initiatives included changes that impact the entire school through the scheduling and how the change can potentially impact the teachers and students. These change initiatives included developing a completely new master schedule and/or summer school schedule.

The interview data indicated that school counselors in this study served different roles in the change process depending on the school district in which they worked. When exploring district wide change in this study school counselors have less of an impact on district change than they do on building level change. School counselors tend to focus more on issues specific to the building they work in. Except for US1 school counselors who were focusing on developing a completely new master schedule for a newly created school district as a result of a two school merger.

This study found that all school counselors are consulted with, directly or indirectly through the director or coordinator of guidance, when district leaders are considering a potential

change that may impact scheduling, period schedules, and changes to programing. They are also utilized for changes that are needed when implementing new programing for students. Over the last year, in the suburban schools, they have been utilized to implement bullying prevention programs and as resources for the Dignity for All Student Act.

The interview data indicated that in both rural schools in this study, school counselors were consulted when there was a change to the structure of the school day. School counselors were relied upon for input to predict potential barriers or issues that may result in changes to the school day, policies, and specific programming being considered. The interview data also indicated that the rural school counselors were consulted with on changes to period schedules, student eligibility, and implementing and developing new programming. Rural school counselors had the opportunity of attending building level meetings and having a voice in change compared to the larger suburban and urban school districts as indicated by the interview data.

The interview data revealed that school counselors in this study served more of a role in building level change than district level change. Interview data indicated that school counselors were consulted by district leadership when changes to the class schedule, daily period schedule, the master schedule, and student programming were being considered by the administration. When school counselors in this study were involved in district wide change, the change tends to be in developing and implementing student intervention programs, changes to schedule structure, and consulting on personal and academic issues that students face as suggested by the interview data. A review of documentation and interview data indicated that one of the district wide initiatives in this study that involved school counselors in suburban schools is the Dignity for All Students Act.

There appear to be several factors found from this study that determined how school counselors are involved in both the building level and district wide change process. These factors include size of the school district, needs of the administration, changes to the master schedule, and issues having to do with student needs.

Research question three: How do the roles of school counselors as leaders differ in Urban, Suburban, and Rural school districts?

Several interview questions were utilized to explore this research question in both the School Leader Interview Protocol and he School Counselor Interview Protocol. See Figure 4.

All Urban, Suburban, and Rural School Districts in this study had a form of District Leadership Team (DLT). Not every school counselor served on a DLT while some where consulted as needed. Some of the respondents discussed school counselors and membership on the Building Leadership Team (BLT) specific to the school building school counselors' work. Leadership on the DLT in this study was dependent on the size of the school district and administration. Urban DLT's were larger with more administration members, due to the larger size of the school district and the number of administrative positions, compared to Suburban DLTs and Rural DLT's. Suburban DLT's contained more administrators, due to the larger size of the school district and the number of administrative positions, than Rural DLT's. The Rural DLT's in this study were the smallest sized school districts and had fewer administrators who functioned in multiple roles while serving as school leaders.

US1 Superintendent discussed the need for school counselors to report directly to the superintendent and school counselors not serving on the district leadership team. US1 Superintendent stated:

In hindsight the high school counselors are part of the district leadership team in the sense that they coordinate all of the data, and all the information for secondary programming. They have district level responsibilities when it comes to those specific duties. Other than that, their responsibilities are building level. (personal communication, May 3, 2013)

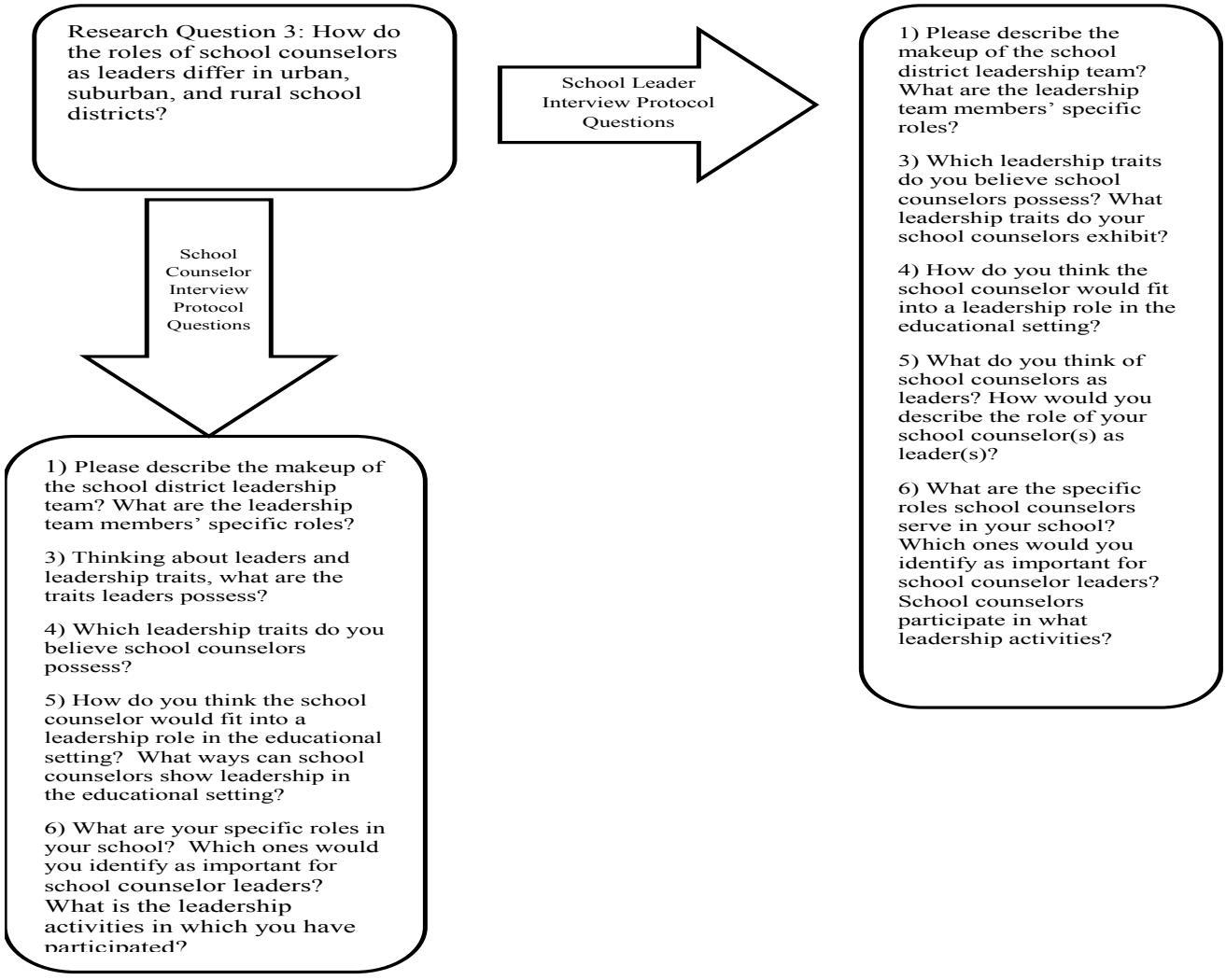

Figure 4. Research Question 3 and Corresponding Leader and School Counselor Protocol Questions.

The DLT was not discussed during US1 Principal's interview. US1 Principal discussed the membership of the high school counselors as members of the Building Leadership Team (BLT), "I have an assistant principal and three guidance counselors. Two of the counselors are high school counselors and the third one is a five through eight counselor. Included is the school nurse as part of the building leadership team" (personal communication, May 3, 2010). US1 Principal described the role of the school counselors as part of the BLT, "The counselors will typically come in and focus more on grades, but they also have a tendency to include and look at the students holistically, so we're looking at grades, behavior, and attendance" (personal communication, May 1, 2013). US1 Principal does not understand why school counselors would not be involved in leadership. US1 Principal (personal communication, May 1, 2013) stated, "I just can't fathom not having the counselors be involved with leadership". US1 Director of Guidance discussed being a member of the 7-12 high school department chairpersons' teams. US1 Principal identified this leadership team and described it stating:

> I guess that's a leadership team that takes information from the building principal and the assistant principal and disseminated it down through the departments. For instance, right now, we are looking at a draft copy of June's tests. The regents test schedule. So we hash it out, then we give it to the department members. (personal communication, May 3, 2013)

US1 School Counselor was not able to identify a DLT for US1 or what such a team would be called. US1 School Counselor discussed weekly meetings with the school principal, assistant principal, and school counselors. US1 School Counselor stated, "We have weekly meetings with US1 Principal to discuss students. I think that is important and a leadership role. The team is the principal, assistant principal, and school counselors" (personal communication, May 3, 2013).

When discussing why school counselors would not be a part of the district leadership team US1 School Counselor stated, "We're looked at as more supportive. To help carry out some of those decisions that are made or to consult with us, you know, more as a supportive role to administration" (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US1 School Counselor followed up stating that the administration" pulls the school counselors into meetings on a regular basis depending on the situation" (personal communication, May 3, 2013).

In US1 the school counselors are a regular part of the Building Leadership Team. US2 is a larger school district than US1. School counselors are not a part of the DLT in US2. The US2 Counselor Coordinator will typical attend the DLT meetings when called upon for consultation on any guidance related issues. The US2 Counselor Coordinator stated:

> If it has anything to do with secondary education and transitioning between buildings, or to higher education, inclusive of any programs that assist in dual credit, AP credit, bridging, homebound instruction, and home schooling they are there. There seems to be a movement lately for home schooling, I've been called to our central office to meet for a few of those. More than I ever have been. (personal communication, May 31, 2013)

US2 Principal oversees the school counselors and meets with the guidance team on a regular basis during the school year (personal communication, May 31, 2013). US2 Principal stated, "I oversee all of the school counselors in the building. We have a counselor coordinator that facilitates basic dissemination of information, coordination of activities, but I oversee the department" (personal communication, May 31, 2013).

School Counselors are not a part of the BLT in US2 but they will meet with the Counselor Coordinator and an Assistant Principal as part of a Guidance Team Meeting. US2 School Counselor discussed being a part of the Instructional Support Team. The US2 School

Counselor identified other teams that do not include school counselors. US2 School Counselor is not aware of a BLT when asked a follow up question about BLT's US2 School Counselor stated, "There may be. I am not aware of any building team" (personal communication, May 31, 2013). When asked why school counselors would not be a part of those teams US2 School Counselor stated:

> I don't know. Their structure is very strange to me with the counseling department, not having a guidance department head while all the other academic areas have department heads. The support staff really is not a represented by a leader in this building. (US2 School Counselor, personal communication, May 31, 2013).

When discussing the DLT, SUS1 Superintendent does not have school counselors on the DLT but discussed the Pupil Personnel Team on which they participate. The Pupil Personnel Team is not a DLT or BLT. The Pupil Personnel Team includes support staff from across the school district. The Pupil Personnel Team includes the school counselor, social worker, school psychologist, and school nurse (SUS1 Superintendent, personal communication, March 21, 2013) SU1 Superintendent stated "We have a great Pupil Personnel Team which I think is an important part of any leadership team" (personal communication, March 21, 2013).

School counselors are part of the SUS1 building leadership team. SUS1 Principal stated that there were several different leadership teams and the school counselors were on the BLT's. SUS1 Principal stated:

> Included in those teams are our school social worker and guidance counselors. We have a part-time elementary guidance counselor who will serve on the elementary building leadership team. The high school counselor is a permanent member of the high school

> building leadership team. Then at different times they also serve on the district team as well. (SUS1 Principal, personal communication, March 18, 2013).

When discussing roles of BLT members SUS1 Principal stated, "There are no specific roles. It all depends on the task at hand. Everybody takes a leadership role, depending on what it is that we're doing" (personal communication, March 18, 2013).

SUS2 is the larger school district when compared to SUS1. The Director of Pupil Services of SUS2 discussed the makeup of the DLT called the Administrative Team and identified that it was made up of school administrators only and did not include school counselors. The school counselors are called in by the Administrative Team when needed. SUS2 Director of Pupil Services stated, "The Administrative Team will reach out to school counselors as needed for an issue that is specific to guidance" (Personal communication, May 7, 2013). The SUS2 School Counselor was confused by what was meant by DLT when asked about leadership teams. SUS2 School Counselor identified having an Administration Council and Principal Council and stated, "I am not sure if they're called that title that you used to portray them. To my knowledge there are no school counselors on that. We have Administrative and Principal Councils" (personal communication, April 23, 2013). As a follow up SUS2 School Counselor stated:

> If there is a situation that arises a counselor might go in a role like a guest for that particular issue. For example, if there was an issue, we've had an issue recently this year with programming our core selections. So, one, two, or three counselors at a time would go and talk to the Principals' Council. There is no counselor who is permanently assigned. (personal communication, April 23, 2013).

SUS2 School Counselor elaborated on why school counselors are not part of the councils and stated, “I think historically counselors were never a part of any, and I don’t think a lot of thought has really been devoted to counselors at those meetings” (personal communication, April 23, 2013).

RS1 does not have a DLT. When asked to describe the make-up of the DLT RS1 Principal replied, “We don’t have a DLT, we only have a building level leadership team” (personal communication, March 1, 2013). RS1 School Counselor described the make-up of the BLT as department heads of all the academic departments, library, special education, and the guidance department (personal communication, March 1, 2013). RS1 Principal stated, “My director of guidance and middle school counselor is also a member of the building level team, which is a leadership team to help make decisions for the building” (personal communication, March 1, 2013). RS1 Principal discussed roles and described the BLT:

> There are not necessarily specific roles because we act as a collaborative entity for the building. They’re conduits from which all of the people in their respective departments act and go to and then speak through them to me and vice versa. (personal communication, March 1, 2013).

RS1 School Counselor went on to discuss the BLT:

> I’m the department head for guidance. We have the math, science, all the main core areas, and the elementary. The elementary has the reading department head, and math department head. So, we do have department heads that the principals work with to try to get the information to teachers. (RS1 School Counselor, personal communication, March 11, 2013)

RS1 School Counselor (personal communication, March 11, 2013) identified that the guidance department is made up of two other counselors while the other departments have typically five to six people.

RS2 has a DLT and the Director of Guidance is a part of the DLT. RS2 Superintendent described the personnel on the DLT stating, "We have an elementary principal, a secondary principal, the superintendent, school business manager, and guidance director" (personal communication, April 10, 2013).

When discussing DLT roles RS2 Superintendent stated:

> Some of the roles blur and blend. I say that because we don't have an assistant superintendent or someone that's fully responsible for curriculum and instruction. We share that role. When I talk about roles blurring or blending, I might come up with an initiative, the principals might come up with an initiative and our business official is our purchasing agent may come up with technology see alternatives and generate new discussion. (personal communication, April 10, 2013).

RS2 Principal identified having a DLT and an unofficial BLT. RS2 Principal stated, "I would say kind of unofficially in my building we have myself, dean of students, and the guidance counselor as part of my go to team" (personal communication, April 10, 2013). When discussing roles, RS2 Principal identified that the BLT has no specific roles (personal communication, April 10, 2013). RS2 School Counselor (personal communication, April 3, 2013) when discussing the DLT stated, "I would like to say I'm a part of it. I am for some instances but not for others, only unless it pertains to something related to guidance".

The roles of the school counselors in urban, suburban, and rural school districts in this study differed in several ways. In the larger urban and suburban schools in this study, having a

more structured guidance program and higher student caseloads decreased school counselor flexibility to take initiative on projects outside of the scope of the school counselor role. In this study, school counselors in the urban and larger suburban school districts tended to serve more of a traditional school counselor role falling under the Traditionally Oriented school counselor role. Activities in the Traditionally Oriented role in this study included advising students on course selection, scheduling, college and career planning, attending CSE meetings, scheduling parent-teacher conferences, and connecting with outside resources to bring programming in to the school district. Responsibility for school counselors in the urban school districts and larger suburban school district in this study included maintaining and monitoring data for graduation requirements, student grades, attendance, and discipline.

In the smaller rural and suburban school districts in the study, school counselors filled the traditional counselor role and had the flexibility to take a leadership role in program creation and implementation. School counselors tended to serve on multiple committees and served more as a member of the school BLT. Rural school counselors in this study were consulted with more by the principals and superintendents in the decision making process than the larger suburban and urban school districts. They tended to have more contact and work more closely with administration.

The majority of the DLT's in each of the schools that participated in this study do not have school counselors as a regular part of the DLT. The only school district that did was SUS1. Districts that do not have school counselors as part of the DLT will call them into meetings as needed, typically when there is a situation impacting students, faculty, data for programming, and the school schedule.

Research question 4: **What barriers and/or obstacles keep school counselors from functioning in a leadership role? If school counselors are not viewed as leaders in your school, then what barriers do they have to overcome to be able to be viewed as leaders?**

There are several questions utilized to explore this research question in both the School Leader Interview Protocol and he School Counselor Interview Protocol. See Figure 5.

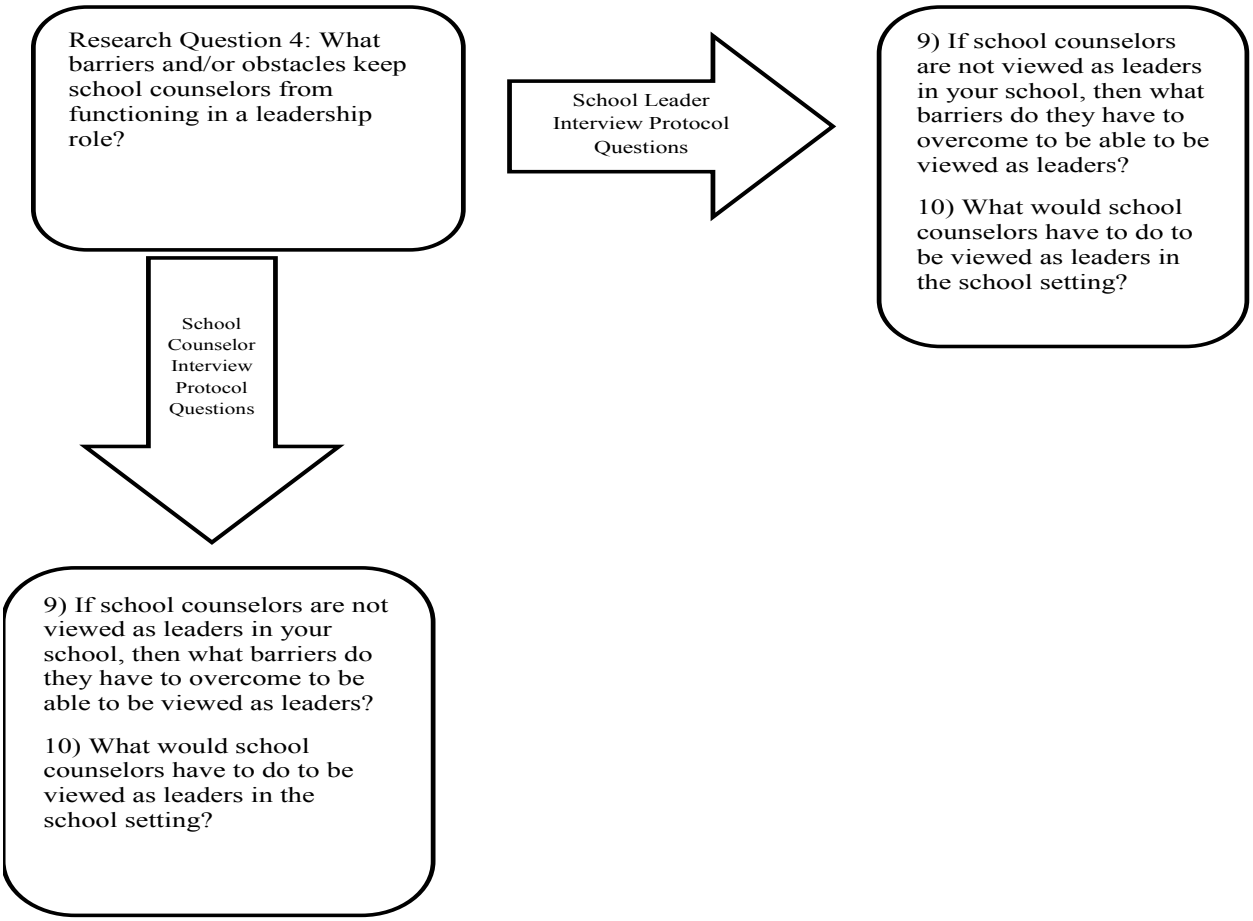

Figure 5. Research Question 4 and Corresponding Leader and School Counselor Protocol Questions.

Three categories of barriers were identified in this study. These categories include internal barriers, external barriers, and organizational barriers. Internal barriers come from

within the school counselor and include school counselors who are not interested in leadership or are not motivated to pursue leadership. External barriers are barriers that come from outside the school counselor and include school counselors not being viewed as leaders by administration or being valued as a resource. This barrier includes school counselors' ability to pursue leadership opportunities due to lack of time or flexibility due to school counselor work load. Organizational barriers are barriers that are determined on how the organization is structured. Organizational barriers include the hierarchical nature of the administration, lack of leadership certification on the part of school counselors, and membership in the teachers' union.

Several suggestions were made by respondents in this study to overcome barriers to school counselor leadership. One suggestion made by respondents in this study included educating faculty, administration, and the community on the school counselor role. Other suggestions from respondents in this study to overcome barriers to leadership included collaborating with school leaders and school counselors being more visible in the school counselor role.

When discussing barriers US1 Superintendent identified several potential barriers. US1 Superintendent stated:

> The only school counselors who probably aren't perceived as leaders are those that just aren't fulfilling the role the way they should. Or they are being held by other forces such as the administration and/or the union leadership. (US1 Superintendent, personal communication, May 3, 2013)

US1 Principal identified trust issues and personal factors as barriers to school counselor leadership. US1 Principal stated, "It could be trust issues, there could be personal factors, or personnel factors" (personal communication, May 3, 2013). When discussing overcoming

barriers US1 Principal stated, “They had to be able to develop relationships with the administration and the administration has to be willing and wanting. I think it is a two way street” (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US1 Director of Guidance identified time and balancing the school counselor role with new responsibilities that are given as barriers to school counselors taking on leadership roles. US1 Director of Guidance stated:

> The barrier is: Do I have enough time to do this? Sending out transcripts, writing letters of recommendations, you know all the stuff that makes up a counselor. We don’t need anything new to do even though it may be fun. It might be interesting. If we have something new, can we do justice to the rest of the job? That’s the real barrier. (personal communication, May 3 2013).

US1 School Counselor identified how teachers perceive school counselors lack of leadership skills as a barrier to school counselors being viewed as leaders. US1 School Counselor also identified being a part of the union as barrier to school counselor being viewed as leaders due to concern of how they will be viewed negatively by other members of the teachers’ union (personal communication, May, 3, 2013). US1 School Counselor stated, “Teachers sometimes perceive us as soft. They’ll joke that we are too nice to kids. Other barriers are if they didn’t possess leadership skills. School counselors aren’t administration; they are in the teacher’s union” (personal communication, May 3, 2013). When discussing the teachers’ union US1 School Counselor continued stating, “They may feel that they have to be careful because they are in the union. Some counselors may want to go above and beyond but how you’re perceived by others could be rough” (personal communication, May 3, 2013).

When discussing barriers in US2 the US2 Principal identified how school counselors are perceived by faculty and administration. US2 Principal stated, “I think that there’s that view of

them as a support personnel. Everybody sees them as, instead of being a decision maker, the one that intervenes at a certain level, but not one that set protocol" (personal communication, May 31, 2013). US2 Principal adds that they can change how they are seen as a leader by taking more initiative, getting involved with committee teams, and playing a key role in the school based inquiry teams (personal communication, May 31, 2013). US2 School Counselor identified the administration, faculty, and families not understanding the school counselor role as one of the biggest barriers. US2 School Counselors stated:

> I think the biggest barrier is that people don't really understand what we do. People as far as parents, students, administrators, and teachers really don't know what we do. They have an image of what they think we do, but they don't really know. (US2 School Counselor, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

US2 School Counselor discussed that promoting understand of the school counselor role would help overcome this specific barrier. US2 School Counselor stated, "I think people have to understand what it is that we do. We have to be given more opportunities to make decisions and explain our role." (personal communication, May 31, 2013).

US2 Coordinator of Guidance identified perceptions of counselors and lack of understanding of the school counselor role. US2 Coordinator of Guidance stated:

> I think sometimes they're some people that feel we're overly empathetic. I think that is a sort of barrier. I think that one of the problems with our profession is that it is, to the public, they feel that they greatly understand our job. In reality, they don't at all. Everybody thinks they know what we should be doing. Our profession is not very well understood. So, it is greatly misunderstood and I think sometime we're just not taken seriously because of that. (personal communication, May 31, 2013)

When discussing actions school counselors could take to show they are leaders, US2 Coordinator of Guidance stated:

> I think one of the problems here is that sometimes we're very humble, and we're worker bees. We are trying to get stuff done. We're not making a lot of waves, so we're not a very load voice. I think, if we're more overt about the things we do, and it doesn't mean we have to stand up with a megaphone saying everything we do, but just be doing it overtly. (US2 Coordinator of Guidance, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

SUS1 Superintendent discussed leadership fit and official titles as potential barriers to school counselor leadership. SUS1 Superintendent stated:

> Sometimes it is fit. I mean the superintendent or assistant superintendent or whoever works most closely with the counselor. Someone has to empower them. The leaders, the administration, need to be on the same page with the counselors. If not, then you either work really hard to change the administrators mind or find a better fit. Part of it is fit. Part of it is you have to strip away the title issues and you have to strip away the hierarchy issues and say, who cares whose, the superintendent and who's the principal, and who's the counselor. Here's what we want to accomplish. It really doesn't matter who gets the credit, who gets the blame, we're all working together." (SUS1, personal communication, March 25, 2013)

SUS1 Superintendent continued focusing on the idea of everyone working together and stated, "If I could advise my colleagues in a bigger district. They're probably not using the counselors to their best ability or best potential." (personal communication, March 25, 2013). SUS1 Principal identified perceptions of school administration of the school counselors' role as a barrier to

leadership. SUS1 Principal identified how school administrators could work to change the perception of school counselors not being seen as leaders:

> There are times, I think, in districts where the counselors are underutilized only in that they're not perceived as administrators so they do not want to be in that role. At the same, time they are not teachers. So they are kind of in limbo. If you do not look at them as a good solid resource, or perceive them as a good place to get information, or to bounce things off, or to use as a resource, then overcoming the perception that all they do is counsel kids and scheduling is, you know, overcoming the basic misconceptions of what a counselor should be. Then you got to get over that and beyond that. Put that person into a role where they would have more active participation with the decision-making process. (SUS1 Principal, personal communication, March 18, 2013)

SUS1 School Counselor identified school counselor expectations, responsibilities, and personal issues as barriers (personal communication, March 4, 2013). SUS1 School Counselor states:

> I think from district to district the expectations are different. I think some of it depends on how a school or a district views a counselor and sees the counselor roles. So I think, it has to do with the expectations of the role within each district. I think some of it is personal too. What the person is willing to do and what they're comfortable with doing. What they view their responsibilities as a school counselor. (SUS1 School Counselor, personal communication. March 4, 2013).

SUS2 Principal identified school counselor comfort level with leadership and motivation as a barrier to school counselor leadership. SUS2 Principal stated:

> I think we have opportunities for school counselors, but, you know, it's like any opportunities. How well are they going to take advantage of them? How much are they

> going to step forward? They are doing their job but not taking it to the next step. I don't know if it is comfort level or something they just don't want. (SUS2 Principal, personal communication, May 7, 2013)

SUS2 Director of Pupil Services identified teachers' perceptions of school counselors as a barrier to leadership. SUS2 Director of Pupil Services stated:

> I think it is perception, you know. We are in the business of, you know, doing instruction and educating students. So teachers may have a perception that if they haven't taught in the class or been in the classroom, how can they really lead us or understand where we're coming from? (SUS2 Director of Pupil Services, personal communication, May 7, 2013)

When discussing the issue of overcoming barriers to school counselor leadership, SUS2 Director of Pupil Services stated, "They need to be visible; they need to be seen as someone who supports students and teachers in instruction" (personal communication, May 7, 2013). SUS2 School Counselor did not identify specific barriers but identified being more visible as a way of increasing how a school counselor is viewed as a leader in the school district. SUS2 School Counselor stated:

> I don't think there'd be really barriers, more for us, than there would be for anyone else. You'd just have to be like anybody else here. Start wearing a tie, do more afterschool events, and play the political game. (SUS2 School Counselor, personal communication, April 23, 2013

In RS1 the principal viewed being a part of the teachers' union as a barrier to school counselor leadership. RS1 Principal added, "I think the biggest barrier is the fact that they're part of the teachers bargaining unit" (personal communication, March 1, 2013). When discussing how to overcome that barrier RS1 Principal stated, "I think it would behoove them to

become a school district leader. Get the certification to be a school district leader or be involved in some type of leadership program for counselors." (personal communication, March 1, 2013).

RS1 School Counselor identified caseload size in larger schools, motivation, and school counselors not having personal goals as barriers to school counselor leadership. RS1 School Counselor stated:

> The caseloads would be an issue. I think they have to think about what they really want to accomplish and really go after it to try and make it happen. If you're at a big school and you have those barriers, I think you have to think, okay, what's really important to me? What do I really want to see and try to make it happen? Don't give up. It may take more hurdles to get over, but if it's positive change then I think they should try to implement that. (RS1 School Counselor, personal communication, March 11, 2013)

RS1 School Counselor identified ways to overcome barriers by collaborating with the department heads, getting involved and taking risks by "putting yourself out there" (RS1 School Counselor, personal communication, March 11, 2013).

RS2 Superintendent identified trust and motivation as barriers to school counselor leadership. RS2 Superintendent stated:

> Trust has to be a big piece. I'm assuming it's this way in most districts, that the school counselor is part of the teaching unit. If the teachers in the building didn't trust him/her to be confidential about their concerns and the students didn't trust the counselor to be confidential, you know, the parameters obviously, for safety and with their concerns and if the leadership team didn't trust her with the same sense of what's ok to share and what's not ok to share, I think the whole system would break down. So that ability for

> the counselor to have trust among all staff in the build, I think, has got to be a big piece of how they fit into leadership. (personal communication, April 10, 2013)

RS2 Superintendent responded that to overcome barriers and increase perceptions of leadership, "It's that motivation to go above and beyond. No one is telling RS2 Counselor to do that. That's intrinsic motivation that she has." (personal communication, April 10, 2013). RS2 Principal identified perceptions of school counselors and not understanding school counselor roles as barriers to leadership, RS2 Principal stated:

> I already mentioned the big one, at least from a teacher's perspective. That would be that this person never taught. They don't know my world. Some teachers will be comfortable with school counselors as leaders. Others might have that, they never done what', doing piece and they can't talk to me about it, attitude. I think misconceptions or misunderstanding about the current roles of counselors. As I mentioned earlier, I think, a lot of people view the role of counselor as talking to kids when kids are having a bad day and making schedules with kids. If you believe those are the only two things counselors do, then it might be harder for you to accept them as the leader. (RS2 Principal, personal communication, April 10, 2013)

RS2 Principal identified school counselors' involvement in decision making and developing relationships with administration as a way to overcome barriers to school counselor leadership. RS2 Principal stated:

> They could speak up and take a more active role in conversations, in faculty meetings, or on team meetings, or building level teams. They can help themselves by showing others, by talking about variety of topics that, you know, are other than talking with kids and making schedules. They need to forge strong relationships with the building

> administration. I think that if the faculty and staff at large see the building principal is including this person and looking to this person when important decisions need to be made, then that can help the perception of that person as leader. (RS2 Principal, personal communication, April 10 2013)

RS2 School Counselor identified education, being hired under the teachers' contract, certification, and perceptions from teachers and administration as barriers to school counselor leadership:

> I think the degree, the initials unfortunately, that's a separating factor of it. We are hired through the teachers' contract. The first barrier is when we start looking at contracts and things like that. You know, whether there needs to be a different level, a quasi-administrative type level where maybe even the school nurse does fall too because they are a leader in many aspects. I think that's the first barrier. I think the other barrier is how it's presented or how our role is perceived. (RS2 School Counselor, personal communication, April 3, 2013)

The barriers and obstacles to school counselors' leadership discussed by all participants from all of the school districts in this study ranged from personal to organizational factors. Participants from school districts in urban, suburban, and rural school districts in this study identified being a part of the bargaining unit as a barrier. Principals and superintendents in this study are aware of this issue. SUS1 superintendent consciously choose not to discuss specific information with the school counselor that could potentially create a dilemma for the school counselor regarding specific union issues (SUS1 Superintendent, personal communication, March 25, 2013).

School counselors in suburban and rural schools of this study identified that school counselors may not take on leadership roles due to fear of not being trusted by other teachers and being viewed as not supporting the teachers' union by taking on responsibilities that went beyond what their role requires in that specific school district. Participants in all of the school districts in this study discussed lack of leadership skills as a potential barrier. Another barrier that participants in all of the school districts discussed in this study was faculty and administration not having a clear understanding of the counselor role. Other barriers identified by participants in this study included having the time and flexibility to take on leadership roles and lack of empowerment by the administration for school counselors to take on a leadership role.

Barriers to school counselors' leadership can be broken down into three categories. Internal barriers are barriers that would include a school counselor not wanting to be in a leadership position or lack of motivation on the part of the school counselor. External barriers are barriers that would include administration not viewing school counselors as leaders and valuing them as a resource, lack of time and flexibility to pursue leadership opportunities. Finally, organizational barriers are barriers that would include barriers built into the organizational structure of the organization. Examples of organizational barriers would include being part of the teachers' union, not having leadership certification and the hierarchical nature of the administration of the school district. Size of the school district, administration's perceptions of school counselors' roles, and school counselor motivation were viewed in this study as barriers to school counselor leadership. The larger school district school counselors in this study have to contend with time and flexibility as a barrier to school counselor leadership when compared to school counselors in smaller suburban and rural school districts.

Research question five: What barriers or obstacles hinder school counselors from being part of a district leadership team?

There are several questions to explore this research question in both the School Leader Interview Protocol and he School Counselor Interview Protocol. See Figure 6.

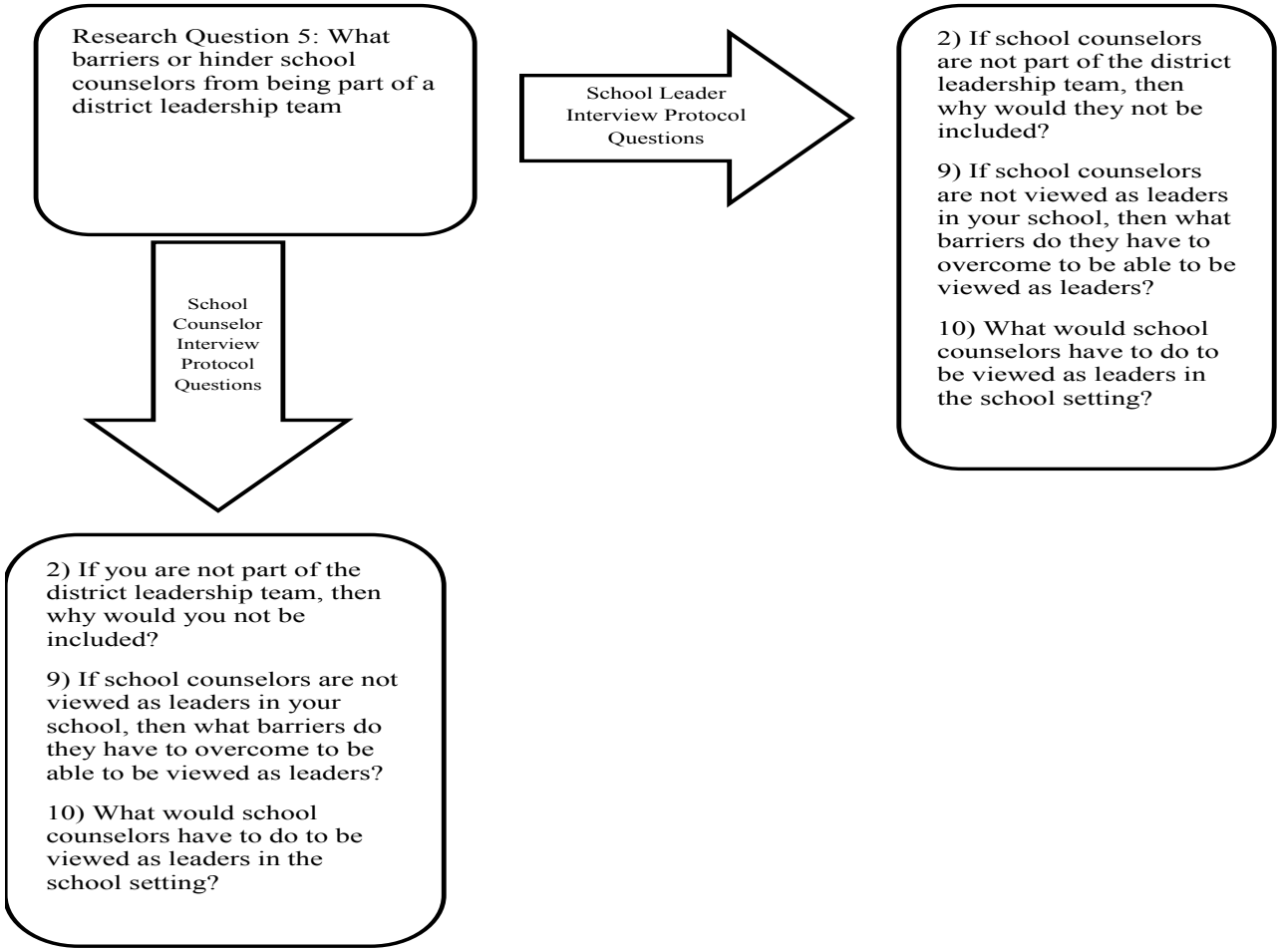

Figure 6. Research Question 5 and Corresponding Leader and School Counselor Protocol Questions.

The barriers and obstacles for school counselors serving on the district leadership team are similar to the barriers and obstacles that hinder school counselors from functioning in a leadership role. Barriers to school counselors serving on the district leadership team include

school counselors functioning at the building level, school district expectations of the school counselor role, administration not understanding the counselor role. Other barriers include school counselors' lack of time and flexibility due to workload and membership in the teachers' union. Some of the respondents in this study did not discuss barriers to school counselors serving on the district leadership team because the function of the school counselor in their school district is at the building level.

US1 Superintendent discussed the roles of school counselors being a building level responsibility. US1 Superintendent stated, "They actually don't get involved in the elementary, but data. All the secondary data, that is something they report directly to me. Other than that, their responsibilities are building level." (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US1 Principal discussed counselors being a part of the Building Leadership Team (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US1 Director of Guidance identified speaking freely and being outspoken as barriers for school counselors working towards administration. US1 Director of Guidance stated, "I think that's a problem as a counselor. You, you're often time not able to do the politics and things like that" (personal communication, May 3, 2013).

US2 Principal discussed the make-up of the administration and different leadership teams throughout the building and identified barriers to counselor leadership teams. US2 Principal stated:

> School counselors have some leadership capacity. It's limited. It's, I would say, it's more targeted to their area of expertise. Obviously they are a key people on our crisis team. They are key people when dealing with students with high needs. They also serve really as like a kind of a forefront, like a door for or before, you know things come down

to the administration. They screen quite a bit for us. (US2 Principal, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

US2 Coordinator of Guidance could not identify any barriers to counselors serving on the District Leadership Team. US2 Coordinator of Guidance mentioned accessibility as a potential barrier:

> No, if anything, sometimes it's accessibility. We also have the luxury of having an assistant principal here in the building that has a guidance background. So, we're sometimes interchangeable on some of those teams. If I can't make it, she can. If she can't make it, I can make it. But there is a guidance influence. (US2 Coordinator of Guidance, personal communication, May 31, 2013)

US2 School Counselor identified the guidance program structure and lack of a department head for the guidance program as potential barriers for counselors being part of any leadership teams. US2 School Counselor stated:

> I don't know. Their structure is very strange to me with the counseling department, not having a guidance department head while all the other academic areas have department heads. The support staff really is not a represented by a leader in this building. (US2, personal communication, May 31, 2013).

SUS1 Superintendent identified the board of education as a barrier to school counselors serving on a DLT. SUS1 Superintendent stated:

> I think the only reason why school counselors would not be a part of the DLT is if, if, the governing body, being the board, did not feel that thy warranted that sort of, and I guess I'll use the word, power and authority". (personal communication, March 25, 2013).

SUS1 Principal did not identify any barriers for counselors being a member of the district level leadership team but identified school counselors' role at a building level. SUS1 Principal identified the teams set up in the school district. SUS1 Principal stated, "The district team meets less often and then just, kind of, hands down tasks to the building team. So then, the counselors act in the capacity of the building level." (personal communication, March 18, 2013). SUS1 School Counselor was part of the BLT but is not sure why they are not part of the DLT (SUS1 School Counselor, personal communication, March 4, 2013).

SUS2 Principal identified school counselors being overlooked, not considered as being able to help on a larger scale, lack of flexibility, and work load as barriers for school counselors to serve as members of the DLT. SUS2 Principal stated:

> It sounds very simple but I think administrators may not include school counselors and not consider them as an important part of helping come up with solutions, plans, and designs. This district has a very defined guidance plan. That can be a double edged sword, because with a well-defined guidance plan you're really moving along and have a good calendar you can follow. Sometimes it doesn't give you wiggle room to have that flexibility to serve on a leadership team or help problem solve, or become part of ad hoc groups. When given a routine and certain meetings you're holding, or information you're providing to students and your trying to meet that plus things that come up with these type of leadership groups can be a challenge for counselors. (personal communication, May 7, 2013)

SUS2 Director of Guidance identified workload as a potential barrier. SUS2 Director of Guidance stated, "The day to day role of the position is quite involved. So, sometimes it's hard to sit back and reflect because you're doing all those, keeping all those little plates in the air, and

working on all those pieces" (personal communication, May 7, 2013). When discussing barriers for school counselors as members of the DLT, SUS2 School Counselor stated, "I think historically counselors were never a part of and I don't think a lot of thought has really been devoted to counselors at those meetings" (personal communication, April 23, 2013).

RS1 does not have a District Leadership Team. They only have a Building Leadership Team that school counselors are a part of. RS1 Principal stated:

> The building leadership team is comprised of all the department heads from all the four major content areas. English, Math, Social Studies, Science and then we have Practical Arts, Fine Arts, Guidance, Physical Education, and the Library Media Specialist, and Special Education all comprise the building leadership team. (personal communication, March 1, 2013).

RS1 School Counselor discussed various roles as a school counselor in other school districts and identified being a member of the teachers' union as a potential barrier to being a member of the DLT. RS1 School Counselor stated:

> At another school, I was considered an administrator. We are so in the middle between teachers, parents, students, and administrators that a lot of times, I do feel, that we are in leadership role because we are. We are major players in implementing change and developing new courses and working with teachers with the master schedule. All that stuff, but we are also part of the union. So, we're sensitive to that side as well. So maybe that's part of RS1, why we're not part of the leadership team. (RS1 School Counselor, personal communication, March 11, 2013)

RS2 Superintendent thought that being a member of the teachers' union as a barrier to being on the DLT due to the dual role of school counselors being a part of the teachers' union and viewed

by administration as a member of the DLT (personal communication, April 2012). RS2 Superintendent stated, "I think there is this pull, tug, and pull situation where the school counselor is part of the negotiating unit of teachers and yet he/she is really, you know, a key partner for the leadership team" (personal communication, April 10, 2013). RS2 Principal identified certification, job responsibilities, and how counselors are viewed as barriers to school counselors serving on the DLT. RS2 Principal stated:

> I imagine it has something to do with certifications and job responsibilities. I think in most cases, at least in my experience, though guidance counselors do administrative, or have performed administrative responsibilities, they don't have administrative certification. They are not viewed by most people as administrators or supervisors. (personal communication, April 10, 2013)

RS2 School Counselor identified being part of the teachers' union, lack of administrative certification, and a way of protecting the school counselor as reason why school counselors would not be a part of the DLT. RS2 School Counselor stated:

> I think part of it is the nature of our positions. We're part of the union and so we're seen on the same playing field as the teachers. But yet, we're quasi administrative. I like to say because we do not fit with the teachers, but we don't fit all aspects of the administration either. I didn't have an admin degree, you know, I have a Masters and the CAS. I don't have an admin degree, so I think that's part of it. I think some of it, at least here in this district; some of it's by design to protect me. (personal communication, April 3, 2013)

Interview data revealed that a representative for the guidance department or school counselor is on the Building Leadership Team in all of the school districts that were included in

this study. The only school district in this study that has a school counselor serving as a regular member of the DLT is SUS1.

The interview data indicated that major barriers or obstacles for school counselors serving as member of the district leadership team in this study included the school counselor role being a building level role, lack of understanding of the school counselor role, the size of the school counselors work load, and school counselor having extra time and flexibility to participate in leadership activities. Other barriers to school counselors serving on the district leadership team included the board of educations' willingness to empower school counselors as leaders and being a part of the teachers' union. School counselors' specific area of expertise was mentioned as a barrier to serving on the DLT in this study because it limits the scope for school counselors to participate in leadership.

Chapter four discussed the findings of the five research questions explored in this study. Chapter five will provide a summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations. The recommendations will address the future practice of school counselors and future study of school counselors and leadership.

Chapter 5: Summary of Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter includes the summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations for practice. The findings and conclusions in this chapter are presented in order of the research questions for this study.

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of how school leaders perceive school counselors as leaders, how school counselors function as part of the district leadership team, and how school counselors impact district wide change. The study explored the barriers that deter school counselor leadership and barriers that prohibit school counselors from serving on the district leadership teams in six schools selected for the study in Upstate and Central New York. The following research questions were addressed by this study:

1. What are the perceptions of school leaders regarding school counselors as leaders?
2. What role or roles do school counselors serve in the district change?
3. How do the roles of school counselors as leaders differ in urban, suburban, and rural school districts?
4. What barriers and/or obstacles keep school counselors from functioning in a leadership role?
5. What barriers or obstacles hinder school counselors from being part of a district leadership team?

The research questions were used as a guide to explore how school leaders perceive school counselors as leaders and school counselors' involvement in the district level change process. Interviews were conducted that included participants from two urban, two suburban, and two rural school districts. The participants included four superintendents, six principals, one director

of pupil services, and one coordinator of guidance, one director of guidance, one director of guidance/school counselor and four school counselors.

Summary of Findings

The following results are based on the analysis of data that were presented in chapter four.

Research Question One: What are the perceptions of school leaders regarding school counselors as leaders?

Principals, Superintendents, School Counselors and Directors of Guidance in urban, suburban, and rural school districts in this study all perceived school counselors as leaders. Leadership traits described by superintendents and principals in this study included caring, nurturing, collaborative, resourceful, goal oriented, having a vision, and ability to develop relationships. US2 Superintendent identified school counselors as leaders in US2 (personal communication, May 3, 2013). SUS1 Superintendent described the SUS1 School Counselor as able to be sympathetic, aware of what is going on in the school district, and having long range plans (personal communication, March 25, 2013). SUS1 Principal identified the school counselor as a leader in the building (personal communication, March 18, 2013). RS1 Principal identified the RS1 School Counselor as an important leader in the school (personal communication, March 4, 2013). The RS2 superintendent stated that RS2 School Counselor was able to "take on leadership roles fairly naturally" (personal communication, April 10, 2013).

In smaller school districts in this study with student enrollment of 500 to 3000, regardless of being urban suburban, or rural, school counselors exhibited "others oriented" and "action oriented" behaviors when exploring leadership. In these school districts, superintendents, principals, and school counselors utilized more "others oriented" and "action oriented" words

and behaviors to describe school counselors as leaders than the school counselors in the two urban schools and in SUS2 in this study.

This study found that all school counselors in this study who exhibited more "others oriented" behaviors discussed in chapter four were perceived to be leaders by school administration and teachers. "Others oriented" behaviors of school counselors from the interview data in this study include school counselors who are empathetic, collaborative, advocates, and rapport builders. SUS 1 Superintendent described "others oriented" behaviors of school counselor leaders as empathetic, collaborative, advocate, and rapport builders (personal communication, March 25, 2013). School counselor described as being good listeners, communicators, mediators and collaborators would also be considered "others oriented" school counselors. RS1 Principal used the terms communicator, collaborative, and mediators to describe school counselors as leaders who exhibit "others oriented" behaviors (personal communication, March 1, 2013). Fourteen of the eighteen respondents in this study identified school counselor visibility as a factor that increases perceptions of school counselors as leaders. School counselors who exhibit "others oriented" behaviors tend to be more visible and based on the data from this study would be viewed more as leaders compared to school counselors who do not exhibit these behaviors.

This study found that all school counselors in this study who exhibited more "action oriented" behaviors, discussed in chapter four, were perceived to be leaders by school administration and faculty. "Action oriented" behaviors of school counselors in this study include school counselors who are resourceful, set goals, follow a plan, have a vision, are creative, and problem solvers. SUS1 Superintendent identified the "action oriented" behaviors of school counselors as resourceful, problem solver, seeing the bigger picture, and long term

planner to describe school counselors as leaders (personal communication, March 25, 2013). RS2 Principal identified school counselors "action oriented" behaviors as facilitators, knowledgeable of best practices of counseling and student achievement, and having a vision as leaders in the school (personal communication, April 10, 2013). School counselor visibility was identified as a factor that strengthens perceptions of school counselor leadership by fourteen of the eighteen respondents in this study. "Action oriented" school counselors exhibit behaviors that show leadership and enable them to be more visible compared to school counselors who do not exhibit these behaviors. School counselors who exhibit "action oriented" behaviors tend to be more visible which increases perceptions of them as leaders based on the interview data from this study.

Research Question Two: What role or roles do school counselors serve in the district wide change process at the district level?

This study showed that school counselors in the urban, suburban, and rural school districts of this study are directly involved in building level changes. Building level changes in this study focused on student schedules, changes in the school buildings daily period schedule, changes from a block schedule to a single period schedule, and building specific student programing.

This study showed that school counselors in this study are consulted with by the administration, when needed, on district wide changes. District wide changes that school counselors are consulted with by administration included developing and implementing programs, changes to the schedule structure, and consulting with administration on issues that the students face.

School counselors in SUS1 and SUS2 are involved in implementing programing on decreasing bullying and implementing the procedures and policies of the Dignity for All Students Act. This is a student focused initiative to provide safety and protection to a specific protected class of students throughout the school district and in each school building. Due to SUS1 school counselor's experience developing and facilitating this type of programing, the SUS1 superintendent identified the SUS1 School Counselor as leader in that area of change (personal communication, March 25, 2013).

School counselors in this study are more likely to be consulted with on district wide change when the change impacts the school schedule, teachers' schedules, and how any changes may affect students and teachers. SUS1 Superintendent utilized the school counselors to create a new class period schedule and relied heavily on input from the counselors to help avoid conflict and issues that could possibly impact the functioning of the school (personal communication, March 25, 2013). SUS1 Principal relied on the input from school counselors when exploring a change to the class period schedule (personal communication, March 18, 2013).

Only one school in this study had school counselors who participated fully in district wide change. US1 was the only school that completed a merger and the school counselors were given the responsibility of developing and implementing a new master schedule for the newly merged school district. US1 Superintendent consciously supported and assigned the task of developing a district wide master schedule. US1 Superintendent provided the school counselors from both of the merged school districts with the freedom to shape how the newly formed school district student schedules and faculty schedules were developed (personal communication, May 3, 2013) This district wide change included merging the course catalogues of both school districts being merged, creating new class period schedules, creating student and

teacher schedules, and converting all the student data to one data base from the two merged school districts.

Research Question Three: How do the roles of school counselors as leaders differ in urban, suburban, and rural school districts?

School counselors in larger urban and suburban schools including US2 and SUS2 tend to exhibit more "traditionally oriented" behaviors as described in chapter four based on interview data from this study. "Traditionally oriented" behaviors include advising students on course selections to meet graduation requirements, college and career planning, and supporting students to work through individual issues.

This study found that school counselors in smaller school districts, both RS1 and RS2 and SUS1 serve on the school Building Leadership Team. SUS1 Principal identified the school counselor as a permanent member of the high school building leadership team (personal communication, March 18, 2013). RS1 Principal identified that the school counselor only serves as a member of the building leadership team (personal communication, March 1, 2013). RS2 Principal identified having an unofficial building leadership team that includes the school counselor (personal communication, April 10, 2013).

This study found that the school counselors who are members of the building leadership team on do not have specific roles in SUS1, and RS1 and RS2. These three schools were the smallest school districts in this study. SUS1 Principal identified that there are no specific roles for the building leadership team members (personal communication, March 18, 2013). SUS1 pointed out that the roles for the building leadership team members were dependent on the task they were focused on and that every member of the team served as a leader (personal communication March 18, 2013). RS1 Principal described the goal of the building leadership

team was to help make decisions for the building (personal communication, March 1, 2013). RS1 Principal described the building leadership team as a "collaborative entity" that did not have any specific roles for the members of the team (personal communication, March 1, 2013). RS2 Principal also stated that the building leadership team member did not have specific roles to fill (personal communication, April 10, 2013).

Research Question Four: What barriers and/or obstacles keep school counselors from functioning in a leadership role?

This study found that there are three categories that are barriers to school counselor leadership. These categories are internal barriers, external barriers, and organizational barriers.

Internal barriers are barriers that include school counselor motivation and willingness to take on leadership role. SUS1 School Counselor identified a school counselor's willingness to become leaders and comfort level with leadership roles as barriers to school counselor leadership (personal communication, March 4, 2013). SUS2 Principal identified school counselor comfort level with being a leader and motivation to be a leader as barriers to school counselor leadership (personal communication, March 4, 2013).

External barriers are the barriers placed on school counselors by administration and or faculty. These barriers include school counselors not being viewed as leaders or resources. US1 Superintendent identified the administration not allowing school counselors to function in a leadership role as a barrier to leadership (personal communication, May 3, 2013). US1 Director of Guidance identified the difficulty school counselors may have balancing the school counselor role with new responsibilities as a barrier to school counselor leadership (personal communication, May 3, 2013). This includes school counselors serving as a member on a

specific committee and implementing new programing while maintaining all of the other school counselor responsibilities.

An external barrier would include administration not having a clear understanding of the school counselor role as identified by US2 School Counselor (personal communication, May 31, 2013). US2 Principal identified the faculty and administration not understanding the role of the school counselor and viewing the counselor role as just a supportive role (personal communication, May 31, 2013).

US2 Coordinator of Guidance identified perceptions of counselors and lack of understanding of the school counselor role as barriers to school counselor leadership (personal communication, May 31, 2013). US2 School Counselor identified the administration, faculty, and families not understanding the school counselor role as one of the biggest barriers (personal communication, May 31, 2013). SUS1 Principal identified perceptions of school administration of the school counselors' role as a barrier to leadership (personal communication, March 18, 2013).

Organizational barriers are barriers placed upon school counselors by the requirements of the institutional system and structure. Organizational barriers include not having the school leadership certification. School counselor membership in the teachers' union was identified as an organizational barrier. Another organizational barrier identified is school counselor workload. US1 School Counselor identified membership in the teachers' union as a barrier to school counselors pursuing leadership roles (personal communication, May, 3, 2013). US1 School Counselor explained that membership in the teachers' union may cause school counselors concern about how they will be perceived by faculty for assuming a leadership role (personal

communication, May, 3, 2013). US1 School Counselor further suggested that faculty perceptions of school counselor leadership may be a factor that causes the school counselor to act cautiously and not pursue leadership roles (personal communication, May, 3, 2013). SUS1 Superintendent discussed leadership hierarchy and official titles as a potential barrier to school counselor leadership (personal communication, March 25, 2013). SUS2 Principal discussed having a defined guidance plan as a barrier which limited school counselors' ability to accept leadership roles (personal communication, May 7, 2013). The RS1 principal identified school counselors being a part of the teacher's union and not having leadership certification as barriers to school counselor leadership (personal communication, March 1, 2013). RS1 School Counselor identified school counselors having large caseloads as a barrier to school counselor leadership (personal communication, March 1, 2013). RS2 Superintendent identified school counselor trustworthiness and motivation to be a leader as barriers to school counselor leadership (personal communication, April 10, 2013).

Research Question Five: What barriers or obstacles hinder school counselors from being part of a district leadership team?

Many of the barriers discussed in question four are the same barriers that hinder school counselors from being part of the leadership team. This study found that barriers to school counselors serving on the district leadership team included school counselor accessibility, willingness of the board of education to empower school counselors, lack of flexibility due to amount of job duties, workload, and the building level role of school counselors as barriers to school counselors serving on the district leadership team. US1 Superintendent identified the building level role of the school counselor as barrier to serving on the district leadership team (personal communication, May 3, 2013). The SUS1 Principal identified the school counselor

roles as building level to be a barrier to serving on the district leadership team (personal communication, March 18, 2013). US2 Coordinator of Guidance identified school counselors' accessibility due to workload as barriers to serving on leadership teams (personal communication, May 31, 2013). SUS1 Superintendent identified that the board of education not wanting the school counselors to serve in on a leadership team as a potential barrier to school counselors serving on the district leadership team (personal communication, March 25, 2013). SUS2 Principal identified lack of flexibility in the school counselors' role due to a very defined and structured district guidance plan (personal communication, May 7. 2013). SUS2 Principal also identified the large size of the school counselor workload as barriers to serving on a district leadership team. The SUS2 Director of Guidance also identified school counselor workload as a barrier to school counselors serving on the district leadership team (personal communication, May 7, 2013).

This study found that lack of leadership certification and school counselor membership in the teachers' union may be barriers for school counselors serving on the district leadership team. Responses from the RS1 and RS2 interviews identified school counselors being part of the teachers' union may be a barrier to school counselors serving on the district leadership team. RS1 School Counselor identified being sensitive to the issues teachers faces and a member of the teachers' union as barriers to school counselors serving on the district leadership (personal communication, March11, 2013). RS2 Superintendent thought that school counselors' membership in the teachers' union was a barrier to school counselors serving on the district leadership team because of the position school counselors face of supporting the teachers' union and supporting the administration that are at time not in agreement with each other (personal communication, April 10, 2013). RS2 School Counselor identified school counselors'

membership in the teachers' union as a barrier to school counselors serving on the district leadership team (personal communication, April 3, 2013). RS2 School Counselor identified that the administration is aware of the dual role of the school counselor position of being a union member and supporting the administration in the school district causing the school administration to not specifically include the school counselor in all leadership roles as a way to protect the school counselor (personal communication, April 3, 2013).

Conclusions

The American School Counselor Association National Model (2005) describes school counselors as student advocates, leaders, collaborators, and system change agents. DeVoss and Andrews (2006) describe school counselors as leaders and agents of systemic change. One conclusion from this study is that school counselors are viewed as leaders within the school districts by all of the participants in each of the school districts of this study.

Another conclusion from this study is that school counselor flexibility, due to their role and available time, are needed to function in multiple roles including leadership. Interview responses in this study showed that smaller school districts provided school counselors with the flexibility needed to pursue leadership opportunities and provide school counselors with the ability to function in multiple roles. In the smaller school districts, school counselors have the time needed to pursue leadership opportunities. School counselors in this study from smaller school districts who were responsible for multiple roles were provided with opportunities to accept leadership roles and given the chance to take initiative in implementing change. School counselors in the urban school districts and larger suburban school districts in this study do not have the same flexibility and amount of time to pursue or participate in leadership opportunities. Due to having higher numbers of students on their caseloads in the larger school districts in this

study and a very structured guidance program, school counselors tend to have less flexibility and time to pursue opportunities outside of the role they serve.

Another conclusion from this study is that school counselors who are visible and actively working with others while participating in leadership activities are viewed as leaders. School counselor visibility is a factor that increases the perceptions of school counselors as leaders. School counselors who are supportive, collaborative, encouraging, and helpful were seen as more visible in this study. School counselors who actively work and collaborate with administration in the decision making of the school building and/or school district are viewed as more visible and are viewed as leaders. School counselors who are seen as "others oriented" and "action oriented" are more visible and are viewed as leaders.

Another conclusion made from this study is that school administrations' support of school counselors is needed to increase the perception of school counselors as leaders by faculty and administration. The administration in the study that provided school counselors with opportunities to fill a leadership role were seen as supportive of school counselor leadership by the school counselors. Supportive administration in this study encouraged school counselors to be leaders in the school. School counselors in school districts where the administration empowers and supports them to be leaders are perceived by others in the school district as school leaders. Dollarhide, et al. (2008) found that school counselors who receive support from others are one of the factors of a successful school counselor leader.

This study concludes the school counselors' roles in the larger school districts are determined by the administrations' understanding of the school counselor role. In the larger school districts in this study, school counselors are viewed as leaders but have fewer opportunities to purse leadership roles than the school counselors in smaller school districts.

Larger school districts in this study have specific roles for school counselors that are determined by a very structured district guidance plan, large workloads, and specific duties determined by the administration that limit the school counselors ability to pursue leadership opportunities. US1 Principal suggests that school counselors work to develop relationships with the administration and that the administration has to be open to developing relationships with counselors (personal communication, May 3, 2013). House and Hayes (2002) suggest the school counselor roles will be determined by the administration when school counselors' roles are not clearly defined.

Research question two explored the roles that school counselors serve in the change process. This study concludes that school counselors interviewed in all the school districts participated in change that is consistent with expectations of the administration for the guidance department and their roles as school counselors at the building level. Building level change in this study focused on building scheduling issues, bell period issues, student safety issues, and student data management. This study found that change school counselors participate in is limited to the school building level except for US1. In US1 the superintendent utilized all of the school counselors in the development of a district master schedule and merging student data bases due to a two school merger.

Another conclusion form this study is that school counselors have more of an impact on school building change than they have on school district change. School counselors in this study are not directly involved in district wide change, but are consulted when needed by the administration. This study found that school administration will consult with school counselors when exploring change that would impact students, student schedules, teachers, and the master schedule. School administrators in this study will consult with school counselors when

considering implementation of new programing or programing changes to help assess the potential negative effects on students, faculty, and overall functioning of the school building. In urban, suburban, and rural school districts in this study, school counselors are directed by the priorities of the administration when it comes to the roles they serve in the change process. One exception is in US1 where the school counselors are more involved in district wide change due to the two school merger.

A conclusion from this study is that school district location being urban, suburban, or rural is not a factor that determines school counselor leadership roles. The factor that did determine school counselor leadership role in this study is the size of the school district based on student enrollment. This study found that smaller suburban and rural schools provide school counselors with more flexibility in their workload, schedule, and time for school counselors to purse leadership roles. Another conclusion made from this study is that school counselors who have smaller workloads are able to take advantage of more opportunities to pursue leadership roles. With smaller workloads and increased opportunity to work with administration, school counselors are viewed to be leaders in the smaller rural and suburban school districts than larger urban and suburban school districts in this study.

This study concludes that the barriers and obstacles that prohibit school counselors from functioning in leadership roles need to be understood and overcome by school counselors to function as leaders in the school district they work. The literature suggests that school counselor role confusion, limited opportunity for leadership, and lack of leadership training are barriers to school counselor leadership (Janson et al., 2009). Another barrier identified by the literature includes administrations' demands of school counselors (Schillingford & Lambie, 2010).

Recommendations

Several recommendations can be made to increase perceptions of leadership of school counselors, and how they function in a leadership role based on this study. Recommendations from this study will provide a starting point for the actions school counselors can take to educate stakeholders, faculty, and administration on school counselor leadership.

First, this study suggests that faculty and administration lack understanding of the role of the school counselor and do not value the leadership potential of school counselors as barriers to school counselors' leadership. This researcher recommends that school counselors may want to work to educate faculty, administration, and other stakeholders on the role of the school counselor and the need for school counselor leadership in schools by implementing a comprehensive guidance plan or reviewing and updating an older comprehensive guidance plan to reflect school counselor roles and leadership.

Second, this researcher recommends that school counselors should ask if school leaders understand the importance of a comprehensive school counseling program and how having one can positively impact students. School counselors should consider learning about and advocating for the implementation of the ASCA National Model in their school districts. The ASCA National Model provides a framework for school counselors to work towards the school district's mission, advocate and ensure equal access to education for all students, and promote student achievement.

Third, this study suggests that school counselors would benefit from leadership education and building leadership skills. It would be beneficial for school counselors to build skills for leadership and become comfortable with leadership as part of the role of the school counselor. Since leadership courses may not be part of the master level or doctoral level curriculum for

school counseling, all master level and doctoral level school counselor programs in New York should consider implementing courses on leadership and change theory as part of the curriculum. School counselors that have already attained the required degree and certifications to function as a school counselor in New York should focus on leadership as part of their professional development. School counselors may want to attend workshops, trainings, and college courses on leadership as a way of developing knowledge of leadership theory and increase their comfort level with functioning as a leader.

Fourth, this research showed that school counselor membership in the teachers' union may be a barrier for school counselors pursuing leadership roles. This researcher recommends that school counselors educate all school personnel on what the role of the school counselor is and how school counselors can function as leaders in the school. Building trust is important for maintaining relationships. It would be beneficial for school counselors to build trust with faculty and administration by openly discussing their role and the conflicted position they may sometimes feel they are in between the faculty and the administration.

Fifth, this study suggests that school counselors overcome barriers to leadership by building working relationships with school administration. This researcher recommends that school counselors continuously work to build positive working relationships with administration and faculty by using counseling skills and training to nurture those relationships. School counselors should use active listening skills, open communication, and show respect to those they are working with to further develop positive working relationships.

Sixth, this study shows that school counselors who are viewed as "others oriented" and "action oriented" are more likely to be perceived as leaders in the schools. It is recommended that school counselors should utilize those orientations to increase how they are viewed as

leaders. It is also recommended that school counselors may want to take the initiative by accepting leadership opportunities that are presented by the school administration. School counselors may also talk with the school administration and educate them on the roles of school counselor leadership and ask to work in a leadership capacity.

Finally, it is also recommended that those school counselors, who have already attained the required degree and certifications to function as a school counselor in New York, focus on change theory as part of their professional development. This study suggests that school counselors need to gain knowledge and understanding of systemic change. School counselors in this study have a larger role in building level change than they do with district level change. For school counselors to potentially increase the role they play in district level change, it is important for school counselors to learn and understand theories and models of systemic change. It would be beneficial for school counselors to attend workshops, trainings, and college courses on system change to educate themselves on change models and theory.

Recommendations for Future Research

First, a recommendation for future study is an in-depth study of barriers to school counselor leadership. This type of study could focus on identifying specific barriers school counselors face to leadership. This type of study would also benefit school counselors by identifying potential strategies to overcome barriers to school counselor leadership.

Second, another recommendation for future research is to focus on school districts in New York and explore how school districts have implemented comprehensive guidance plans and whether those plans have had any impact on school counselor leadership. This study could compare school counselor leadership in schools with comprehensive guidance plans to schools that do not have comprehensive guidance plans.

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Appendix A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

To:

You are being asked to participate in a research project entitled**: School Leaders' Perceptions of School Counselors as Leaders as Part of the District Leadership Team and the Change Process.**

This research is being conducted by:
Principal Investigator: Dr. Daniel Alemu, Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership and Committee Chair, Sage Graduate Schools

Student Investigator: James S. Davis, Doctoral Candidate, Sage Graduate Schools

Explanation of the Study and its Procedures:
This doctoral research study is designed to explore the perceptions of school administrations' view of school counselors as leaders and school counselors' roles in the change process. James S. Davis, a doctoral student at Sage Graduate Schools in Albany, New York, is conducting this study to learn more about the roles of school counselors as leaders, how school counselors are viewed as school leaders, and school counselors' involvement in the change process. Individual interviews will be conducted with twenty four school district leaders to gain insight regarding school counselors as leaders.

The nature and duration of subject's participation and procedures

Participants in this study will be interviewed by the researcher either in-person, on the telephone or via the internet on Skype (www.skype.com). The interviews will last approximately forty-five minutes, but no longer than one hour. For the purpose of data analysis, the interviews will be audio taped by the researcher and later transcribed by a bond transcriber. The interviews will be conducted at a location and setting that is mutually agreed upon by the participant and the researcher.

The data gathered from interviews will remain confidential. For the duration of this study, all information will be stored on a password protected laptop computer and hard copies of documents will be locked in a file cabinet. Only the researcher and members of the dissertation committee will have access to the study data. There will not be any identifying names on the audio tapes. In addition, the participants' names will not be available to anyone other than those serving on the committee. The results of the research will be published in a typed document and may be published in a professional journal or presented at professional meetings. After the completion of the dissertation, the audio tapes will be destroyed. It is intended that the information gathered from this study will assist school counselors and school leaders to re-examine the school counselor role in leadership and the change process.

Benefits of participation
For school leaders, the anticipated benefit of participation in the study is the opportunity to discuss school counselor roles within the school district. Such discussions may allow these district leaders to closely examine the current school counselor role and identify if school counselors are being utilized in the most effective manner. For school counselors it will provide them with a voice regarding their roles and effective uses within the school district. For administrators, involvement in this study may encourage them to provide school counselors opportunities to be leaders in their schools. For school counselors, the anticipated benefits of participation in this study include evaluating their own leadership skills and leadership roles as related to the change process sin their schools. In addition, these counselors may determine that educational leadership is a career path they may consider themselves.

Potential risks of participation
The potential of minor risks and/or discomforts for participants include disparaging comments and perceptions of school leaders regarding school counselors involved in the study. Such comments may be upsetting to these school counselors and in the worst case, convey the message that the school counselors as leaders are not valued within the school setting. In the event that I am harmed by participation in this study, I understand that compensation and/or medical treatment is not available from The Sage Colleges. However, compensation and/or medical costs might be recovered by legal action.

Audiotape of Interview
For the purpose of data analysis only, the interviews will be audio taped by the researcher and later transcribed by a bond transcriber. The tapes will be played in the home of the researcher and in the office of the transcriber. The interviews will be conducted at a location and setting that is mutually agreed upon by the participant and the researcher.

I give permission to the researcher to play the audio tape of me in the places described above. Put your initials here to indicate your permission. _____.

Participation in this study is voluntary; I understand that I may, at any time during the course of this study, revoke my consent and withdraw from the study without any penalty.

I have been given an opportunity to read and keep a copy of this Agreement and to ask questions concerning the study. Any such questions have been answered to my full and complete satisfaction.

I, _____, having full capacity to consent, do hereby volunteer to participate in this research study.

Signed: _____

Appendix B

Invitation Letter to Participants

Date:

To:

My name is James S. Davis and I am a doctoral student at Sage Graduate Schools in Albany, New York, in the Educational Leadership Program. I am currently working on my dissertation and conducting a study to learn more about the roles of school counselors as leaders, how school counselors are viewed as school leaders, and school counselors' involvement in the change process.

This will be a qualitative study. A preliminary survey will be used to identify schools that fit the criteria needed for the study. Please see enclosed survey. Once the school districts have been identified based on data provided by the survey they will be contacted to participate in this study. Participation in the study will require face to face interviews, phone contacts, e-mail, or Skype session with school leaders (superintendents, principals, assistant principals, pupil services) and school counselors. The interviews will be audio taped/recorded and transcribed. The data gathered from the interviews will be reviewed for accuracy by having the participants check the transcripts of their interview. Once the data is collected and checked for accuracy, analysis will begin to explore the perceptions of school administrations' view of school counselors as leaders and school counselors' roles in the change process.

The data gathered from interviews will remain confidential. For the duration of this study, all information will be stored on a password protected laptop computer and hard copies of documents will be locked in a file cabinet. Only the researcher and members of the dissertation committee will have access to the study data. There will not be any identifying names on the audio tapes. In addition, the participants' names will not be available to anyone other than those serving on the committee. The results of the research will be published in a typed document and may be published in a professional journal or presented at professional meetings. After the completion of the dissertation, the audio tapes will be destroyed. It is intended that the information gathered from this study will assist school counselors and school leaders to re-examine the school counselor role in leadership and the change process.

Please take a moment to fill out the brief survey and return it to me in the provided return self-addressed stamped envelope. I would like to sincerely thank you in advance for completing the survey.

Thank you,
James S Davis
Graduate Student
Sage Graduate Schools

Appendix C

Participant Interview Questions

School Leader Interview Questions

1) Please describe the makeup of the school district leadership team? What are the leadership team members' specific roles?
2) If school counselors are not part of the district leadership team, then why would they not be included?
3) Which leadership traits do you believe school counselors possess? What leadership traits do your school counselors exhibit?
4) How do you think the school counselor would fit into a leadership role in the educational setting?
5) What do you think of school counselors as leaders? How would you describe the role of your school counselor(s) as leader(s)?
6) What are the specific roles school counselors serve in your school? Which ones would you identify as important for school counselor leaders? School counselors participate in what leadership activities?
7) Describe the change initiatives in which your school district is currently involved? Describe the role school counselors have or are playing in the change initiative?
8) How could school counselors be used more effectively in the change initiative?
9) If school counselors are not viewed as leaders in your school, then what barriers do they have to overcome to be able to be viewed as leaders?
10) What would school counselors have to do to be viewed as leaders in the school setting?

School Counselor Interview Questions

1) Please describe the makeup of the school district leadership team? What are the leadership team members' specific roles?
2) If you are not part of the district leadership team, then why would you not be included?
3) Thinking about leaders and leadership traits, what are the traits leaders possess?
4) Which leadership traits do you believe school counselors possess?
5) How do you think the school counselor would fit into a leadership role in the educational setting? What ways can school counselors show leadership in the educational setting?
6) What are your specific roles in your school? Which ones would you identify as important for school counselor leaders? What is the leadership activities in which you have participated?
7) Describe the change initiatives in which your school district is currently involved?
8) Describe your role in the change initiative? Why would a school counselor not be included in a change initiative?
9) If school counselors are not viewed as leaders in your school, then what barriers do they have to overcome to be able to be viewed as leaders?
10) What would school counselors have to do to be viewed as leaders in the school setting?

The Sage Colleges
Ed.D in Educational Leadership

Final Approval of the Individual Doctoral Research Report
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Ed.D in Educational Leadership

Date:_____

Candidate's Name: James S Davis, Jr.

Candidate's Sage ID Number: _____

Title of Final Doctoral Research Report:

School Leader's Perceptions of School Counselors as Leaders as Part of the
District Leadership Team and Impact on the District Wide Change Process

The Doctoral Research Committee for the above names Doctoral Candidate gives final approval of the Individual Doctoral Research Report.

Signature:_____ **Chair**
Dr. Daniel Alemu

Signature:_____ **Member**
Dr. Robert Bradley

Signature:_____ **Member**
Dr. Peter McManus

Signature:_____ **Member**