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Facilitating Role Understanding and Collaboration Between Aspiring School Counselors and Principals: A Pilot Convergent Mixed Methods Design

Shelby Kaitlin Gonzales

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FACILITATING ROLE UNDERSTANDING AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN
ASPIRING SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND PRINCIPALS: A PILOT CONVERGENT
MIXED METHODS DESIGN

by

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DEDICATION

My dissertation is dedicated to my family; ancestral, heavenly, and earthside.

Without you, I would not be where I am or who I am. I love you.

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First, I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Dodie Limberg. Our connection started in 2014 and has grown into one of my most valued relationships. Thank you for starting as my instructor, evolving to my mentor, and ending this chapter as my friend, colleague, and a person I aspire to be. The patience, encouragement, guidance, and love you have poured into me undoubtedly changed my life for the better. I love you, and your family, as my own. My committee members, Drs. Jonathan Ohrt, Moody Crews, and Kathleen Cunningham, thank you for your time and expertise throughout this process.

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ABSTRACT

Using a piloted convergent mixed-methods design, I investigated role understanding and collaboration between school counselors and principals. Specifically, this intervention situated aspiring school counselors and principals in a curriculum implementation on the role of their counterpart and then brought the two professions together in a collaborative powerful learning experience (PLE). Neither the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP), American School Counseling Association (ASCA) or National Policy Board for Education Administration (NPBEA) currently require graduate students to learn about the role of their opposite counterpart or collaboration between the two professions before they graduate from their respective programs.

A thorough review of the literature is presented surrounding the roles of school counselors and education leaders, collaboration between the two professions, and the leadership they each hold within the schools. Using a quasi-experimental within-groups design and thematic analysis, results are reviewed and compared to existing research in the field. Furthermore, limitations of the current study are explained and recommendations for future research are provided. Finally, implications of the study regarding professional school counseling and education leadership are discussed.

The overall sample for this study is 58 graduate level school counseling and education leadership students (school counseling, $n=20$, education leadership, $n= 38$).

The results of this study support that both school counselors and education leadership graduate students benefit and value a presentation on roles of their opposite counterpart and the opportunity to practice collaboration in their graduate preparation programs.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to address the lack of role understanding between two professions, school counselors and school principals, and to foster collaboration between them at the graduate level. Both professions place emphasis on collaboration with other professionals that they interact with due to the nature of their career (ASCA, 2019; NEBPA, 2018). Although collaboration is emphasized within each set of standards, there is no mention of how each should understand the other's role and how that collaboration should take place within the K-12 setting (ASCA, 2019; NPBEA, 2018). This study piloted a curriculum intervention which includes a collaborative powerful learning experience (PLE, Young, 2015) to assess future feasibility for a larger study. Results of this pilot will inform the development of an effective intervention that can be deployed on a larger scale for future research. Using a convergent mixed-methods approach, multiple assessments of feasibility and participant feedback are integrated throughout to strengthen investigative rigor. The purpose of the present study is to: (a) foster a better understanding of the opposite professional (i.e., school counselor, school principal) within the K-12 education system and (b) facilitate a collaborative working relationship between the two professions at the graduate level. The intentionality of implementing this intervention at the graduate level aligns with the notion that both school counselors and principals are developed at graduate level instruction. Since both positions must obtain at least a master's degree in their respective fields to secure a

professional position in the K-12 school system, situating them both in this intervention empowers the two professions to understand each other's role and learn to work together utilizing each profession's unique lens when addressing school-wide and student concerns.

The US Department of Education's mission statement states "Our mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering education excellence and ensuring equal access" (DOE, 2021, para. 1). However, fostering education excellence and ensuring equal access for all students is not that simple. The Obama administration signed Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) into law in 2015. The ESSA states that schools should ensure students find success through advancing equity, protecting students who are disadvantaged or high-need, teacher instruction meets high standards that prepare students to succeed in college and their careers, provide information to educators, families, students, and communities through assessments distributed annually to measure students' progress towards the previously mentioned high standards, and placing emphasis on evidence-based standards and place-based interventions developed by local leaders and educators (Darrow, 2016). As school systems aim to meet the needs of all their students, school counselors are well situated to address the needs that students present. The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) defines the role of a school counselor as an individual who is a certified or licensed educator that works with students to help them find success by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2019). The ASCA National Model gives school counselors a framework to design and deliver school counseling programs that improve student outcomes through advocacy and collaboration, promote equity and

access, tie their program's mission statement and goals to their respective schools, and to embrace the ethical and professional standards that are outlined by ASCA (2019). The work that school counselors do span across all curricular areas, meaning that school counselors' work with students is a holistic approach to addressing student needs (ASCA, 2019). Overall, school counselors are positioned in the schools to oversee student's social/emotional, academic, and career development and the use of the ASCA Model aids school counselors in their ability to meet those developmental needs across K-12 education.

Preparation for both aspiring school counselors and principals each follow a respective set of preparational and professional standards that aim to prepare these future professionals to excel in their career within the K-12 education system. School counseling preparation programs are guided by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) which was initially established in 1981(CACREP, 2021). As an accrediting body, CACREP developed and continues to refine professional standards and procedures that counselor preparation programs address in their graduate level programs (CACREP, 2021). Outlining standards for the learning environment, professional counseling identity, professional practice, program evaluation, entry-level specialty areas (school, clinical mental health, addiction, clinical rehabilitation, college, and marriage couples, and families counseling), and standards for doctoral students, CACREP places value on advancing the counseling profession through counselor education, ethical decision-making processes, ensuring counselors are responsible leaders in protecting the public, producing counselors who are open to growth, change, and collaboration, and create and strengthen standards that reflect the

diverse needs of society, instructional strategies, and program improvement (CACREP, 2016).

Education leadership programs are guided by both the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL) and the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) standards to prepare aspiring educational leaders for their professional work in K-12 schools. The PSEL standards were created during a two-year development process using empirical research and school and district leaders. These standards act as a guide for school leaders to make a difference in the learning and well-being of students as they move towards more equitable outcomes, meet challenges of the job currently and in the future of education (NPBEA, 2021). The NELP standards, previously known as the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELLC) standards, were developed to guide program design, accreditation review, and state program approval for education leadership graduate preparation programs (NPBEA, 2021). Both professional preparation programs are guided by their respective sets of standards (CACREP, 2016; NPBEA, 2018) and though each set addresses the expectations and responsibilities of each role independently, there is opportunity for both professions to recognize each profession's strengths, training, and role to benefit the other.

The need for professional school counselors to address K-12 students' social/emotional well-being and mental health has been emphasized thoroughly through literature and has continued to inform the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019; Bowers et al., 2018; Even & Quast, 2017; Collins, 2014; Clark & Breman, 2011). Repeatedly, researchers provide insight into the effectiveness of school counselors (Whiston et al., 2011; Whiston and Quinby, 2009, Brigman & Campbell, 2003) when they work in the

role they are trained to do. Unfortunately, it is well documented that often school counselors are assigned duties and roles that do not align with their training and role as outlined by the ASCA National Model (Havlik et al., 2019; Fitch et al., 2001; Dollarhide et al., 2007). Furthermore, in the spring of 2020, the spread of the COVID-19 virus forced nationwide school closures which not only disrupted K-12 students' learning but also school counselors' comprehensive school counseling programs (ASCA, 2021; Limberg et al., in press). In a report on the state of the profession (ASCA, 2021), school counselors reported barriers formed by COVID-19. Throughout the pandemic, school counselors struggled to serve students, finding it difficult to access students in a virtual environment and providing counseling lessons to students virtually on a day-to-day basis, all while continuing to manage high caseload numbers, working to close opportunity and achievement gaps, and being assigned inappropriate duties throughout the year (ASCA, 2021). Additionally, there is evidence to suggest that schools closing as a result of COVID-19 paired with online learning has had negative impacts on students' academic, physical, and behavioral health (NAE, 2020). Considering that school counselors have continued to advocate for their position and appropriate duties for school counselors (Blake, 2020; Collins, 2014; Bringman et al., 2003), little change has been made, and many of the existing concerns of the profession were accentuated throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the need for change in how the role of school counselors is understood within the K-12 school system and its leaders.

K-12 principals oversee the building they lead, working to provide evidence that what students are doing within their building is preparing them for life beyond the K-12 system (e.g., college and careers) (NPBEA, 2018). Within the K-12 school system,

principals are required to hold at least a master's degree in educational leadership and obtain their certification before securing a professional position and although not a requirement, many principals work first as a teacher within the K-12 education system in pursuit of a leadership role and to have a broader wider their impact across education (Harris et al., 2000). Although teachers may enter a graduate program that trains them to be principals, that does not guarantee that upon graduation, they will obtain that title due to the opportunity for other leadership roles within the K-12 system at the school and district level. However, since the success of a comprehensive school counseling program is dependent on the support that is received from the principal (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Suslak & Geier, 2018), this study focuses on the relationship between the principal and school counselor, specifically. As leaders of their building, school level administrators are often tasked with improving student outcomes, hiring staff for their building, delegating roles and responsibilities, the formal evaluation of staff, budget management, engaging with community stakeholders, and continuous school improvement (NPBEA, 2018). Guided by professional and ethical standards, school principals are encouraged to embrace a collaborative effort with various school personnel (e.g., school psychologists, school librarians, and classroom teachers), however, noticeably absent from their collaborative list is the school counselor. Due to the nature of their roles and working within the same building, it is inevitable that school counselors and principals will need to work together to support the needs of students. However, if each profession does not recognize or understand the other's role, the needs of the students they aim to serve may not be met (Collins, 2014; Bringman et al., 2010; Dollarhide et al., 2007). Murphy et al. (2007) acknowledged that successful school leaders often place their focus on "the

technology of schooling or overall, the learning, teaching, curriculum and assessment” (p.179) and that focus means that protecting teachers’ time is important to ensure teachers do not have any distractions that take away from that instruction. However, when distractions to the learning environment occur, principals will often delegate tasks to staff members that situate them outside of the role they are trained to do to mitigate these distractions (i.e., student conduct, behavior, etc.) (Stone-Johnson, 2015), and typically, the misassignment of duties has consistently been directed towards the school counselor (Leuwerke et al., 2009; Lieberman, 2004).

Researchers have long worked to inform and educate school principals on the role of the school counselor (Blake, 2020; Bringman et al., 2010; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Zalaquett 2005). However, principals report relatively little exposure to the comprehensive school counseling programs and school counselor training either in their preparation programs or in their professional world (Leuwerke et al. 2009). This lack of exposure and role understanding is cause for alarm when principals who are overseeing and evaluating the work of school counselors and assigning duties that are not aligned with the actual role of the school counselor (i.e., addressing students’ social/emotional, career, and academic development). For school counselors and their respective program to be successful, it is imperative for school counselors to have a positive and supportive relationship with their principals (ASCA, 2019; Leuwerke et al., 2009). Shoffner and Williamson (2000) acknowledge that although both professions are trained differently, the two have similar goals for students to find success in their education. However, within each respective program, standards regarding training or acknowledgement of the opposite profession (the role of a school counselor or principal) is noticeably absent

(ASCA, 2019; CACREP, 2016; NPBEA, 2018). Considering role education is not addressed in training programs, principals and school counselors may not have a true understanding of each other's roles. This pilot study provides insight into the development of an effective intervention to inform aspiring school counselors and principals of each other's role but also facilitate collaboration between the two professionals at the graduate preparation level.

Problem Statement

Within literature surrounding the role of the school counselor, there is a push for school counselors to continue to advocate both for their profession and their role within the school system (Dollarhide et al., 2007); however, there is a need for further action. There is an expectation that both school counselors and school administrators want students in their building to find success (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). If that is the case, then these two professionals must begin working together in a collaborative fashion, so each professional's lens comes together for the benefit of the students they serve (Leuwerke et al., 2009). Attempts to address the lack of understanding of the role of the school counselor up until this point have been one sided, aiming solely to educate school principals on the role of the school counselor (Bringman et al., 2010; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000), currently there is still a lack of understanding of the school counselor and their assigned duties within the school system. Furthermore, in survey conducted by Lowery et al. (2018), participants who were graduates of an educational leadership program reported that they were not prepared to collaborate with school counselors and that "it wasn't mentioned, and it should have been" (p. 18). Lastly, participants in the study identified a desire to know more about the role of the school counselor in their

graduate preparation programs (Lowery et al., 2018), highlighting the need for this pilot study.

In addition to the lack of role understanding from the principal's perspective, the same can be said about the knowledge that school counselors have regarding the role of the principal. Within the ASCA National Model (2019), school counselors are directed to collaborate and work closely with their school principal as they form and create their comprehensive school counseling program. Furthermore, both CACREP (2016) and ASCA (2019) standards also fail to outline the role of the principal or their impact on the role of the school counselor, leaving a gap within a school counselor's knowledge of the role of the principal. Although the ASCA National Model (2019) prompts school counselors to speak with their principal about their annual agreement and plan, there are no other directives on how school counselors should go about collaborating with their principal. Considering the notable knowledge gaps that exist concerning the role of each professional in both fields, there is an opportunity to insert role understanding into each respective graduate level curriculum to assist in closing the knowledge gap.

Built within each respective professional's standards is the call for collaboration with other school personnel, relying on others and their training to aid the principal in meeting student needs. Developed in 1994 by Chrislip and Larson, collaborative leadership theory (CLT) embodies the notion that there should be interdisciplinary collaboration between professionals and intentionally involving those who are impacted by the decisions that are being made. CLT asserts that for effective collaboration to take place, it is important for individuals to set their egos aside and participate honestly and openly in the process. In opposition to traditional leadership styles, CLT encourages

participants to think about collective, collaborative, and distributed roles and responsibilities for those who are working on solving or addressing the problems presented. Joined with the modern approach of collaboration, CLT also focuses on the tangible skills that leaders possess and apply within their organization (Grove, 2011).

School counselors are called to collaborate by the ASCA National Model (2019). Collaboration with teachers, staff, parents, administration, and community stakeholders permits school counselors who are trained mental health professionals, to assist K-12 educators in identifying student needs and working together to address students' social/emotional, career, and academic development inside and outside of the classroom (ASCA, 2019) through leadership teams, student-support teams, and indirect services on behalf of students. Just as school counselors are called to collaborate, so are principals as they work to lead their teachers, staff, and K-12 building (NPBEA, 2018). This dual call for collaboration, aligns the two professions to work together to meet the needs of the students they are trained and hired to serve.

This study not only aimed to educate aspiring school leaders on the role of the school counselor but also educates school counselors on the role of the principal. Fostering an understanding for both professions to understand their counterparts' professional lens, perspective, and profession. Furthermore, participant small groups (aspiring school counselor and principal) were situated into a collaborative powerful learning experience (Young, 2015). Powerful learning experiences (PLEs) are rooted in nine andragogical tenets that aim to situate adult learners in activities that are authentic, meaningful, relevant and problem finding like the real-life situations that will likely appear when they enter the workforce (Young, 2015). PLEs focus on the development of

collaborative skills and translating research-based knowledge to practice that adult learner can specifically apply to their learning experience (Young, 2015).

When applying CLT to the present study, it is important to understand the leadership role that principals fulfil within the K-12 education system. Principals are often situated at the top of the leadership hierarchy within a K-12 school building (Lindahl, 2008). They oversee hiring, role assignment, budget management, and decision making, and day-to-day emergency management that impacts their entire school building (Stone-Johnson, 2015). Adopting CLT as a primary leadership theory within the K-12 school system would allow other helping professions such as the school counselor to take a leadership role where appropriate as they are instructed to in their preparation programs. Furthermore, principals who adopt the CLT may find that the stressors they experience over balancing their job duties and the decisions that they must make is more manageable when a team approach to those leadership decisions are being made. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to educate both school counselors and principals on each other's role and facilitate collaboration between the two professions while they are enrolled in their graduate course work.

Purpose of the Study

To assess role understanding, each profession separately attended a presentation of a curriculum that is specifically designed for aspiring school counselors to understand the role of the principal and for aspiring principals to understand the role of the school counselor. This study collected both pre- and post-test data to assess the changes in role understanding for both professionals and their readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005). At the conclusion of the curriculum

presentation, graduate students were situated into small groups and participated in a collaboration activity. Guided by the principles of a PLE (Young, 2015), the small groups were given one of three in-depth case vignettes of a pseudo-school within the public education system. The case vignettes gave participants specifics about student demographics, teachers, staff allotment, the school's report card, budget, challenges, and concerns that need to be addressed. Utilizing each professional's lens and the knowledge acquired in the curriculum implementation, the aspiring professional groups collaborated and solved their assigned case vignette and came up with a plan to address the needs of the students, staff, and school as a whole and then shared their plan in a whole group discussion at the end of the PLE. At the conclusion of the collaborative PLE, participants completed an exit survey consisting of open-ended questions about their experience with the collaborative PLE. Responses to the open-ended questions were then analyzed using thematic analysis.

There are implications for both counselor education and educational leadership preparation programs. As it stands now, these two professions will undoubtedly work together once they acquire a position at a school and each respective position needs the other when they are working within their professional capacities to meet the ever-diverse needs of students in the K-12 education system. This study calls attention to the lack of acknowledgement between both professions on the facilitation of collaboration and role understanding in preparation programs. As teacher focused administrators continue to graduate from preparation programs that do not teach them how to utilize and evaluate school counselors, the social/emotional, mental health, academic, and career development of the students they serve will continue to go unmet. For school counselor

preparation programs that do not situate aspiring school counselors in environments that require them to advocate and work with a principal until they are interviewing for a job or attain a job in a school, school counselors do not know what that interaction could or should look like. Once both a principal and school counselor are hired within the same school building, the two work to address student needs and a collaborative partnership to address those needs can be done through work on school leadership teams (ASCA, 2019) and student-support teams that include other helping professionals such as school psychologists, social workers, nurses, etc. that are situated in K-12 school systems which could lead to more effective decision making on behalf of students. Furthermore, if there is significant change in each professional understanding of their counterpart and collaboration then preparation programs should consider more intentional integration and collaboration experiences for other school personnel. Therefore, findings from this study have implications for curriculum instruction for both professional preparation programs and in-service professional development.

The professional application of this study is multifaceted. On the student level, I am aimed to provide instructional changes that benefit participant's learning and to better prepare them for the professional world through knowledge acquirement and facilitation of collaboration. On the instructional level, I am aimed to expand the focus of preparation programs, giving instructors experiential and tangible activities that can be easily implemented into their own classrooms. If students show significant improvement in their knowledge requirement and respond positively to the case vignettes, this could energize instructors inside and outside of these initial programs (e.g., counselor education and education leadership) to engage in similar practices. Lastly, results for this study can have

implications for professional accrediting bodies (e.g., CACREP, ASCA, NPBEA), directing attention to the expansion of their current standards.

Socially, this study has implications for the dynamics of K-12 education and how professionals collaborate with each other moving forward. The initial collaboration experience could foster aspiring collaboration once a professional position is obtained by either a school counselor or education administrator. Once school administrators have an understanding what school counselors do and how they are an asset to the school in the areas of program planning, mental health, social/emotional, career, and academic development, school counselors can then be utilized more effectively. Moreover, many institutions prepare professionals for the same system, in this case the K-12 education system, but do not collaborate in an interdisciplinary fashion. Findings from my study could also lead to a change in professional standards and expand the mindset and knowledge base of a previously teacher focused administrator; opening the door for other helping professionals in the building that have specialized training to help students when administrators are planning professional development activities, developing leadership team roles, and in personnel evaluations.

Operational Definitions

School Counselor

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) defines the role of a school counselor as an individual who after completing at least a master's degree in the field of school counseling, is a certified or licensed educator that works with students to help them find success by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2019)

Principal

After the completion of a master's degree in education leadership and obtaining state required certifications, principals are the leaders of the building they are hired to oversee, working to provide evidence that what students are doing within their building is preparing them for life beyond the K-12 system (e.g., college and careers) (NPBEA, 2018).

Collaborative Leadership Theory (CLT)

Collaborative leadership theory is defined as adopting a leadership approach that shares leadership responsibility among group members, embracing theoretical underpinnings of transformative learning, experiential learning, and feminism (Lawrence, 2017)

Powerful Learning Experiences (PLE)

Powerful Learning Experiences is a framework that is used to give students opportunity to engage authentic problems and practice with situations they may face once they obtain a professional position (Young, 2015). The framework consists of nine pedagogical approaches to develop collaborative skills and translate knowledge to practice specifically for adult learners (Young, 2015). (See Table 1.1)

Collaboration

Collaboration is defined as working jointly with other or together especially in an intellectual endeavor (Merriam-Webster, 2021).

Impact

The term impact is used in research question 1 and 2 and is evaluated by the change in participants pre- and post- test scores in the curriculum implementation and their self-reported experiences after their participation in the study.

Research Design

Pilot studies are used to test the feasibility of an intervention (Thabane et al., 2010) before executing the study on a larger scale to increase the amount of investigative rigor (Ismail et al., 2017) and to ensure high quality research (Thabane et al., 2010). Throughout my pilot study, I actively gathered feedback throughout the development, implementation, appraisal, and intervention materials used by all participants. The pilot study is a convergent mixed-methods design, engaging both quantitative and qualitative methodologies and data analyses. For each qualitative and quantitative paradigm, data collection and analysis procedures are followed thoroughly. The quantitative piece of my study consists of a quasi-experimental within-group, pretest-posttest design (Heppner et al., 2016) to examine school counseling and education leadership graduate students' understanding of their professional counterpart's role and an assessment of their readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005). The qualitative aspect of my study consists of situating graduate student pairs in a collaborative PLE where they worked together to solve pseudo-school case vignettes and thematically analyzing the themes that emerge from participant experiences. The primary focus of this study is on the feasibility of study implementation and assessment of materials, pre- and post-tests, pseudo-case studies, collaborative PLE, and feedback given

by participants surrounding their experience throughout the study and their interaction with study materials.

Research Method

Population and Sampling

The target population of this study consists of graduate level school counseling and educational leadership students who are in either their first-year or second year of their preparation program. The sample consists of 58 graduate students who are currently enrolled in either a school counseling program (CACREP accredited) or education administration (CAEP accredited) program at the University of South Carolina-Columbia. Johanson and Brooks (2010) recommend 30 representative participants from the population of interest for pilot studies and when two or more groups are sampled, it is acceptable to have at least 12 participants per group (Julious, 2005; Johanson & Brooks, 2010). Permission to recruit participants from each respective program was approved by program faculty, instructors of record, and program chairs in the spring of 2021. Furthermore, Viechtbauer et al. (2015) recommend a sample size of 59 participants for pilot studies with a confidence interval of 95% meaning that this sample ($N=58$) is one less than their recommendation of 59. The instructors of record have already agreed to share the content of my study with their students; however, they did not require participation in the study, meaning that about one week before implementation of my study I visited each classroom to explain my study and recruit student participants with requirement to consent to participate.

Research Questions

Due to the nature of a pilot study, the focus of the research lies on the feasibility and rigor of the study itself, the materials, assessments, and procedures. However, given the importance placed on adequate understanding of roles of different professionals and collaboration between professions the following research questions were used to guide the investigation:

1. *How does a curriculum implementation on the role of a school counselor (ASCA, 2019) impact aspiring education administration graduate students' understanding of the role of the school counselor and their readiness for interprofessional learning (RIPLS, Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?*
2. *How does curriculum implementation on the role of the school principal (NEBPA, 2018) impact aspiring school counseling graduate students' understanding of the role of a school principal and their readiness for interprofessional learning (RIPLS, Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?*
3. *How are aspiring school counselors and principals experiencing a collaborative PLE?*

Furthermore, the following research questions are asked to assess feasibility of the pilot study:

1. *What is the feasibility of a study that assesses aspiring school counselors and principals' knowledge of the role of their professional counterpart as based on the ASCA (2019) and NEBPA (2018) standards and their readiness for*

interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?

2. *What is the feasibility of a study that facilitates collaboration between aspiring school counselors and principals through a collaborative PLE?*
3. *What are aspiring school counselors and principal's perceptions of receiving an intervention on the role of the school counselor or principal and a collaborative PLE during their first or second year in their program?*

Data Collection Procedures

After approval from my committee and the instructional review board (IRB) at the University of South Carolina- Columbia to ensure that all ethical research practices are followed, I began data collection. Although data from this study does not result in formal generalizable results on the effectiveness of the intervention, there are various forms of data collection for feasibility purposes surrounding the implementation of this study for a future larger study. Following completion of the demographics form and the pre-test on the role of their professional counterpart (aspiring school counselor or principal) and the Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale (RIPLS) (Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005) to assess their readiness for interprofessional learning. The Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale (RIPLS) was developed by Parsell and Bligh (1999; McFayden et al., 2005), assesses the attitudes and perceptions of students and professionals surrounding their readiness for interprofessional learning and change, normed on health care students' readiness of shared learning and activities. The updated version, refined by McFayden et al., (2005) is a self-report survey with 19 Likert style questions reported to take students approximately 10 minutes to complete.

The scale specifically measures subscales of teamwork and collaboration, negative and positive professional identity, and roles and responsibilities and can be applied to a variety of settings with students. The first stage of my study consists of the instructors of record presenting a curriculum of the role of the school counselor to participants enrolled in the education leadership program for aspiring school principals and the role of the principal to participants enrolled in the counselor education program for aspiring school counselors. However, before any materials were presented to students, feedback regarding the curriculum implementation was requested from both graduate student instructors who specialize in their field and current practicing school counselors and principals. These professionals and experts reviewed all content that is presented to their program specific students meaning that the school counseling experts reviewed the school counseling curriculum implementation that the aspiring principals received, and the educational leadership experts reviewed the curriculum implementation that aspiring school counselors received. Their feedback was applied to the developed curriculum before the intervention was presented to students. Once adjustments were made based on expert recommendations, the curriculum materials were sent to each instructor for presentation to their classes. Following the 45-minute curriculum, participants completed the post-test and RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005) along with open-ended questions to gather initial feedback from participants about their experience. Additionally, I collected pre-test and post-test data to determine whether participants report an increase in their understanding of the role of their professional counterpart and an assessment of their readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005). Approximately a week after the curriculum implementation, in

a joint zoom meeting, all participants were placed into small groups to create a plan to meet the needs of one of three pseudo-schools, this activity was structured as a collaborative PLE (Young, 2015). Upon completion of the collaborative PLE activity, participants completed an exit survey consisting of open-ended questions regarding their insights and feedback about their experience. An example of open-ended questions included, “Tell me about your experience with the collaborative PLE”, “What were the most valuable aspects of the implementation? What were the least?”, and “If you could change anything about the implementation you just received, what would you change?”. Approximately two weeks after completion, participants who volunteered to participate in the focus group were contacted to participate in a focus group regarding their experiences and any additional feedback they have as it pertains to their experience with study materials. Examples of the open-ended questions included, “Tell me about your experience with entire intervention”, “What was the most valuable aspect of this study? What was the least?”, “If you could change anything about the study, what would you change”, “Thinking about where you are in your program, what impact (if any) has this intervention had on your professional development or identity?”.

Data Analysis

The utilization of a convergent mixed-methods design (also known as triangulation or concurrent triangulation design) permits the researcher to use different research methods, both quantitative and qualitative findings, to gain deeper understanding of a phenomenon (Flynn, 2021). According to Creswell and Plano-Clark (2017), when using a convergent mixed-methods design, the researcher collects data separately and then brings both data sets together during analysis. Upon reporting the findings, the data

is presented in separate sections and the analysis and interpretation combines the two datasets to identify convergency or similarities among the results (Crewswell, 2009).

The use of a pre-test post-test design is labeled as helpful or assessing course and material effectiveness (Heppner et al., 2018) and therefore an analysis of pre-test and post-test means was conducted using a paired samples t-test. Although generalized findings will not be reported from the data analysis, the data analysis that was completed assists the evaluation of study materials, intervention, and feasibility while also providing insight into participants' role understanding regarding their colleagues' role and an assessment of their readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005).

In anticipation of small sample sizes for both school counseling and education leadership students, using G*power, an a priori analysis was conducted. For a two-tailed t-test ($p < .05$), an effect size of 0.61 is needed for $n=37$. For this study there were 38 education leadership participants and for a two-tailed t-test ($p < .05$), and effect size of 0.87 is needed for $n= 20$ and there were 20 school counseling participants. Effect size statistics were evaluated using Cohen's (1988) criteria in which $d^3 \pm 0.20$ is interpreted as a small effect, $d^3 \pm 0.50$ is interpreted as a medium effect, and $d^3 \pm 0.80$ is interpreted as a large effect.

For all qualitative data, thematic analysis (Holton, 1973) was used as a foundational method of qualitative analysis. Thematic analysis revealed themes from the opened-ended questions assessing participant's experiences and feedback after participation in the collaborative PLE, this feedback provide insight into changes that can be made to improve study materials and content. Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that

thematic analysis is useful for examining the different perspectives of participants, bring attention to similarities and differences while discovering unanticipated insights of participants which makes this analysis a good fit for the research being asked and the data collected.

Feedback

Throughout my study, there were multiple intentional feedback touch points to increase the amount of feasibility, acceptability, and fidelity of my intervention. The first touch point includes feedback from both school counseling and education leadership experts review of the curriculum implementation. These experts teach either aspiring school counselors or principals how to be effective in their roles following professional standards outlined by each profession (CACREP, 2016; ASCA, 2019; NPBEA, 2018). Next, after instructors completed the curriculum implementation, they were asked to provide feedback on their experience with implementation. Instructors were given a feedback form containing questions such as: “If you made any changes to the curriculum, please note the changes below and provide an explanation for the change”, “What worked well with the implementation?”, and “What improvements would you make to the curriculum implementation?”. Finally, participants were asked to provide feedback throughout the intervention and for those students who participate in the focus groups, feedback was also welcomed and encouraged.

Assumptions and Limitations

Standing alone, pilot studies are designed to provide preliminary evidence on the efficacy of an intervention with the intention of expanding size of the study once feasibility and rigor has been considered (Thabane et al., 2010). For the context of this

study where there are no standardized measures for role understanding of each professional's role, piloting the curriculum implementation and receiving feedback from experts in each field, instructors of record, and participants on the study materials presented to them will aid and strengthen the future full mixed-methods study. However, since there is not true standardized assessment of role understanding for either school counseling or principals, there is a threat to validity and the degree to which the instrument being used accurately measures what it is claiming to measure (Flynn, 2021), in this case, role understanding. Therefore, the decision to pilot this curriculum implementation without drawing generalizations yet still collecting pre- and post-test helps strengthen the research design and rigor before implementing this study on a larger scale.

The utilization of a convergent mixed methods design aids in the understanding of the complex issues that school counselors and principals face as they prepare in their separate preparation programs to work together. Understanding first how the presentation of knowledge impacts their understanding of their opposites role then following up with a qualitative analysis of participant's experiences with collaboration provides insight into the development of a collaborative working relationship for professionals preparing to enter their prospective fields.

Finally, when running t-test analysis, after screening for outliers, I was working under the following assumptions that the data follows a normal distribution and that there is a homogeneity of variance, meaning that the variances of each observation are equal (Flynn, 2021).

There are several limitations within this study. First, since this is a pilot study, I will not be generalizing the findings of analysis due to the small sample size but rather focusing on the feasibility, acceptability, and fidelity of the study. Furthermore, the sample size includes a limited number of participants because it is sampled from just one university and the two sample groups (first and second year) participants is a confounding variable that may impact the data analysis and assessment of the pilot study. Additionally, there is no control group for this pilot study, although I will be collecting both pre- and post-test data for each group and can compare them by tracks (school counseling and education leadership), year (first and second), and even participant to participant, there is no control group to demonstrate singular effectiveness of the intervention in participant's quantitative responses. Considering that all participants will be sampled from the college of education in one university, there is a risk to (1) not have a diverse sample population and (2) have a limited number of participants to work with. This means that my sample may not provide conclusive results even though for the purposes of this study, conclusive results are not the goal. Within the curriculum implementation, different instructors for both school counseling and education leadership taught the content to their respective students, because of the variation between how instructors teach, the fact that they were encouraged to teach with authenticity and with the freedom to relate curriculum content to prior or related class content, even though there were instructor guides provided, each instructor presented the content differently. Finally, limitations of a mixed-methods approach include the time and effort that goes in to adequately assessing the two forms of quantitative and qualitative data. Therefore,

when comparing the results of two different analysis, it may unclear how to pinpoint how the different constructs interact with each other.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations will be considered by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) committee and dissertation committee at the University of South Carolina, those considerations included but are not limited to the following:

1. Upon collection of survey and demographics data, only the primary researcher will run data analysis and know participant ID numbers. All other data will be collected anonymously (coordinating focus groups) to protect the identity of participants and to promote confidentiality
2. All focus group and other qualitative data was autonomized and transcribed for analysis once received by me, the primary researcher, to ensure confidentiality.
3. Participation in this study will be voluntary and participation would not impact participant's course grade.
4. All participants were informed of their rights and an explanation of research was approved by the IRB at the University of South Carolina. Participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.
5. Permission to use the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005) has been obtained based on open public access granted by Angus McFayden via email communication in August of 2013.
6. The study was conducted with the permission and approval of dissertation co-chairs, committee members, and IRB of the University of South Carolina.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the lack of role understanding between school counselors and principals in the K-12 education system and the importance of collaboration between the two professions. The research design has been explained and potential limitations and ethical considerations have been examined. Although the curriculum for each respective professional includes high standards and expectation for the profession, a gap still remains surrounding the understanding of roles outside of their own and directionality for collaboration once in the professional world. This identified gap drives the need to develop a curriculum implementation and collaboration activity for students at the graduate level considering one does not exist. The following chapters will outline the current and existing literature surrounding the role of the school counselor, role of the principal, and the facilitation of collaboration between the two aspiring professionals and the methodology used throughout this pilot study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In chapter two, there is a discussion of the literature surrounding the theoretical framework for this study, school counseling, principals, the education systems which prepare them and house them as professionals once their training is complete, and research that has identified and aimed to address the gaps that exist between the two professions.

Within the education system as a whole school counselors and principals are trained to address the needs of the students within their building. However, the ways they go about doing that are different based on their respective training (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Throughout the training for each respective professional, they are not educated on the role of their professional counterpart which often leads to role confusion and a lack of understanding of how to work with each other effectively (Shoffner & Williams, 2000).

An examination of the role of the school counselor and principal are necessary to understand each profession individually to eventually bring them together for the benefit of the students they serve. In its simplest terms, the role of the school counselor is defined by ASCA (2019), stating that school counselors are educators who are certified/licensed professionals that work to improve the success of their students through implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. Whereas the role of the principal is defined in general terms, is the highest-ranking administrator and are the designated school leaders

within a K-12 school building (Encyclopedia of Education, 2021). Each respective professional must hold at minimum a master's degree in their respective fields and hold required educational licenses as dictated by their state requirements.

To first understand the necessity of this study, a review of the literature in understanding the role of the principal and school counselor and collaboration between the two professions is discussed. Outlined below is the research that has been done surrounding the relationship between school counselors and principals and I have summarized and reviewed the articles. For the purposes of this literature review, articles have been sourced from Google Scholar and EBSCOhost. Both search engines were used because of their comprehensive reach of published literature. I used the search terms school counselors and principals, principal and school counselor collaboration, school administrators and school counselors, and school counselor and principal relationships with a publication range starting with the year 2000 to make the search and literature review updated and manageable. Furthermore, the ASCA National Model was last updated in 2019 and 2012, therefore I wanted to make sure to include the most relevant literature on collaboration and bridging the two professions with the most updated standards.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study is supported by both exploring collaboration and role understanding between the two professions and the relationship between school counselors and principals grounded in experiential learning theory (ELT) and communities of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) with considerations of the adult

learner (Knowles et al., 1984). A thorough review of the literature is presented along with empirical research that has been conducted surrounding each construct.

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT)

Founded by Kolb (1984), experiential learning theory (ELT) is the theory that students learn in a four-step experiential learning cycle consisting of: (1) concrete experience, (2) observation and reflection, (3) formation of abstract concepts and generalization, and (4) testing implications of new concepts in new situations. Concrete experiences for students in the learning cycle include simulation of real-life situations, hands-on experiences like practicum and internship, and demonstration of skills that for both. During the observation and reflection step in the learning cycle, students are participating in discussion, small groups, or a designated observers during activities where students are actively reflecting on and taking observation of the learners' experiences from different perspectives (Kolb, 1984). Within the formation of abstract concepts and generalizations, students are combining concepts with their observations into logically sound theories through sharing content. Lastly, the testing implications of new concepts in new situations in the learning cycle is where students use the theories, they have created to make decisions and solve problems where students are applying theories to make decision and solve problems (Kolb, 1984). Within ELT, course instructors are viewed as the facilitators of learning where purposeful engagement with students aim to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values (Kolb, 1984), therefore students engage with the instructor, course material, reflective assignments, and their peers to create their own learning and form their own relationship with the subject

matter rather than just reading or hearing about subject matter that's presented (Kolb, 1984).

Communities of Learning

Communities of learning developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) is an approach that takes advantage of social situated learning communities created by classrooms to enhance student learning. Adopting a classroom culture of social participation, nurturing of relationships and shared purpose of activities becomes an important factor into student learning (Lave & Wenger (1991). Furthermore, communities of learning engage classroom peers as resource for student learning, recognizing that when students begin their learning, they are novices in their profession but as they move on with course material and in their respective programs, students develop their own identities over time and then become full-fledge members of their professional community (Aubrey & Riley, 2016). This pedagogical practice helps instructors not only learn from their classes and course content, instructor, or given instruction but from their peers' experiences (Lave & Wenger, 1991).

The Adult Learner

Knowles et al. (1984) acknowledges that there are six key assumptions of the adult learner which shapes the way adults in the classroom learn, take in information, and the information that they bring into the classroom with them. The six key assumptions include: (a) self-concept, where instructor assumes self-concept has been reached and the adult is responsible for their own life and is already self-directing their own learning, (b) role of experience, the understanding that when adults enter the classroom, they are entering with a vast amount of experience that not only enhances and influences their

learning but has the potential to impact learning of their peers, (c) readiness to learn, the assumption that adult learners are coming into the classroom ready and willing to learn because they are actively choosing to enroll in a program or take classes, (d) orientation for learning, where the learner is not learning for the sake of learning, but they are learning with a clear end-goal in mind, whether that be to career or personally oriented, adult learners have a goal, (e) internal motivation, in addition to external motivations such as a salary increase, career change, etc., some internal motivators for adult learners include self-esteem, recognition, gaining self-confidence, and a better quality of life, and (f) need to know is the assumption that adults need to know the value of their learning and what exactly they are learning as it applies to their overall goals (Knowles et al., 1984).

Powerful Learning Experiences (PLE)

Powerful learning experiences (PLEs) are rooted in nine andragogical tenets that aim to situate learners in activities that are authentic, meaningful, relevant, and problem finding like the real-life situations that will likely appear when they enter the workforce (Young, 2015). PLEs focus on the development of collaborative skills and translating research-based knowledge to practice that adult learner can specifically apply to their learning experience (Young, 2015). Reflecting the research on adult learning, PLEs enhance the learning process specifically of adult learners who have backgrounds filled with experiential experiences (Edelman & Tononi, 2000; Kolb, 1984; Lehrer, 2009). The nine aspects of PLEs are as follows:

1. They are authentic, meaningful, relevant, problem-finding activities.
2. They involve sense-making around critical problems of practice.

3. They involve exploration, critique, and deconstruction from an equity perspective (e.g., race, culture, language).
4. They require collaboration and interdependence.
5. They develop confidence in leadership.
6. They place both the professor and the student in a learning situation.
7. They empower learnings and make them responsible for their own learning.
8. They shift the perspective from classroom to school, district, or state level.
9. They have a reflective component (Young, 2015).

These nine tenets not only support the student learner but also allow the instructor space to learn along with their students, making this component a sound fit with the intentions of this study.

Role of the School Counselor

The role of the school counselor has undergone radical changes within the last 100 years of the profession (Bain, 2012) and these reforms have shaped perceptions regarding the role of the school counseling profession that we know today. In its inception, school counseling started with the need for vocational guidance situated within high school systems to aid students in their pursuits post-high school evolving to the attention to student's mental health, social/emotional, career, and academic development (Erford, 2019). Similar to the role of the principal, knowing where the profession began and where it is today, is beneficial when aiming to move the profession forward with a true understanding of the actual role of the school counselor.

Founded by Frank Parsons, often referred to as the “Founder of Guidance”, worked with young people and assisted them in making vocational choices and he place emphasis on their own growth and prevention, helping them transition from school to workforce (Erford, 2019). Around a similar time, Jesse B. Davis who was a superintendent in Michigan, was the first documented educator to introduce systematized guidance instruction for students (Bain, 2012). This curriculum implemented by Davis centered around career interests, character development and behavioral problems which parallel closely with the domains outlined by the ASCA National Model today (Gladding, 2009).

The most recent version of the ASCA National Model was released in 2019. The ASCA National Model (2019) provides a framework for school counselors to define, deliver, manage, and assess their comprehensive school counseling program. These four areas are designed to work together to prepare K-12 students for life after graduation, striving to all students to be able to apply their academic achievement strategies, manage emotions and apply interpersonal skills, and plan for postsecondary options to find success in life post K-12 graduation. School counselors define their program by creating their comprehensive school counseling programs based on student and professional standards outlined by ASCA. School counselors develop, implement, and assess their school counseling programs to improve student outcomes guided by standards from the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (ASCA, 2019) and Career-Readiness for Every Student Standards (ASCA, 2019). They address these standards though the use of guidance lessons, small groups, and individual counseling sessions with students. To be delivered effectively, a school counselor’s comprehensive program must be efficiently

and effectively managed. Guided by program focus and planning tools, school counselors design and implement a school counseling program that produces results. Using tools like school data summaries to identify needs and create action plans to address the needs. School counselors deliver developmentally appropriate activities and services directly and indirectly to students. These activities aid in student's development of the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors while ensuring equitable access for all students. Direct services can include guidance lessons, small groups, or individual counseling, appraisal of their presented school counseling curriculum, hosting career fairs, college application days, or other activities that address students' social/emotional, career, or academic needs. Indirect services that school counselor provide include consultation or collaboration with other professionals like teachers, administrators, social workers, school psychologists, nurses, etc. or with parents and community stakeholders to support student needs that arise. Finally, school counselors regularly assess their programs to determine its effectiveness in helping all students succeed, inform improvements to their school counseling program design and delivery, show how students are different as a result of the school counseling program. Assessment of the comprehensive school counseling program is done through the use of data collection from annual reports (from teachers, admin, and students) to see where students improved or are in need of support in various areas such as academic, attendance, discipline, and behavior.

However, the true beginnings of the school counseling profession are documented in the early 1900's when vocational guidance was a response to the industrial boom and child labor laws in the late 1800s. As time passed, the profession evolved to address mental health issues in students after Clifford Beer, a former mental health patient

published an expose on the inhumane treatment of mental health patients and his call to improve institutional care, address mental health stigmas, and promote mental health in general. This call to attention caused a shift in mental health attitudes and the introduction of traditional guidance counselors in the US education system (Parry, 2010). Closely followed by the launch of the Soviet Union Sputnik I launch, in the 1950s Guidance and Personnel Services Section in the Division of State and Local School Systems was established, fueled by the space race and the United States' lack of scientists and mathematicians, guidance counselors were again used to aid students in their vocational exploration and encouraging students to pursue mathematics and science fields (Jeynes, 20017). As the civil rights movement in the US progressed, the push to provide educational opportunities for all students highlighted the need to develop counseling strategies to address mental health concerns of students (Bain, 2012), change in family structures, and the impacts of crime (Myrick, 2003). These relatively new challenges caused school counselors to work to address these needs with the use of alternative counseling strategies such as small group and individual counseling sessions however, school leaders (Wingfield et al, 2010). In response, school counselors were encouraged to engage in curriculum development and mental health service delivery to serve the school population and they continued to build relationships within their community (Wingfield et al., 2010). According to Wingfield et al. (2010) school counselors worked to continually meet the needs of students, school counselors and counselors alike developed strategies and skills to meet the developmental needs of students and support areas to increase equity and access. In the late 1980s, the emergence of a comprehensive program came to light, outlining the training that counselors have in their professional preparation

programs, placing emphasis on helping students succeed academically, guide their career and vocational direction, and provide them with the emotional and social support throughout their education (Kiser et al., 2011). Throughout the refinement that the profession went through in the 1990s, in 2003, the ASCA National Model: A Framework for Comprehensive Counseling Program emerged, along with the title shift from guidance counselor to school counselor.

Around the same time in the early 2000s, the decline in the US economy resulted in smaller budgets for education and a reduction in federal and state funding (Johnson et al. 2009). This change adversely impacted school counselors, displacing many and for those who were not displaced were asked to take on non-counseling related duties like attendance, scheduling, proctoring/organizing testing, and supervising students (Zalaquett & Chatters, 2012). The evolving role of the school counselor coupled with the title change of the profession has caused for understandable confusion for those outside of the profession on what the true role and/or title of a school counselor is. Therefore, concretely defining and educating aspiring principals on the role of the school counseling and providing role clarity in their graduate preparation programs can help bridge the gap that exists due to the evolution of the field of school counseling.

The view that a principal adopts surrounding the role of the school counselor greatly impacts what role that counselor plays within the school (Fitch et al., 2001; Zalaquette & Chatters, 2012) and because of role confusion, school counselors are often assigned inappropriate tasks. According to Fitch et al. (2001) and Zalaquette and Chatters (2012) principals are often correctly able to identify roles such as crisis intervention and direct service to students as an appropriate role for school counselors but will frequently

assign duties and tasks for which counselors are overqualified for which takes away from their intended school counselor duties. Furthermore, since the role of the school counselor is dictated by the principal (Dollarhide, 2003), the role of the school counselor within a building can differ based on the principal who is overseeing the work of the school counselor. Principals of high schools and principals with more years of experience may be more likely to assign inappropriate tasks for school counselors (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005) such as building the master schedule, coordinating 504 plans, or coordinating data entry for all students. In a survey conducted by Zalaquette and Chatters (2012) found that even when school principals have a positive view of school counselors, they inconsistently could identify appropriate role and task assignment for school counselors.

This continued confusion directed towards the role of the school counselor that is dictated by the principal of a school is cause for alarm. When school counselors are unable to work in the capacity in which they are taught in their graduate level courses, the social/emotional, career, and academic needs of the students they are working to serve are not being met (Dollarhide, 2003).

Role of the Principal

According to Cuban (1988), principals were often labeled as successful supervised teachers who would manage daily school operations, attend to needs of teachers, and engaged with community stakeholders and other members of the community for most of the twentieth century. However, the role of the principal changed when principals began to engage in more authoritative leadership processes that would impact organizational structures and stability while supervising the work of others within

the school building (Cuban, 1988). The leadership possessed by school principals shifted again when administration aimed to transform their leadership practices into more democratic approaches and procedures while working with teachers and community members to improve the success of their students and school overall (Murphy & Shipman, 1999). Embracing their own vision for the school consisting of a more democratic leadership style, principals are the designated position to supervise, monitor, assess, evaluate, and disseminate information to their building staff which primarily consists of teachers along with other support staff (Ayeni, 2012). Furthermore, Ayeni (2012) asserts that principals are often aiming to keep their teachers informed on relevant and current educational issues and modern teaching techniques that inform results-driven curriculum delivery. Furthermore, Lipham and Hoeh (1974) articulated the role of the principal as someone who had five areas of responsibility including: the instruction program, staff personnel services, student personnel services, financial-fiscal resources, and school-community resources. The authors stated that principals must also have effective leadership capabilities in these areas to have a well-run school organization along with good conceptual skills, human relation skills, and technical skills (Lipham & Hoeh, 1974).

However, the demands of the profession as it pertains to the role of principal has its own set of challenges. The National Association of Secondary School Principals (2016) report that many principals experience increased job stress, inadequate school funding, challenges balancing school management with instructional leadership, new curriculum standards, educating an increasingly diverse student population, and shouldering responsibility that at one time belonged at home or the community (NAASP,

2017). In tandem with fewer teachers wanting to advance to the role of a principal for the salary raise, prestige or collegial respect, and the complexities, demands, and expectations, there has been a shortage in applicant pools for principalships (Lazaridou, 2009).

Considering the diverse complexities and demands of the role of the principal, it is clear that the principal is in need of allyship from all staff, teacher or otherwise. Therefore, the school counselor is well positioned to aid and assist the principal in their leadership endeavors. Unfortunately, although school counselors are destined to work with principals once they obtain a position with the school system, school counselors are not required by professional standards (ASCA, 2019; CACREP, 2016) to be informed of the role of the principal or how to work and collaborate with them. This gap in the pre-standing graduate curriculum perpetuates the identified barriers that already exist when principals and school counselors aim to collaborate within the school system.

Graduate Preparation Programs

Both aspiring school counselors and administrators must obtain at least a master's degree in their respective fields to obtain a professional position within the K-12 school system. However, although each preparation program is driven by an accrediting body like CACREP (2016) for school counseling and NPBEA (2018) for education leadership programs, the actual coursework, classes, and required post-graduation exams, licenses, and certifications vary state to state and by university program.

School Counseling Preparation Programs

Preparation programs for aspiring school counselors are guided by the CACREP (2016) standards. These standards were created to provide counselor educators with clear

accreditation requirements and to standardize the content and skills counselors must learn within the preparatory programs (CACREP, 2016). Within the counseling profession, there are various tracks (addictions, career, clinical mental health, clinical rehabilitation, college, marriage, couples, and families, and school counseling) and the CACREP standards outline standards that all counselors must meet and then specifies track specific standards for aspiring counselors to meet throughout their graduate programs (CACREP, 2016). For universities that are accredited by CACREP, they must provide documentation on how their students are meeting the various CACREP standards but how they go about teaching students those standards are up to each individual university. Since universities are using the 2016 CACREP standards to dictate what their school counseling students learn and there is no requirement that aspiring school counselors learn the role of the school administrator or to facilitate collaboration which highlights a gap in school counselor preparation that is rooted in the required standards.

Education Leadership Preparation Programs

Similarly, to the preparation of school counselors, education leaders are trained by education leadership educators who align their respective programs with standards provided by NPBEA (2018) and NELP (2018). Through the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) advanced program review process, these standards were created to “lead standards-based and research-informed policy, preparation, and practice for school and school system leaders” (NPBEA, 2018). Specifically, NELP (2018) standards were developed to provide a guide for universities to build their program curriculum, provide accreditation review and to receive state program approval. The NELP (2018) standards are broken down into building and district

level standards and state what program graduates and novice leaders should know and be able to do as a result of completing their graduate level programs as either a principal or superintendent. Within the standards, role understanding and collaboration with school counselors is absent, which means that graduates of CAEP accredited programs are not required to understand the role of the school counselor or practice collaboration with them before they graduate from their programs creating a gap in student preparation before they enter the professional workforce.

The perpetuation of lack of role understanding and collaboration between school counselors and school administrators continues in both preparation programs. Although both professions are designed and encouraged to be leaders within their schools or school systems, they are not required to work together in their graduate preparation which may under prepare these professionals upon graduation.

Leadership Within the Schools

Leadership within the K-12 education system has traditionally and primarily stemmed from that of the principal. The leadership style of school leaders can vary based on the need and individual, however the examples of leaderships styles can include constructivist, transformational, facilitative, instructional, developmental, and collaborative (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002; Growe, 2011). Leadership approaches in the school differ due to the diverse individuals and layers of leadership situated within the education system from policy makers, government leaders at the local, state, and federal levels along with district leaders and administrators that influence the work that school principals do at the building level (Goldring & Greenfield, 2002). Therefore, it's important to acknowledge the daunting challenge that principals face when working to

manage a building filled with teachers, students, staff while fulfilling policy requirements, expectations, and pressures from district-level leadership. As noted by Goldring and Greenfield (2002), schools are situated within larger environments (social, cultural, economic, and political) that contain their own respective sets of intricacies. However, within the literature, it's noted that for individuals who aim to become school principals, there is a transformative process of role conception and role identity transformation (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Browne-Ferrigno (2003) discusses the professional growth that educators go through as they prepare to become school principals, noting that all of her participants are shifting their identity from teachers to school administrators. The work that Browne-Ferrigno (2003) is significant because when understanding the role of the principal and how they lead or view their leadership, it's important to note that many principals are coming from a teaching background, creating more teacher focused administrators when they enter or re-enter the workforce. As the section will go on to discuss role understanding between school counselors and school principals, acknowledging what role understanding looks like for principals and teachers provides a baseline to begin facilitating the future role understanding between principals and school counselors.

Woven throughout expectations of school counselors is the role of leadership within their school building (ASCA, 2019). ASCA regularly calls for school counselors to be active members on their school's leadership teams, working with community stakeholders, teachers, staff, parents, and immersing themselves in daily school activities and routines to establish relationships with students (ASCA, 2019). Although much time is spent in graduate preparation programs for aspiring school counselors to acquire a

school counselor identity rooted in leadership (CACREP, 2016) but once school counselors obtain a position in the school system, they are not always permitted or encouraged to engage in school wide leadership as dictated by their school supervisor, the principal (Dollarhide, 2003). Therefore, there is a need to bridge the gap between the two professions to work collaboratively in their leadership roles.

One of the ways principals can effectively use school counselors is to situate them as leaders within the school. Dollarhide (2003) proposes that the reason school counselors are not viewed as leaders is because their duties and worth are often defined by school administrators, rather than by the school counselors themselves. If principals identify and situate school counselors as leaders, school counselors may operate with freedom and authority to develop and maintain an effective school counseling program and advocate for themselves, their program, and the profession (Lowery et al., 2018; Winfield et al., 2010). Distributed leadership is a practice of leadership where there is acknowledgement of school leadership consisting of multiple leaders (Spillane, 2005). For instance, within distributed leadership, the practice of leadership is a product of the various interactions between leaders, followers, and situations within a school system, rather than relying on a singular leader's knowledge and skill. Essentially, the interactions between people and their situations is the practice of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005), which is how principals can capitalize on the role of the school counselor and the leadership skills and practices they are taught throughout their graduate preparation programs. A model of distributed school leadership is suggested by Janson et al. (2009) where some of the power and responsibility within the school system is allotted to the school counselor. Within this model, school counselors can work with more

interdependence and foster collaboration and interaction among school leaders. Within the model of distributed leadership, school principals can move from a distant administrator towards an engaged collaborator (Janson et al., 2009). Finally, Dollarhide (2003) emphasizes the importance of principals recognizing to barriers that school counselors face when working to gain leadership status. Principals should continually be aware of barriers such as school norms, and political barriers, and the power differential that exists between the two professions and work to address those with collaborative leadership styles that empower both professions to meet the needs of the students that they both work to serve (Dollarhide, 2003).

School Counselor and Principal Relationship

As outlined earlier, the role of the school counselor as dictated by the principal, is often misunderstood and therefore school counselors are assigned duties and roles outside of their training (Fitch et al., 2001). When reviewing characteristics of a positive school counselor and principal relationship, Ponec and Brock (2000) identified four elementary schools within a midwestern school district who had implemented counseling programs what were considered developmental and comprehensive. Through observation and interview, the research team witnessed school counselors and principals working together as a unit and that these professionals had formed a strong collaborative relationship that allowed them to work as a team and complement each other's role. Furthermore, the two professionals had developed a relationship that was full of reciprocated mutual trust and communication which supported the school counselor's effort with students and staff and with clear communication, principals could trust that school counselors would keep them in the loop (Ponec and Brock, 2000). The identified participant pairs also emphasized the

importance of continuing to build and maintain their relationships together, which included action items such as reviewing ASCA guidelines, advocacy, and continued evaluation of their comprehensive school counseling programs (Ponec & Brock, 2000).

Stone and Clark (2001) outlined the leadership and advocacy role of the school counselor and the ways in which the school counselor supported the principal in their efforts to improve academic achievement for all students. They highlighted the fact that both school counselors and principals are tasked with preparing all students for the unknown but more importantly for life outside of the K-12 school system. Stone and Clark (2001) asserted that the two professions should join forces “to ensure that all students have access to the information and experiences that will allow them to influence the society of the future” (p. 51) furthering the need for this pilot study to begin the facilitation of the principal-counselor collaborative relationship at the graduate school level.

After interviewing exemplary principals who were supportive of school counseling programs Dollarhide et al. (2007) found that their participants learned to appreciate and support their counseling after observing the work that school counselors do with student when handling critical incidents. These critical incidents ranged from witnessing the school counselors use a specialized skill with students to school counselor taking an advocacy role on behalf of students when it was needed. Although the participants in the study all had various experience within the school system, all participants were firm in their backing of school counselors because of the positive impact school counselors made on behalf of their students (Dollarhide et al., 2007). Additionally, these principals identified what traits an exemplary school counselor

embodied which was school counselors who advocate for themselves, serve the school community and students, and worked as a team with the principal (Dollarhide et al., 2007).

After surveying 2,386 school counselors and principals to gain greater insight into their relationship, Finkelstein (2009) found that both school counselor and principals desire more communication and respect, and those two elements were identified as the two most important aspects of the school counselor and principal relationship. However, both professionals also acknowledged that time was the biggest barrier for collaboration between the positions (Finkelstein, 2009), noting that there isn't always enough time in the day to connect, communicate, and collaborate as they desire which makes it challenging to continue to build their relationship. Dusklak and Geir (2016) found that those principals and school counselors who had a strong-reciprocal relationship had a higher meeting frequency that enhanced both professions abilities to work together within the school they are situated in. Interestingly enough, the meeting frequency did not mean higher, formal, structured meetings, meeting times that were informal aided in the development of the school counselor and principal relationship. This insight further highlights the needs for the present study, rather than waiting for professionals to obtain a position in the field and work to build a relationship with a principal or school counselor for the first time, this facilitation at the graduate level could have longitudinal implications for how the two professions collaborate.

Odegard-Koester and Watkins (2016) explored the ways in which school counselors and principals build a working relationship of a school counselor and principal in a rural Midwestern elementary school through a case study methodology. The authors

found that three shared themes emerged from their data, that their relationship resulted from a student-centered focus, role differentiation, and trust and because of these themes, the two professionals developed a collaborative working relationship. Although the insights from this study are valuable and insightful, the Odegard-Koester and Watkins (2016) first explored the relationship between two individuals who are situated in a different region than my proposed study. Furthermore, these individuals were situated in an elementary school which limits the scope of applicability to the full K-12 education system.

Collaboration Between School Counselors and Principals

Collaboration between school counselors and principals is dictated by the relationship established and maintained by the two professions within the school they are working within (Young et al., 2013). Without collaboration, a main focus of the work that school counselors do school-wide, school counselors are unable to do the job that they are trained to do as outlined by the ASCA National Model (2019). The need for enhancing the school counselor and principal relationship and increasing collaboration between the two professions was recognized by The College Board in 2021 with the release of the *Enhancing the Principal and School Counselor Relationship: A Tool Kit* which was shared by ASCA. This toolkit provides both school counselors and principals worksheets of questions to assist the two professions in their pursuit of collaboration: asking questions surrounding their respective field's commitment to equity, purpose and mission statements, communication, fostering trust and respect, leadership, and support. Furthermore, principals can collaborate with counselors by recognizing their unique skill set and contribution to the school system while school counselors can continue to educate

principals on their areas of expertise (Bore & Bore, 2009) and those schools who possess strong principal-school counselor collaboration have lower turnover, higher job satisfaction, and more effective school counseling programs (Clemens et al., 2009).

Shoffner and Williamson (2000) conducted a seminar class that consisted of ten aspiring school counselors and one to eight (depending on the week of class) aspiring principals that discussed the role of each professional and aimed to increase collaboration between the two professions. The class and the resulting study aimed to help students gain knowledge about their colleagues, develop a greater appreciation of one another's role, responsibilities, and perspectives while learning to work together in the process. Contrasting from my study, participants were situated in a semester long seminar class to learn together whereas in my study, participants learn about one another's role separately in their respective program's pre-existing class to then be brought together to practice collaboration. At the conclusion of the seminar class, participants reported that they found the seminar helpful to their future careers and stated that they the vignettes and problem-solving discussions were the most helpful and informative aspects of the seminar (Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Participant's preference of the vignettes strengthens the rationale to include case vignettes in my study. The case vignettes included in my study engage in participants' problem-solving abilities with real life scenarios they may face once they acquire a professional position. Shoffner and Williamson's approach to teach students together in a singular course is an active, integrated approach to fostering collaboration at the graduate student level, however due to CACREP (2016) and NPBEA (2018) standards, there is little room for entirely new

courses to be introduced that focus solely on school counseling and principal collaboration.

Using Q methodology, Janson et al. (2008) surveyed 39 participants, 22 school counselors and 17 principals on their perception of their relationship with the principal or school counselor. Participants reported in four opinions of the principal/counselor relationship: working alliance, impediments to alliance, shared leadership and purposeful collaboration. The authors highlight participants in their study distinctly identified that purposeful collaboration between professional school counselors and principals was imperative to facilitate school wide change. Findings from this study suggest that both school counselors and principals need to work together if they want to be successful in implementing systemic change and sustain the change they are striving towards.

The ways in which collaboration can be achieved between school counselors and principals is suggested throughout the literature. Young et al. (2013) identified the principals as the individual who builds collaborative culture within the school system. Therefore, principals can partner with school counselors to ensure that their needs, along with their program's needs are being supported so they can offer services to students and properly carry out their jobs (Young et al., 2013). Even more, when working to combat school wide issues such as bullying or identifying at-risk students, principals and school counselors can collaborate to create programming to address those issues (Austin et al., 2016) and principals can recognize the specialized skill sets and training school counselors have to handle student specific situations (Johnson & Perkins, 2009). This collaborative effort begins with reaching an understanding of each other's role and one of

the best ways for principals to do that is when principals show respect for a counselor's role and advocating for that role (Edwards et al., 2014).

However, although research indicates that school counselors and principals work best when they work collaboratively, there are barriers that exist surrounding collaboration efforts. Dahir and colleagues (2010) found that school counselors and principals had different focuses while working within the school and if communication between the two professions is lacking, each professionals' goals and needs go unmet. More so, this lack of communication can turn into a lack of role understanding and widen the collaboration gap. Primary barriers to collaboration identified by Bardhoshi et al. (2014) include different sets of views on the role of the school counselor, tasks assigned, school goals, ethical and respect for one another's goals. For instance, often school counselors are viewed as an someone who can be used as an extra resource to meet school needs and without recognizing their unique skill set (Bore & Bore, 2009). Not to mention that principals are frequently misinformed or simply unaware of the role and appropriate tasks of the school counselor and where their time should be spent. Due to these misunderstandings, school counselors will report higher levels of burnout that results from feelings of exhaustion, feeling ineffective, heavy caseloads, and job dissatisfaction from being assigned to non-counselor related duties (Barhoshi et al. (2014). However, when asked about communication and respect for their positions, both school counselors and principals wished for improvement in those areas for their respective roles (Finkelstien, 2009) showing promise for future studies like this one.

Fitch et al., (2001) found that principals who are enrolled in training programs had misconceptions of the role of the school counselor before they even began their

professional careers. Which is why intervention early on in graduate programs like the one done by Shoffner, and Williamson (2000) are not only beneficial for adult learners but the students who enrolled in their seminar class from both programs reported that the class was beneficial to their future careers. Lastly, in a survey done by Bringman and colleagues (2010), practicing principals reported that after attending a presentation on the role of school counselor they felt more confident in their knowledge of the school counseling profession overall. Building on the work done by previous scholars, the pilot study below combines both curriculum implementation for both aspiring school counselors and principals to aid in their understanding of each other's role while also situating them into a collaborative PLE to facilitate collaboration between the two professions in their respective graduate programs. As mentioned previously, a barrier for many graduate level programs is that their courses and course content is dictated by their respective accrediting bodies, making it difficult to add additional courses, classes, or even electives making it difficult for programs to aid in student's understand of roles outside of their own like the role of the school counselor or principal. Further, with the exception of a few studies like the one done by Shoffer and Williamson (2000), many studies aimed to solely educate current or aspiring principals on the role of the school counselor, disregarding the potential that school counselors may not fully understand the role of the principal.

Chapter Summary

Chapter two provided an overview of the role of the school counselor and principal, their preparation programs, and leadership and collaboration between the two professionals. Given the lack of the dual exploration on the role of both the school

counselor and principal in K-12 settings, the following study explores role understanding on behalf of the school counselor and principal, an assessment of readiness for interprofessional learning (McFayden et al., 2005) and the facilitation of collaboration at the graduate student level. The utilization of a piloted mixed-methods approach is used to examine the effectiveness of a presentation on the role of the school counselor of aspiring principals and the role of principal to aspiring school counselors followed by a collaborative powerful learning experience (PLE) between the two disciplines with aim to provide valuable insight to curriculum development for these professional programs. The methodology and procedures for the study are outlined in the next chapter.

Table 1.1

Powerful Learning Experience Tenets

PLE Andragogical Tenets	Collaborative PLE Relevancy
1. Authentic, meaningful, relevant, problem finding activities	Pseudo-school case vignettes are developed using report cards from actual public school report card data with areas of concern being highlighted throughout.
2. Involve sense-making around critical problems of practice	
3. Involve exploration, critique and deconstruction from an equity perspective	Demographics of students and teachers are given within case vignettes and the application of social justice and equity are called for and relevant
4. Require collaboration and independence	School counselor/principal pairs will independently collaborate in zoom rooms
5. Confidence in leadership	Leadership on behalf of their professional role and representing how their profession would address noted concerns

6. Place both the professor and the student in a learning situation	Instructors will be permitted to observe participants in their collaboration rooms (this is also addressed in stage 1 when instructors implement the curriculum implementation)
7. Empower learning and makes students responsibly for their own learning	Students can concretely apply the role understanding from stage 1 to an actual collaborative opportunity with an aspiring professional counterpart.
8. Shift the perspective from classroom to school, district, or state level	School wide (and some district) concerns are presented within case vignettes
9. Reflective component	Students reflect in whole group discussion, feedback questions, and in focus groups

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Within Chapter 3, the research design, method, and procedures for my study is outlined. The purpose of this study was to pilot a curriculum implementation to increase role understanding between aspiring school counselors and principals, assess their readiness interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005), and to foster collaboration between the two professions through a collaborative PLE (Young, 2015) at the graduate level. At this time, there is no curriculum that exists to educate school counselors on the role of the principal or to educate principals on the role of the school counselor, therefore a curriculum was developed for each profession based on national standards (ASCA, 2019; NEBPA, 2018) from each respective profession and a review of curriculum materials by experts in each field was conducted before materials were presented to participants. The collaboration activity, grounded in the tenets of powerful learning experiences (Young, 2015) provided graduate students an experiential learning opportunity to facilitate collaboration between the two professions. This pilot study was designed to assess the feasibility of this mixed-methods study on a larger scale.

Due to the complex nature of facilitating role understanding and a collaborative working relationship between the two professions, piloting a mixed-methods approach provides preliminary evidence on the efficacy this intervention, assesses feasibility and rigor (Thabane et al., 2010) and secondly engages participants to not only respond to items and questions as a participant but also to identify unclear or ambiguous elements about the items (Heppner et al., 2016). Additionally, the use of a mixed methods

convergent design allowed the research team to explore quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously (Flynn, 2021). Each stage of the study, whether it was quantitative or qualitative adhered to the full procedures and rigor of each respective paradigm (Flynn, 2021). Throughout this piloted mixed methods study I gathered a true, full picture of what was occurring and encouraged participants to give feedback that will be used to strengthen the study before it is expanded to a larger participant pool in the future (Flynn, 2021). Lastly, to date, no study has aimed to educated both the school counselors and the principals on their opposite counterpart's role and follow up with a collaborative activity to aid in the facilitation of collaboration with the two professions at the graduate level; making this approach is the soundest way to continue this line of research and gain a clear picture of the implications of the presentation of a curriculum implementation and collaborative PLE.

Grounded in experiential learning theory (ELT) and communities of learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991) with andragogical considerations specific to adult learners (Knowles et al., 1984), this study aims to (a) foster a better understanding of the opposite professional within the K-12 education system and b) facilitate a collaborative working relationship between the two professions, utilizing each professions unique lens when addressing school-wide concerns.

Population and Sampling

Once I obtained approval from the University of South Carolina's Institutional Review Board (IRB) I recruited participants from both the school counseling and education leadership programs at the university. The total sample consists of 58 (school counseling $n= 20$, education leadership $n= 38$) graduate students who are currently

enrolled in either a school counseling program (CACREP accredited) or education administration (CAPE accredited) program at the University of South Carolina-Columbia. For pilot studies, Johanson and Brooks (2010) recommend at least 30 representative participants from the population of interest for pilot studies and when two or more groups are sampled, it is acceptable to have at least 12 participants per group. Permission to recruit participants from each respective program was approved by program faculty, instructors of record, and program chairs. Prior to the implementation of my study, the instructors of record agreed to share the content of my study with their students; however, did not require participation in the study, meaning that one week before implementation of my study, I visited each classroom to recruit participants. If they agreed to participate, then they received an informed consent form and completed pre-test and demographics questionnaire. At this initial introduction, I worked to establish a researcher-participant relationship grounded in my desire to aid them in their educational journey and skills to serve them as they aim to acquire a professional position in their desired field. This relationship continued throughout study. Within the study, there were two groups of participants from each graduate program that varied on how long they have been enrolled in their program (first or second year) and which track (school counseling or education administration) they are enrolled in.

Data Collection Procedures

Upon obtaining IRB approval for my study, I coordinated with the counselor education and education leadership programs at the University of South Carolina-Columbia to discuss start dates for my study. In response to the interdisciplinary nature of this study, permission to work with students in both programs was obtained in February

of 2021 in a meeting of faculty and program coordinators. Since this study is piloting a curriculum intervention, there are two different groups (first year and second year) school counseling and education leadership graduate level participants who received the intervention. All participants regardless of year in the program followed the same procedures for the study, the only exception is discussed below.

Once participants consented to participate in my study, they were instructed to take the pre-test on knowledge of their opposite counterpart's role and the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005) approximately a week before receiving the curriculum implementation. The instructors of record were given the curriculum implementation to administer to their students during 45-minutes of their regularly scheduled class meeting time. Instructors were asked to either record or permit myself and/or a member of the research team to observe their instruction of the curriculum implementation. The purpose of observation is to track the fidelity of implementation and make note of areas where additional information may be needed for participants and to document the time the implementation of materials would take. At the conclusion of the curriculum implementation, participants were asked to complete a post-test of their opposite counterpart's role, the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005), and the inclusion of Likert scale and open-ended questions surrounding participant's feedback on their experience. An example of open-ended questions included, "What was the most helpful part of this module?", "What was the least helpful part of this module?", "If you could change anything about this module, what would you change?", and "Overall, what are your thoughts (positive or constructive) about this module?".

Approximately a week later, following the 45-minute curriculum implementation, all participants participated in the collaborative PLE during a mutually agreed upon time with both program instructors. For first year participants, their regularly scheduled class time had overlap allowing them to complete the collaborative PLE online during their regular meeting time. Second-year participants met during the education leadership class' regularly scheduled meeting time, which was a deviation from the school counseling participant's schedule, but it was a mutually agreed upon time for all parties. Since all participants in the educational leadership program are a part of an online program, this stage of the study for all participants was conducted over zoom. Once all participants logged into the zoom meeting link, the primary researcher described the activity to the students. School counseling and education leadership students were assigned into groups to solve one of the three pseudo-school case vignettes in a collaborative PLE. Students had approximately 20 minutes to work together and come up with a plan to address the needs of the pseudo-school using the knowledge they acquired during the curriculum implementation and their respective professional lenses. At the conclusion of the collaborative PLE, students re-joined the main zoom room to share strategies and/or solutions they came up with to solve their pseudo-school case study. Once the group discussion was complete, participants were asked to complete the exit questionnaire with open ended questions regarding their overall experience. Examples of the open-ended questions include, "Tell me about your experience participating in the collaborative PLE", "In what ways was your participation in the collaborative PLE helpful to your learning?" "In what ways was your participation in the collaborative PLE unhelpful to your learning?", "What was the most valuable part of this experience?", "You were given

20 minutes to complete the case vignette, what are your thoughts and experience surrounding the time you were given to come up with a plan?”, “If you could change anything about this stage of the study, what would you change?”, “What would you keep the same within this stage of the study?”, and “Do you have any remaining thoughts you'd like to share?”.

Focus Groups

According to Gibbs (1997) focus groups are valuable to social researchers who want to have an organized discussion with a selective group of individuals to gather information about their views and/or experiences. When completing the demographics form, participants were given the option to volunteer to participate in the focus groups at the end of the study. Of the volunteers, six school counseling participants and two education leadership participants completed a focus group. Focus groups were conducted by a second-year doctoral students who had prior experience conducting focus groups for other studies. The purpose of having an outside research conduct the focus groups rather than the primary researcher was to create a space where participants could share their feedback with anonymity. The data collected from participants in the focus group will contribute to further development and improvement of study and study materials.

Instructor Feedback

There were four instructors of the graduate level classes involved in this study. The first-year graduate instructors co-taught the first half of the study that discussed the role of the school counselor and principal. The two instructors who taught the second-year students taught the material independently. Since each of the course instructors administered the curriculum implementation, they were asked to provide feedback on

their experience with the study content and materials to further explore the feasibility of the study (Thabane, 2010).

First Year Participants

First-year participants in the school counseling and education leadership programs received the curriculum intervention with their main instructors leading their class as they but as the main instructors followed the curriculum implementation PowerPoint and instructor guide provided on the role of the school counselor or principal, they had an expert from the field they were discussing present. Meaning that as the school counseling faculty member taught about the role of the principal, an education leadership faculty member co-taught with them and aided in their instruction of course materials. The school counseling faculty member did the same for the education leadership faculty as they instructed their own students on the role of the school counselor.

Second Year Participants

Second-year participants in the school counseling and education leadership programs received the curriculum intervention with their main instructors only. The instructors were given the curriculum implementation PowerPoint and instructors guide to complete the curriculum implementation segment of the study and they did not have any co-teaching support.

Instrumentation

To collect the data and information from participants, a demographics form, pre- and post-test that includes an assessment on role understanding for both school counselors and principals, the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005), and an exit survey were completed by participants. Each instrument utilized within the study is discussed below.

Demographics Form

Paired with the informed consent, participants filled out a demographics form to gather information on their gender, age, race, ethnicity, location (state), education, program of study, how long they have been enrolled in their program, and previous career experience. Within the demographics form, participants were asked if they are willing to participate in a focus group at the conclusion of the study, if they selected yes, they were contacted to schedule a time for the focus group.

Quantitative Instruments

The first instrument used is an assessment based on role understanding of each profession. Currently, there is no standardized measure for measure knowledge of the role of the school counselor or school principal. Therefore, the development of a survey based on standards and roles of each professional was created and guided by the steps outlined by Swank and Lambie's (2016) development of the research competencies scale. Swank and Lambie (2016) state that you first must decide on what to measure; for this study, I wanted to measure role understanding, therefore, I utilized previously published research, literature, and standards from each profession. From there, I produced an item pool, step two outlined by Swank and Lambie (2016), once an item pool was produced, using Likert style questions, each item in the survey was then reviewed by experts for feedback. After input from experts, items were edited for clarity. Administering the pre- and post-test to the participants serves as the sixth step which is to administer to a developmental sample which aligns with the purposes of piloting this study. As part of the results of this study, participant answers and feedback given is considered and reported in the results section to evaluate the items.

As stated above, this measure was created based on published research, literature, and standards from each profession as outlined by ASCA (2019) and NPBEA (2018) with an additional review by experts in the field and both the university level as well as experts currently working in K-12 education systems for more than 8 years in their respective positions. These defined roles and responsibilities of the school counselors are outlined by ASCA (2019) in a handout titled *Appropriate and Inappropriate Roles of the School Counselor*. The specific role of the principal is outlined by Marzano et al. (2005) *21 Responsibilities of the School Leader*. Both individual assessments were developed by the primary researcher and then was sent to experts in the field of school counseling and education leadership at the university and K-12 level. Based on their feedback, changes were suggested surrounding wording, and presentation, all changes suggested by the experts were made. The format of the measurement was a combination of Likert scale questions to assess role understanding, completion of the RIPLS, and open-ended questions that were included in the post-test for feasibility purposes. The inclusion of validation items comes from the use of the Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale (RIPLS) (Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005). During this pilot study, the assessment was administered to participants on a small scale with a total *N* of 58 to analyze the data and allow participants to provide feedback on the study and it's included materials. This feedback and analysis served as the evaluation of items included on the survey. Lastly, again based on preliminary data analysis and feedback given by participants, changes will be made for a future larger study.

Readiness for Interprofessional Learning

The Readiness for Interprofessional Learning Scale (RIPLS) was developed by Parsell and Bligh (1999; McFayden et al., 2005), assesses the attitudes and perceptions of students and professionals surrounding their readiness for interprofessional learning and change, normed on health care students' readiness of shared learning and activities. The updated version, refined by McFayden et al., (2005) is a self-report survey with 19 Likert style questions reported to take students approximately 10 minutes to complete. The scale specifically measures subscales of teamwork and collaboration, negative and positive professional identity, and roles and responsibilities and can be applied to a variety to settings with students. The original content of the scale was based on identified dimensions of theories and practical applications, characteristics and conditions required for interprofessional learning and working for positive outcomes and were grouped into four key dimensions: (1) relationships between professional groups based on the values and beliefs that people hold, (2) collaboration and team-work based on knowledge and skills needed, (3) roles and responsibilities of what people actually do, and (4) the benefits to patients, professional practice, and personal growth (Parsell & Bligh, 1999). Within the context of the aforementioned areas, school counselors and principals must adopt when working to address student needs while also fulfilling their day-to-day professional role as outlined in their respective professional standards (ASCA, 2019; NPBEA, 2018). The factor analysis of Cronbach's alpha for all scales was reported at .90, with the teamwork & collaboration range =.44-.79, negative and positive professional identity range= .44-.79, and roles and responsibility range= .49- .63. The RIPLS adapted version refined by McFayden et al., (2005) is a publicly available version that does not

require permission for use. The RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005) was used during both the pre- and post-test during the curriculum implementation stage. Murphy and Nimmagadda (2015) piloted a study where nursing and social work students learned together using simulation pedagogy and found that students from both professions improved their RIPLS scores. Further, Judge and colleagues (2015) set out to investigate if exposure to interdisciplinary education improves student readiness for interprofessional learning as it pertains to healthcare team (dental medicine, dietetics, medicine, nursing, pharmacy and physical therapy) development and through a pre- and post-test design found nursing students' post-test mean scores were higher when compared to their pre-test scores, pharmacy students had higher pre-test mean score when compared to medical and nursing students, and the RIPLS mean pre-test score was higher for dietetics than medical students.

Qualitative Instrumentation

Furthermore, this study situated participant groups prospective school counselors and principals) into a collaborative powerful learning experience (Young, 2015) to solve a pseudo-school case vignette using both of their professional lenses to address the needs of the pseudo-school. At the conclusion of the collaborative PLE, participants completed an exit survey to investigate their experience in collaboration with their opposite counterparts.

Powerful Learning Experiences (PLE)

Powerful learning experiences (PLEs) are rooted in nine andragogical tenets that aim to situate learners in activities that are authentic, meaningful, relevant and problem finding like the real-life situations that will likely appear when they enter the workforce

(Young, 2015). PLEs focus on the development of collaborative skills and translating research-based knowledge to practice that adult learner can specifically apply to their learning experience (Young, 2015).

However, Young (2015) notes that not every module developed with a PLE in mind has all nine components, and within this intervention, eight of the nine tenets are included. (See Table 9).

Pseudo-School Case Vignettes

Considering the absence of required collaboration with either a school counselor or principal in either preparation program, the pseudo-school case vignette serves as practice for students to collaborate and come up with a plan to address the needs of an actual school before they obtain a professional position in their desired field. In reference to preparing counselors in training, Cummings (2000) asserts that when students can practice in the classroom with hypothetical cases to manage, they can develop clinical skills that directly translates to actual practice (Cummings, 2000). The pseudo-school case vignette uses that same pedagogical strategy but translates it to a situation where both school counselors and principals can collaborate. Additionally, in a study done by Shoffner and Williamson (2000), participants stated that case vignettes and problem-solving discussions were the most helpful and informative activities when learning about the roles of another profession.

The pseudo-school case vignettes created by the researcher are grounded in literature surrounding challenges that K-12 schools, principals, and counselors are facing within the education system. Beginning with a real school's actual state report card, pseudo-schools were created following the statistics regarding student demographics,

attendance rates, student progress, school financial data, classroom environment, and other data that is included in the data summaries given by various states across the country. Within each separate case vignette, different schools in the state of South Carolina were used to model and create the pseudo-school to ensure that diverse and dynamic scenarios are represented. Furthermore, each pseudo-school case vignette was reviewed by both experts in the school counseling and education leadership fields to further strengthen the quality of the exercise for participant groups. At the conclusion of the collaborative PLE, participant pairs completed an exit survey to inquire about their experiences within the exercise.

Research Design

To increase the amount of investigative rigor (Ismail et al., 2017) and to assess the feasibility of a study, a pilot study is used to gather feedback and pre-testing appraisal materials for this study. Within this piloted mixed methods design, the quantitative aspect consisted of a quasi-experimental within-group, pretest-posttest design (Heppner et al., 2016) to examine school counseling and education administration graduate student's understanding of their professional counterpart's role and an assessment of their readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005). Furthermore, along with the research team, I conducted thematic analysis of participants experiences after their participated in the collaborative PLE because it can be used to analyze patterns when participants complete open-ended survey responses (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following pilot study procedures, preliminary data was collected and analyzed for feasibility and potential impact on the participants of the study. The focus for this study was on the feasibility, rigor, and participant feedback

surrounding study materials, pre- and post-tests, pseudo-case studies, collaborative PLE and any other feedback participants provided to improve and adjust materials for a larger future study. Feedback and data were gathered by participants through post-tests, exit questionnaires, and focus groups.

Quasi-Experimental Design

According to Heppner et al. (2016), notes that much of the research done in counseling happens in a natural field setting, which mean that researchers do not always have control over the design of their study. For this study, the use of a quasi-experimental design stems from the inability to randomly assign participants to treatment conditions because of (a) a small sample size for the pilot study, and (b) groups of participants are already situated in groups by their year in the program and their tracks. Within the sample of my population, there were not enough participants to have a control group and therefore, the selection of a quasi-experimental design was utilized.

The use of a within groups pre- and post-test design aims to minimize error variance because within this design, each participant serves as their own control (Heppner et al., 2016). Although all participants are exposed to all the intervention materials throughout the study, there is an assessment of their role understanding and RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005) before the and after the intervention and an analysis of the scores using a paired-samples t-test provides insights on the impact of the intervention on the participants.

Qualitative

The need to understand the experience of participants after they engage with their opposite professional counterpart drives the need for a qualitative component in this

study. As participants collaborate to solve a pseudo-school case vignette, understanding their experiences with doing so is imperative; working to understand how their understanding of their counterpart's role was or was not helpful throughout that interaction, if they saw value within the experience or not, and what their thoughts and feelings were during and after the collaborative experience is valuable information for this line of research. Since thematic analysis is considered a foundational method of qualitative analysis and is useful when examining the different perspectives of participants, thematic analysis was utilized to understand how participants experienced a collaborative PLE with their opposite counterpart. We implemented the six steps of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clark (2008): (1) familiarize yourself with the data, (2) generate initial codes, (3) search for themes, (4) review themes, (5) define and name themes, and (6) produce a report.

Pilot Studies

Arnold et al. (2009) and Thabane (2010) assert that a pilot study is a smaller-sized study that aids in the planning, modification, and assessment of feasibility of a study before it executed on a larger scale. Throughout the pilot study phase of research, the researchers follow the research design and procedures that would take place the larger main study to identify and refine areas of the study that require improvement (In, 2017). Throughout the implementation of the pilot study, all procedures of the main study are followed, and the results are used to validate the feasibility of participant recruitment, involvement, and assessment, interventions and instruments presented to participants, training of the researcher and researchers involved, and the suitability of data collection and analysis (In, 2017). At the data analysis stage, researchers must recognize that

hypothesis testing should not be a part of the analysis and caution should be taken when reporting the results (Ross-McGill et al., 2000; Kraemer et al., 2006). Thabane (2010) outlined a checklist for researchers conducting pilot studies, those directives include the following considerations: (a) researchers must clearly note that the study is a pilot study in the title; (b) a rationale for why a pilot study is needed must be stated in the introduction; (c) within the methods section, assessment of validity of procedures should be established, including participant inclusion and exclusion criteria, detailed procedures of the intervention, and methods of data analysis outlined; (d) the results sections should describe the validity of the procedures discussed in the methods section and any data that was analyzed is presented; (e) the discussion should be focused on the if the study is feasible and if changes were made or need to be made are noted (In, 2017). Lastly, pilot studies provide researchers beneficial information for both the researcher's main study as well as contributing to the research area as a whole which is why executing a pilot study with proper rigor and feasibility is crucial (In, 2017).

Role of the Researcher

As the primary researcher, I was involved in every step of the process for both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study including the creation, coordination and dissemination of module items, communication with course instructors on the implementation of each phase, feasibility and fidelity checks, the gathering of data, and organizing the focus groups. Within the quantitative stage, I created and constructed both curriculum modules to educate school counselors on the role of the principal and principals on the role of the school counselors. Therefore, the content covered within each module created is based on scholarly literature surrounding each role (ASCA, 2019),

professional standards (ASCA, 2019; CACREP, 2016; NPBEA, 2018), and all presented content was reviewed by experts (i.e., subject area faculty members and current practicing professionals) for quality of information presented and for constructive feedback to be given before the presentation of information to participants. Within the qualitative stage, I constructed the pseudo-school case vignettes, again, basing the information within the case studies in professional literature, professional standards (ASCA, 2019; CACREP, 2016; NPBEA, 2018), and having the materials reviewed by experts (i.e., subject area faculty and current practicing professionals) before participants interacted with the materials. Lastly, I was the individual who coordinated focus groups with participants to gather feedback. To protect participant's anonymity another member of the research team conducted the focus groups where participants shared their experiences and suggestions, they had for improving any areas of the quantitative or qualitative pieces. As the primary researcher, I was immersed in all aspects of the study which required me to well document my own personal biases and assumptions throughout the study.

The Research Team

The research team consists of myself, the primary researcher who is a female, third year doctoral candidate with a background in school counseling in both North and South Carolina. I have completed all my course work required to obtain my Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision and am working on this study to complete my dissertation requirements. Two second year doctoral students aided in conducting the focus groups, one male and one female.

Both second year doctoral students have backgrounds in clinical mental health counseling. Additionally, two third year doctoral candidates assisted with the thematic analysis of qualitative data. The third-year doctoral candidates consist of one male and one female who have backgrounds in rehabilitation counseling and clinical mental health counseling respectively. All members of the research team are enrolled in the doctoral program at the University of South Carolina and are immersed in best research practices through curriculum instruction and formal research teams.

Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

Participant's information remained confidential to everyone except myself, the primary researcher. Confidentiality of responses to the various surveys stayed intact by using participant ID numbers throughout the data collection process for both quantitative and qualitative data.

Research Questions

Due to the nature of a pilot study, the focus of the research lies on the feasibility and rigor of the study itself, the materials, assessments, and procedures. However, given the importance placed on adequate understanding of roles of different professionals and collaboration between professions the following research questions were used to guide the investigation:

- 1. How does a curriculum implementation on the role of a school counselor (ASCA, 2019) impact aspiring education administration graduate students' understanding of the role of the school counselor and their readiness for interprofessional learning (RIPLS, Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?*

2. *How does curriculum implementation on the role of the school principal (NEBPA, 2018) impact aspiring school counseling graduate students' understanding of the role of a school principal and their readiness for interprofessional learning (RIPLS, Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?*
3. *How are aspiring school counselors and principals experiencing a collaborative PLE?*

Furthermore, the following research questions are asked to assess feasibility of the pilot study:

1. *What is the feasibility of a study that assesses aspiring school counselors and principals' knowledge of the role of their professional counterpart as based on the ASCA (2019) and NEBPA (2018) standards and their readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?*
2. *What is the feasibility of a study that facilitates collaboration between aspiring school counselors and principals through a collaborative PLE?*
3. *What are aspiring school counselors and principal's perceptions of receiving an intervention on the role of the school counselor or principal and a collaborative PLE during their first or second year in their program?*

Data Analysis

The use of a mixed methods convergent design aims to simultaneously use diverse methodological frameworks that complement each other, to converge on a richer understanding of a phenomenon (Flynn, 2021). Meaning that throughout my study, I collected quantitative and qualitative data separately and analyzed both data sets together

during analysis to interpret the data sets independently and holistically to understand participant experiences throughout the study.

The quantitative stage of my study consisted of a quasi-experimental within-group, pretest-posttest design (Heppner et al., 2016) to examine school counseling and education administration graduate student's understanding of their professional counterpart's role, and their readiness for interprofessional learning. Using the pre- and post-test means to determine whether participants report an increase in their understanding of the role of their professional counterpart and how the presentation of the course module impacts their *readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005)*. The use of a pre-test post-test design has labeled as helpful or assessing course and material effectiveness (Heppner et al., 2018). After collecting pre- and post-test data, I analyzed group pre-, and post-test means using a paired samples t-tests. The t-test results are used to assess if there is an increase in each participant group's (school counseling and education leadership) role understanding and/or their readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005). Assessment of the RIPLS score was done for both school counseling and education leadership participants separately and then together as a whole group.

With the qualitative data, myself along with my research team consisting of two third year doctoral candidates and one second year doctoral candidate thematically analyzed data from the opened-ended questions assessing participant's experiences and feedback after their participation in the curriculum implementation, collaborative PLE, and focus groups. Thematic analysis can be used as a foundational method of qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke (2006) assert that thematic analysis is

useful for examining the different perspectives of participants, bringing attention to similarities and differences while discovering unanticipated insights of participants, making this form of analysis a suitable fit to analyze participant experiences, feedback, and focus group data collected throughout my study. Furthermore, thematic analysis has also been described as a method of analysis that can be used for the needs of many studies, providing a complex account of acquired data with rich details while also being considered an accessible form of analysis for those early in their research career (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). Outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006), thematic analysis consists of a six-step methodology for the research team: (1) familiarize yourself with your data, the research team met and reviewed data together to gain an understanding of what data was collected; (2) generating initial codes, each member of the research team created initial codes independently and we came up with a total of 236 initial codes then condensed the initial codes to a list of 60 codes; (3) searching for themes, after reviewing initial codes, the research team generated their own themes and sent their initial codes and themes to the primary researcher for review; (4) reviewing themes, I reviewed the presented themes by the research team, there were 10 different themes, however, since themes were consistent and similar across members and themes were finalized into four to answer the mixed-method research questions and four to answer the feasibility questions; (5) defining and naming themes, definitions and names were finalized by the primary researcher; and (6) producing a written report, the report is given in chapter four. Since the research team consisted of second- and third-year doctoral candidates early on in their research career and identities, thematic analysis is also a well-suited methodology for the research team's range of research experiences.

The use of thematic analysis of themes from the opened-ended questions assessing participant's experiences and feedback after participation in the curriculum implementation, collaborative PLE, and overall feedback provides insight into what aspects of the overall study are beneficial for participants as well as potential changes that can be made to improve the overall study.

Mixed Methods Research Questions

To guide the investigation of my study, I have three research questions. Two questions answered by the quantitative portion of my study and one for the qualitative portion.

The first two questions: (1) *How does a curriculum implementation on the role of a school counselor (ASCA, 2019) impact aspiring education administration graduate students' understanding of the role of the school counselor and their readiness for interprofessional learning (RIPLS, Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?* And (2) *How does curriculum implementation on the role of the school principal (NEBPA, 2018) impact aspiring school counseling graduate students' understanding of the role of a school principal and their readiness for interprofessional learning (RIPLS, Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?* Are answered through a paired samples t-test analysis of the pre- and post-test means of role understanding and the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005).

The final question which guides the qualitative inquiry is: *How are aspiring school counselors and principals experiencing a collaborative PLE?* To answer this research questions, a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2005) of participants exit survey responses and the focus groups was completed.

Pilot Study Research Questions

Furthermore, the following research questions were asked to assess the overall feasibility of the pilot study: (1) *What is the feasibility of a study that assesses aspiring school counselors and principals' knowledge of the role of their professional counterpart as based on the ASCA (2019) and NEBPA (2018) standards and their readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005);* (2) *What is the feasibility of a study that facilitates collaboration between aspiring school counselors and principals through a collaborative PLE?;* and (3) *What are aspiring school counselors and principal's perceptions of receiving an intervention on the role of the school counselor or principal and a collaborative PLE during their first or second year in their program?* These questions are answered through the thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2005) of participant responses to the open-ended questions from the post-test, the exit survey, the focus group data, and the instructor feedback forms.

Feasibility Areas of Focus

Acceptability

Bowen et al. (2010) state that acceptability is an appropriate area of focus when assessing feasibility of an intervention and that studies should inquire to what extent is a new program, process or measure suitable, satisfying, or attractive to program deliverers or recipients? Within my study, acceptability is address through a collection of participant and instructor feedback on the two stages (curriculum implementation and collaborative PLE) through open-ended and Likert style questions.

Implementation

An assessment of implementation of a new idea, program, or process that is being delivered to participants comes from an examination of the degree of execution and its success or failure, and factors that affect implementation ease or difficulty (Bowen et al., 2010). Throughout my study, the feasibility of implementation is assessed again based on feedback from both participants and instructors but also through observation of implementation of the curriculum stage of the intervention. Requesting a recording or observation of the curriculum implementation by instructors permits the research team to identify areas where more or less information, interaction, engagement, time or exploration of the intervention is needed. During the collaborative PLE stage of the implementation, as the primary researcher I documented areas that needed improvement during that stage of the study.

Integration

The focus of integration is assessing the practicality of integrating an intervention within an existing system, the sustainability of the intervention, and costs to an organization (Bowen et al., 2010). Since I integrated my intervention into an existing system (i.e., previously established university programs) and implementing during previously scheduled class time, feedback from instructors provided insights into the integration aspect of my study.

Fidelity

Since graduate level instructors for both the school counseling and education leadership programs are the individuals teaching the curriculum implementation that aims to educated participants on either the role of the school counselor or principal, fidelity

checks are interwoven throughout. As the primary researcher, I attended all curriculum implementations and took notes on how instructors followed the instructors guide, the time they spent on each slide and activity, and information that they added as they instructed their students. Additionally, a third-year doctoral student on the research team who has no background as a school counselor or principal also completed fidelity checks throughout.

Trustworthiness

Nowell and colleagues (2017) assert that for qualitative data to be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researcher must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted in a manner that is precise, consistent, and exhaustive through various forms of documentation like recording, systematizing, and disclosing the methods of analysis used. To aid in the assurance that findings from my study are trustworthy and worthy of attention (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), I describe the ways in which analysis was done in a credible, transferable, dependable, confirmable manner. In addition to the triangulation of information between the demographics form, memoing, and member checking after focus groups have been conducted; the entire research team documented their biases and state their positionality before analysis begins and continue to memo their thoughts throughout the data analysis process (Heppner, 2016). The research and analysis process is clearly documented and outlined through logical and traceable descriptions (Tobin & Begley, 2004) within my procedures and analysis sections. Finally, interpretations and findings from the data are clearly outlined within the results section of my study, enhancing the confirmability of my study by combining all steps mentioned above (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

Positionality

As the primary researcher, I understand that my previous experience as a school counselor influences the lens in which I view the data collected throughout my study. I worked as a school counselor in two different states and my interactions with different principals, those who worked to better understand my role and those who did not, have influenced my desire to increase role understanding between principals and school counselors while facilitating collaboration between the two professions at the graduate student level. I also acknowledge that I created this entire intervention and the accompanying materials which means that myself, my views, and experiences have impact on the how I interact and interpret the data presented. I also understand that I do not have a background in education leadership and considering the interdisciplinary nature of my study, it is and continues to be important that the field of education leadership is well represented in my study just as school counseling is.

Biases

Before beginning our thematic analysis, as a research team, we recorded our biases regarding our views prior to reviewing the data and continued to acknowledge them throughout (Creswell, 2007; Hays & Wood, 2011). We acknowledge that as four doctoral candidates in a counselor education program, we are biased towards improving the training that all counselors receive in their programs, but for this study specifically, we want to improve the training that school counselors receive in their graduate preparation programs. Further, we discussed having the same desire to improve the training education leadership students receive and that they acquire a better understanding of the role of the school counselor and how they use the ASCA model.

Additionally, we were anticipating that participants would want to collaborate and learn more about their counterpart's role to improve the work that they do with the students they are training to serve and the professionals they will work with in the K-12 school system. Finally, although three of the research team members do not have any formal training in the field of school counseling, they all believe that interdisciplinary collaboration between these two professionals is beneficial.

Conclusion

Choosing to pilot this convergent mixed-methods study to examine aspiring school counselor and principals understanding of their opposite counterparts' role, conduct an assessment of readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005), and to foster collaboration at the graduate student level provides opportunity for both fields to examine how educating other leaders in K-12 education can benefit the students they are training to serve. The utilization of participant feedback and analysis of the data collected without drawing generalizations of study data due to the small sample size study will help inform the curriculum development for aspiring school counselors and principals and provide insight on the fostering of collaboration between the two professions for future larger studies in this area. The results, implications, discussions, and limitations of this study are discussed in the following chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In this chapter, I present the results of both the mixed-methods and pilot study questions. The purpose of this study was to pilot a curriculum implementation to increase role understanding between aspiring school counselors and principals, assess their readiness interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005), and to foster collaboration between the two professions through a collaborative PLE (Young, 2015) at the graduate level. Specifically, I collected quantitative and qualitative data through pre- and post-tests, exit surveys, instructor feedback forms, and focus groups to answer research questions used to guide the investigation and to assess the feasibility of the complete intervention for a future, larger study.

Sampling Procedures and Data Collection Procedures

The target population for the study was aspiring school counselors and education leadership graduate students. The sample consists of 58 graduate students who are currently enrolled in either a school counseling program (CACREP accredited) or education administration (CAEP accredited) program at the University of South Carolina-Columbia. Johanson and Brooks (2010) recommend 30 representative participants from the population of interest for pilot studies and when two or more groups are sampled, it is acceptable to have at least 12 participants per group (Julious, 2005; Johanson & Brooks, 2010). Permission to recruit participants from each respective program was approved by program faculty, instructors of record, and program chairs in the spring of 2021. The

instructors of record agreed to share the content of my study with their students; however, they did not require participation in the study, meaning that about one week before implementation of my study I visited each classroom to explain my study and recruit student participants. If students elected to participate in my study, they completed the demographics form and the pre-test.

After participant recruitment, I distributed the curriculum implementation materials to the instructors of record before their scheduled class times, at least one week before they were scheduled to present the materials to their students. While the instructors of record taught their students separately during their regularly scheduled class times, I conducted live fidelity checks and recorded via video recordings or voice memos of the teachings for the additional fidelity check by a research team member. At the conclusion of the curriculum implementation, participants completed the post-test.

Approximately one week later, the two graduate classes came together during a mutually agreed upon time set by the lead instructors over zoom to participate in the collaborative PLE. During the collaborative PLE, students worked in small groups with both aspiring school counselors and education leadership students to solve one of three pseudo-school case vignettes, using their recently acquired knowledge of their counterpart's role. Once they collaborated on the pseudo-school case vignette, all students came back together to have a whole groups discussion. Once the collaborative PLE was finished, participants completed an exit survey. In the following weeks, participants in both tracks who volunteered to participate in a focus group were contacted to arrange a time to meet over zoom with a member of the research team. After they completed the focus group, the audio file was transcribed via rev.com.

An analysis of pre-test and post-test means was conducted using a paired samples t-test surrounding role understanding of either the school counselor or principal and on participants readiness for interprofessional collaboration separately and then all RIPLS data was analyzed together. All qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis (Holton, 1973). Thematic analysis revealed themes from the opened-ended questions assessing participant's experiences and feedback after participation in the collaborative PLE, this feedback provides insight into changes that can be made to improve study materials and content.

Data Results

Demographics

Descriptive data and measures of central tendency are presented for all participants in the study ($N = 58$). The following descriptive analyses are reported on the total sample ($N = 58$; see Table 4.1). Most of the sample identified as female ($n = 49$, 84.5%) compared to those who identified as male ($n = 9$, 15.5%). The mean age of the participants ($N = 58$) was 32.12 years ($SD = 9.5$, range 21 to 56, $Mdn = 30$). Ethnicity and race of participants ($N = 58$) was, 43 (74.1 %) Caucasian/White, 12 (20.7%) Black/African American, and 3 (5.2%) Other/Multi-Racial. Of all the participants ($N = 58$), 55 reported living in the state of South Carolina (94.7%), 1 lives in the Bahamas (1.7%), 1 in Virginia (1.7%), and 1 in West Virginia (1.7%). When asked what participant's ($N = 58$) highest degree was completed, 38 had completed their bachelors (65.5 %), 19 had completed their masters (32.7%), and one had completed their doctoral degree (1.7%). In total, participants ($N = 58$) have worked a mean of 7.4 years ($SD = 7.22$, range 0 to 26, $Mdn = 5.25$) in education.

School Counseling Participants

Descriptive data and measures of central tendency are presented for school counseling participants in the study ($n = 20$). The following descriptive analyses are reported on school counseling participants ($n = 20$; see Tables 4.2 & 4.3). Most of the school counseling sample identified as female ($n = 18$, 90%) compared to those who identified as male ($n = 2$, 10%). The mean age of the participants ($n = 20$) was 26.55 years ($SD = 6.23$, range 21 to 44, $Mdn = 23$). Ethnicity and race of school counseling participants ($n = 20$) was, 14 (70 %) Caucasian/White, 4 (20%) Black/African American, and 2 (10%) Other/Multi-Racial. Of the school counseling participants ($n = 20$), all 20 reported living in the state of South Carolina (100%). When asked what school counseling participant's ($n = 20$) highest degree was completed, 17 had completed their bachelors (85 %) and 3 had completed their masters (15%). In total, school counseling participants ($n = 20$) have worked a mean of 2 years ($SD = 3.69$, range 0 to 12, $Mdn = 0$) in education.

Education Leadership Participants

Descriptive data and measures of central tendency are presented for education leadership participants in the study ($n = 38$). The following descriptive analyses are reported on education leadership participants ($n = 38$; see Tables 4.4 & 4.5). Most of the education leadership sample identified as female ($n = 31$, 81.6%) compared to those who identified as male ($n = 7$, 18.4%). The mean age of the participants ($n = 38$) was 35 years ($SD = 9.68$, range 24 to 56, $Mdn = 31$). Ethnicity and race of education leadership participants ($n = 38$) was, 29 (76.3%) Caucasian/White, 8 (21.1%) Black/African American, and 1 (2.6%) Other/Multi-Racial. Of the education leadership participants ($n =$

38), 35 reported living in the state of South Carolina (92%), 1 lives in the Bahamas (2.6%), 1 in Virginia (2.6%), and 1 in West Virginia (2.6%). When asked what education leadership participant's ($n = 38$) highest degree was completed, 21 had completed their bachelors (55.3%), 16 had completed their masters (42.1%). and one had completed their doctoral degree (2.6%). In total, education leadership ($n = 38$) have worked a mean of 10.28 years ($SD= 7$, range 3 to 36, $Mdn= 7.5$) in education.

Focus Groups

There were two focus groups conducted at the conclusion of this intervention. The first focus group consisted of school counseling participants ($n=6$) and the second consisted of two education leadership participants ($n=2$, See Table 4.6). Within both focus groups, a majority of the participants (87.5%) were female, and all participants (100%) held a bachelor's degree. Within the school counseling focus group, there were four first year participants and two second year participants, and all participants (100%) were located in the state of South Carolina. Within the education leadership focus group, one participant identified as White/Caucasian (50%) and one participant identified as Other/Multi-Racial (50%). One participant was located in South Carolina (50%) and one participant was located in the Bahamas (50%).

Data Analyses for Research Questions

The following section reviews the results of the research questions from the convergent mixed-methods section of the study. Although generalizable inferences will not be drawn from this data set, full statistical analysis were done to follow each paradigms rigorous procedures to their full extent. All of the quantitative data was analyzed using the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS, Version 28) using

an 95% confidence interval and alpha of .05 was set and all qualitative data was analyzed by the research team using thematic analysis. When using a convergent mixed-methods design, data is collected separately and then brings both data sets together during analysis (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2017). Upon reporting the findings, the data is presented in separate sections and the analysis and interpretation combines the two datasets to identify convergency or similarities among the results (Creswell, 2009).

Quantitative Findings

To understand the impact the intervention had on both school counseling and education leadership participants role understanding and their readiness for interprofessional learning, the following research questions were asked, How does a curriculum implementation on the role of a school counselor (ASCA, 2019) impact aspiring education administration graduate students' understanding of the role of the school counselor and their readiness for interprofessional learning (RIPLS, Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)? And how does curriculum implementation on the role of the school principal (NEBPA, 2018) impact aspiring school counseling graduate students' understanding of the role of a school principal and their readiness for interprofessional learning (RIPLS, Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?

To clean the data, I first observed which participants in the two groups (school counseling and education leadership) completed both the pre-test and the post-test. There were 12 participants in the school counseling program who only took the post-test and three who only took the pre-test. In the education leadership program seven participants only took the pre-test and four only took the post-test. After removal of those who did not complete both the pre-and post-test, I checked the data for missing values and there were

no missing values. From there, data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and paired-samples t-tests. When running t-test analysis, after screening for outliers, I was working under the following assumptions that the data follows a normal distribution and that there is a homogeneity of variance, meaning that the variances of each observation are equal (Flynn, 2021).

School Counseling Participants

School counseling participants were asked to rate the following responsibilities of a principal on a Likert scale of 1 to 5; 1 being less important and 5 being most important. Participants ($n = 20$) responded to 29 responsibilities for both the pre-test and the post-test. A paired samples t-test was conducted between pre and post-test scores across participants on student's role understanding of the principal (see Table 4.7). The results indicated that there was a significant improvement where participant's pretest scores ($M = 122.4$, $SD = 10.85$) were improved at post-test ($M = 136.1$, $SD = 8.54$), $t(19) = 5.99$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in pre- and post-test scores was 13.7 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 8.91 to 18.49. The effect size was 1.33 (post-hoc) which is a large effect size and is greater than the .81 (a priori) that was calculated by G*Power (version 3.1). Cronbach's α assessing the internal consistency of the 29-item assessment of role understanding of the principal was .84 for the pre-test and .89 for the post-test, indicating a good internal consistency of the assessment.

School counseling participants also completed 18-item the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005) during the pre- and post-test. Participants were asked to select the value which best reflects how they currently feel about their future team (team being them and a principal) and them, as a member of the team, work or act within the team. Responses

were on a Likert scale of 1 to 5; 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. A paired samples t-test was conducted between pre and post-test scores across student's readiness for interprofessional learning (see Table 6). The results indicated that there was a significant improvement where participant's pretest scores ($M = 68.65$, $SD = 4.64$) were improved at post-test ($M = 72.35$, $SD = 4.77$), $t(19) = 3.21$, $p = .005$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in pre- and post-test scores was 3.7 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 1.29 to 6.11. The effect size was .72 (post-hoc) which indicates a medium effect size but was less than the .81 (a priori) that was calculated by G*Power (version 3.1.).

Education Leadership Participants

Education leadership participants were asked to rate the following responsibilities of a school counselor (13 items are labeled by ASCA (2019) as inappropriate and 17 are labeled as appropriate) on a Likert scale of 1 to 5; 1 being inappropriate and 5 being appropriate. Participants ($n = 38$) responded to a random assortment of the 30 appropriate and inappropriate roles for both the pre-test and the post-test. A paired samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on student's role understanding of the school counselor's for both appropriate and inappropriate roles (see Table 4.8). The results indicated that there was a significant improvement of identifying appropriate roles where participant's pretest scores of ($M = 66.53$, $SD = 8.48$) were improved at post-test ($M = 69.97$, $SD = 8.66$), $t(37) = 2.38$, $p = .023$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in pre- and post-test scores was 3.45 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .514 to 6.38. The effect size .386 (post-hoc) indicates a small effect size and is less than the .61 (a priori) that was calculated by G*Power (version 3.1). Cronbach's α assessing the internal

consistency of the assessment of role understanding of the school counselor was .77 for the appropriate pre-test and .73 for the appropriate post-test, indicating a good internal consistency of the assessment. Next, the results indicated that the participants' pre-test scores of identifying inappropriate roles of the school counselor as appropriate decreased ($M = 31.29$, $SD = 8.68$) to post-test ($M = 18.82$, $SD = 8.66$), $t(37) = -7.17$, $p < .001$ (two-tailed). The mean decrease in pre- and post-test scores was -12.47 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from -16.00 to -8.94. The effect size was -1.16 (post-hoc) indicating a large effect size, which was more than the .61 (a priori) that was calculated by G*Power (version 3.1). Cronbach's α assessing the internal consistency of the assessment of role understanding of the school counselor was .77 for the inappropriate pre-test and .87 for the appropriate post-test, indicating a good internal consistency of the assessment.

Education leadership participants also completed 18-item the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005) during the pre- and post-test. Participants were asked to select the value which best reflects how they currently feel about their future team (team being them and a school counselors) and them, as a member of the team, work, or act within the team. Responses were on a Likert scale of 1 to 5; 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. A paired samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on student's readiness for interprofessional learning (see Table 7). Results indicated there was not a statistically significant increase in readiness for interprofessional learning from pre-test scores ($M = 69.55$, $SD = 7.05$) to post-test ($M = 69.97$, $SD = 5.60$), $t(37) = .474$, $p = .638$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in pre- and post-test scores was .421 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 1.38 to 2.22. The effect size was .08 (post-hoc) which

indicates no effect size and is less than the .61 (a priori) that was calculated by G*Power (version 3.1).

Furthermore, since all participants completed the RIPLS (McFadyden et al., 2005) for both the pre- and post-test, a paired samples t-test was conducted to evaluate the impact of the intervention on student's readiness for interprofessional learning (see Table 4.9). Results indicated there was a statistically significant increase in readiness for interprofessional learning from pre-test scores ($M = 69.24, SD = 6.29$) to post-test ($M = 70.79, SD = 5.41$), $t(57) = 2.13, p = .037$ (two-tailed). The mean increase in pre- and post-test scores was 1.55 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .094 to 3.00. The effect size was .28 (post-hoc) which is a small effect size and is less than the .49 (a priori) that was calculated by G*Power (version 3.1).

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative research question was, how are aspiring school counselors and principals experiencing a collaborative PLE? Four themes connect to this research question (a) *role and responsibility clarification*, (b) *challenged prior knowledge of the other professional's roles and responsibilities*, (c) *concrete application of collaboration and advocacy skills*, and (d) *a valuable experience* (See Table 4.10).

The first theme *role and responsibility clarification* describes how both school counseling and education leadership participants recognized the clarity surrounding each other's roles they acquired throughout the intervention. Specifically, a school counseling participant referenced how the intervention benefitted their understanding and then how they can apply that information to future situations "I did not have much information on the roles and responsibilities of principals in schools before doing this collaboration

training, and I feel a lot more comfortable now moving forward, in my ability to collaborate with the principal at my future school as a school counselor. I also recognize now that our goals overlap, and therefore, there is no reason at all why we shouldn't!".

Another school counseling participant stated, "I think this was eye opening because I truly didn't know the extent of the principal's role within the school". Also commenting on the benefit of role clarification, this school counseling participant said, "It expanded my perspective and scope of knowledge regarding the role and responsibilities of the principal". Furthermore, an education leadership participant mentioned how they had not been previously taught about the role of the school counselor, "I thought it [the intervention] gave me a lot of information that I was never taught about the roles of school counselors". Speaking to how the intervention itself translates to real practicing school counselors and principals, an education leadership participant mentioned how clarifying roles and responsibilities is important because during an assignment for class where they interviewed school counselors, they came to the realizations school counselors were unaware of what the role of the principal was, "This topic and issue is important. I just interviewed three school counselors and they all admitted they didn't truly understand the role of the principal and agreed that none of them wanted that job. They knew "what" the principal did, but not all of it." Lastly, an aspiring principal spoke to the total takeaway from the intervention and the new perspective that they had on how the two roles can work together and remove the hierarchical nature of the relationship, "So it was very interesting to interact with other school counselors to see from their point of view. And then it was enlightening. And the fact that we had the same goal, but from different perceptions and from two different viewpoints. So, it was good to realize that

the principal isn't over the school counselor, but rather work side by side and literally two sides of the same coin”.

The second theme is, *challenged prior knowledge of the other professional's roles and responsibilities* describes how participants realized that they were operating under assumed knowledge about the other's role, rather than truly knowing what their counterpart's role was within the K-12 system. Within the intervention, the concept of assumed knowledge was discussed, and school counseling participants acknowledged where their prior knowledge of the principal came from, “This was the first time I learned anything about principals in a structured fashion. Anything else has been in passing, personal experience, or quick google searches”, another said, “It was really interesting to learn more about what the principal does because I had no idea what they truly were in charge of apart from discipline” and finally, another stated, “ I think this was eye opening because I truly didn't actually know the full extent of the principals role within the school.”. An education leadership participant had a similar realization, “I think for me, I learned a lot more about what the role is of a counselor previous to what I thought. I mean, I know I have interactions with our school counselors, and it made me realize more as a future administrator that the roles are often misused, and counselors were often misused and given responsibilities that take them away from what they're actually there for” and their peer added, “It gave me a lot of information that I was never taught about the roles of school counselors”. Lastly, this education leadership participant referenced the awareness they found because of the intervention, “For me it was definitely an awareness. It brought my big takeaway that it brought a keen awareness of roles and responsibility, which I think is important. Even though I've been in the education for

more than five years, but as a teacher, my viewpoint of the counselor is, oh if there's a disciplinary issue, send them to the counselor. If there's a social send them to the counselor, and so that brought a different awareness of, okay, it's not about this, it's about the other. And these are the responsibilities, and this falls under the portfolio of a school counselor. So, for so many, like we said, as, as principals, as assistant principal, we're not aware coming in.”

The third theme is, *concrete application of collaboration and advocacy skills* which describes how both graduate-level tracks reported that having the opportunity to practice collaboration and engage in advocacy with their professional counterparts made them feel more prepared to enter their profession. A school counseling participant stated, “Now I feel more comfortable being able to collaborate with a principal, as my role as a school counselor. Beforehand, I feel like maybe I wouldn't know exactly how to, but now I feel more comfortable being able to do so” while another said, “It was a great way for me to practice my role as a school counselor in relation to a principal - knowing their priorities and mindset.”. Also commenting on their preparedness to take on the role of an administrator, an education leadership participant stated, “I am more prepared to work alongside the counselors that may be in my school when I move into administration.” While another education leadership student mentioned, “Actually getting to practice a collaborative approach to helping students and school improvement with other school professionals was helpful”. Thinking about working as a school counselor in a district that may not have lots of resources, a school counseling participant said, “I think it was helpful because at the end of the day, you have to work with what you have, and seeing that the administration is learning important information about collaborating and

understanding the role of school counselors and how to be a cohesive team for the betterment of the students is very important.” Another school counseling participant said, “This experience will enable me as a school counseling professional to effectively and efficiently collaborate with the principal to promote positive school-wide change.”

Finally, the last theme is, *valuable experience* describes the way in which in both graduate programs expressed the value they found in the intervention and its application to their future careers. Many participants articulated they found the experience to be positive, beneficial, valuable, and that they enjoyed the intervention. However, an education leadership participant elaborated on their overall experience saying, “This was a valuable experience, it sort of opened my thought process a little bit, because as I said, when we were in that one group and we were talking to a counselor and she was coming from a different perspective, I was like, initially I was like, well, that's really from a counselor's perspective. You have to understand a principal has to run the school. So, it's not this narrow focus that a bigger focus, but that consideration has to really have some weight to it, given what's going on in the world. And what's happened to these children.” Similarly, a school counseling participant elaborated on how they felt about the intervention and that they wished more school counselors and principals could participate in, “This should be something that all school counselors and principals undergo, and I strongly believe in the value!”

Feasibility Research Questions

The following section reviews the results of the research questions from the pilot study surrounding the feasibility (acceptability, implementation, integration, and fidelity) of the intervention, all qualitative data was analyzed by the research team using thematic

analysis and feedback offered from participants is also included in the analysis.

Qualitative data was collected after participants completed the post-test, through instructor feedback, after the collaborative PLE, and during the focus group.

The first research question that was asked was, What is the feasibility of a study that assesses aspiring school counselors and principals' knowledge of the role of their professional counterpart as based on the ASCA (2019) and NEBPA (2018) standards and their readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)? Two themes emerged to answer this research questions from instructor and participant feedback: (a) *beneficial to learning* and (b) *adjustment to time and materials*.

When addressing acceptability of participant's role understanding and their readiness for interprofessional learning, participants and instructors reported that the information provided was *beneficial to learning*. One participant stated, "This was a very informative module, and the important content was supported by research. I feel as though this module could benefit all stakeholders within the school setting, not just school counselors and principals" and a school counseling participant said, "It was so helpful to gain more insightful information about principals." Building on what the participants contributed to the acceptability of the first portion of the study, one of the lead instructors stated, "I liked that students were able to get a glimpse of what school counselors do and the information was clear and generated good questions."

The second theme, *adjustment to time and materials* reflects the request from participants to have longer stretches of time to engage in discussion and time prior to the curriculum intervention to review the materials. One education leadership participant

stated, “I would have liked increased breakout time to discuss ways to best partner with counselors” and another mentioned, “I wish I could have went through it (the materials) by myself beforehand”. Additionally, an education leadership instructor added to this theme by saying, “When I got into the information, several of the points took longer than planned for. Unfortunately, this resulted in me not getting through everything on time”.

To address the implementation feasibility, I conducted observations of the curriculum implementation and kept track of the time that each slide took, and the total time spent for each slide, for each instructor. The curriculum implementation was scheduled to take approximately 45 minutes of pre-existing class time, the first-year school counseling class took 53 minutes to complete, and the second-year school counseling class took 42 minutes to complete with an average of 49 minutes to complete the entire curriculum implementation. The first-year education leadership class took 67 minutes to complete, and the second-year education leadership class took 53 minutes to complete the curriculum implementation for an average of 60 minutes to complete the entire curriculum implementation. Throughout the curriculum implementation, instructors were encouraged to engage with the instructor materials authentically, meaning they could relate the presented content to previously discussed course material or other relevant topics for their students to benefit their student’s learning. The curriculum implementation was designed to be inserted into a pre-existing course; three of the four instructors stated that they want to continue implementing the content into their courses signaling that the implementation piece of the study is desirable for course integration. First-year school counseling participants commented on the delivery of the curriculum implementation, and how they appreciated the collaboration with the education leadership faculty member, but

one school counseling participant elaborated on why they enjoyed the co-teaching experience, “Having open communication with someone who knows the role of a school principal and hearing how they agree that our roles are important as well and that we should work together. It instilled my confidence in collaboration.” Lastly, fidelity checks were done throughout the curriculum implementation to track the consistency of delivered information across both the first-and second-year classroom by the course instructors. I completed the fidelity checks in real time while the instructors taught the curriculum implementation, and one additional fidelity check was done by a member of the research team. The school counseling instructors completed their curriculum intervention with fidelity rates of 99.4% and 98.8% and education leadership instructors completed their curriculum intervention with fidelity rates of 98.7% and 99%.

The second research question that was asked was, What is the feasibility of a study that facilitates collaboration between aspiring school counselors and principals through a collaborative PLE? One major theme emerged to answer this research question from instructor and participant feedback, *translation to future career*. Both school counseling and education leadership participants mentioned that the collaborative PLE translated well to what they would be doing in their future career and that they liked that they were able to practice collaboration on real world scenarios, which builds on the acceptability of the intervention for participants, one education leadership participant said, “The case vignettes were interesting and relevant. Looking at these cases and considering the roles the counselor could play in the action plan is important for me to consider as a future administrator. Effective use of support staff is crucial when considering all ways to provide student support, bridge gaps between home and school, and building relationships

and partnerships with the community.” A school counseling participant echoed similar thoughts by saying, “Being able to work with other students that have a different perspective than my own. I appreciated being able to work with students that see things from the future principal perspective. It helps put into focus that while we all have different roles we are working toward the same goals”.

When examining the implementation of the collaborative PLE, time and the format in which the collaboration took place were mentioned by participants. Most of the participants expressed that the time provided to work on the case vignettes was just enough time to discuss work through the presented scenario, however, there were some students who would have liked to collaborate in their small groups for a longer period of time. Although it did not emerge as consistent feedback because there were three different case vignettes and all participants worked through different vignettes based on their group assignment, some of the students who examined case vignette three provided feedback that the vignette was overwhelming. They mentioned that there were several complex issues presented in the vignette to work through and the time allotted to work through that vignette was too short. These participants suggested editing the third vignette to make less complex. The integration of the collaborative PLE into pre-existing programs across two different graduate level tracks proved to take extra coordination. Since the education leadership program is only offered through an online format, conducting this stage of the study through Zoom made the most sense, of the three participants who gave specific feedback on the format delivery of the collaborative PLE, two appreciated the fact that it was online so they could easily attend the meeting of two different graduate tracks rather than having to make a special trip to the university campus, and one student said that they

would have preferred to collaborate in person with the other professionals. Finally, as the primary researcher, I conducted the collaborative PLE activities with the participants as part of fidelity. During the collaborative PLE, I followed protocols for the collaborative PLE with 99.8% fidelity and 99.5% fidelity, during both collaborative PLE sessions, I did not read the full script with 100% accuracy and in the second-year participant group, I failed to give groups an accurate five-minute warning that the small group collaboration was going to expire.

The last question that was asked was, What are aspiring school counselors and principal's perceptions of receiving an intervention on the role of the school counselor or principal and a collaborative PLE during their first or second year in their program? Most participants didn't speak specifically to the intervention being presented to them during their first or second year in the program, however, for those that did, one theme emerged, *comfortability of collaboration*. Of the school counseling participants who discussed their perception of receiving this intervention during second year while completing their practicum hours said "I would just say it's not something that I think we really cover in depth in class. So, it was good to have this kind of separate little lesson on it. And it just shows you how important the relationship is with the administration. And I think it was awesome that another second year and I get to experience it while we're at site too, because we get to kind of put it into action." A first-year school counseling student spoke to their perception of the total intervention, "It definitely made me less anxious or apprehensive working with administration in the future. Whether it's within something like this again, or once I'm actually in a school", and a first-year classmate echoed similar sentiments, "Similarly, I, now that I have more knowledge about it, I feel less intimidated

with the idea of collaborating with the principal. So, I too would say that I feel more comfortable than I would have if I didn't have this experience". The education leadership participants didn't specifically speak to the intervention being presented in their first or second year, but a second-year education leadership participant said, "The thing I thought about during this process was I have to keep these things on the forefront of my head. I have to remember to really be cognizant of what's going on with my counselors and how they're interacting and what I'm doing with them when I go into this role that to keep up with what they're supposed to have. Those conversations really have that open door. I mean, you're supposed to do that as a principal, is really have those open conversations with everybody or your staff. But I think it's really important to have maybe a separate conversation in a different frame or a different framework with the counselors, because they really, they do, as you said to me, that they almost run this parallel role, but yet they're so different".

Findings

For this convergent mixed-methods study, I asked: How does a curriculum implementation on the role of a school counselor (ASCA, 2019) impact aspiring education administration graduate students' understanding of the role of the school counselor and their readiness for interprofessional learning (RIPLS, Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?, How does curriculum implementation on the role of the school principal (NEBPA, 2018) impact aspiring school counseling graduate students' understanding of the role of a school principal and their readiness for interprofessional learning (RIPLS, Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005); and How are aspiring school counselors and principals experiencing a collaborative PLE? Results indicate that school counseling

participants had a significant increase in role understanding of the principal and their readiness for interprofessional learning with large effect sizes of -1.34 and -.720 respectively. Education leadership participants had a significant increase in accurately identifying appropriate and inappropriate roles of the school counselor, with a large effect on their identification of inappropriate roles (1.16) and a weak effect (.386) on identifying appropriate roles of a school counselor. However, the intervention did not have a significant impact on education leadership participants readiness for interprofessional learning. When evaluating all participants readiness for interprofessional learning, the intervention had a significant impact on their readiness for interprofessional learning with a weak effect size of .28. After their participation in a collaborative powerful learning experience (Young, 2005), participants self-reported that the intervention provided them with valuable role and responsibility clarification, challenged prior knowledge of other professional's roles and responsibilities, provided them an opportunity for concrete application of collaboration and advocacy, and was an overall valuable experience.

To assess the feasibility of this intervention with graduate level school counseling and education leadership participants: What is the feasibility of a study that assesses aspiring school counselors and principals' knowledge of the role of their professional counterpart as based on the ASCA (2019) and NEBPA (2018) standards and their readiness for interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (Parsell & Bligh, 1999; McFayden et al., 2005)?; What is the feasibility of a study that facilitates collaboration between aspiring school counselors and principals through a collaborative PLE?; and What are aspiring school counselors and principal's perceptions of receiving an intervention on the role of the school counselor or principal and a collaborative PLE during their first or second year in

their program? Participants reported that they found the curriculum implementation beneficial to their learning while also noting that they think an adjustment to their time interacting with the materials was increased through means of reviewing the materials before they were presented in their class. When addressing the feasibility of the collaborative PLE, participants reported that they collaboration and problem-solving skills they used, translated well to what they will be doing in their future career while suggesting that some edits be made to the content of case vignette number three and that more structure is provided during the small group breakout activity. Lastly, when inquiring about participants experiences in the intervention during their first and second year of their program, participants didn't speak specific to their year in the program but did mention that they have a newfound comfortability with collaboration and what that will look like once they enter the K-12 school system.

Chapter Summary

In chapter four I presented the results of the data analysis procedures which included (a) descriptive analysis, (b) paired samples t-tests, and (c) thematic analysis and a review of the feasibility of the complete intervention. I continue chapter five with a discussion of the results, offering implications for aspiring and practicing school counselors and school leaders, counselor educators and education leadership educators, and areas for future research.

Table 4.1
Demographics

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Age	21-25	20	34.5%
	26-30	12	20.7%
	31-35	7	12.1%
	36-40	7	12.1%
	41-45	5	8.6%
	46-50	3	5.2%
	51-55	3	5.2%
	56- 40	1	1.7%
Gender	Female	49	84.5%
	Male	9	15.5%
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	43	74.1%
	African American	12	20.7%
	Other/Multi-Racial	3	5.2%
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors	38	65.5%
	Master	19	32.8%
	Doctorate	1	1.7%
Years in Education	0-5	29	50%
	6-10	14	24.1%
	11-15	6	10.3%
	16-20	3	5.2%
	21-25	5	8.6%
	26-30	1	1.7%
Year in Program	First Year	16	01.2%
	Second Year	42	15.3%
Current Location	South Carolina	55	94.8%
	The Bahamas	1	1.7%
	Virginia	1	1.7%
	West Virginia	1	1.7%

Table 4.2
School Counseling Participants

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Age	21-25	14	70%

	26-30	2	10%
	31-35	3	15%
	36-40	1	5%
	41-45	1	5%
Gender	Female	18	90%
	Male	2	10%
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	14	70%
	African American	4	20%
	Other/Multi-Racial	2	10%
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors	17	85%
	Master	3	15%
Years in Education	0-5	17	85%
	6-10	1	5%
	11-15	2	10%
Year in Program	First Year	16	80%
	Second Year	4	20%
Current Location	South Carolina	20	100%

Table 4.3
School Counseling Participants Continuous Demographic Variables

Demographic	<i>M</i>	Range	SD
Age	26.55	21-44	6.22
Years in Education	2.03	0-12	3.69

Table 4.4
Education Leadership Participants

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
Age	21-25	7	18.4%
	26-30	10	26.3%
	31-35	4	10.5%
	36-40	6	15.8%
	41-45	4	10.5%
	46-50	3	7.9%
	51-55	3	7.9%
	56- 40	1	2.6%

Gender	Female	31	81.6%
	Male	7	18.4%
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	29	76.3%
	African American	8	21.1%
	Other/Multi-Racial	1	2.6%
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors	21	55.3%
	Master	16	42.1%
	Doctorate	1	2.6%
Years in Education	0-5	13	34.2%
	6-10	12	31.6%
	11-15	4	10.5%
	16-20	3	7.9%
	21-25	5	13.1%
	26-30	1	2.6%
Year in Program	First Year	1	2.6%
	Second Year	37	97.4%
Current Location	South Carolina	35	92.1%
	The Bahamas	1	2.6%
	Virginia	1	2.6%
	West Virginia	1	2.6%

Table 4.5
Education Leadership Participants Continuous Demographic Variables

Demographic	<i>M</i>	Range	SD
Age	35.05	24-56	9.68
Years in Education	10.28	3-26	7.01

Table 4.6
Focus Group Demographics

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent
School Counseling (<i>n</i> =6)			
Age	21-25	6	100%
Gender	Female	5	83.3%

	Male	1	1.7%
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	5	83.3%
	Other/Multi-Racial	1	1.7%
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors	6	100%
Years in Education	0-5	6	100%
Year in Program	First Year	4	66.4%
	Second Year	2	33.3%
Current Location	South Carolina	6	100%
Education Leadership			
Age	26-30	1	50%
	46-50	1	50%
Gender	Female	2	100%
Ethnicity	White/Caucasian	1	50%
	Other/Multi-Racial	1	50%
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors	2	100%
Years in Education	6-10	1	50%
	16-20	1	50%
Year in Program	Second Year	1	100%
Current Location	South Carolina	1	50%
	The Bahamas	1	50%

Table 4.7
School Counseling Participants Paired Samples t-Test (n= 20)

Assessment	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i> (95% CI)
Role Understanding	5.99	<.001	1.34 (8.91, 18.48)
RIPLS	3.21	.005	.720 (1.29, 6.11)

Table 4.8

Education Leadership Participants Paired Samples t-Test (n= 38)

Assessment	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i> (95% CI)
Role Understanding			
Inappropriate Roles	-7.17	<.001	-1.16, (-16.00, -8.95)
Appropriate Roles	2.38	.023	.386 (.514, 6.38)
RIPLS	.474	.638	.08 (1.38, 2.22)

Table 4.9

Total RIPLS

Assessment	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i> (95% CI)
RIPLS	2.13	.037	28(.094, 3.01)

Table 4.10

Thematic Analysis Themes

Themes	<i>Definition</i>
Mixed Methods	
Role and Responsibility Clarification	Both school counseling and education leadership participants recognized the clarity they gained surrounding each other's roles
Challenged Prior Knowledge of Other Professionals Roles and Responsibilities	Participants realized that they were operating under assumed knowledge about their other's role, rather than truly knowing what their counterpart's role was within the K-12 school system.
Concrete Application of Collaboration and Advocacy	Both graduate-level tracks reported that having the opportunity to practice collaboration and engage in advocacy with their professional counterparts made them feel more prepared to enter their profession.
Valuable Experience	Participants expressed the value they found in the intervention and its application to their future careers.
Feasibility	

Beneficial to Learning	Participants expressed that this intervention was beneficial to their learning
Adjustment to Time & Materials	Participants provided feedback to adjust the time spent with materials prior to the curriculum intervention and the addition of time in breakout sessions with peers
Translation to Future Career	Both participants and instructors mentioned that the collaborative PLE translated to what they would be doing once they begin working as a school counselor or principal in the K-12 system
Comfortability of Collaboration	Participants stated their comfortability with collaboration improved because of the exposure to role understanding and collaborative PLE.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of chapter five is to provide an overview of the study, the research methodology, and a discussion of the results. In chapter five, I expand and elaborate on the results presented in chapter four and compare findings to the research introduced in chapter two. This chapter (a) reviews the limitations of the study, (b) provides recommendations for future research, and (c) presents implications for school counseling and education leadership programs and their educators.

Summary of Study

The purpose of this research study was to pilot a curriculum implementation to increase role understanding between aspiring school counselors and principals, assess their readiness interprofessional learning as based on the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005), and to foster collaboration between the two professions through a collaborative PLE (Young, 2015) at the graduate level. Since no curriculum currently exists, this investigation aimed to educate school counselors on the role of the principal and principals on the role of the school counselor based on national standards (ASCA, 2019; NEBPA, 2018) from each respective profession and a review of curriculum materials by experts in each field was conducted before materials were presented to participants. The collaboration activity, grounded in the tenets of powerful learning experiences (Young, 2015) provided graduate students an experiential learning opportunity to facilitate collaboration between the two professions. This pilot study was designed to assess the feasibility of implementing this mixed-methods study on a future, larger sample.

It is true that both professions place emphasis on collaboration with other professionals that they interact with due to the nature of their career (ASCA, 2019; NEBPA, 2018) but although collaboration is emphasized, within each set of standards there is no mention of how each should understand the other's role and how that collaboration should take place within the K-12 setting (ASCA, 2019; NPBEA, 2018). Researchers have long worked to inform and educate school principals on the role of the school counselor (Blake, 2020; Bringman et al., 2010; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Zalaquett 2005). However, principals report relatively little exposure to the comprehensive school counseling programs and school counselor training either in their preparation programs or in their professional world (Leuwerke et al. 2009). This lack of exposure and role understanding is cause for alarm when principals who are overseeing and evaluating the work of school counselors and assigning duties that are not aligned with the actual role of the school counselor (i.e., addressing students' social/emotional, career, and academic development). For school counselors and their respective program to be successful, it is imperative for school counselors to have a positive and supportive relationship with their principals (ASCA, 2019; Leuwerke et al., 2009). Shoffner and Williamson (2000) acknowledge that although both professions are trained differently, the two have similar goals for students to find success in their education. However, within each respective program, standards regarding training or acknowledgement of the opposite profession (the role of a school counselor or principal) is noticeably absent (ASCA, 2019; CACREP, 2016; NPBEA, 2018). Considering role education is not addressed in training programs, principals and school counselors may not have a true understanding of each other's roles. This pilot study provides insight into the development of an effective intervention to

inform aspiring school counselors and principals of each other's role but also facilitates collaboration between the two professionals at the graduate preparation level.

This study was approved by the University of South Carolina's IRB. Data collection began on September 20th, 2021 and ended December 5th, 2021. The sample for this study included 58 participants (school counseling graduate students, $n= 20$, education leadership graduate students, $n= 38$). Participants were recruited from their pre-existing programs and course schedule after obtaining permission from both program's department chairs and instructors. Participants completed the data collection instruments through google forms, which consisted of four instruments: (a) demographics form, (b) pre-test, (c) post-test, and (d) an exit survey, instructors completed a feedback form, and participant volunteers participated in a focus group at the conclusion of the study. Quantitative analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics and paired-samples t-tests while all qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2005).

Discussion

The following section examples and expands upon the results presented in chapter four. Specifically, a review of the both the quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The results are compared to previous research that was presented in chapter two, focused on role understanding, readiness for interprofessional learning, and collaboration between school counselors and principals.

Overall, participants reported that they enjoyed the entire intervention and labeled it as a valuable experience for their learning and professional development. Specifically mentioning that they have a better understanding of either the role of the school counselor or principal and that they feel ready to collaborate with their counterpart in the K-12

school system whether that be when they enter their desired profession or in their practicum or internship placements.

Participants

Descriptive data and measures of central tendency are presented for all participants in the study ($N = 58$). The following descriptive analyses are reported on the total sample ($N = 58$). Most of the sample identified as female ($n = 49$, 84.5%) compared to those who identified as male ($n = 9$, 15.5%). The mean age of the participants ($N = 58$) was 32.12 years ($SD = 9.5$, range 21 to 56, $Mdn = 30$). Ethnicity and race of participants ($N = 58$) was, 43 (74.1 %) Caucasian/White, 12 (20.7%) Black/African American, and 3 (5.2%) Other/Multi-Racial. Of all the participants ($N = 58$), 55 reported living in the state of South Carolina (94.7%), 1 lives in the Bahamas (1.7%), 1 in Virginia (1.7%), and 1 in West Virginia (1.7%). When asked what participant's ($N = 58$) highest degree was completed, 38 had completed their bachelors (65.5 %), 19 had completed their masters (32.7%), and one had completed their doctoral degree (1.7%). In total, participants ($N = 58$) have worked a mean of 7.4 years ($SD = 7.22$, range 0 to 26, $Mdn = 5.25$) in education.

Prior participant demographic data in research done in role understanding and collaboration between school counselors and principals is similar to the demographics of my study, with the exception of the study done by Fitch et al., (2001). Bringman et al., (2010) participant groups of solely education administration students consisted of a total of 31 students' pre and post-test data were used in this study. Twenty-one (67.7%) were female, and 10 (32.3%) were male; participants identified their race/ethnicity as 3.2% Asian American, 3.2% African American, 16.1% Hispanic American, 67.7% White American, and 9.6% mixed racial/ethnic composition. The mean age was 33.50 ($SD =$

7.31) for the experimental group, and 32.46 (SD = 5.16) for the control group. Differing from my sample of education leadership students, in a survey of education administration graduate sample done by Fitch et al., (2001), 86 respondents completed their form, ninety-five percent ($n= 82$) were Caucasian, 5% ($n= 4$) were African American, ninety percent ($n= 77$) were male, and 10 % ($n= 9$) were women. In the seminar class focusing on collaboration between both graduate-level school counselors and school administration students, Shoffner and Williamson (2000) did not give demographic information to compare to the present study.

Approaches to address the lack of role understanding and collaboration between school counselors and principals have remained one sided, aiming solely to educate school principals on the role of the school counselor (Bringman et al., 2010; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000), currently there is still a lack of understanding of the school counselor and it is clear that school counselors do not fully understand the role of the principal. Bringman and colleagues (2010) used an intervention to educate school counselors and principals on the role of the school counselor, Fitch et al., (2001) developed a survey to assess how school administrators in training perceived the role of the school counselor, and Dollarhide et al., (2007) interviewed identified exemplary school principals on their knowledge and understanding of school counselors and recommendations they have for school counselors within the K-12 school system. The study with the most similarity to this one, done by Shoffner and Williamson (2000) situated participants with school counseling or education administration backgrounds in a semester long seminar class where they worked together and learned from each other and about one another's roles, however this was a full class with coordinating content rather than an intervention that

could be applied to preexisting courses within the two different professional graduate programs.

Role Understanding

Both school counseling and education leadership participants displayed growth in their understanding of the role of their opposite counterpart. Participants from each graduate program had a statistically significant increase in role understanding of their opposite counterpart; school counselors in their understanding of the role of the principal and principals were able to identify and differentiate between inappropriate and appropriate roles of the school counselor more accurately. Participants supported their increased role understanding when articulating that the intervention provided them with clarification on the roles and responsibilities for each profession by challenging their prior knowledge on what they thought a principal or school counselor did and/or what they are trained to do within the K-12 school system. Participants also reported that the intervention challenged their prior knowledge of the other professional's role and made them critically think about how they had come to an understanding of what the role of a school counselor or principal was. Consistent with findings by Fitch et al. (2001), current practicing principals began the intervention with a misunderstanding of the role of the school counselor using ASCA (1990) and increased their understanding after their intervention. Within our study, after the presentation of the curriculum intervention, education leadership participants were able to identify inappropriate and appropriate roles of the school counselor as outlined by ASCA (2019) with higher accuracy. Meaning that throughout the curriculum intervention aspiring principals found clarification on where school counselors should not be spending their time and efforts (i.e., creating the master

schedule, handing discipline, or coordinating testing). Building on just being able to identify the roles of each professional, participants mentioned that they better understand the viewpoints that each profession has when working to address the needs of the school and students; recognizing that principals as the overseers are looking at things from a larger picture whereas school counselors are looking at situations through the lens of social/emotional, academic, and career development.

Furthermore, Bringman and colleagues (2010) found that after attending a presentation on the role of the school counselor, principals reported they were more confident in understanding their role which aligns with participant experiences for both aspiring school counselors and principals in this study. Although there are no prior studies that inquire on school counselor's understanding of the role of the principal, school counseling participants experiences in the study mirrors that of their education leadership counterparts as they expressed how their confidence in understating what a principal's responsibilities are, increased. Both aspiring professionals not only found clarification surrounding their counterpart's role, but they also significantly increased their understanding. This indicates that continuing to educate principals and school counselors, whether they are aspiring graduate students or current practicing professionals on the role of their professional counterpart is mutually beneficial for both fields.

Interprofessional Learning

Situated within the pre- and post-tests of this study was the RIPLS (McFayden et al., 2005) which assess participants readiness for interprofessional learning. After the completion of the intervention, there was a statistically significant increase in

participant's readiness for interprofessional learning when comparing their pre- and post-tests. This indicates that providing aspiring school counselors and principals the opportunity to learn in an interdisciplinary fashion impacts their readiness for learning outside of their specific graduate preparation program. When evaluating only school counseling participant's readiness for interdisciplinary learning, participants had an increase in readiness for interprofessional learning with a moderate effect size, whereas the educational leadership participants did not. Although the pre-test scores for both tracks were relatively similar, the school counseling participants showed a significant increase in their readiness for interprofessional learning after completion of the curriculum implementation meaning that the experience impacted their readiness for interprofessional learning whereas it did not impact the readiness for interprofessional education leadership students. This finding for school counseling participants is congruent with emphasis placed on collaboration in school counseling preparation programs. ASCA (2019) and CACREP (2016) standards place emphasis on collaboration with building professionals and stakeholders within the school system. Within their programs, both school counselors and education leadership students are encouraged to collaborate with many professionals (i.e., teachers, social workers, school psychologists, etc.) within the K-12 system as they work to meet student's needs (ASCA, 2019; NPBEA, 2018). Although a larger sample for both graduate participants in a future larger study would give further insight into this mismatch of readiness.

Collaboration

Participants in both graduate programs expressed that they liked/enjoyed the opportunity to participate in a concrete application of collaboration and advocacy skills

while in their respective training programs. As referenced earlier in chapter 1, missing from the experiential learning cycle (Kolb, 1984) in graduate preparation programs when it comes to collaboration with either a school counselor or principal is the actual practice of collaboration before graduation. The active participation in the collaborative PLE activity where students engaged with their opposite counterpart to solve a pseudo-school case vignette gave participants an opportunity to put collaboration into action, share their perception and professional perspective about a situation in a K-12 school, and in the case of the school counseling students, advocate for their profession when working to address the presented student needs. Participants said this part of the study was something they enjoyed the most because of the interactions where they got to apply the knowledge gathered in their programs and within the intervention to real life situations, including conversations they will likely need to have with either a school counselor or principal. This finding is consistent with the work done by Shoffner and Williamson (2000) where preservice school counselors and principals found case vignettes and problem-solving discussions to be the most helpful and informative to their learning about the role of the school counselor.

Adjustments to Curriculum

Throughout the study, I collected multiple points of feedback that were given by both participants and graduate instructors surrounding the feasibility of the intervention. Feedback and notes of areas of improvement are included below for consideration when setting out to implement this for a future larger study.

Time and Materials

Time

From participants, instructors, and feasibility data collected, there is a need for an adjustment to the time allotted for aspects of the study and the accompanying materials. Beginning with the curriculum implementation, both participants and instructors requested to have more time with the study materials (PowerPoint, instructors guide, and supplemental handouts). Given that the instructors were teaching on a role of a professional outside of their expertise, instructors who were given their materials approximately a week before the intervention, asked to have more time to familiarize themselves with the content. Similarly, participants requested to have time to review the content before the class presentation as well so that they did not have to spend class time reading over some of the handouts and didn't feel like they were taking in as much information for the first time. Moving forward, giving both the instructors and participants more time with the materials is an easy adjustment for the future study given participants complete the pre-test before they are given the content on the role of the school counselor or principal to review.

During the collaborative PLE, participants were given approximately 20 minutes to work together in their small groups to solve the pseudo-school case vignette. A majority of the participants reported that 20 minutes was enough time to work through the vignette with some participants requesting that they would have liked to read through all of the vignettes before starting the collaboration activity, so they didn't waste time reading the vignette once small groups were assigned. Additionally, at the end of the collaborative PLE, as a whole group, participants discussed the pseudo-school case

vignettes and what they came up with to address the varying needs presented to them. Participants voiced that they would have liked the debrief to continue longer than the allotted 10-15 minutes, especially because the remaining two vignettes they were unable to read and work through were interesting to them. Therefore, applying the adjustment of allowing participants to read the pseudo-case case vignettes before beginning the collaborative PLE and permitting them to discuss all of the cases during whole group discussion after the activity is an adjustment that can easily be implemented in future studies.

Materials

Materials in the curriculum implementation consisted of the PowerPoint, accompanying instructor guide, PowerPoint student handouts, and handouts that outlined the roles and responsibilities of each profession. Feedback on the materials from participants focused on the PowerPoint and the thorough inclusion of information. Recognizing that there is a lot of information for participants to take in both on the slides and the information being presented to them from the instructor's guide, slides will be edited and reviewed for clarity of information and reduction of text on the slides. However, making the adjustment mentioned above where participants are able to view all of the materials after taking the pre-test and before the intervention begins may help participants take in and process that information easier, so it is not all new information they are taking in throughout the presentation.

During the collaborative PLE, participants who were specifically assigned to participate in case vignette three gave specific feedback that there was a lot to work through and the vignette could use some refinement due to its complexity. Case vignette

three included school wide concerns surrounding student poverty, opioid addiction, behavior challenges (i.e., outbursts, defiance, and other classroom disruptions), partnerships with community stakeholders, and community level grief due to a car crash that resulted in the loss of student life. Participants stated that they felt there were too many issues to address which resulted in a feeling of overwhelm. Therefore, within the third case vignette, the community level grief experience will no longer be present. Participants also mentioned that when completing the pseudo-school case vignettes, they would have liked more structure with the activity such as guided questions for the groups to use as they worked to solve the case vignettes. Guided questions will be developed and included with each case vignette moving forward. Following the small group breakout sessions, participants came back to a whole group discussion to share what they came up with address the needs of the students and school in the pseudo-school case vignettes. It may also be beneficial to have whole group debrief discussion questions for instructors to work through with their students at the conclusion of the collaborative PLE.

As for the intervention, participants described the experience as beneficial to their leaning, translatable to their future career, and school counseling participants across both years said they felt it increased their comfortability of collaboration with principals. Instructors also reflected similar sentiments, stating that they felt their students gained insight into an important area for them to consider as they strive to obtain school leadership positions and that they would like to continue to present these materials to their students in the coming semesters.

Limitations

Research Design Limitations

Within this piloted mixed-methods design, although attempts were made to limit threats to validity, not all threats could be eliminated. First, since this is a pilot study, although full and thorough data analysis was done at each stage and for each methodology, this study is not to be used to generalize the findings due to the small sample size but rather focusing on the feasibility, acceptability, and fidelity of the study. Additionally, within mixed methods research, I used two major research methodologies to answer my research questions which results in the deployment of multiple phases of data collection and therefore multiple phases of data analysis. Considering there were many steps to my design, creating a complex study, according to Flynn (2021), a limitation of this mixed-methods approach includes the time and effort that goes in to adequately assessing the two forms of quantitative and qualitative data. Further, throughout the study as a research team, we relied solely on the self-report of participants to assess their role understanding and experiences for the total duration.

Sampling Limitations

A major sampling limitation of this study was the context in which it was situated during the fall of 2021. Due to pandemic of COVID-19, educators in the education leadership program (who were currently working within the K-12 school system), voiced that they felt very overwhelmed by their current commitments and consenting to participate in the study and its various data collection pieces. Therefore, the actual sample population for this study was limited by those who could lend the extra time and space to provide the data I was looking to collect. Considering the sample size includes a limited

number of participants because it is sampled from just one university with first- and second-year participants, that is a confounding variable that may have impacted the data analysis and assessment of the pilot study. All participants were sampled from the college of education in one university, there is a risk to (1) not have a diverse sample population and (2) have a limited number of participants to work with. For participants in their first year of their program, they received the curriculum implementation from their lead instructor while a content specific (school counselor or education leadership educator) co-taught along with them, modeling collaboration between the two professions. As part of the pilot piece of this study, that presentation structure was different than what the second-year participants received which varied the way in which participants received the first part of the intervention. Additionally, there was no control group for this pilot study, although I collected both pre- and post-test data for each group and can compare them by tracks (school counseling and education leadership, there is no control group to demonstrate singular effectiveness of the intervention in participant's quantitative responses. Lastly, and most importantly, the sample size for this study and for each graduate track specifically is very small. Although for some of the statistical analyses that were run, large effect sizes were found, a larger sample would give greater insight into the effectiveness of this intervention.

Instrumentation Limitations

There are no standardized measures for role understanding of each professional's role, therefore piloting the curriculum implementation and receiving feedback from experts in each field, instructors of record, and participants on the study materials presented to them will aid and strengthen the future full mixed-methods study. However,

since there is not true standardized assessment of role understanding for either school counseling or principals, there is a threat to validity and the degree to which the instrument being used accurately measures what it is claiming to measure (Flynn, 2021), in this case, role understanding. Therefore, the decision to pilot this curriculum implementation without drawing assertive conclusions yet still collecting pre- and post-test helps strengthen the research design and rigor before implementing this study on a larger scale. Also, when running t-test analysis, after screening for outliers, I was working under the following assumptions that the data follows a normal distribution and that there is a homogeneity of variance, meaning that the variances of each observation are equal (Flynn, 2021).

Within the curriculum implementation, different instructors for both school counseling and education leadership taught the content to their respective students, because of the variation between how instructors teach, the fact that they were encouraged to teach with authenticity and with the freedom to relate curriculum content to prior or related class content, even though there were instructor guides provided, each instructor presented the content differently.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should continue to explore role understanding between school counselors and education leaders and work to foster collaboration between the professions at the graduate and current practicing level. Although this study focused on graduate student preparation, there are current, practicing school counselors and principals who may not have a full understanding of each other's role or know how to collaborate effectively with one another that may benefit from an intervention like the

one implemented here. Further, a phenomenological exploration of participant's lived experiences following their participation in this intervention and their practicum or internship experiences may provide more insight into how this intervention may have impacted their professional development. Also, following participants longitudinally for two to five years after their participation in this intervention, once they have obtained a position as a school counselor or school leader to explore their experiences in the K-12 education system and their levels of role understanding and collaboration with their colleagues may provide further insight into the working relationship between these two professions.

In this investigation, I found aspiring school counselors and principals did not have a clear understanding of each other roles prior to the intervention. Therefore, when considering the other professionals situated within the K-12 education system such as teachers, social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, etc. it is likely that the same misunderstanding of roles and responsibilities and coinciding collaboration challenges may be present among them. Expanding this intervention into programs at the undergraduate and graduate level programs for teachers, social workers, school psychologists and school nurses could prove beneficial. Considering this intervention can be presented to students who are already in preexisting programs and scheduled class times; each semester, aspiring K-12 professionals could learn about their future colleagues' roles and practice collaboration with them at the instructional level. For example, one semester, professional pairs could be school counselors and principals, nurses and school psychologists, teachers and social workers where students at any level learn about each other and how to collaborate for the benefit of their students. In the

following semester, pairs change where teachers couple with school counselors, principals couple with school psychologists, and social workers couple with school nurses. That cycle could continue once per semester to expose adult learners to the professionals they will undoubtedly work with to support their students in the education system.

Moreover, researchers could adapt this intervention to fit the need of practicing professionals and evaluate its effectiveness in a K-12 setting. Currently, school counselors and principals are working together within the K-12 school system and are likely facing the same challenges of role understanding and collaboration. Adjusting this intervention to situate current, practicing school counselors and principals in professional development that promotes role understanding and collaboration could have beneficial outcomes for the students they are currently working with. Similarly, to the expansion of the intervention with other professionals in the K-12 system mentioned above, bringing in current practicing social workers, school psychologists, teachers, and school nurses is plausible.

Implications

For Learning Theory

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory [ELT] (1984) outlines the ways in which learners, learn. Highlighted in this study was the lack of concrete learning experiences of collaboration that aspiring principals and school counselors are not receiving in their graduate preparation programs. For instructors who set out to integrate ELT, there must be intentionality behind providing students with those concrete experiences in their preparation or the cycle is incomplete. Furthermore, this highlights the ways in which

communities of learning outlined by Lave and Wenger (1991) applies to interdisciplinary learning. Activities such as the collaborative PLE can be utilized to enhance and enrich the learning of students across disciplines by utilizing the knowledge of peers inside and outside of student's original program.

For School Counseling

In much of the literature surrounding the role of the school counselor and principals, implications are one-sided, exploring *why* principals do not understand the role of the school counselor to then direct school counselors to advocate for their profession to principals to help them learn the role of the school counselor (Bringman et al., 2010; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). However, this intervention shows that although principals need to learn the role of the school counselor, the same can be said about school counselors needing to know the role and responsibilities of the principal. This study alters the narrative that it is just principals who need to better understand their colleague's role within the K-12 system and that school counselors need to work to understand the role of the principal to enhance collaboration between the two professions. It's clear that school counselors are willing to learn in an interprofessional fashion and benefit from interventions to teach them about the role of the principal and the opportunity to collaborate with other aspiring professionals. Furthermore, situating graduate student learners in experimental activities where they can practice applying the skills they are working to master provides them with confidence and a comfortability in engaging with individuals who are destined to be their professional colleagues or even their superiors in charge of hiring them, overseeing their work, and conducting

evaluations that has implications on their abilities to implement their comprehensive school counseling programs.

For School Counselor Educators

School counseling educators can also take away valuable insights from this study. First, school counselor educators have the opportunity to model collaboration with education leadership programs. By implementing an intervention with their students, they are first modeling that although school counselors strive to have their role understood by principals, school counselors must also understand the role of the principal, displaying mutual respect for each professional's position. Secondly, presenting information on the role of the principal models the interprofessional collaboration that will undoubtedly take place once school counselors obtain a position in the K-12 school system. Additionally, if school counseling faculty work with education leadership faculty to have their students participate in a collaborative PLE, they are providing their students an opportunity to practice their collaboration and advocacy skills in a learning environment designed to foster their growth as budding professionals.

For Counselor Educators

For counselor educators who do not have a specialty in the field of school counseling, this intervention could provide direction and information to assist them in their learning of the role of the school counselor and the collaboration that needs to happen and should be occurring within the K-12 school system. CACREP (2016) standards outline the requirements for all levels of counselor education including clinical mental health, rehabilitation, addiction, college and career, and school counseling however not all counselor educators understand the role of the school counselor when

they obtain a faculty position. This curriculum could aid in counselor educators with specialties outside of school counseling gain insight into the role of the school counselor and the collaboration they engage with.

For Education Leadership

As stated earlier, school counseling literature has sought to educate principals on the role of the school counselor (Bringman et al., 2010; Fitch et al., 2001) and it's clear from the results of this study that a gap in understanding, stemming from education leadership program that a gap remains meaning that the misunderstanding of roles continues in graduate preparation programs and likely into those already in the professional world. However, this intervention reiterates the findings of Bringman and colleagues (2010) that when educated on the role of the school counselor, principals can identify appropriate and inappropriate roles of the school counselor with better accuracy. Meaning that interventions on role understanding for aspiring principals should continue and better prepare graduate learners for their professional role as a principal or school leader. Furthermore, this intervention provided aspiring education leaders the opportunity to speak with aspiring school counselors and work to understand their professional perspective and lens as a counselor when working to meeting the needs of school wide and student concerns. This collaboration experience specifically made graduate level education leadership participants reflect on their role as a future leader in a K-12 building. Continuing to educate education leadership students on the roles other professionals within their building fulfil not only could benefit their abilities as leaders of their building but ultimately benefit the students and their diverse needs that the education system is working to meet. Collaboration is a pivotal part of the work that

school principals do to help support the students within their building because they cannot do it all on their own. Education leaders have built in allies with school counselors and the other helping professionals outside of teachers within the school system and this intervention indicates that principal's benefit from learning how to capitalize on that allyship.

Education Leadership Educators

Mirroring implications for school counselor educators, education leadership educators have the opportunity to model collaboration and role understanding of a profession that their students will undoubtedly work with once they obtain a position in the K-12 school system. This intervention is a practical way for education leadership educators to enhance their student's learning and expand on their leadership abilities without taking a large amount of precious class time. Additionally, teaching their students about the role of the school counselor may also open conversations concerning other helping professionals outside of teachers that school principals should be aware of before they become a school leader. Just as counselor educators do, presenting an intervention with a collaborative PLE provides their students with the concrete experience of collaborating with a school counselor and gaining insight of their perspective while also using their lens as an overseer of their building as they work to address school wide and student concerns. Also, when considering distributed leadership, working and collaborating with a school counselor at the graduate student level may introduce education leadership students to an ally in leadership at an earlier point, better preparing them to delegate leadership responsibilities in the school system and knowing an ally they can turn to when they need to address concerns that present themselves.

For Interdisciplinary Learning

Principals and school counselors alike are destined to work with each other when they enter the K-12 school system, just as they are destined to work with other specially trained professionals such as teachers, social workers, school psychologists, school nurses, etc. All of these professions have specialized training but when the overseer of a building doesn't fully understand how to utilize the professionals they oversee to the best of their ability, students' needs are not being met. This intervention, training school counselors and principals to effectively gain understanding of each other's roles and to collaborate during their graduate training as implications for the remaining helping professions in the school system that are not fully understood by the professions they are destined to collaborate with. Furthermore, when meeting student needs, all professionals in the building must work together to do so but if there are professionals being underutilized, the education system in which K-12 students are situated in are failing the students they aim to serve.

Chapter Summary

In chapter five, I reviewed and compared study results from the current investigation with existing research in the field. The results of the study support the need for continued and expanded interventions surrounding role understanding and collaboration between graduate level school counselors and education leaders at the graduate level.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL



OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER for EXEMPT REVIEW

Shelby Gonzales
820 Main St
Wardlaw College
Columbia, SC 29208

Re: **Pro00115188**

Dear Shelby Gonzales:

This is to certify that the research study *Facilitating Role Understanding and Collaboration between Aspiring School Counselors and Principals: A Pilot Convergent Mixed-Methods Design* was reviewed in accordance with 45 CFR 46.104(d)(1), the study received an exemption from Human Research Subject Regulations on **9/20/2021**. No further action or Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight is required, as long as the study remains the same. However, the Principal Investigator must inform the Office of Research Compliance of any changes in procedures involving human subjects. Changes to the current research study could result in a reclassification of the study and further review by the IRB.

Because this study was determined to be exempt from further IRB oversight, consent document(s), if applicable, are not stamped with an expiration date.

All research related records are to be retained for at least three (3) years after termination of the study.

The Office of Research Compliance is an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB). If you have questions, contact Lisa Johnson at lisaj@mailbox.sc.edu or (803) 777-6670.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Lisa M. Johnson".

Lisa M. Johnson
ORC Assistant Director and IRB Manager

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT AND CONSENT FORM

Dear Prospective Participant,

My name is Shelby Gonzales, I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Studies Department at the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements of my degree in Counselor Education and Supervision and I would like to invite you to participate.

I am conducting a study aimed to facilitate role understanding and collaboration between aspiring school counselors and principals through a curriculum intervention at the graduate student level. You will be asked to participate in a curriculum presentation by your instructor of record and to collaborate with an aspiring professional counterpart (i.e., school counselor or principal) to solve a pseudo-school case vignette that consists of current, real-life situations that principals and school counselors face in the K-12 education system.

There are two stages to this study. In stage 1 you will learn about the role of either the school counselor or principal within the K-12 school system and take pre- and post-tests to assess your knowledge of the role of your opposite counterpart (i.e., school counselors will learn about principals and principals will learn about school counselors). In stage 2, you will work in pairs (one school counselor aspiring and one aspiring principal) to solve a case vignette that outlines challenges that K-12 schools regularly face. By working together in your pairs, both aspiring school counselors and principals will practice their collaboration skills with a professional they are destined to work with within the K-12 school system. Because this study is also a pilot study, there is a focus on feasibility and implementation of study materials, therefore at each stage and at the conclusion of this study, you will be asked questions where you can provide feedback on intervention materials so that the research team can make improvements and adjustments. Study information will be kept in a secure location at the University of South Carolina. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

In order to participate in this study, you must meet the following criteria:

1. You must be enrolled in the counselor education school counseling program at the University of South Carolina in your first or second year of the program and taking a class with Dr. Dodie Limberg or Dr. Moody Crews
2. You must be enrolled in the education leadership at the University of South Carolina in your first or second year of the program and be taking a class with either Dr. Katie Cunningham or Dr. Suzy Hardie

After completion of the study, you will be entered to win one of 35 \$20 gift cards to support your participation time and effort. I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me, Shelby Gonzales at gonzalsk@email.sc.edu or my faculty advisor Dr. Dodie Limberg at dlimberg@sc.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. **If you would like to participate, please send an email to gonzalsk@email.sc.edu and I will be in contact with you to discuss participating.**

With kind regards,

Shelby K. Gonzales, Ed.S, NCC

820 Main Street, Columbia SC

gonzalsk@email.sc.edu

