

ABSTRACT

SMITH, KIMBERLY NICOLE TRIPP. Implementing Innovative Counseling Practices: Are School Counselors MEASUREing Up? (Under the direction of Dr. Matthew Militello).

The purpose of this study was to examine school counselors' perception of how innovative counseling practices are or are not lived in a local school district. The eastern North Carolina school district was selected because MEASURE was being introduced in the district as a new way for program evaluation. The acronym MEASURE stands for Mission, Elements, Analyze, Stakeholders-Unite, Results, and Educate and is a six-step accountability process that helps counselors with their school improvement efforts. A Phase One interview was conducted with the district's Director of Student Services to gain insights on the adoption of MEASURE along with factors that supported or inhibited this change initiative. The quantitative Phase Two involved Q-methodology with 34 school counselors from 25 schools sorting 37 concourse statements derived from the 2008 North Carolina School Professional Counseling Standards and other data sources. Phase Three involved a focus group of six counselors who responded to Phase Two findings and allowed the researcher to further clarify counselors' perceptions of practices. The Q-Sort revealed three model factor arrays representing based on counselor loadings: Factor One "The Helping Professionals," Factor Two "The Skill-driven Professionals," and Factor Three "Coordinating Professionals." The mixed methods research findings were linked to extant literature and the researcher used the lens of Everett Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation to discuss the personal change efforts involved with MEASURE.

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Implementing Innovative Counseling Practices:
Are School Counselors MEASUREing Up?

by
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BIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

Across the nation, educators are working to respond to the challenges of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. While the initial focus of NCLB was on teachers and administrators, school counselors are also striving to prove the effectiveness of their programs in this high stakes era (Stone & Dahir, 2007). At the same time, local school districts are facing difficult financial times (Lewis, 2010; Stone & Dahir, 2007; Whiston, 2002) and “student services expenditures are undergoing intense scrutiny” as decisions are being made regarding budget cuts (Jacques & Brorsen, 2002, p. 998). Therefore, school boards and school officials are examining the cost benefit ratio of programs due to limited funding (House & Hayes, 2002). For school counselors, there is an increased pressure to demonstrate accountability results with data (Stone & Dahir, 2007; White, 2007).

In order to meet the accountability challenges, the traditional role of school counselors is shifting towards a more ideal counseling role of today based on counselors responding to national standards and the ASCA model. Since the origins of the counseling profession in the late 1800s, the roles of school counselors have continuously evolved in response to various national policies, economics, and educational reforms (Herr, 2001; Paisley & Borders, 1995). An initial role of counselors was working to match immigrants with jobs during the Industrial Revolution (Gysbers, 2004; Herr, 2001). Frank Parsons, known as the father of guidance, stressed the importance of vocational guidance counselors in helping students find their “occupational niche” (Stephens, 1970, p. xiv). By the 1940s, the George-Barden Act of 1946 began establishing guidance and counseling programs in most

school settings, and the client centered theory of Carl Rogers emphasized a person-centered approach (Stone & Dahir, 2007). School counseling preparation programs emphasized mental health theory, technique, and practice. Therefore, the traditional roles of school counselors focused on counseling, consultation, and coordination of services in a service-driven model (Education Trust, 1997b; Stone & Dahir, 2007).

In response to the accountability legislation, the ideal role of school counselors is being shaped by the publication of the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) (2003; 2005) national model and standards. The ASCA model serves as a blueprint for counselors to structure their work with students and emphasizes the importance of the academic, career, and personal-social domains. Additionally, the national model stresses the necessity for counselors to align student targets to reform goals and use evidence based practices to report outcome based data as a way to document program effectiveness (Adelman & Taylor, 2006; ASCA, 2003; 2005; Lapan, 2001; Sink & Stroh, 2003).

As school counselors are transitioning in their roles, program evaluation methods are changing too. Traditional school counselors conducted program evaluations by collecting needs assessments, time on task data, and tallying the number of student contacts or group sessions offered as a way to evaluate their effectiveness (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Stone & Dahir, 2007; White, 2007). Stone and Dahir (2007) described the counting of student contacts and group sessions as the “so what” data in the eyes of legislators, school board members and other critical stakeholders” (p. 1). In addition to the traditional roles of counseling, consultation, and coordination of services, school counselors are expected to

utilize a data-driven standards-based model that focuses on these new additional expectations: leadership, advocacy, collaboration, managing resources, use of data, and use of technology (Education Trust, 1997a; Stone & Dahir, 2007). Moreover, the expectations for the 21st century school counselor is to become an integral part of the school improvement process by being highly visible, supporting student achievement, serving as leaders in efforts to close the achievement gap and promoting a positive school climate (Dimmitt, Militello, & Janson, 2009; House & Hayes, 2002; Stone & Dahir, 2007).

In order for 21st century practices to emerge, school counselors have to face the impacts of the various personal and institutional changes occurring within their profession. In terms of personal change, Fullan (1991) recommended for individual people to serve as change agents in order to alter their school environments for deep change. In this case, school counselors will need to understand the meaning of the new ASCA standards and their roles so they can initiate change within the school. Some counselors may be ready for the 21st century innovations that are occurring in the field; however, some counselors may display a “conservative impulse” to avoid change by clinging to their familiar traditional counseling roles (Fullan, 1991). Additionally, the school leadership personnel will also need to comprehend the innovation for the changes to be enacted (Rogers, 2003). Hence, both school counselors and school leadership personnel will need to work together in order to successfully transition school counselors into the 21st century.

In terms of institutional change, previous studies have shared inhibitors to school change such as high turnover, fast reform efforts, and lack of involvement from the greater

community. The concept “grammar of schooling” was introduced that suggests that change initiatives often challenge our ideas about a “real school.” Throughout history, initiatives such as the graded school and Carnegie units have become a part of the “grammar of schooling.” Based on the “grammar of schooling” concept, several change initiatives fail due to people going back to the status quo or their traditional ideas of a “real school” (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Tyack & Tobin, 1994).

As a result, the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and the larger community about the traditional roles of school counselors may challenge their ideas of a “real school.” Furthermore, Rogers’ (2003) diffusion of innovation change model reveals the rates of adoption of an innovation will be based on perceived attributes, change agent efforts, degree of felt need, and the norms of the system. School counselors along with other educational stakeholders will need to understand the meaning of the change with the new ASCA model and professional standards.

Another change for school counselors to consider is the adoption of program accountability tools such as MEASURE to help them demonstrate how their programs are impacting students (Dahir, Burnham, & Stone, 2009; Stone & Dahir, 2007). The acronym MEASURE stands for Mission, Elements, Analyze, Stakeholders-Unite, Results, and Educate and is a six-step accountability process that helps counselors with their school improvement efforts. As these changes are occurring in the professional field, school counselors will also need to value the counseling innovation in order for counselors to

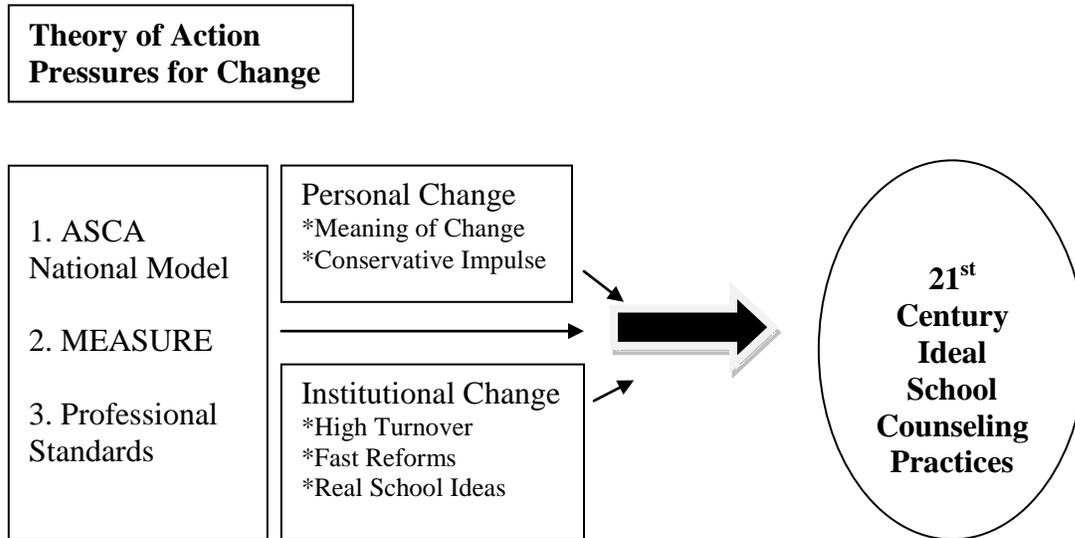


Figure 1.1. 21st Century ideal school counseling practices.

implement changes and push their counseling practices forward from traditional to ideal practices (Fullan, 1991; Rogers, 2003).

The theory of action model (see Figure 1.1) presented in the introduction has depicted the concept of the 21st century counselor being shaped by counseling innovations. This figure is meant to be simplistic as the figures will build upon one another through the chapters. The later discussion of the findings will elucidate the figure in the final chapter. The Theory of Action represents the pressures for change that are occurring in the counseling field as a result of innovations such as the national professional counseling standards (Stone & Dahir, 2007), the ASCA (2005) national model, and responses from individual states as they have developed their own professional standards.

Later in Chapter Two, the literature review shares clear research supporting the theory of action and pressures for change within the counseling field. As local school districts have responded to the newly developed state standards, they have utilized tools such as MEASURE to impact school counseling program accountability. MEASURE was developed by two counseling researchers, Stone and Dahir, to address the accountability component of the national model. This free accountability tool was selected as a way to evaluate counseling programs in the study's local eastern North Carolina school district with 34 school counselors participating in the study. Other districts in North Carolina as well as other states across the nation have access to MEASURE.

In addition to these pressures for change, the concepts of personal change and institutional change will also impact the school counselor as they respond to counseling

innovation such as MEASURE. Throughout the study, the researcher will utilize innovation to refer to MEASURE since this accountability tool was introduced to the district as a new way of program evaluation that supported the most recent ASCA national model.

The school as an institution also creates a potential barrier for counselors who are attempting to change perceptions of “real school” ideas to implement their 21st century school counselor roles. As counselors step towards becoming 21st century school counselors who are living the ideal practices of today, the change process is a critical element to consider in implementation of counseling innovations.

Since MEASURE is an accountability tool that is utilized by counselors to evaluate their counseling program and counseling efforts, I utilize a play on words “MEASUREing up” throughout this paper. Ultimately, the research study determined if school counselors in a local district were MEASUREing up to 21st century counseling practices by living or not living its ideals and ascertained the resources and support required for effective implementation of counseling innovations such as MEASURE.

Theories of action are drawn from the work of Argyris and Schön (1974) who suggested that people have mental maps which guide them in how they will act in certain situations. The two theories of action exist are a theory of use and an espoused theory. The theory of use is the theory that governs a person’s actions. For this study, the theory of use would be school counselors’ actual enacted practices. MEASURE was introduced into the district and referred to in this study as an innovation. Counselors were expected to create three measurable goals, collect data, and demonstrate progress towards these goals.

Therefore, MEASURE summarized counselor program evaluation efforts within the district. In the study, participants conducted a Q-sort where they made decisions on most and least representative practices. Some of these enacted practices were documented through the accountability tool, MEASURE. The espoused theory is the theory that one would communicate to others when asked about what we do. For instance, counselors may be tempted to complete the Q-sort based on their idea of what they should be doing versus actual practices. The researcher ensured confidentiality in Q-sorts and post Q-sort questions in order for counseling participants to feel comfortable in accurately describing their practices. Argyris and Schon (1974) shared an espoused theory is one that a person gives their allegiance to; however, may or may not be their actual practices. All theories of action have a key question to be answered. In order to determine how practices were lived or not lived in the local school district, the researcher worked to determine actual practices of counselors in one local eastern North Carolina school district. The district under study had pressures to change and possibly more pressures with a director of student services serving as champion of the change effort.

Statement of the Problem

Since the inception of NCLB (2002) and the development of the ASCA's National Model (2003; 2005), school counselors have recognized the model's comprehensive approach for program foundation, delivery, management, and accountability. These counseling innovations have resulted in drastic changes to the counseling profession which historically began with a focus on vocational guidance. As the counseling innovations have

been introduced, districts, schools, and counselors are attempting to respond by standardizing their services “to create one vision and one voice for school counseling programs” (ASCA, 2003, p. 8). Consequently, school counselors are finding outcome based reporting necessary to document their efforts through measurable program evaluation efforts (Stone & Dahir, 2007). Equally important, counselors must explore their roles within the school environment and collaborate with fellow educators to increase program efforts (Dimmitt et al., 2009). The 21st century school counseling practices represent a major shift from their traditional school counseling roles. While ASCA (2005) provided the national model to serve as a blueprint, states, local districts, and individual counselors are left with little direction in terms of putting the model into practice (Dahir et al., 2009; Stone & Dahir, 2007). Therefore, the responsibilities of implementing the new model, standards, and practices rests within each school counselors’ specific context.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine school counselors’ perception of how innovative school counseling practices are or are not lived in a local school district. The mixed methods research design consisted of a qualitative interview with a district’s student services director. This interview was conducted to understand how MEASURE was selected and introduced in the district as the new way of program evaluation. The quantitative phase involves Q-methodology with 34 school counselors from 25 schools sorting 37 statements derived from the state’s 2008 professional counseling standards that were reconstructed in 2008 in order to respond to the ASCA national model. At the time of the research study, the

eastern North Carolina school district had 55 school counselors working within the district. The Q-methodology and post Q-sort questions with counselors determined school counselor perceptions of how they are enacting the standards in their current school counseling practices. The findings of the Q-sort were shared with six school counselors in a focus group setting where interview questions were asked to elicit further qualitative data. These counselors had also participated in the Phase Two Q-sort. The study's findings provided insights for the district in terms of school counselors' perceptions of their current school counseling practices and the resources and support provided to counselors with the introduction of MEASURE to evaluate programs.

The study addressed how one district and specifically, school counselors perceive their counseling practices and responded to counseling innovations such as MEASURE. In addition, the researcher answered the following sub questions:

- What fosters or inhibits change towards innovative school counseling practices?
- What are ideal counseling practices?
- How was MEASURE implemented with the district?
- In what ways, if any, has MEASURE changed counseling practices?

Definition of Terms

Prior to investigating the current practices of K-12 school counselors, several key terms are defined for the purposes of this study.

- ASCA: The acronym stands for the American School Counselor's Association. This organization serves as the national professional organization for school counselors.

- ASCA's National Model: The model was developed to serve as a "blueprint for the development and implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs" (Dahir et al., 2009, p. 2). The first model was released in 2003 followed by the most recently revised 2005 version.
- Concourse: the "technical concept...used in Q-methodology for the collection of all possible statements the respondents can make about the subject at hand" (Van Exel & Graaf, 2005, p. 7).
- Factor Loadings: these are "in effect correlation coefficients: They indicate the extent to which each Q-sort is similar or dissimilar to the composite factor array (model Q-sort)." (McKewon & Thomas, 1988, p. 50).
- Innovation: This term will be used throughout the research study to refer to the new way of program evaluation for the local school district. MEASURE was created by Stone and Dahir to be used nationally as an accountability tool that supports counselor's work towards the ASCA National Model.
- MEASURE: The acronym stands for Mission, Element, Analyze, Stakeholders-Unite, Results, and Educate. According to Stone and Dahir (2007), "MEASURE is a six-step accountability process that helps school counselors demonstrate how their programs impact critical data" (p. 23).

- National School Counselor Professional Standards: These standards originated in 1997 and facilitate student development in three broad areas: academic, career, and personal/social (Campbell & Dahir, 1997).
- North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards: These standards were revised by the state in 2008 in response to ASCA's (2005) National Model.
- P-sample: the participants who are performing the Q-sort in the study.
- Q-Sample: "is a collection of stimulus items...that is presented to respondents for rank-ordering a Q-sort" (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 25). The Q-sample is derived from the concourse and is the final set of statements used for the sorting.
- Q-Sort: "Q-Sorting is a process whereby a subject models his or her point of view by rank-ordering Q-sample stimuli along a continuum defined by a condition of instruction" (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 30).
- RAMP: The acronym stands for Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program and this designation is offered to schools that fully implement the ASCA model and seek this certification from the national counselor association.

Significance of the Study

The results of the study enhanced the counseling field in the areas of practice, policy, and research. First, the study provided information about one district's efforts towards implementing a new plan for program evaluation and how school counselors in this district

viewed their current counseling practices. Information was gained about the future directions of school counseling practices from the lens of researcher and district student services director. In terms of the local school district, the focus group in Phase Three provided counselors with the results of the research that offered them valuable information on school counselors' perceptions of present counseling practices in the district. The district also gained a better understanding of present level of counseling practice and effects of their new way of program evaluation. Therefore, the study offered insights on how K-12 school counselors are responding to changes in the counseling profession by examining how they viewed their current counseling practices after responding to changes within the district related to new ways of program evaluation.

Second, the implementation efforts helped shape future educational policy for school counselors. McDonnell and Elmore (1987) highlighted various types of alternative policy instruments. For this study, capacity building is the policy instrument that will be primarily addressed. The details of the district's implementation of counseling innovations gained from the Phase One interview with the districts' director of student services provided information on the human investment of counselors' time and the district's capacity building efforts towards professional development in regards to the change. As a result, the study produced key information to direct capacity building policy in school counselor program evaluation.

Additionally, future policy insights were gained on how the district implemented the counseling innovation of MEASURE to address the concept that March (1988) described as "policy ambiguity." March shared that implementation problems are often attributed to

interpretations such as bureaucratic incompetence and conflict of interest; however, the policy is often ambiguous which leaves organizations left to interpret for themselves. Based on the study results, states and individual districts could clarify guidelines in program evaluation efforts. Consequently, the study could also affect future policy mandates for states or districts who are seeking to standardize program evaluation for school counselors.

While the counseling profession has established a national model, little research has focused on district efforts to implement these changes into their practices or the use of MEASURE. Additionally, limited guidance has been offered to districts in terms of how to transition school counselors from their traditional roles into the ideal roles established in the professional standards of the 21st century. The results of this study helped contribute to the existing literature on the ways school counselors are currently viewing their practices and the ways program evaluation tools such as MEASURE are helping school counselors provide outcome data for school improvement. As more answers are gathered, studies such as this one can offer solutions for appropriate and effective program evaluation strategies. While school counselors are presently facing drastic changes in their profession due to major shifts from traditional to ideal roles, this research study seeks to determine how school districts and counselors are responding to these counseling innovations.

Overview of Approach

In addressing the research question, a mixed methods research design was utilized for this study and consisted of an interview, Q-methodology, and a focus group. There will be further details provided in Chapter 3 of all Phases of the research study. Initially, the

researcher completed concourse development by editing the 2008 North Carolina School Counseling Professional Standards and further refining the statements by connecting with five school counselors. These counselors represented a first year counselor, second year counselor, and three recently retired counselors who had experiences in the K-12 setting. Phase One consisted of interviewing the local school districts' student services director who was a catalyst of change in the district to gain background information on the introduction of MEASURE, supports and barriers to implementation, and the school counseling practices. Next, Phase Two involved conducting Q-methodology with 34 school counselors from 25 schools sorting 37 statements derived from the state's 2008 professional counseling standards in order to understand the current view of K-12 counseling practices. School counselors placed statements of counseling practices on a continuum of "least representative of my counseling practices" (-5) to "most representative of my counseling practices" (+5). The data was analyzed with three factor arrays emerging to represent Factor One: The Helping Professionals, Factor Two: Skill-driven Professionals, and Factor Three: The Coordinating Professionals. The researcher gained deeper qualitative data through reflective post-sort questions. Phase Three allowed the researcher to conduct a focus group with six school counselors to ask additional questions that related to the enactment of professional counseling standards, the recent changes in program evaluation, and their perceptions of school counseling practices. During the focus group, research data from Phase Two was presented to counselors for their reflections and response.

Organization of the Study

The dissertation is comprised of six chapters. Chapter One contains an introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, definition of terms, significance of the study, an overview of the approach, and the organization of the study. In Chapter Two, a review of the literature is provided that includes literature on the origins of school counseling, recent changes in the profession resulting in pressures to change counseling practices such as the National Standards for School Counseling (ASCA, 1997), ASCA (2005) model, and MEASURE (Stone & Dahir, 2007). Moreover, the conceptual and empirical literature is reviewed on topics that include counseling program impacts on student achievement, roles of counselors, and the principal and counselor relationship. Chapter Three explains the methodology, the appropriateness of the mixed methods, research questions, theoretical framework, site selection and sample, data collection, data analysis, research validity and reliability, safeguards against researcher bias, ethical issues, and limitations of the study. Chapter Four relays the findings of Phase One of the study which focuses on a Theory of Action. Chapter Five depicts the findings of Phase Two and Phase Three of the study which involves school counselors completing a Q-sort with statements derived from a state's professional counseling standards in order to understand current counseling practices. In addition, the post Q-sort questions and the focus group with school counselors will add further understanding of the counselors' perceptions of their enactment of the professional standards. Chapter Six will provide the conclusion, recommendations, and the implications on policy, practice, and research.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a vast amount of literature pertaining to the school counseling profession and school counselor efforts towards becoming twenty-first century counselors. The literature reveals that counseling practices are continuously being shaped by national policies, economics, and educational reforms (Borders & Drury, 1992; Gysbers, 2004; Herr, 2001; House & Hayes, 2002; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Stone & Dahir, 2007). Presently, school counselors are responding to legislation, professional initiatives, and an economic period that demands for all educational stakeholders to demonstrate their effectiveness as it relates to school and student achievement (Jacques & Brorsen, 2002; Lewis, 2010; Stone & Dahir, 2007; Whiston, 2002). The school counselor transformation process is influenced by both personal and institutional change (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Fullan, 1991; Rogers, 2003; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Tyack & Tobin, 1994). In many ways, the traditional practices of counselors have become a part of the real school ideas of principals, teachers, and the larger community (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Tyack & Tobin, 1994).

The literature is heavily saturated in conceptual (Baker, Robichaud, Westforth Dietrich, Wells, & Schreck, 2009; Dahir, 2009; Galassi & Akos, 2004; Green & Keys, 2001) and empirical (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Brown, Galassi, & Akos, 2004; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Fitch & Marshall, 2004; Kolodinsky, Draves, Schroder, Lindsey, & Zlatev, 2009) literature about counseling roles and the need for school counselors to be accountable (Dahir, 2009; Dimmitt, 2009; Edwards, 2009; Green & Keys, 2001; Stone & Dahir, 2007; White, 2007). In addition, the literature clearly establishes the

expectations for counseling programs and practices in the National School Counseling Professional Standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997), ASCA (2005) model, and role definitions (Education Trust, 2009). However, little research has been completed on counseling innovations being promulgated into the profession in order to understand what has worked to help districts, schools, and school counselors implement the changes and shift towards 21st century school counseling practices. The purpose of the literature review is to highlight the major school counseling topics that emerged in the field as they relate to school counselors and to discover the gaps in the existing literature that will assist in future research directions. In a review of the literature, the following topics became apparent: origins of the profession, recent change initiatives in the profession and research studies on these endeavors, comprehensive school counseling programs and academic achievement, role confusion of counselors, and the principal and counselor relationship. While the literature addresses a multitude of topics, there is little research that indicates how school counselors are viewing their current practices after attempting to implement changes towards the counseling innovations and how districts can improve the resources and support for effective implementation. While the roots of the counseling profession are in vocational guidance and a history exists within the profession of a strong mental health focus for school counselors. Presently, school counselors are attempting to implement the ASCA (2005) model that combines the historical traditional roles into ideal 21st century roles with an exit from the mental health model to an academic model that focuses on the personal/social, academic, and career domains.

Origins of the Counseling Profession

The school counseling profession originated in the late 1800s with guidance counselors helping students prepare for their future occupations by serving as vocational counselors (Herr, 2001; Schmidt, 2000; Stephens, 1970). Frank Parsons known as the father of guidance stressed the importance of vocational guidance counselors in helping students find their “occupational niche” (Herr, 2001; Schmidt, 2000; Stephens, 1970, p. xiv). Subsequently, the counseling profession established vocational guidance standards and essential vocational guidance program activities as the profession’s first efforts towards accountability (Edgerton, 1929; Gysbers, 2004; Myers, 1926). By the 1930s, Proctor (1930) created a score card system that became the “forerunner of today’s concept of program evaluation” by allowing counselors to program audit their guidance and counseling program activities (Gysbers, 2004, p. 3). Even in earlier years, a pressing need for counselors to evaluate and measure results of their guidance programs was present in the profession. Hutson (1935) conveyed, “all school activities are subject to the sharpest scrutiny, and the administrator is called upon to justify every expenditure of time and money” (p. 21).

Throughout the literature, the profession has been shaped by national policies, economics, and educational reforms (Borders & Drury, 1992; Gysbers, 2004; Herr, 2001; House & Hayes, 2002; Paisley & Borders, 1995; Stone & Dahir, 2007). One piece of legislation that is credited with the establishment of guidance and counseling programs in all school settings was the George Barden Act of 1946 (Stone & Dahir, 2007). In addition, the National Defense Education Act of 1956 greatly impacted the counseling profession as

counselors worked to identify students who would excel in the areas of math and science. As a result, K-12 guidance programs emerged and school counselors were viewed as having important roles in motivating students with their academics and encouraging students to prepare for college (Gysbers, 2004; Herr, 2001).

By the 1970s and 1980s, counselors were asked to focus on the total educational program versus providing one on one service to students (Herr, 2001). Mitchell and Gysbers (1978) posited that a comprehensive guidance program would include four phases: planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating. The introduction of the comprehensive guidance program was another major shift in the counseling profession. Across the nation, school systems attempted to respond to this comprehensive guidance model by establishing program goals, expectations, counselor competencies, guidance responsibilities for all educators, and structures to align guidance goals to educational goals (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Herr, 2001; Myrick, 2003; Stone & Dahir, 2007).

In the 1990s, the School to Work Opportunities Act and the work of organizations such as the Education Trust and American College Testing continued to change the counseling field (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). In addition, the Transforming School Counseling Initiative was introduced for counselor preparation programs; however, the focus eventually transferred to actual school counseling practices (DeVoss & Andrews, 2006; Janson & Stone, 2009; McMahon, Mason, & Paisley, 2009). This initiative (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Education Trust, 1997a) requested for counselors to utilize skills such as advocacy, collaboration, use of data, and leadership skills in order to identify and address systemic

barriers to student learning (McMahon et al., 2009). Campbell and Dahir (1997) utilized these transformed practices to develop national standards for school counseling programs that were adopted by the American School Counselor Association (Burnham & Jackson, 2000).

Since the origins of the profession, counseling has shifted from vocational guidance counselors matching students with jobs to a school counseling perspective that addresses career, academics, and personal-social development of students (Herr, 2001; Schmidt, 2000; Stone & Dahir, 2007). For several decades, the profession has continuously responded to the pressing need for change as directed by national policies, educational reforms, financial times, leading researchers in the field, and even from within their own organizations. Today, school counselors are responding to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 which has forced the profession to gather outcome data that documents the effectiveness of counselors' efforts on academic achievement. As schools struggle to achieve adequately yearly progress for all students, increase the graduation rates, and prepare students with college readiness skills, school counselors are at a striving towards their 21st century ideal school counseling roles that will demonstrate how their practices contribute to school improvement efforts.

Counseling Innovations

In this section of the literature review, counseling innovations that are occurring in the counseling field will be explored. These counseling innovations serve as the premise for the Theory of Action that is pressing school counselors to change towards the ideal practices of the 21st century. The first section will highlight these pressures for change that exist in the

field. Subsequently, the next three subsections will reference counseling innovations in the field which include the ASCA (2003; 2005) national model, the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP), the North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards (2008), and MEASURE (Stone & Dahir, 2007).

Pressures for Change

Several accountability initiatives have been introduced to establish program expectations and counseling standards in this high stakes accountability era. At the moment, school counselors are currently reacting to accountability demands of ASCA's National Model, National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997), role definitions (Education Trust, 2009) and accountability program evaluation tools such as MEASURE (Stone & Dahir, 2007) as they strive to meet the pressures to change their practices in order to meet twenty-first century school counselor expectations.

The National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) was established and served as the foundation for building the national model (Galassi & Akos, 2004). This change initiative preceded the ASCA (2003; 2005) model and the standards had a primary goal "to enhance student achievement and accomplishment" (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, p. 4). In addition, the standards sought to link school counseling programs to the mission of the schools. As a result of the standards, program content identified academic, career, and personal/social areas for development with an emphasis on students being able to develop knowledge, attitudes, and skill competencies based on their

involvement with the school counseling program (Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Galassi & Akos, 2004)

Following the National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997), the ASCA (2003) National Model emerged with a continuing focus on the three areas of development (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). The revised ASCA (2005) National Model continues to serve as a free organizational model for states, districts, and local schools in order for school counselors to design, develop, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program. The model consists of four elements which are the following: foundation, delivery system, management system, and accountability. First, the foundation is comprised of the national standards, philosophy, mission statement, and domains. Next, the delivery system incorporates the guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and systems supports. Thirdly, the management system encompasses the management agreements, advisory council, use of data, action plans, use of time, and calendars. Finally, the element of accountability addresses school counselor performance standards, results reports, and the program audit.

Another part of the framework emphasizes four themes of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. In the area of leadership, counselors work to ensure all students can access the curriculum and encourage student success by closing the achievement gap. As an advocate, counselors try to remove barriers to student success to guarantee equity. At the same time, counselors collaborate with various stakeholders in order to build a sense of school community and to offer information to improve educational opportunities. The

systemic change occurs as counselors utilize data to help make decisions on changes needed to procedures and policies within the school setting (ASCA, 2005). See Figure 2.1 (ASCA, 2005) for the ASCA National Model diagram. This figure is shown to clarify the intent of the ASCA National Model and Figure 2.1 does not inform the researcher's logic model referred to earlier in our chapter.

Since the introduction of the ASCA National Model, the American School Counselor Association has served the counseling profession as the non-profit organization that has assisted counselor training and development in the model through literature, conferences, and support to state organizations. Another counseling innovation introduced to help school counselors show how their programs impact students is a six-step accountability process known as MEASURE (Dahir & Stone, 2009; Stone & Dahir, 2007). The acronym MEASURE stands for Mission, Elements, Analyze, Stakeholders-Unite, Results, and Educate. This free accountability tool was developed to assist school counselors with their outcome data that targets the three domains of the ASCA National Model. The first step is to link an aspect of the school counseling program to the mission of the school and the goals of the school improvement plan. Second, select a critical data element that you would like to collect data on in order to determine impact. Next, analyze the critical data element in a number of ways. Then, stakeholders will be identified and unite to develop a plan of implementation. Results will be examined and the counselor will reflect on the process. Lastly, stakeholders will be educated about the efforts through a report card that shows the changes in the data elements (Dahir & Stone, 2009).



Figure 2.1. ASCA national model diagram.

The pressure for change is also evident by the work of the Education Trust (2009) who initially focused on university level counseling training programs and helped begin the Transforming School Counselors Initiative in 1997. Eventually, a National Center for Transforming School Counselors was opened in 2003 and promoted a new vision for school counselors that highlights the contemporary role of a trained school counselor to be “an assertive advocate” who creates “opportunities for all students to pursue dreams of high aspirations” by assisting “students in their academic, career, social, and personal development.” Additionally, the school counselor “serves as a leader as well as an effective team member working with teachers, administrators, and other school personnel to help each student succeed.” In essence, the ideal role of school counselors would be counselors working to close the achievement gap and being accountable for school improvement by measuring their success (Education Trust, 2009; Dahir & Stone, 2009; McMahan et al., 2009).

ASCA Model

Throughout the literature, several studies have been conducted with a focus on the ASCA model (Baggerly & Osborne, 2006; Dodson, 2009; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; Edwards, 2009; Fitch, Newby, Ballestero, & Marshall, 2001; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Zalaquett, 2005). Baggerly and Osborne (2006) suggested school counselors who focused on appropriate duties according to the ASCA model had higher levels of career satisfaction. Scarborough and Culbreth (2008) supported this claim in their findings that school counselors were more likely to practice as they

preferred if they were implementing national standards. While career satisfaction and preferred practices were positive in terms of the ASCA model (Baggerly & Osborne, 2006; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008), a dissertation study by Edwards (2009) revealed that only 41% of the 420 professional school counselors surveyed in Alabama were engaged in accountability practices consistent with the ASCA national model. Some of these empirical studies cited a counselor's years of experience may contribute to the level that they are implementing the ASCA model (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001); however, other research has shared that years of experience is not a significant variable to actual practice (Mustaine, & Pappalardo, 1996).

Moreover, a number of studies have concentrated on principals' understanding of the ASCA model (Dollarhide et al., 2007; Fitch et al., 2001; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Zalaquett, 2005). Leuwerke and Walker (2009) suggested that over 70% of the 337 Iowa principals completing an online survey had little or no exposure to the ASCA model. Furthermore, the study indicated that a brief introduction to information about the model can impact principals' perceptions about use of counselors' time on appropriate and inappropriate tasks. Fitch et al. (2001) completed work with administrators in training who were able to correctly prioritize counselor duties as related to ASCA standards and the state of Kentucky, yet there was some misperceptions in that principals rated discipline and record keeping as significant duties for counselors which contradicts contemporary counseling practices. Dollarhide et al. (2007) offered another study that suggested principals valued counseling duties that were related to the ASCA model. Regardless of the principals' awareness of the

model (Leuwerke & Walker, 2009), Zalaquett (2005) revealed that less than one-third of the 500 Florida elementary school principals in their study believed that the ASCA model would enable counselors to focus on appropriate job duties.

Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP)

Some school districts or individual schools aspire to achieve the Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program (RAMP) designation by completing a free application and their counseling program is reviewed in order to determine if the program meets the criteria for delivering a comprehensive, data-driven program (Dodson, 2009). A few dissertation studies are beginning to emerge in the counseling research that involves RAMP schools (Blakely, 2009; Dodson, 2009; Fulthorp, 2009). Dodson's (2009) study revealed that there were differences in administrators' perceptions of counselors in RAMP versus non-RAMP designated high schools. The most significant finding reflected that counselors in RAMP schools were viewed as having a more direct role in delivering guidance curriculum, counseling students with disciplinary problems, and offering behavioral management techniques to teachers. A qualitative study by Fulthorp (2009) ascertained preconditions in schools and leadership qualities in counselors that enabled schools to receive the RAMP certification. In fact, Dodson (2009) shared that only 10 high schools achieved the RAMP designation in 2005; however, this number grew to 62 in 2008. At the elementary and middle school levels, 121 RAMP designated schools existed in 2008. From a counselor supervision perspective, trainees supervised by counselors in RAMP schools following the ASCA model showed a significant difference in their supervisory activities and the model

was used more by experienced supervisors (Blakely, 2009) which supports earlier work referenced in the literature (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001).

MEASURE

Dahir (2004) reflected accountability efforts are “critical to determine the effectiveness of school counseling programs, their relationship to the educational agenda, and, ultimately, to the survival of the counseling profession” yet there is limited research in the field to address the use of MEASURE in program evaluation (p. 352). One action research study with MEASURE conducted by Dahir and Stone (2009) involved the researchers using voluntarily submitted MEASURE plans to identify the most important school improvement goals selected by counselors as well as their contributions to these goals. Over 175 counselors volunteered to submit their MEASURE plans during a three year period from 2003 to 2006. The school improvement goal of improving grades and reducing failure emerged in 35 of the 53 plans. In terms of school counselor contributions, 51 out of 53 counselors reported positive impacts in the results section of MEASURE with elementary school action plans yielding the highest gains towards improved student achievement (Dahir & Stone, 2009).

North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards

As counseling innovations originated at the national level, individual states began to revise their own professional standards. The North Carolina State Board of Education approved the revised North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards on December 4, 2008. In addition, the state revised the school counselor job description in 2008 to align with

the state standards and the ASCA National Model. The professional standards were developed to serve as a guide to schools and local school districts in supporting, monitoring, and evaluating school counseling programs. In addition, these standards were to assist the curriculum development in higher education for school counselors. The North Carolina standards consist of the five standards which are the following: demonstrate leadership, advocacy, and collaboration/ promote a respectful environment for a diverse population of students, understand and facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program, promote learning for all students, and actively reflect on their practice.

Conceptual and Empirical Literature

In this section, both the conceptual and empirical literature was investigated within the counseling field. However, little research addresses local districts, schools, and counselors' response to the various counseling innovations in order to determine if counselors are living or not living these professional standards. The following seven subsections emerged from the review to include the following: counselors and academic achievement, counselors and job satisfaction, counseling practices, role confusion, principals' perceptions of school counselors, the counselor and principal relationship, and the idea of counselors as leaders.

Counselors and Academic Achievement

Previous research studies have addressed school counselors and achievement (Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Sink & Yilik-Downer, 2001). Dimmitt et al. (2009) reported several correlational studies (Lapan, Gysbers, & Petroski, 2001; Lapan et al.,

1997) that have been conducted to measure students' academic achievement in schools with comprehensive counseling programs. Studies in Missouri revealed middle and high school students in schools with fully implemented comprehensive school guidance programs self reported higher grades (Lapan et al., 1997, 2001), a more positive school climate (Lapan et al., 1997), a better relationships with teachers (Lapan et al., 2001), and education preparation that was relevant to help them in their futures (Lapan et al., 1997, 2001). Moreover, Sink and Stroh (2003) concurred with previous research in their finding that linked student achievement results to established comprehensive counseling programs. For instance, Sink and Stroh's (2003) study of 150 elementary schools in Washington state revealed elementary students over time had higher test scores on both norm-referenced and state criterion referenced tests in schools with comprehensive counseling programs (Dimmitt et al., 2009).

While the impacts of comprehensive school counseling programs on academic achievement (Lapan et al., 1997; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Sink & Yilik-Downer, 2001) have been explored, Brown and Trusty (2005) asserted that there is little empirical support that fully implemented comprehensive school counseling programs results in academic achievement. Additionally, Whiston (2002) expressed that further research was needed in the field and agreed with Brown and Trusty's (2005) claim that no causal link has yet to be established.

Counselor Job Satisfaction

Most of the research in the field suggests that school counselors are satisfied in their profession (Baggerly & Osborne, 2006; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). For instance, Baggerly and Osborne (2006) concluded that 84.5% of Florida school counselors were very

satisfied in their careers. In the same study, school counselors who were able to perform appropriate counseling duties according to the ASCA (2003; 2005) Model were “more satisfied and committed to their career” than those school counselors who were completing non-counseling duties (p. 6). This finding supports the later work of Scarborough and Culbreth (2008) who noted that school counselors who were following the national standards were more likely practicing as they preferred. Similar job satisfaction research revealed that nearly 82% of the 155 Arizona school counselors in the study reported high levels of job satisfaction. The areas of greatest satisfaction in terms of their practices was direct interaction and engagement with students with the least satisfying parts of their job to include working with district administrators, non-guidance activities, crisis response, and time spent on system support (Kolodinsky et al., 2009). Brown et al. (2004) described 64% of counselors in study one and 77% of counselors in study two questioning their futures as counselors based on their testing duties which supports other research on the negative impact of non-guidance duties on counselors’ job satisfaction. Therefore, Baggerly and Osborne’s (2006) findings were supported in that counselors who are assigned appropriate duties with adequate support have an increased career satisfaction and commitment to the profession.

Counseling Practices

In examining exemplary counseling practices in nationally recognized high schools, Militello and Janson (2007) identified ten themes which included some of the following counseling practices: effective program management, external partnerships, counselors as leaders, achievement oriented climates, effective use of school data, and the ability to remove

nonessential activities in order to have time for innovative practices. This study supported the work of Fitch and Marshall (2004) by noting counselors collaborated with other stakeholders and were involved in systemic interventions; however, varied from their study in that evidence was not found to support the use of data and evaluation to guide planning and counseling practice (Militello & Janson, 2007).

While the literature shares that school counselors are least likely to appreciate non-counseling related duties (Brown et al., 2004; Kolodinsky et al., 2009), several studies have indicated counselors are unable to address student needs because of their non-counseling related duties that are incompatible with their ideal counseling roles (Brown et al., 2004; Burnham & Jackson, 2000). In their 2001 study, Burnham and Jackson (2000) addressed the gap between “the real” and “the ideal” counseling roles as they examined the actual practice of school counselors compared to existing program models. Brown et al. (2004) reported North Carolina school counselors attributed their involvement with testing as having a negative impact on their role in the school with “poorer relationships with teachers” and “others having an incorrect view of the counselor’s role” (p. 37). Similarly, a Florida study of counselors revealed that 60% of counselors responded that testing impeded their ability to meet the needs of students and teachers (Baggerly, 2002). Scarborough and Culbreth (2008) also examined the discrepancies between actual and preferred practice to find the non-counseling duties prevented counselors from practicing as they preferred. Successful counselors demonstrated a belief that their tasks would lead to outcomes, aligned the counseling program with the national standards, and worked in a supportive organizational

culture. Additionally, these counselors possibly could have successfully minimized their nonessential duties to free up time for innovative practice (Militello & Janson, 2007).

The conceptual literature in the field has stressed that counselors over time have accrued several non-counseling duties such as registration, scheduling, student records, and testing which are duties that seem to have been encompassed in the counselor's job description (Baker, 1996; McCurdy, 2003). From the work of Fitch et al. (2001), "more than half of the participants indicated that record keeping was a significant duty" by administrators in training (p. 98) and one third of respondents shared discipline as highly important counseling duty which is a task unrelated to a counselor's role.

Role Confusion

While the profession has worked to define the role of a school counselor, role confusion for counselors is documented in the school counseling literature (Amatea & Clark, 2005; ASCA, 1996; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Fitch et al., 2001; House & Hayes, 2002; McCurdy, 2003). As stated previously, non-counseling duties have become entrenched in the practices of school counselors, which adds to the confusion (Baker, 1996; Fitch et al., 2001; McCurdy, 2003). Often, counselors do not establish their program, mission, and vision which results in other educational stakeholders such as administrators, parents, and teachers defining the counselor's role based on their agenda. Consequently, school counselor duties vary from school to school (Borders & Drury, 1992; House & Hayes, 2002).

Fitch and Marshall (2004) discovered Kentucky school counselors in high achieving schools spent more time focused on the roles of program management, evaluation, and

research than counselors in low achieving schools. However, many school counselors at high or low achieving schools are continuing to meet the needs of students with individual counseling. Burnham and Jackson (2000) reported 20 of the 79 school counselors in their study spent 50% of their time on individual counseling. Traditional counseling program models have emphasized both direct and indirect counseling services such as individual counseling, small group counseling, classroom guidance, consultation, appraisal, and nonguidance activities (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Green & Keys, 2001). Galassi and Akos (2004) conveyed one criticism that suggested that traditional counseling's "broad mental health focus" serves only a few students while failing to meet the needs of all students within the school population (p. 149). Some counselors are shifting their roles and practices from the mental health model to coincide with the educational focus of ASCA's (2005) model and professional standards, yet the role confusion that exists within the profession may be hindering their transformation efforts (Baker, 1996; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Fitch et al., 2001). Furthermore, Fitch and Marshall (2004) indicated that states are publishing standards but may not be encouraging their implementation. As part of their study's recommendations, the researchers suggested for local and national organizations to clearly define and communicate the expected best practices for school counselors.

Principals' Perceptions of School Counselors

Principals' perceptions of the counseling role can contribute to counselors spending time on inappropriate activities (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004). Ponec and Brock (2000) suggested research

was needed in order to assess principals' knowledge and expectations of school counselors. Leuwerke and Walker (2009) found over 70% of the study participants had little or no exposure to the ASCA model. In fact, Perusse et al. (2004) suggested over 80% of secondary principals perceived record keeping, test administration, and maintenance of records as appropriate tasks (Ponec & Brock, 2000). Contrastingly, Dodson (2009) also examined high school principals' perspectives to disclose that the three highest scores fell on the roles of individual student academic program planning, small and large group counseling activities, and interpreting student records. Moreover, Zalaquett (2005) found principals are aware of the importance of school counselor's duties with highest priorities attributed to counseling, consulting, and coordination. While Zalaquett's (2005) study indicated that Florida counselors continue to spend time on testing, they found most administrators and counselors value the same activities with administrators desiring for counselors to become more engaged in these practices in the future. Dollarhide, Smith, and Lemberger (2007) found similar results in their study noting principals valued many ASCA aligned roles and activities. Furthermore, 92% of the elementary school principals were very or somewhat satisfied with their counselor's job performance with more than 70% agreeing or strongly agreeing that the counselor made a significant difference with the academic performance of students served.

While efforts to clarify roles have been ongoing by the profession, Shoffner and Williamson (2000) proposed that principals have many different opinions about the functions of school counselors. Amatea and Clark (2005) concurred with Shoffner and Williamson (2000) in their findings that principals relied on the popular counseling role at the time of

their training. Therefore, principals' expectations reflected four historical roles of counselors that included: innovative school leader, collaborative case consultant, responsive direct service provider, and administrative team player (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dollarhide et al., 2007). Interestingly, only 3 of the 26 principal respondents gave precedence to the innovative school leader role which is the role more closely aligned with the ASCA model (Amatea & Clark, 2005). Although the Amatea and Clark (2005) study was limited in principal respondents, their finding somewhat contradicts the work of Zalaquett (2005) who suggested administrators valued the same practices of counselors and wanted counselors to find more time in the future to engage in these activities.

At the same time, Zalaquett's positive perceptions of elementary school counselors was supported by the work of Dollarhide et al. (2007) who examined critical incidents of principals who offered exemplary support for school counselors. The results offered three themes that included: prior exposure to school counseling, present perspectives of school counseling, and recommendations for school counseling; however, there was no evidence to support graduate training or contact with school counselors in K-12 experiences impacted principal's support which opposes the work of Amatea and Clark (2005). Principal support was gained based on the experiences of counselors influencing parents, students, administration, and the entire school which emphasized the importance of counselor relationships. As eloquently stated by Dollarhide et al. (2007), principals appreciate counselors who serve "as the mortar that binds the bricks of the school building together,

cementing students, parents, teachers, and administrators, together in the effort to educate children” (p. 367).

Counselor and Principal Relationship

New literature in the counseling field is highlighting the role of collaboration of school counselors with principals (Dimmit et al., 2009; Janson, Militello, & Kosine, 2008; Janson, Stone, & Clark, 2009; McMahan et al., 2009). For a school counselor, their ability to establish a relationship with the principal is critical for their success (Dollarhide et al., 2007; Janson et al., 2008). Likewise, the principal plays a significant role in determining the effectiveness of the school counseling program (Ponec & Brock, 2000). Several studies have eluded to the principal shaping the direction of the counseling program by their influences to hire, schedule assignments, and determine job expectations for counselors (Dollarhide et al., 2007; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Zalaquett, 2005). As trust, communication, and clear roles are established between principals and counselors, their relationship is strengthened (Ponec & Brock, 2000; Stone & Clark, 2001). Dollarhide et al. (2007) suggested for counselors to be mindful of the professional roles of problem solver, student advocate, and systemic change agents that were desired by principals in order utilize these roles to maintain a positive relationship. At the same time, Janson et al. (2008) spoke to “the power that school counselors have in shaping the perceptions of the principal” (p. 365). In their study, counselors and principals believed that they were working together when the counselor took the time to educate their principal on appropriate roles and functions aligned with the ASCA National Model. This concept was also supported by the work on Leuwereke and Walker

(2009) who also emphasized short informational presentations could change principal perceptions. Zalaquett (2005) shared that the relationship should be based on knowledge and trust so principals and counselors can work together as “natural partners” (p. 456).

Counselor as Leader

As part of the relationship between principals and counselors, the literature also highlights them “joining forces for leadership and advocacy [that] can positively affect a school’s mission, its climate, and its students’ ability to achieve academic success” (Stone & Clark, 2001, p. 46). In addition, Stone and Dahir (2009) also described a principal-counselor alliance for accountability and data use in order to meet the accountability challenge of the No Child Left Behind Act. In terms of leadership, McMahon et al. (2009) also expressed a vision for school counselors’ educational leadership so they can function as role models who are fully able to transform the counseling profession. While the leadership field contains literature on distributed leadership and the movement away from the heroic school leader (Spillane, 2005), little research is in the field about the concept of counselors as leaders (Janson, 2007; Militello & Janson, 2007). In one study, Janson (2007) examined high school counselors’ perceptions of their leadership behaviors to uncover that leadership is expressed by counselors in diverse ways that depend on the individual context of their work setting. From a distributed leadership perspective, Militello and Janson (2007) investigated the counselor and principal relationship to yield items related to leadership practice. One of the factors that represented 11% of the principal participants revealed principals supported leadership development for their counselors within the school. As counselors are

transforming their practices, the concept of counselor as leader will be an area to further examine in their practices.

The researcher conducted and documented an extensive review of both conceptual and empirical literature related to school counselors (see Appendix A). Figure 2.2 summarizes the counseling tenants found in the literature and presents the conceptual framework with the extant literature. This figure is the same as Figure 1.1 with the addition of the counseling tenants: counselors and academic achievement, counselor job satisfaction, counseling practices, role confusion, principals' perceptions of school counselors, counselor and principal relationship, and counselor as leader, added as a second layer to Figure 1.1. While the literature informed the creation of the ASCA model, MEASURE, and National Professional standards, these counseling tenants are continuing to impact how counselors are responding and viewing their counseling practices today.

Conceptual Framework

As school counselors are being pressured to change their practices, they are being influenced by both personal (Fullan, 1991) and institutional change (Rogers, 2003; Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Tyack & Tobin, 1994). In many ways, the traditional practices of counselors have become a part of the 'real school' ideas of principals, teachers, and the larger community (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Tyack & Tobin, 1994). Tyack and Cuban (1995) revealed the graded school and the Carnegie units, as two practices that were institutionalized because of efficiency and standardization; however, they described other failed attempts due to burnout and failure to enlist support. The twenty-first century school counselor is caught

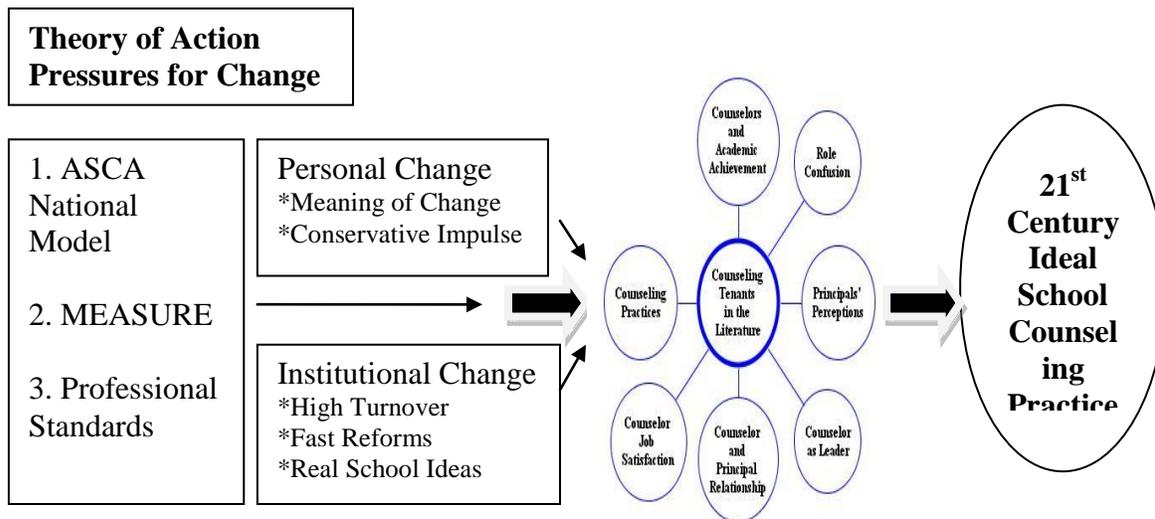


Figure 2.2. Counseling tenants in the literature.

between the traditional counseling practices that support real school ideas and the ideal practices that have been outlined from recent innovations in the counseling profession. The pressures of change are confronting school counselors as they undergo both personal and institutional barriers. However, school counselors continue to transform their practices in response to ASCA's (2005) national model and the additional change initiatives in order to meet the present accountability challenges (Dahir & Stone, 2009). Dahir (2004) eloquently raised the question, "Have the national standards helped the profession realize these dreams?" (p. 352).

For the proposed study, the researcher answered a similar question by examining school counselors' perception of "How are innovative school counseling practices lived or not lived in a local school district?" In other words, "Are school counselors measuring up to MEASURE?" The researcher relied on two lenses to make meaning of the research data and to examine the current practices of school counselors. These lenses represented theories that reflected two levels of change. For personal change, the researcher used Diffusion of Innovation that encompasses the change theory of Everett Rogers (2003). For institutional change, the researcher used policy ambiguity based on the work of March (1988). The conceptual framework allowed the researcher to examine the introduction of the counseling innovation, MEASURE, to a local school district through Phase One findings from the interview with the Director of Student Services. For Phase Two, the conceptual framework enabled the researcher to examine counselors' perceptions of their current practices and the supports and barriers for their enactment of MEASURE. Ultimately, the conceptual

framework helped determine if school counselors are living or not living up to the professional standards.

For the first lens, the researcher relied on the work of Rogers' (2003) *Diffusion of Innovations*. The origin of Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory was derived from his exploration of the agricultural farmers' frustrations with integrating new techniques on the farm. Rogers (2003) identified five crucial elements necessary for changes in practice to occur:

- Relative Advantage – “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being better than the idea that supersedes” (p. 15)
- Compatibility – “the degree to which an innovation is perceived as being consistent with the existing values, past experiences, and needs of potential adopters” (p. 15)
- Complexity – the degree to which an innovation is perceived as difficult to understand and use” (p. 16)
- Trialability – “the degree to which an innovation may be experimented with” (p. 16)
- Observability – “the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others” (p. 16).

While the diffusion of innovations model was constructed for the agricultural community, the theory can be applied to school counselors' efforts to integrate innovations into their practices. In applying these elements to counselors, the concept of relative

advantage was seen by finding out how counselors perceive the ASCA national model, MEASURE, and professional counseling standards. In order for the innovation to be diffused throughout the system, school counselors had to understand the relative advantage of the innovation, MEASURE, and the benefits offered by MEASURE in their practices. From the theory, the changes in practice must coincide with their values and experiences in order for school counselors to be compatible with the change. The study determined if MEASURE was embraced by counselors or if their experiences in the traditional roles conflicted with the ideal practices that are expected of the 21st century counselor. As part of complexity, school counselors had to understand MEASURE in order to be able to place these concepts into their practices. The local district in the study introduced change by introducing MEASURE as the new way for counselors to evaluate their counseling programs. What is the degree of counselor understanding of this innovative practice? What were supports or barriers that counselors faced in attempting the new initiative? For trialability, the school counselor had to work with MEASURE in order to experiment with the innovation. The trialability time enabled counselors to customize MEASURE to fit their needs. Finally, the innovated practices should be able to be observed by others. Possibly, others seeing the results of MEASURE helped validate the efforts of counselors. As school counselors are working to be accountable, the observability of their efforts is of primary importance in their school improvement and student achievement efforts.

From a policy lens, the researcher could have used March's (1988) policy ambiguity to address the institutional change and the district's policy implementation of MEASURE.

As policies are developed March (1988) shared that policy implementation is often problematic; however, he noted “the difficulties cannot be treated as independent of the confusions in the policy” (p. 160). While implementation errors are often interpreted to be issues with the organization, there is an importance of understanding the policy making process in the implementation analysis. March (1988) indicated that policies are often ambiguous in order to gain enough support for adoption; however, the policy ambiguity results in “the cost of creating administrative complications” (p. 159). For this study, the researcher chose to focus primarily on the Roger’s (2003) Diffusion of Innovations as the lens for this study. Roger’s work was used to focus on personal change and insights are shared of how the theory could be used to diffuse the innovation of change throughout the organization. The study worked to determine the answer to the question: Are school counselors MEASURING up? This question was posed not only to see if counselors enacted the counseling innovation, MEASURE, but also to determine supports and barriers for them in their efforts to work as 21st century school counselors. Figure 2.3 is the same as Figure 2.2 but the research lens of Rogers’ Diffusion of Innovation (2003) has been added.

Summary

As the history of school counseling responded to national policies, economics, and educational reform, the school counselors’ role transformed from vocational guidance in the pre-50s, encouraging personal growth in the 50s, developing individual growth in the 60s, and the comprehensive counseling programs of the 70s (Galassi & Akos, 2004; Herr, 2001; House & Hayes, 2002). There are additional pressures to change beyond the No Child Left

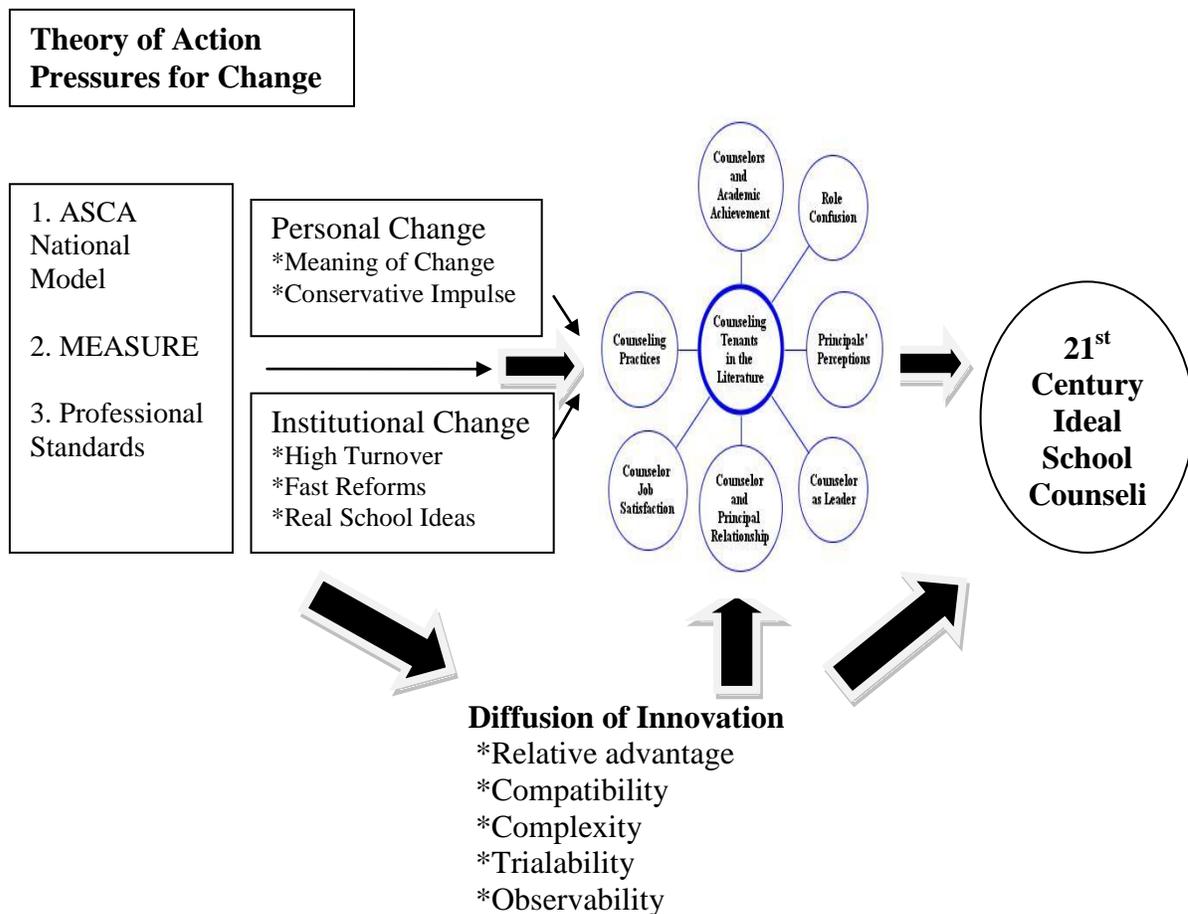


Figure 2.3. Conceptual framework.

Behind (2002) legislation which include the National Standards for School Counseling (Cambell & Dahir, 1997), the ASCA National Model (2003; 2005), and MEASURE (Stone & Dahir, 2007). Through the literature review, several counseling tenants emerged with both conceptual and empirical literature that included the following: counselors and academic achievement, counselor job satisfaction, counseling practices, role confusion, principals' perceptions of school counselors, the counselor and principal relationship, and the idea of a counselor as a leader. Existing research in the field has focused on the comprehensive school counseling program and student achievement (Lapan et al., 1997, 2001; Sink & Stroh; 2003). Furthermore, there are plenty of studies on how educators perceive the work of school counselors (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Perusse et al., 2004; Ponec & Brock, 2000; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000; Zalaquett, 2005). While counselor job satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborne, 2006; Kolodinsky et al., 2009; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008) and role confusion (Amatea & Clark, 2005; ASCA, 1996; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Fitch et al., 2001; House & Hayes, 2002; McCurdy, 2003) has also been addressed, the newer literature is focusing on the concepts of the principal-counselor relationship (Dimmit et al., 2009; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Janson et al., 2008; 2009; McMahan et al., 2009) and the idea of counselor as leader (Janson, 2007; Militello & Janson, 2007; Stone & Clark, 2001). Furthermore some research (Baggerly & Osborne, 2006; Dodson, 2009; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Edwards, 2009; Fitch et al., 2001; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Zalaquet, 2005) has addressed school counselors and the ASCA National Model (2003; 2005).

Nonetheless, little research has been completed to understand “implementation strategies [that] may help school counselors bridge the gap between theory and practice” (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008, p. 456). In addition, very few studies have been conducted about the use of MEASURE as a program evaluation tool for school counselors. The proposed study contributed to an understanding of counselors’ perceptions of their practices in relation to their revised state professional counseling standards after the introduction of MEASURE in the local school district. In light of the small number of studies that have focused on the outcomes of counseling efforts such as the enactment of revised counseling standards and the introduction of accountability tools such as MEASURE, the proposed research study offered information on how one district brought in a new plan for program evaluation in order to impact K-12 school counseling practices. The overarching research question examined school counselors’ perception of “How innovative school counseling practices are or are not lived in a local school district?” In addition, the study provided further information on the following sub questions:

- What fosters or inhibits change towards innovative school counseling practices?
- What are ideal counseling practices?
- How was MEASURE implemented with the district?
- In what ways, if any, has MEASURE changed counseling practices?

The next chapter will outline the research design to answer these questions.

CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH DESIGN

The goal of this research study was to determine how innovative school counseling practices are lived or not lived in a local school district. The study focused on one North Carolina school district's efforts to impact counseling practices. The method of research that was utilized for this study was a mixed-method design. Greene and Caracelli (1997) indicated that the mixed-method inquiry's rationale "is to understand more fully, to generate deeper and broader insights, to develop important knowledge claims that respect a wider range of interests and perspectives (p. 7). Q-methodology was selected due to the "psychometric and operational principles that, when combined with specialized statistical applications of correlational and factor-analytical techniques, provide[s] researchers with a systematic and rigorously quantitative means for examining human subjectivity" (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 5).

This chapter will provide an overview of Q-methodology and the research questions. In addition, the study is described beginning with concourse development and the refinement of statements to be used later in the study. Next, Phase One will highlight the interview with the local school districts' student services director. Phase Two will emphasize the details of the Q-Sort with school counselors and the Post Q-Sort Questions. As part of this section, the P sample, protocol, and data analysis will be discussed. Finally, Phase Three of the research study will offer information on the focus group with a small group of six counselors.

Q-Methodology

The selection of Q-methodology allowed for both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. This Q-method was developed in 1935 by William Stephenson and provided the researcher with “a distinctive orientation toward the systematic study of human subjectivity” (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 9). The primary axiom of Q methodology is “subjectivity is always self-referent” (p. 12). The researcher utilized concurrence theory to establish Q-statements. The counselor participants become known as the P set and completed the Q sort where they ranked the concurrence statements based on their internal frame of reference. Therefore, the “variables are the people performing the Q-sorts, not Q-sample statements” (p. 17). The analysis and interpretation was completed based on the factor loading which indicated the degree of association that each respondent had with the concurrence statements.

Within the field, the objections to Q-methodology involve the “forced free” distribution that requires the respondents to rank a prescribed number of items in each category (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 34). In addition, a criticism has been the “magnitude of the sorting task lies beyond the cognitive ability of most people to perform adequately” (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 34). For the researcher, Q-methodology had several benefits which contributed to the selection of the method that included: allowing rigorous methods at relatively low costs, requiring only a basic knowledge of statistics, and utilizing small numbers of respondents for a single case. Brown suggested “the interest of Q-methodology is in the nature of the segments and the extent to which they are similar or

dissimilar, the issue of large numbers, so fundamental to most social research, is rendered relatively unimportant” (Van Exel & de Graaf, 2005).

Research Questions

The overarching research question examined school counselors’ perception of “How innovative counseling practices are or are not lived in a local school district?” In addition, the study provided further information on the following sub questions: (1) How do school counselors perceive their enactment of these professional counseling standards? (2) What fosters or inhibits change towards innovative school counseling practices? (3) In what ways, if any, has MEASURE changed counseling practices? Moreover, Figure 3.1 provides the research data collection and timeline.

The answers to the study’s research sub-questions worked to define the current counseling practices in one local school district. The study consisted of voluntary participants and appropriate measures were taken to guarantee anonymity. The researcher secured permission forms prior to participation in all phases of the study.

Site Selection

The local school district is comprised of 37 schools from 25 schools with approximately 55 school counselors ranging from the elementary to high school levels working within the district. The eastern North Carolina school district was selected as a purposeful sample based on the district choosing to implement MEASURE as a new way of school counselor

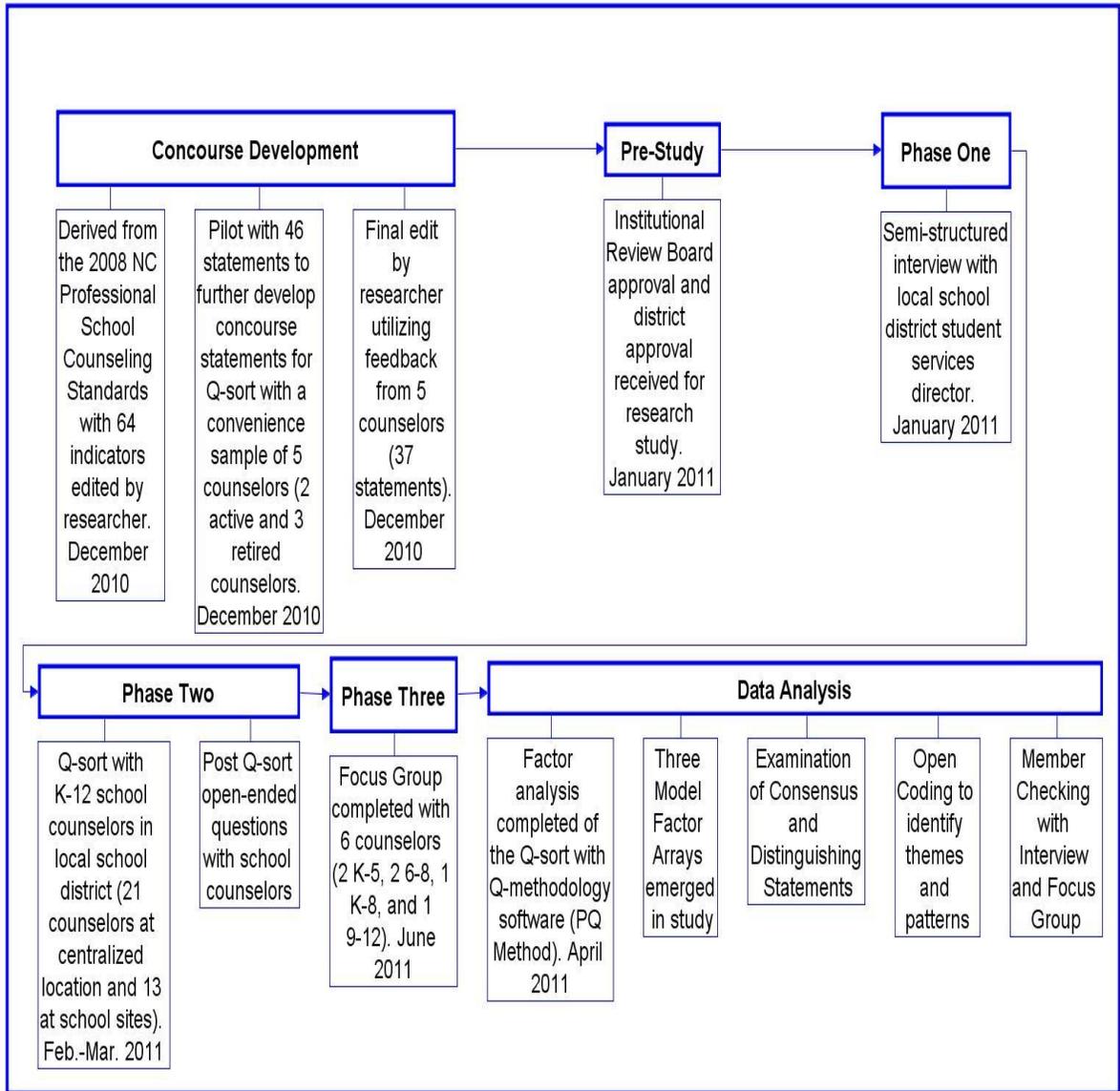


Figure 3.1. Research study data collection timeline.

program evaluation. Also, this district had a student services director who worked as a former school counselor and was working to implement changes such as MEASURE in order to provide outcome data for the school counseling programs within the district.

Credibility of the Researcher

For the research study, I served as the novice researcher who worked under the close advisement of my dissertation chair. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believed that a researcher must develop a certain level of skills appropriate to serve as the human instrument for qualitative inquiry. Prior to beginning the research study, I completed coursework at the university level that allowed me to learn about qualitative and quantitative inquiry. The coursework included some of the following: Qualitative Research in Education, Advanced Qualitative Applications in School Administration and Policy, and Applied Research Methods in Education. Furthermore, this coursework strongly emphasized the ethics and care that must be adhered to in all research studies. In terms of the researcher, the mixed methods approach values the tenants from qualitative research that emphasizes the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher. Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasized the researcher's "ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capacity to separate the pertinent from that which isn't" (p. 42). Throughout the research study, I had ongoing meetings with my dissertation chair for feedback and guidance.

Concourse Development

In January 2011, the researcher gained approval from the North Carolina State University's Institutional Review Board for the research study (see Appendix E). Q-

methodology involves concourse development that has been described as the “technical concept...for the collection of all possible statements the respondents can make about the subject at hand” (Van Exel & de Graaf, 2005, p. 7). For this study, the researcher chose to use concourse statements that were derived from the North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards. The standards were adopted in 2008 and consisted of 64 indicators which represented the following five standards: demonstrate leadership, advocacy, and collaboration; promote a respectful environment for a diverse population of students; understand and facilitate the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program; promote learning for all students; and actively reflect on practice. Each of the five standards had indicators for a total of 64 indicators that became the statements used for concourse development (see Table 3.1). Table 3.1 reflects the North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards (2008) as written. McKeown and Thomas (1988) noted that the amount of concourse statements should be considered so the participant was not overwhelmed by having to sort a large number. Moreover, Table 3.1 highlights the thought process of the researcher in editing and omitting the statements. The researcher utilized the review of the literature from Chapter two and worked to cull the cards from 64 to 46 statements (see Table 3.2). Therefore, the subsequent Table 3.2 reflects a summary of the concourse statements edited by the researcher and used for the Q-sort and interviews with the five counselors for further refinement.

Prior to beginning the study, the researcher contacted five school counselors based on a convenience sample who had experiences working as a K-12 school counselor and who

Table 3.1

Concourse Statement Development from the NC Professional School Counseling Standards

	Standard as Written	Q Statement (Edited)	Omit
1.1	Work collaboratively with all school staff to create a positive learning community	1. Work collaboratively with all school staff to create a positive learning community	
1.2	Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs	2. Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs	
1.3	Create data driven goals and strategies that align with the school improvement plan	3. Create data driven goals and strategies that align with the school improvement plan	
1.4	Discuss the comprehensive school counseling program with the school administrator		Omit 1.4. Redundant with 4.5. See edited statement #37.
1.5	Provide input in the selection of professional development for the school staff	4. Provide input in the selection of professional development for the school staff	

Table 3.1 (continued)

1.6	Choose professional development activities that foster their own professional growth		Omit 1.6. Sometimes choice is limited due to budget and counselors only having access to the prof. dev. that the district/school provides them; Coincides with 1.10
1.7	Mentor and support colleagues	5. Mentor and support colleagues	
1.8	Strive to improve the counseling profession		Omit 1.8
1.9	Contribute to establishing a positive school climate		Omit 1.9
1.10	Promote professional growth	6. Promote professional growth and participate in continued, high quality professional development	Merged 1.10 with 5.3
1.11	Collaborate with their colleagues	7. Collaborate with their colleagues	

Table 3.1 (continued)

1.12	Advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning	8. Advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning as well as equitable, student centered legislation	Merged with 1.12 and 1.16
1.13	Promote awareness of and responsiveness to learning styles, cultural diversity, and individual learning needs	9. Promote awareness of and responsiveness to learning styles, cultural diversity, and individual learning needs	
1.14	Collaborate with staff in building relationships with students that have a positive impact on student achievement	10. Collaborate with staff in building relationships with students that have a positive impact on student achievement	
1.15	Participate in the implementation of initiatives to improve the education and development of all students	11. Participate in the implementation of initiatives to improve the education and development of all students	
1.16	Advocate for equitable, student-centered legislation, policy, and procedures	8. Advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning as well as equitable, student centered legislation	Omit 1.16. Merged with 1.12. Edited statement #8 is restated

Table 3.1 (continued)

1.17	Demonstrate ethical behaviors	12. Demonstrate ethical behaviors by following the American School Counselor's Association and North Carolina Educators and Standards for Professional Conduct	Merged 1.17, 1.18, and 1.19
1.18	Uphold American School Counselor Association's Ethical Standards for School Counselors	12. Demonstrate ethical behaviors by following the American School Counselor's Association and North Carolina Educators and Standards for Professional Conduct	Merged 1.17, 1.18, and 1.19. Edited Statement #12 is restated
1.19	Uphold Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators and Standards for Professional Conduct	12. Demonstrate ethical behaviors by following the American School Counselor's Association and North Carolina Educators and Standards for Professional Conduct	Merged 1.17, 1.18, and 1.19. Edited statement #12 is restated
2.1	Create an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible	13. Create an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible	

Table 3.1 (continued)

2.2	Model and teach positive behaviors that lead to positive and nurturing relationships through developmentally-appropriate and prevention-oriented activities	14. Model and teach positive behaviors that lead to positive and nurturing relationships through developmentally-appropriate and prevention-oriented activities
2.3	Demonstrate knowledge of the history of diverse cultures and their role in shaping global issues	15. Demonstrate knowledge of the history of diverse cultures and their role in shaping global issues
2.4	Collaborate with teachers to ensure that the presentation of the Standard Course of Study is relevant to a diverse student population	16. Collaborate with teachers to ensure that the presentation of the Standard Course of Study is relevant to a diverse student population
2.5	Select materials and develop activities that counteract stereotypes and incorporate histories and contributions	17. Select materials and develop activities that counteract stereotypes and incorporate histories and contributions

Table 3.1 (continued)

2.6	Understand how a student's culture, language, and background may influence school performance and consider these influences in the programs and services they provide	18. Understand how a student's culture, language, and background may influence school performance and consider these influences in the programs and services they provide
2.7	Maintain high expectations for all students	19. Maintain high expectations for all students
2.8	Appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment	20. Appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment
2.9	Collaborate with school and community personnel to help meet students needs	21. Collaborate with school and community personnel to help meet students needs
2.10	Identify special needs using data, referrals, observation, and other sources of information	22. Identify special needs using data, referrals, observation, and other sources of information
2.11	Collaborate with others to create a customized plan of action that provides follow-up services to meet students' varied needs	23. Collaborate with others to create a customized plan of action that provides follow-up services to meet students' varied needs
2.12	Improve communication and collaboration among the school, home, and community	24. Improve communication and collaboration among the school, home, and community

Table 3.1 (continued)

2.13	Seek solutions to overcome barriers that may stand in the way of effective family and community involvement	25. Seek solutions to overcome barriers that may stand in the way of effective family and community involvement	
3.1	Align content standards and implement program models developed by professional organizations in school counseling	26. Align content standards and implement program models developed by professional organizations in school counseling	
3.2	Support equity and access to rigorous and relevant curricula		Omit 3.2
3.3	Develop and apply strategies to enhance student success	27. Develop and apply strategies to enhance student success	
3.4	Know theory and research about human development, student learning, and academic success		Omit 3.4
3.5	Address the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students	28. Address the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students	

Table 3.1 (continued)

3.6	Support the mission and goals of the school and district by providing technical assistance to all curricula areas as they align components of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study Guidance Curriculum to their content areas/disciplines	29. Support the mission and goals of the school and district by providing technical assistance to all curricula areas as they align components of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study Guidance Curriculum to their content areas/disciplines	
3.7	Support teachers and other specialists' use of the North Carolina Guidance Curriculum to develop and enhance students' twenty-first century skills and promote global awareness	30. Support teachers and other specialists' use of the North Carolina Guidance Curriculum to develop and enhance students' twenty-first century skills and promote global awareness	
3.9	Use data to develop comprehensive programs that meet student needs	31. Use academic, behavior, and attendance data to plan appropriate programs to meet student needs	Merged with 4.4
3.10	Incorporate into their programs the life skills that students need to be successful in the twenty-first century	32. Incorporate into their programs the life skills that student need to be successful in the twenty-first century	
4.1	Know the influences that affect individual student learning, such as human development, culture, and language proficiency		Omit 4.1

Table 3.1 (continued)

4.2	Assist in overcoming those barriers that impact student learning	33. Listen responsively to students, colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders in order to identify issues and assist in overcoming barriers that impede student success	Merged with 4.17
4.3	Provide resources to staff to enhance student strengths and address student weaknesses	34. Provide resources to staff to enhance student strengths and address student weaknesses	
4.4	Use academic, behavior, and attendance data to plan appropriate programs	31. Use academic, behavior, and attendance data to plan appropriate programs to meet student needs	Merged with 3.9
4.5	Discuss the comprehensive school counseling program with school administrators and communicate the goals of the program to stakeholders	35. Discuss the comprehensive school counseling program with school administrators and communicate the goals of the program to stakeholders	Keep 4.5 statement. Redundant with 1.4 Omit 1.4
4.6	Consult and collaborate with colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders	36. Consult and collaborate with colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders	
4.8	Make their programs responsive to cultural diversity and student needs	37. Make their programs responsive to cultural diversity and student needs	

Table 3.1 (continued)

4.9	Utilize the Guidance Curriculum, Individual Student Planning, and Preventive and Responsive Services in meeting the needs of students as they strive to raise achievement and close gaps	38. Utilize the Guidance Curriculum Individual Student Planning, and Preventive and Responsive Services in meeting the needs of students as they strive to raise achievement and close gaps	
4.10	Allocate time based on the developmental needs of their students		Omit 4.10
4.11	Respond to individual student needs and differences in learning styles		
4.12	Employ technology as appropriate to enhance delivery of their programs	39. Employ technology as appropriate to enhance delivery of their programs	
4.13	Assist all students with developing academic, career, and personal/social skills	40. Assist all students with developing academic, career, and personal/social skills	
4.14	Help students utilize sound reasoning, understand connections and make complex choices		Omit 4.14. Redundant – this seems to go along with teaching life skills and 4.15
4.15	Help students learn problem-solving techniques that incorporate critical thinking skills such as identifying problems, recognizing options, weighing evidence, and evaluating consequences	41. Help students learn problem-solving techniques that incorporate critical thinking skills such as identifying problems, recognizing options, weighing evidence, and evaluating consequences	

Table 3.1 (continued)

4.16	Encourage students to use these skills to make healthy and responsible choices in their everyday lives		Omit 4.16
4.17	Listen responsively to students, colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders in order to identify issues and barriers that impede student success	33. Listen responsively to students, colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders in order to identify issues and barriers that impede student success	Merged with 4.2
4.18	Use a variety of methods to communicate effectively in support of the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students	42. Use a variety of methods to communicate effectively in support of the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students	
4.19	Assists students in developing effective listening and communication skills in order to enhance academic success, build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, advocate for themselves, and become responsible twenty-first century citizens	43. Assists students in developing effective listening and communication skills in order to enhance academic success, build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, advocate for themselves, and become responsible twenty-first century citizens	
5.1	Think systematically and critically about the impact of the comprehensive school counseling program on student academic, career, and personal/social development	44. Think systematically and critically about the impact of the comprehensive school counseling program on student academic, career, and personal/social development	

Table 3.1 (continued)

5.2	Analyze student achievement, behavior, and school climate data as well as feedback from students, parents, and other stakeholders to continually develop their program	45. Analyze student achievement, behavior, and school climate data as well as feedback from students, parents, and other stakeholders to continually develop their program	
5.3	Participate in (continued), high quality professional development	6. Promote professional growth and participate in (continued), high quality professional development	Omit 5.3. Merged with 1.10. Edited statement # 6 restated
5.4	Actively investigate and consider new ideas that improve student academic, career, and personal/social development as well as the school counseling profession	46. Actively investigate and collaborate with other stakeholders to implement new ideas to improve student academic, career, and personal/social development as well as the school counseling profession	Merged with 5.5
5.5	Collaborate with students, staff, parents, and other stakeholders to implement these ideas	47. Actively investigate and collaborate with other stakeholders to implement new ideas to improve student academic, career, and personal/social development as well as the school counseling profession	Merged with 5.4 and 5.5. Edited statement #50 restated

Table 3.2

School Counselor Concourse Statements for the Q-Sort

Q Statement (Edited by Researcher)

1. Work collaboratively with all school staff to create a positive learning community
2. Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs
3. Create data driven goals and strategies that align with the school improvement plan
4. Provide input in the selection of professional development for the school staff
5. Mentor and support colleagues
6. Promote professional growth and participate in (continued), high quality professional development
7. Collaborate with their colleagues
8. Advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning as well as equitable, student centered legislation
9. Promote awareness of and responsiveness to learning styles, cultural diversity, and individual learning needs
10. Collaborate with staff in building relationships with students that have a positive impact on student achievement
11. Participate in the implementation of initiatives to improve the education and development of all students
12. Demonstrate ethical behaviors by following the American School Counselors' Association and North Carolina Educators and Standards for Professional Conduct
13. Create an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible
14. Model and teach positive behaviors that lead to positive and nurturing relationships through developmentally-appropriate and prevention-oriented activities

Table 3.2 (continued)

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15. Demonstrate knowledge of the history of diverse cultures and their role in shaping global issues
 16. Collaborate with teachers to ensure that the presentation of the Standard Course of Study is relevant to a diverse student population
 17. Select materials and develop activities that counteract stereotypes and incorporate histories and contributions
 18. Understand how a student's culture, language, and background may influence school performance and consider these influences in the programs and services they provide
 19. Maintain high expectations for all students
 20. Appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment
 21. Collaborate with school and community personnel to help meet students needs
 22. Identify special needs using data, referrals, observation, and other sources of information
 23. Collaborate with others to create a customized plan of action that provides follow-up services to meet students' varied needs
 24. Improve communication and collaboration among the school, home, and community
 25. Seek solutions to overcome barriers that may stand in the way of effective family and community involvement
 26. Align content standards and implement program models developed by professional organizations in school counseling
 27. Develop and apply strategies to enhance student success
 28. Address the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students
 29. Support the mission and goals of the school and district by providing technical assistance to all curricula areas as they align components of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study Guidance Curriculum to their content areas/disciplines

Table 3.2 (continued)

-
30. Support teachers and other specialists' use of the North Carolina Guidance Curriculum to develop and enhance students' twenty-first century skills and promote global awareness
 31. Use academic, behavior, and attendance data to plan appropriate programs to meet student needs
 32. Incorporate into their programs the life skills that students need to be successful in the twenty-first century
 33. Listen responsively to students, colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders in order to identify issues to assist in overcoming barriers that impede student success
 34. Provide resources to staff to enhance student strengths and address student weaknesses
 35. Discuss the comprehensive school counseling program with school administrators and communicate the goals of the program to stakeholders
 36. Consult and collaborate with colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders
 37. Make their programs responsive to cultural diversity and student needs
 38. Utilize the Guidance Curriculum, Individual Student Planning, and Preventive and Responsive Services in meeting the needs of students as they strive to raise achievement and close gaps
 39. Employ technology as appropriate to enhance delivery of their programs
 40. Help students learn problem-solving techniques that incorporate critical thinking skills such as identifying problems, recognizing options, weighing evidence, and evaluating consequences
 41. Use a variety of methods to communicate effectively in support of the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students
 42. Assists students in developing effective listening and communication skills in order to enhance academic success, build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, advocate for themselves, and become responsible twenty-first century citizens

Table 3.2 (continued)

43. Think systematically and critically about the impact of the comprehensive school counseling program on student academic, career, and personal/social development
 44. Analyze student achievement, behavior, and school climate data as well as feedback from students, parents, and other stakeholders to continually develop their program
 45. Promote professional growth and participate in continued, high quality professional development
 46. Actively investigate and collaborate with other stakeholders to implement new ideas to improve student academic, career, and personal/social development as well as the school counseling profession
-

were willing to offer feedback on the concourse statements. The five counselors represented three recently retired counselors who had experiences in elementary, middle, and high school settings and two counselors who were practicing as school counselors in the elementary settings. The researcher met with each of the five participants to ask for them to perform the Q-sort and to complete interviews on the concourse statements to help clarify, re-word, combine, and eliminate redundant statements. While the participants sorted the statements, the researcher scripted their comments in order to assist in the culling of the statements. After all five counselors sorted and interviewed, the researcher placed the statements in a spreadsheet to look for any common themes through an open coding system. Strauss and Corbin (1990) shared open coding is a first step in data analysis with the researcher taking data and developing categories of information that become themes. Participants shared statements that were repetitive or unclear. Four of the five participants all noted that two statements regarding professional development were similar. There were several concourse statements that addressed working collaboratively. Based on their comments, I combined the following statements:

- Work collaboratively with all school staff to create a positive learning community
- Collaborate with colleagues
- Collaborate with staff in building relationships with students that have a positive impact on student achievement

Several concourse statements addressed diversity with one retired elementary counselor participant sharing three statements were the same and combined the following

two to say “demonstrate and utilize knowledge of the history of diverse cultures.” The original two concourse statements were the following:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the history of diverse cultures and their role in shaping global issues
- Make their programs responsive to cultural diversity and student needs

Amongst the five participants, I had some conflicting thoughts about the concourse statement “mentor and support colleagues.” One retired middle school counselor participant said, “I did that but not officially. I tried to support but I wasn't in the role of being a mentor to a teacher.” One first year counselor participant recommended taking out the word “mentor” to the statement so it would just read “support colleagues.” While another retired middle school counselor participant indicated, “I did a lot of mentoring and supporting [as a counselor.” A third participant explained that she “felt that the mentoring was not for teaching [but to] help the well being of the whole child.” I made the decision to keep the statement to read as follows: “Provide mentoring and support for colleagues to improve the academic success and overall well being of students.”

Participant comments made while completing the activity were scribed and I later created a spreadsheet so I could visually see the number statements that continued to be discussed in terms of being repetitive or unclear. From my own editing of the statements, I had worked to have a total of 46 statements. At the conclusion of the concourse development, statements were refined to 37 statements that are reflected in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3

School Counselor Concourse Statements Edited after counselor interviews

Q Statement

1. Work collaboratively with all school staff to create a positive learning community
2. Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs
3. Create data driven goals and strategies that align with the school improvement plan
4. Provide input in the selection of professional development for the school staff
- *5. Provide mentoring and support for colleagues to improve the academic success and overall well being of students
6. Promote professional growth and participate in high quality professional development activities
7. Advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning as well as equitable, student centered legislation
8. Promote an awareness of learning styles, diversity, and individual learning needs
9. Participate in the implementation of school wide activities to improve the education and development of all students
10. Demonstrate ethical behaviors by following the American School Counselors' Association and North Carolina Educators' Standards for Professional Conduct
11. Create an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible
12. Model and teach positive behaviors through developmentally-appropriate and prevention-oriented activities that lead students to demonstrate positive relationships
13. Understand how a student's culture, language, and background may influence school performance and make the school counseling program responsive to student needs

Table 3.3 (continued)

-
14. Collaborate with teachers to ensure that the presentation of the Standard Course of Study is relevant to a diverse student population
 15. Select materials and develop activities that incorporate the histories and contributions of diverse cultures and work to counteract stereotypes
 - *16. Maintain high expectations for all students including graduation from high school
 17. Appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment
 18. Collaborate with others to create a customized plan of action that provides follow-up services to meet students' varied needs
 19. Identify special needs using data, referrals, observation, and other sources of information
 - *20. Seek solutions that may stand in the way of effective family and community involvement in order to improve collaboration among the school, home, and community
 21. Align content standards and implement program models developed by professional organizations in school counseling
 - *22. Support equity and access to rigorous and relevant curricula in order to enhance student success
 - *23. Apply the knowledge of theories and research about human development, student learning, and academic success to address the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students
 24. Support teachers and other specialists' use of the North Carolina Guidance Curriculum to develop and enhance students' twenty-first century skills and promote global awareness
 25. Use academic, behavior, and attendance data to plan programs to meet student needs
 - *26. Incorporate into the school counseling program the twenty-first century life skills that include leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity, personal responsibility, people skills, self-direction, and social responsibility

Table 3.3 (continued)

-
- *27. Listen to students, colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders in order to identify issues to assist in overcoming barriers that impede student success
 - *28. Understand the influences that affect individual student learning and provide resources to staff to enhance student strengths and address student weaknesses
 - 29. Discuss the comprehensive school counseling program with school administrators and communicate the goals of the program to stakeholders
 - 30. Utilize the Guidance Curriculum, Individual Student Planning, and Preventive and Responsive Services in meeting the needs of students as they strive to raise achievement and close gaps
 - *31. Employ technology as appropriate to enhance the delivery of the school counseling program
 - 32. Help students learn problem-solving techniques that incorporate critical thinking skills such as identifying problems, recognizing options, weighing evidence, and evaluating consequences
 - 33. Use a variety of methods to communicate effectively in support of the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students
 - 34. Assists students in developing effective listening and communication skills in order to enhance academic success, build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, advocate for themselves, and become responsible twenty-first century citizens
 - *35. Examine the impact of the comprehensive school counseling program on student academic, career, and personal/social development in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program
 - *36. Analyze student achievement, behavior, and school climate data as well as feedback from students, parents, and other stakeholders to continually develop the school counseling program
 - 37. Actively investigate and collaborate with other stakeholders to implement new ideas to
-

improve student academic, career, and personal/social development as well as the school counseling profession

These finalized concourse statements were used with the P sample during the Phase Two Q-sort activity and an asterisk is beside the statements to denote the refinement process from the previous statements edited by the researcher in Table 3.2 (see Table 3.3).

Phase One

Phase One consisted of an one on one interview with the district level student services director that yielded qualitative data about the ideal 21st century counseling practices, the selection of MEASURE, and the factors that foster and/or inhibit change. In addition, the Phase One interview with the district student services director provided background information about implementation of MEASURE within the district in terms of timeline, supports, and the involvement of other educational stakeholders (see Appendices B and F). The student services director was selected as an interview candidate based on the district's decision to utilize MEASURE as their program evaluation tool. This decision was a shift from the district's old way of program evaluation that consisted of tallying data to the newly developed accountability tool, MEASURE, that requires counselors to set goals and evaluate the goals with outcome data. The interview was conducted to understand the background for the selection of the counseling innovation, MEASURE, and to gain the district's perspective of factors inhibiting and supporting change.

Data Collection

During January 2011, the researcher scheduled the interview and obtained consent to participate from the district student services director. The semi-structured interview of a hour estimated duration was conducted with research questions linked below (see Table 3.4). The

Table 3.4

Research Questions Linked to Data Collection

	Research Question	Methodology Item
Overarching Research Question	How innovative practices are or are not lived in a local school district	Q-sort of school counselors with the concourse statements derived from the 2008 N.C. Professional School Counseling Standards
Subquestion 1	What fosters or inhibits change towards innovative school counseling practices?	Interview with district student services director Open-ended questions following post Q-sort
Subquestion 2	What are ideal counseling practices?	Interviews district student services director Q-sort of school counselors
Subquestion 3	How was MEASURE implemented within the district?	Interview with director of student services Open-ended questions following post Q-sort
Subquestion 4	In what ways, if any, has MEASURE changed counseling practices?	Post-sort questions with school counselors Focus group

interview was recorded and transcribed using an audio recorder. The interview was conducted face to face and the transcription of the interview was provided to the director of student services as a member check to affirm that the interview accurately represented his views, feelings, and experiences.

The interview with the student services director offered information about the ideal practices of 21st century school counselors, the selection and implementation supports for MEASURE, and the factors that foster and/or inhibit change towards counseling innovations (see Appendix B). The researcher discovered the rationale for the introduction of counseling innovations such as MEASURE in the district and further background information on the implementation efforts towards MEASURE.

Data Analysis

This research study utilized a mixed-methods approach. The Phase One interview provided qualitative measures to analyze the research questions. After the interview conducted in Phase One was transcribed into the electronic format, the transcribed interview was member checked by the director of student services. Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated member checking is “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (p. 314). The researcher selected passages and unique comments to assist in understanding the district director’s perspective and answering the research questions. The Phase One interview became the first of three prongs in the study for triangulation. The intent was to utilize the data from the interview to triangulate with the Phase Two Q-sort and Phase Three focus

group. As Creswell (2007) noted, triangulation “involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (p. 208).

Phase Two

Phase Two focus on the Q-sort activity where 34 school counselors sorted statements derived from the North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards. The school counselors utilized the Q-statements to rank order the counseling standards in terms of their school counseling practices. The researcher emailed an invitation to the K-12 school counselors within the district to explain the purposes of the study and requested their consent to voluntarily participate (see Appendices G and H). The invitation designated the date, time, location, a breakfast, and a raffle drawing incentive. The raffle prize was an opportunity a \$100 donation for the counselors’ program to make purchases that would best meet their professional needs or to enhance their services with students. On the date of the Q-sort, the researcher was able to recruit 21 counselors. In order to gain more research participants, the researcher followed up with counselors who indicated that they would participate but had conflicts arise that kept them from attending. Then, some additional counselors were called particularly from the high school setting to get more representation from these counselors. The researcher was able to complete 13 Q-sorts individually or in small groups by visiting counselors at their school sites. The total number of school counselors participating in the research study was 34 which consisted of the following: 12 K-5 counselors, seven K-8 counselors, seven 6-8 counselors, and seven 9-12 counselors.

P Sample

Q-methodology was conducted with 34 K-12 school counselors representing 25 of the 34 schools in the local school district. The researcher sent an email to all school counselors regarding the purpose of the study and consent of participation form. In addition, the recruitment strategies of a free breakfast and the raffle prize of \$100 was advertised to all possible study participants. The researcher had originally planned to conduct the research before or after a monthly counselors meeting; however, the February meeting was cancelled. So, the counselors who participated came to a centralized location within the district solely to participate in the research study. The Q-sort activity lasted for approximately one hour and involved participants sorting the 37 concourse statements and responding to the open-ended post Q-sort questions. Each participant was asked to sort 37 statements of counseling practices based on North Carolina professional school counselor standards on a continuum of “least representative of my counseling practices” (-5) to “most representative of my counseling practices” (+5). In addition, the school counselors responded to questions according to the Phase Two protocol questions (see Appendix C).

Protocol

Following the Q-sort, a protocol of questions was developed for the P-sample (see Appendix C). The researcher attempted to gain qualitative data to support the reasons behind the choices that school counselors made in determining the statements that were most and least representative of their school counseling practices. The protocol also enabled the researcher to answer the research’s sub-questions about factors that inhibited or supported

their counseling practices as well as professional development offered by the district for MEASURE.

Data Analysis

For Phase Two, the researcher used the PQ Method as the free statistical analysis program (Schmolck & Atkinson, 1997) for the Q-sort data where three factors emerged to help explain counselors' perspectives of current practices. The researcher relied on three statistical procedures that include: correlation, factor analysis, and the computation of factor scores. Q-methodology "calls for the correlation and factoring of persons as opposed to tests, traits, and the like (R-method)" (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 46). Therefore, factor analysis "comprises the statistical means by which subjects are grouped" through Q-sorting. The Q-sorts represent each individual participant and these are factor analyzed for intercorrelations versus the statements. McKeown and Thomas (1988) stated "all that the factor analysis does is lend statistical clarity to the behavioral order implicit in the matrix by virtue of similarly (or dissimilarly) performed Q-sorts." Therefore, the factor analysis "simplifies the interpretive task" and brings "attention [to] the typological nature of audience segments on any given subjective issue" (p. 50). Following the factor analysis with the Principal Component Analysis which was selected in the software program, The factors were rotated (varimax) to yield three model arrays or model Q-sorts (Brown, 1980). In Q-methodology, the similar or dissimilar Q-sort concourse statements are based on the model Q-sort known as the factor array. The researcher analyzed the Q-sorts in the following ways:

factor loadings by individual factors, individual statements, consensus statements across factors, and distinguishing statements among the three factors (McKewon & Thomas, 1988).

Following the Q-sort, post Q-sort questions were analyzed using open coding to identify themes and patterns from the qualitative data (Creswell, 2007). The researcher values the importance of the data analysis spiral described by Creswell (2007) which includes the following procedures: data managing; reading, memoing; describing, classifying, interpreting, representing, and visualizing. Creswell (2007) shared both advantages and disadvantages of using computers in data analysis. In terms of disadvantages, the cost, the distance between researcher and data, features of the program, and the ease of use were cited. On the other hand, computers have advantages for the researcher which includes: an organized storage file system, ease in locating materials, a line by line approach in analyzing data, and ways to visualize the data with visual models. The focus of the coding and analysis for this study was on school counseling practices. The post Q-sort questions asked questions to clarify meaning behind the selection most and least representative practices; however, open-ended questions in the post-Q-sort were related to supports, barriers, and types of professional development. The researcher analyzed the transcripts and worked to code the statements for major themes (Creswell, 2007). The researcher opted not to use computer software due to only having 34 participants and used the analytic strategy Huberman and Miles (1994) described as counting frequency of codes. This process involved the researcher tallying up responses in the open ended questions to determine factors to support counselors in their practice, barriers to their efforts, and types of professional

development. These findings were placed in tables as part of the findings of the study and became the qualitative data to add meaning to the three factors arrays from the Q-sort. The researcher also created visual posters for the three factors along with the statements taken from the post-Q-sort protocols to support most representative and least representative practices to assist in the interpretation of the findings as well as to provide visuals for the Phase Three focus group. In addition, the researcher prepared the data and findings in order to present to the five school counselors participating in the focus group. Table 3.5 outlines the research questions and highlights the various data sources included in the analysis: interviews, Q-sort, post Q-sort questions, and focus group.

Phase Three

Phase Three of the research study consisted of a focus group conducted with six school counselors who were also Phase Two participants. During Phase Two, the researcher shared information about the focus group and was able to generate a list of participants who would be willing to participate in Phase Three. The focus group participants represented two K-5 counselors, one K-8 counselor, two 6-8 counselors, and one high school counselor. The researcher contacted these counselors to communicate the date, time, and location of the focus group and secured the consent to participate (see Appendix H). The focus group was completed on a workday in June and the participants were provided lunch. The focus group was audio recorded so it could be transcribed. The focus group was selected in order to “foster talk among the participants” and to gain “multiple perspectives from the group participants” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 109). Furthermore, the focus group discussion

Table 3.5

Research Data

Research Question (sub-questions)	Data
What fosters or inhibits change towards innovative school counseling practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q-Sort
What are ideal counseling practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Student Services Director • Q-Sort • Focus Group
In what ways, if any, has MEASURE changed counseling practices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Q-Sort Post Questions • Focus Group
How was MEASURE implemented in the district?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Student Services Director Interview • Q-Sort Post Questions

stimulated the participants to “articulate their views” and to “realize what their own views are” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 109). Focus group participants were provided a protocol along with findings of the study in order time to clarify meaning of school counselors’ perspectives on their current practices (see Appendices D and I). The protocol consisted of the three factors along with statements and comments reflecting most (+5 and +4) representative practices and least (-5 and -4) representative practices (see Appendix D). In addition, the handout included the tables found in Chapter five that shared the results of supports, barriers, and types of professional development. The researcher involved the participants’ views of the findings and interpretations for member checking (Creswell, 2007) and asked for their “critical observations or interpretations” of the data (Stake, 1995, p. 115). School counselors were involved in looking at the similarities and differences across the three factors. Moreover, the focus group feedback assisted the researcher in identifying the underlying themes for each factor and the focus group participants reached consensus on the names for each factor. After the findings for all three model arrays were shared, the focus group ended with open ended questions for further clarification of meaning.

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the focus group data, the researcher transcribed the focus group using the audiotape. The videotape did not record the entire focus group so the researcher relied on the audio recording for the transcription. Each speaker was assigned a focus group participant number in the findings to maintain their confidentiality. The transcribed interviews were reviewed and open coded for themes just as previous data in the study. The

statements pulled from the interview transcriptions allowed the researcher to add a thicker description to the data. Specifically, some statements were focused on for further information from the counselors especially when the statement emerged as a most or least representative practice. The focus group participants were a part of the interpretations of the findings and collectively named the factors by noting both similarities and differences in the model arrays.

Research Validity and Reliability

In terms of validity, the concourse statements were derived from the 2008 North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards. The process involved the researcher reading through the standards several times and making decisions to omit and combine standards. During the concourse development, the researcher obtained feedback from school counselor professionals in order to finalize these statements for the Q-sort that occurred in Phase Two. For this study, the term validity is used by the researcher to discuss the usability of the concourse statements. In addition, the researcher wanted to ensure the concourse statements were representative of the North Carolina Professional School Counseling standards where these statements were derived.

Q-Methodology focuses on “why and how they believe what they do” versus “how many people believe such-and-such” (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 45). The respondent’s frame of reference is used for Q-sorting which results in small numbers or even single cases being acceptable. In addition, McKeown and Thomas (1988) shared “validity and reliability tests so central to conventional scaling in mainstream attitude research are simply unessential within the psychometric framework of Q methodology” (p. 45). For this study, additional

data from interviews and the focus group offered some further meaning to the quantitative Phase Two Q-sort. Q methodology relies on factor analysis which reduces individual viewpoints of subjects down to factors that represent shared ways of thinking. While an advantage of factor analysis is the ability to convert subjective attributes to scores to determine the magnitude of the subject's loading. Some of the disadvantages of factor analysis may impact reliability. The researcher is often called to identify and name factors which require background knowledge or theory. The usefulness of the factor analysis also depends on the researcher's ability to collect sufficient sets of attributes. Furthermore, highly similar variables may result in being assigned to the same factor which would result in possibly missing interesting relationships.

Three data sets contributed to the overall findings of this study and allowed the researcher to triangulate the data. The mixed methods approach provided quantitative data through the Phase Two Q-sort and qualitative data from the following: the director's interview, post Q-sort questions, and the focus group. Both the counselors' perspectives and director's perspectives were considered on current practices. The three data sets helped support findings related to the district's implementation of MEASURE, supports and barriers, as well as types of professional development. For the study's sub-questions, Chapter Five graphs illustrating supports, barriers, and types of professional development did not go through the rigorous validity and reliability tests for "mainstream attitude research" and should be viewed with caution (McKewon & Thomas, 1988, p. 45). At the same time, this

information further defines the district under study and contributes to the meaning of the Phase Two quantitative Q-sort.

Table 3.4 reflects the methodology that will be gathered during the study linked with the research questions.

Safeguards Against Researcher Bias (Subjectivity Statement)

In terms of the research study, I will address the safeguards against researcher bias by disclosing a subjectivity statement. I began my educational career with a bachelor's degree in social work and a master's degree in school counseling. Due to this background, I have a strong student centered perspective and value a holistic educational approach. I believe that students should not only learn academics in their school settings but they should also receive experiences that help them to develop into good citizens.

My classroom experiences consist of teaching classroom guidance for students in the kindergarten through eighth grades. My experience as a counselor provided me with a more global view of the school and opportunities to work on intervention teams that helped at-risk students. As a school counselor, I served as the school improvement team chair, teacher assistance team chair, 504 chair, and attended initial and reevaluation individualized education plan meetings for special education students. As a counselor, I often found myself in administrative roles that inevitably pushed me to obtain my master's degree in educational leadership. I worked three and a half years as an assistant principal before obtaining a principalship. Currently, I am a fifth year principal of a K-5 elementary school and I am

continuing my work with counselors as an adjunct instructor in the counseling department at local university.

As I embarked on this research study, I was very interested in learning more about the counseling innovation, MEASURE, as a counseling program evaluation tool and the current school counseling practices within the district. During the data analysis, I was conscientious of researcher bias due to my multiple roles. I addressed researcher bias by utilizing the actual data from the Phase One interview, post Q-sort questions, and focus groups to add meaning to the findings. Throughout the dissertation findings, quotes from participants are utilized to provide a rich description of each model factor array. In addition, I relied on member checking by asking for the director to review the transcript of the interview. Furthermore, researcher bias was addressed by the involvement of six focus group counselors in the naming of the factors and their feedback about the findings to also ensure the removal of any researcher bias.

Ethical Issues

Prior to conducting the study, I submitted the required paperwork to the Institutional Review Board for approval (see Appendix E). The main ethical consideration that was addressed in the study is the relationship that I have with the research participants by my working within the school district. The district student services director was a colleague. In terms of school counselors, one school counselor was directly supervised by me so she did not participate in the Phase Two Q-sort. The remaining school counselor participants were

employed in the same district with some of them knowing me in my previous role as a school counselor or as a university instructor.

I also recognize the importance of maintaining the confidentiality and the security of the research participants who participated in this study so there will not be any negative consequences to them for their participation. The counselors submitted their Q-sort protocols with no identifying names. Their protocols were coded based on their level of experience in education, level of experience as a counselor, and their setting. The following section will provide limitations of the study for the reader to consider as they assess this research study and its findings.

Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of the study is the one site selected for the study. The research study was conducted within one state and one local school district that may not be representative of other school districts in the state or in the nation. The findings will not be generalizable to other districts based on the individual characteristics of the district under study.

In terms of the school counselor population that was involved in the study, the sample may not adequately represent minorities or male school counselors since the majority of school counselors in the district are white females. In addition, the district has 37 schools with the highest number of school counselors at the elementary level followed by the middle school level. In the district under study, there are only six high schools. For this reason, the counselors' perspectives may be more heavily weighted based on counselors who are

working at the elementary levels. In addition, 37 out of 55 counselors in the district chose to participate in this study. The study's participants represented 25 schools in the district. Since some schools had one counselor participate and other schools may have had multiple schools participate, there is an over representation of some schools. The graphs highlighted in Chapter 5 which indicated supports, barriers, and types of professional development should be viewed with caution due to the limitations; however, these graphs were included to provide further meaning to the quantitative Phase Two Q-sort findings.

Another limitation to the study is that I was a novice researcher who conducted a mixed methods research design for the first time. In addition to being the researcher, I served as the interviewer for the Phase One interview with the district's student services director. For Phase One, Two, and Three, I served as researcher and transcribed the interview and focus group as well as examined the post Q-sort questions to tally for themes.

In addition to my multiple roles, I also currently serve as a principal in the same school system of the study. I serve as the employer and supervisor of one of the school counselors in the district that works at my present school and she was not included in the Q-sort. I have a professional relationship established with the district student services director as a colleague. In addition, I formerly worked as a school counselor in the district so there are a few remaining school counselors who know me as a former colleague. Furthermore, I teach at a local university and have a few former students that are now working as school counselors in the district. For these reasons, there was a possibility that school counselors were reluctant to share pertinent information based on my principal position within the

system or may have been more comfortable in their participation since they knew me in some capacity. Due to this potential conflict, I chose for participants to not submit their names on their Q-sort protocols as a higher level of confidentiality. This decision also was a limitation because I was not able to follow up with certain counselors based on their responses or link counselors' perceptions to schools where I could have further analyzed school counselor ratio or achievement status of the school.

Another limitation of the research study was the limitations of Q-methodology and focus groups. Some of the objections of the Q-technique procedures shared by McKeown and Thomas (1988) are the subjects having to “make many decisions regarding the salience, meaning, and the relationship of each item to the others” (p. 34). In addition, the subject is free to place items on the distribution; however, the Q-technique is often criticized due to the forced free distribution where the subject has to place a certain number of items in each rand. Finally, the “inverted quasi-normal distribution is believed to violate the principles of operant subjectivity” (McKeown & Thomas, 1988, p. 34). In terms of focus groups, individuals who want to dominate the conversation and care will have to be taken in making sure all participants are able to participate (Creswell, 2007). In addition, focus groups sometimes have difficulty staying on topic due to the numbers of participants. Also, individuals may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about sharing their experiences in the group (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

The final limitation dealt with the concourse statements. As a researcher, these statements were derived from 2008 North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards and

refined by the researcher with counselor input in order to ensure the statements accurately reflected the state's standards. The statements were sorted based on most and least representative practices; however, there may have been a portion of the statements that resulted in counselors placing the card on the negative side due to not completing all tasks. For instance, Statement 2 read as follows: Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs. Some counselors shared this was a difficult statement to place because they use data at the school level; however, do not work with data at the state or national levels. In addition, Statement 10 read as follows: Demonstrate ethical behaviors by following the American School Counselors' Association and North Carolina Educators' Standards for Professional Conduct. While some counselors placed this card on the positive side as a practice that they complete every day, other counselors indicated the difficulty of placing this statement because this is a belief that underscores all of their work.

Summary of Chapter

Chapter Three focused on the methods utilized for this mixed methods study. The research questions were highlighted as well as a discussion of the site selection of the study. The researcher shared the concourse development that originated with the North Carolina Professional School Counseling standards and shared how these statements were culled through the knowledge gained by the researcher from the extant literature with a final refinement after the Q-sort and interviews with a convenience sample of five school counselors. The research study was described in three phases: Phase One: Interview with the

director; Phase Two: Q-sort; and Phase Three: Focus Group. Data analysis and data collection revealed the ways the researcher would analyze the data at the different phases of the study. The researcher shared information on the reliability and validity considerations as well as limitations of the study. Moreover, the researcher spoke to their credibility as a novice researcher, ethical issues, and a subjectivity statement to self disclose experiences of the researcher in the educational and counseling field. The research questions are summarized in Table 3.5 and Chapter four will focus on Phase One by highlighting the district context and perceptions of the district student services director.

CHAPTER FOUR DISTRICT CONTEXT AND DISTRICT PERSPECTIVE

The previous chapter set the stage for the research questions and the phases of the study to understand counselors' perceptions of their practices. The research study begins with an overview of the local school district by providing a context of the county. The pressures for change illuminated in Chapter two spoke to counseling innovations such as MEASURE to focus on outcome data and counselor accountability. This district chose to respond to the pressures of change and the district director became a champion for the change initiative through involving counselors in the selection of MEASURE. Ultimately, the old way of program evaluation was replaced with MEASURE. This chapter reveals how MEASURE originated as the new program evaluation tool as well as offers the perspective of the district leader on supports, barriers, and professional development.

Description of the Local School District

The site of the study was an eastern North Carolina School district with thirty-seven schools serving approximately 23,267 students. The student population was represented by the following ethnic breakdowns: 1.5% Asian, 7.7% Hispanic, 48.3% African American, 38.9% Caucasian, and 3.5% multi-racial. At the time of the study, the district employed approximately 55 counselors within the school district. These counselors serve Pre-K through twelfth grade students and these thirty-four counselors represented 61% of the districts' counselors.

This district was a unique choice for this study because the Student Services Director implemented MEASURE as a new way of evaluating the school counseling programs in the district during the 2008-2009 school year. Prior to assuming the director position, the participant had worked within the district as a high school counselor and Health Sciences Academy Director. Following these experiences, he was promoted to the Director of Student Services where he directed the work of counselors, social workers, nurses, and school resource officers. After working in this position for a couple of years, he advanced within the position to the Executive Director of Student Services. In 2003, he was recognized with the Barry Gaskins Ambassador Award for exemplifying the attributes of grace, civility, humor, care, and concern for all. In 2006, he received the School of Education's Outstanding Young Alumnus Award from the University of Chapel Hill. Following these achievements, he received his doctorate in education in May 2010 with dissertation work focused on counseling. At the time of the interview, he had recently resigned from his position within the district to assume another position in the university setting.

In considering people within the district to interview, I chose to solely interview the Director of Student Services because he was the driver of the reform. As a counselor within the district, he had earned the respect of the school counselors as well as central office administration. At the beginning of the initiative, he secured the support from the Superintendent and began to enact the change towards MEASURE as the new way of program evaluation by involving the school counselors in professional development to

support them in the transition. At the time of the study, the district was in the third year of implementation of MEASURE.

Interview: Catalyst for Change

The Phase One interview sought to understand through the lens of the district's student services director the rationale for the introduction of MEASURE in the district, information on the implementation efforts towards MEASURE, the factors that foster and/or inhibit change, and his view of MEASURE's impact on counseling practices in the district. In his words, "There was three main reasons why I felt [we should] pursue this. One was that there was pressure to show what it is that our counselors are doing because of economics. Student services right after clerical and custodial is always the first to be cut during tough times and I thought we needed something firm to stand on so we [could] keep positions. I really wanted to add positions and to be able to justify in adding more [positions] we needed some firm data to stand on. MEASURE provided that for us."

The director provided an example of how MEASURE had already helped support counselors' work in the district by sharing:

"Last year, when the budget was looking pretty bleak that was about the time I thought let's share our MEASURE results and so counselors weren't being talked about for cuts at that point and that was part of the buy in with the counselors as well. Hey, this is job security. Right now if people have no idea about all the work that you are doing because you are working so hard.... and they are still questioning about whether or not they should cut our positions. It is because they don't know what you do. The Board doesn't know what you

do. Some principals didn't really know what their counselors did so MEASURE helped provide that.”

He went on to share a second reason for the selection of MEASURE by wanting counselors to be able to focus on counseling practices versus other duties that prevent them from moving forward in their twenty-first century roles. He revealed:

“I am a strong proponent for counselors not being testing coordinators. You can get other people to do the testing there is no special coursework or training in...Counselor Ed programs for how to handle standardized testing. I mean there might be assessment courses but that is completely different and so counselors needed to be spending their time working with students, providing counseling and consultation support and what have you. So that was another impetus for putting this in place. If we put MEASURE in place and we are showing the effectiveness of our program you got to take testing off us.”

The final reason was the underlining theme of accountability and supporting the role of school counselors. Simply stated, “If you hold us more accountable, [we need to have] the time to do the thing that we are being accountable for. [Our Superintendent] agreed and we were very fortunate. Otherwise, there is no way our counselors would have time to collect data and do the sort of things that we asked them to do with MEASURE.” In essence, our efforts to demonstrate accountability “helped MEASURE kind of crystallize in our mind[s] as the way we wanted to pursue evaluating our program and show what counselors really need to be spending their time [doing.]” Therefore, the Director envisioned MEASURE as a tool that would allow counselors to maintain their job security in these economic times, focus

on their counseling practices, and to demonstrate accountability with results in their roles as school counselors.

In terms of the timeline for implementation of MEASURE and the supports that were offered to counselors to assist with this effort. The director indicated that “we actually had heard about MEASURE from Carolyn Dahir at the North Carolina School Counselor Associations’ conference a number of years back and we had been working at that point on moving toward the ASCA national model. We were trying to find the easiest way to make this shift because this is a huge shift of mindset for counselors. They are so busy just putting out the fires and just doing the dirty work every day. Saying you have to collect some more data now and justify what you are doing ...to be effective. That is a lot to ask and it is a huge shift so we had to gradually work up to that so we started talking about collecting data, [and talking about] the [usefulness of the] data that we had been collecting previously.”

For a timeline, “It took us a year to talk about the national model and really com[e] up with what instrument [we would use.] Then, we did a year and a half of training. I would say the whole process itself probably took two and half years which I wish it had been a little bit sooner but I don’t think I would have had the buy in that we had from the counselors if we had rushed it. After awhile it was just something that they were ready to move on with like we’ve been hearing about this for so long let’s just do it and get it over with.”

The district provided workshops, monthly counselor’s meetings, and other resources to support the implementation. The director reflected, “The first year was really tough because we were getting used to working with data. [This] is very different for people who

are use to people skills so a really useful booklet was *Making Data Work* that was a workbook that was put out by ASCA that shows some very simple ways [to collect data.] We had an excel spreadsheet workshop so that our folks got used to putting in formulas and making graphs and charts. Then, we contracted with Ed Star, an education consulting firm, here in the state to come and do three workshops....where we had them kind of work with our counselors on setting measurable objectives, collecting data, analyzing and disaggregating data.” Throughout the process, “myself and some of the staff from the student services department read the rough drafts and looked through them [to send] feedback. So, the first year it was a lot of work but it went pretty well. The second year [was] much more smoothly and our folks were use to it.”

In his reflection of the various stakeholder groups, he commented, “The buy in with the board, the superintendent, and the principals was actually much easier than they buy in from the counselors.” The director had been hired by the Superintendent a few months after she arrived into the district and he quickly received her support at the beginning of the change. He shared, “when she first came on board as the Superintendent, I met with her and told her the vision of the student services department was to hold us accountable [which] would help us justify our existence.” In his words of the Superintendent, “she is an advocate [for students] and student centered.” From the “series of conversations over time” with the Superintendent, the issue of counselors being utilized in the district as testing coordinators was discussed. Basically, the deal was “to hold [school counselors] accountable to do what we are trained to do and [then] we could move them away from testing.” The timing of the

conversations was helpful because the state had just changed the counselors' job description with an emphasis on 80% direct services to students and the call to remove counselors from the role of testing coordinators. Therefore, the superintendent was agreeable and the case for principals was to allow counselors to be "more student-centered people in these roles." The director revealed that only four or five of the 35 principals at the time were "pushing back" or "worried about how [their counselors] would be able to address" working directly with students when they had focused on administrative tasks like testing. While the "shift was not overnight change," all parties recognized that "academic and remediation programs top out and we won't be able to get any further without addressing other barriers that impact students."

In terms of the Board of Education, the director presented year end program evaluation with the MEASURE documents from all of the district's counseling programs. Each school was responsible for three MEASURE documents that focused on an academic, career, and personal/social goal of the program. He commented,

Our board was completely in favor of it and when they got the first results they were completely taking aback. For some of them, they didn't have a clear picture of what our counselors did. I think it helped crystallize for them okay here is the role that they play and why it is so important. One of the board members was moved to tears when she was reading about some of the work her counselors had done and how powerful it was [for students.]

Another important stakeholder group was the principals, he noted:

The principals were really supportive because [of].... the data we had been collecting on the counseling program. For administrators who haven't been counselors or haven't worked in student services before [they were] able to see how I am going to take an event, an activity with guidance, classroom lesson, [and] small groups [to] collect data on the effectiveness of [their practice.] Well now, the administrators have something to go on. So, if counselors are doing a great job and the program is going well they have data to say we have a really strong counseling program or they have data that says okay here are some areas that we need to work on.”

During the course of the interview, the director spoke about both the supports and the barriers to the implementation of MEASURE. In terms of support, he specified trainings by Ed Star, counselor meetings, and the student services staff as supports for counselors. During the meetings, “we set time aside to practice MEASURE. We would essentially just kept practicing every month we were doing something different where we were just getting use to it. Not just jumping in feet first and saying alright we are going to do this. We took a couple of years to think through what instrument we wanted to use for our program evaluation and then how to use that instrument. So, we had that luxury of taking our time, kind of planning out, setting up training, and getting people more comfortable, and we would always check with them and say are we ready for the next step? That helped with buy in because all along there is no one [who] came back to us and said we never talked about this.” In addition, the local university was identified as a support to the initiative by graduating counselors who had already been taught MEASURE. The director mentioned, “what was really fortunate was [the

university was] using MEASURE and that was helpful because anyone new fresh out of [the] program that we hired could hit the ground running and we were in great shape.”

In terms of barriers to the implementation of MEASURE, the director identified one of the major barriers was counselors helping counselors feel comfortable working with data. For instance, “we were trying to help some of our counselors who were veterans and not proficient in Excel how...to save you a tremendous amount of time [in] getting data in a spreadsheet to produce your chart and graph just in seconds.” The director said counselors would share with him, “this is something that I have never had to do before and if I was comfortable with numbers I would be in a different profession.” For him the number one barrier was “getting them comfortable with data and trying to pull it down so it was something really simple and comfortable.” Time was also a barrier as counselors were getting assigned other demands like testing. Counselors also expressed difficulty with the change. Some of beginning counselors struggled not “so much with the concept of MEASURE, [but] trying to learn so many different things [such as] TAT and 504.” In implementing MEASURE, “the way I have always done it is another [barrier]” that was present for experienced counselors.

At the conclusion of the interview, I asked the question to find out from the perspective of the director if MEASURE has changed counseling practices in the district. The director presented these thoughts: “[It] seems like every time [counselors] are thinking about an activity that they already do or [an activity that they are] planning on doing that they immediately start thinking about how can I collect data on this [initiative.]” From the

director's perspective MEASURE worked to change the mindset of counselors. He reflected,

I feel like that mindset has shifted to where that is one of the first things they jump to... It is not let me put this event together so it will be fun but how can I make sure that what we do is measurable and the outcomes that we want.

He gave an example of how one counselor through the use of MEASURE was able to see how a considerable amount of time was spent on activities such as Red Ribbon Week but "there was nothing that really supported all this time that the counselor was putting into it." MEASURE has also provided a reflective piece for counselors to evaluate and reflect on their initiatives. In this example, the counselor was able to "amend her practices to change [and have the data] to contribute to the school." Furthermore, he indicated that MEASURE provided them with a tool to communicate program effectiveness within the district. All of the counselors receive an electronic copy of the MEASURE documents and can know the program efforts of all of the district schools as well as contact information if they wanted to initiate a similar program. In his words, "they could start seeing some of the other things that other people were doing. It wasn't that someone had to tell them because they could look and see this is something that is really working over here. I should try doing that and now I have a contact and a school to call to ask somebody about it."

From the interview, MEASURE did work to help counselors demonstrate accountability by sharing how their practices demonstrate results for students. From the student service director's viewpoint, counselors were able to abandon, modify, or strengthen their practices based on their data. The change effort included supports to assist the

counselors in their transition to MEASURE. The director shared counselor monthly meetings, professional development, the student services staff, and the local universities were helpful in the change process. Barriers were also identified as counselors' ability to work with data, time, and elements of the change process where counselors had to transition to a new way of program evaluation. Presently, MEASURE is continuing to be used within the district by counselors in the development of their yearly goals and program evaluation.

This dissertation is unlike traditional dissertations because the findings are reported in two chapters. The findings in this chapter began by reporting an overview of the district under study. The next section highlighted the interview with the student services director who was the catalyst for the change in the district. The pressures of change and the accountability of the program in the midst of budget cuts was a perfect storm for the introduction of MEASURE. From the conceptual framework, Chapter four correlates to the Theory of Action addressed in Chapter two. The interview allowed the researcher to obtain answers to the research questions from the district's perspective; however, the findings reported in the subsequent chapter will reveal the perceptions of the school counselors about their current school counseling practices as well as their experiences with MEASURE. In the next chapter, the Phase Two Q-sort findings will be revealed. In addition, the post-Q-sort questions and the Phase Three focus group's findings will offer further meaning behind the Q-sort data. Chapter five findings will share the perspectives of counselors and the espoused theory will be revealed to answer: Are counselors living or not living up to twenty-first century practices?

CHAPTER FIVE FINDINGS

The overarching research question for this study examined school counselors' perceptions of "How innovative school counseling practices are or are not lived in a local school district?" In addition, the study presented further information on the following sub questions:

- What fosters or inhibits change towards innovative school counseling practices?
- What are ideal counseling practices?
- How was MEASURE implemented with the district?
- In what ways, if any, has MEASURE changed counseling practices?

In answering the research questions, I used Q-methodology in order for counselors to sort practices derived from the North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards. As you recall from the research design, the Pre-Study Phase provided me with feedback from five counselors in order for me to finalize the concourse statements used with the P-sample. Phase Two focused on the school counselors' perceptions of their counseling practices by utilizing Q-methodology and post Q-sort questions. This chapter will describe the data findings and statistical analysis of the Q-sort from Phase Two by taking the reader step by step with each of the three factors that emerged in the study.

The P-sample was 34 current North Carolina school counselors found in a local school district. The school counselors represented various K-12 school levels including: twelve K-5 counselors, four K-8 counselors, eleven 6-9 counselors, and seven 9-12 counselors. The participants were primarily female (30 female, 4 male) and the majority of

the participants indicated that they were Caucasian (8 of the 34 listed African American). In terms of their years of experience, 58% had five years or less as a school counselor while 41% had six or more years of experience. As far as total years in education, 61% had six or more years in the field of education with 38% of participants having less than six years in the educational field. Twenty-one school counselors completed the Q-sort on the scheduled day; however, the researcher followed up with additional appointments for a larger participant group. All Q-sorts were completed within the same month for a total of 34 participants representing 25 schools in the district.

Statistical Analysis

After collecting the Q-sort data, the software program, PQ Method, was accessed through a free website (www.qmethod.org) and used to analyze the data. The PQ Method provides a DOS based statistical program to analyze the Q-sort data. The thirty-seven concourse statements derived from the 2008 North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards were entered into the program. The Q-Sort data was assigned a number by participant that included the participant's school level, range of years as a counselor, and range of total years in education. The coding system will be explained in more detail later in the chapter. All of the Q-sorts were entered in the PQ Method statistical analysis program by the way participants sorted the concourse statement numbers. The principal components method was used to analyze correlations and to complete the factor analysis.

The PQ method program defaults at eight factors. These eight factors provide eigenvalues. The eigenvalues are then studied to determine rotation. A scree plot was used to display eigenvalues. Figure 5.1 provides the scree plot.

There is a clear and present obvious elbow between Factors One and Two. The plot shows the relative importance of the factors with the slope flattening at a point known as the elbow which shows the important factors occurring before the flattening and the less important factors following the flattening of the slope. Plotting the eight factors chosen by the PQ method program shows one elbow to the curve at Factor One. Further factor rotations were looked at with the data. While there is a clear elbow after Factor One, I would have been unable to conduct a factor analysis with one factor. Therefore, I chose to look at more factors. The correlation among factors after three became very close. Factors beyond three were very similar to one another. Thus, I chose to rotate the three factors to provide three distinct portrayals of counselors' perceptions of their current practices.

In order to understand the significant loadings on factors in Q methodology, N is the number of statements used for the Q-sort. In this study, N is equal to 37. The standard error is one divided by the standard deviation of 34 which produces a standard error is 6.08. This standard error is used to determine the significance level for a loading at both the .01 level. Both Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 are to support the three factor rotation. In looking at the correlations between factors, there is a relatively low correlation between Factor One and Three as well as Factor Two and Factor Three which should make a nice, unique factor array.

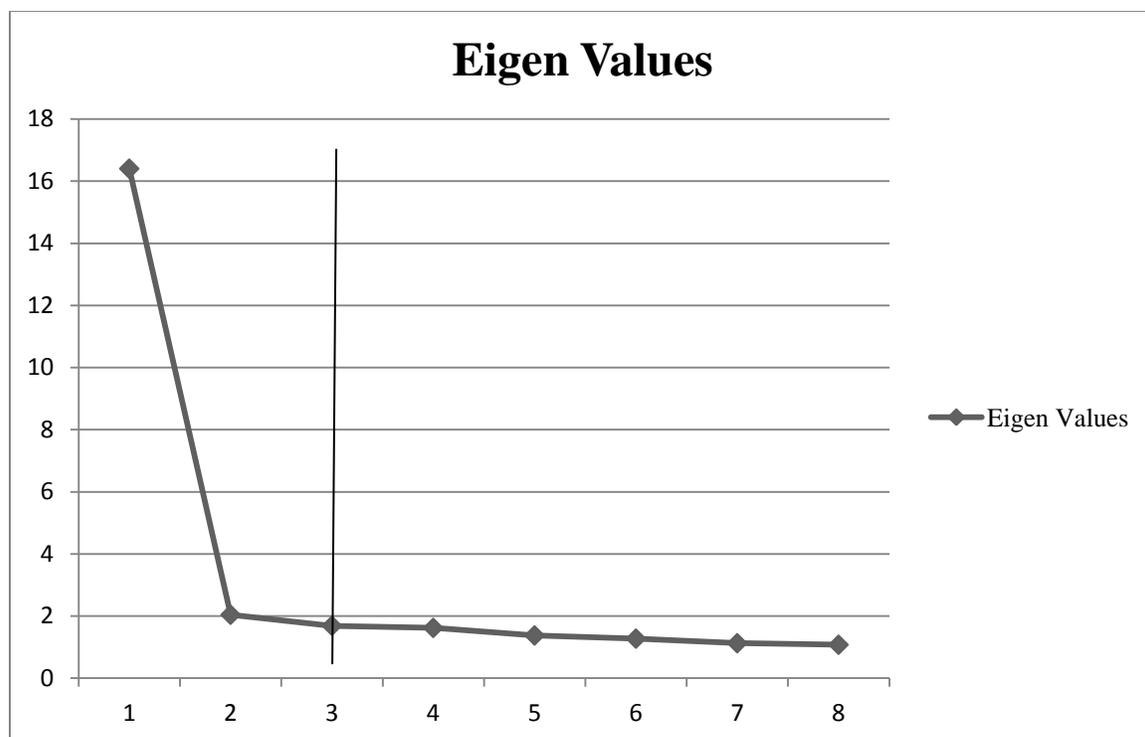


Figure 5.1. Scree plot of eigen values.

Table 5.1

Correlations Between Factor Scores

Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1.000	0.1425	0.7495
0.4125	0.3890	1.000
0.7495	1.000	0.3890

Table 5.2

Humphrey's Rule

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Cross Product of Two Highest Loadings	.6611	.5862	.4158
Standard Error	.32	.32	.32
Difference	.3411	.2662	.0958

At the same time, there is a high correlation between Factor 1 and Factor 2 with .7495. This will be described later as we will discover some of the ways that these factors are related.

Humphrey's rule indicates that a factor is significant if the cross product of its two highest loadings (ignoring sign) exceeds twice the standard error (Fruchter, 1954). As per this rule, all three factors selected for final interpretation are significant. All three factors satisfy all of the above criteria to be chosen for rotation and interpretation. Humphrey's rule was met for this study and is found in Table 5.2.

Factor Interpretation

Three model sorts (Factors One, Two, and Three) were found in this study accounting for 58 % of the variance. One hundred percent of the 34 participants loaded significantly on one of these three factor arrangements. The three factors were named the following: Factor One: The Helping Professionals – “The Helpers;” Factor Two: Skill-Driven Professionals – “The Worker Bees,” and Factor Three: The Coordinating Professionals – “The Cruise Directors.” Each model sort provides insights into the current school counselors' perspectives of their counseling practices in relation to the current North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards.

Table 5.3 depicts the loadings of Factors One, Two, and Three. The asterisks on the table denote the level of significance that each participant loaded across the three factors. For 99% confidence, two asterisks are recorded to reflect .4242 at or above .01 significance level. For 95% confidence, one asterisk is recorded to reflect .3222 at or above .05

Table 5.3

Participants' Q-sort According to Factor Arrays

Participants	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
1-133	0.4469**	0.5788**	0.1790
2-111	0.1855	0.7132**	0.4124*
3-144	0.7232**	0.3294*	0.2365
4-144	0.4949**	0.2599	0.5981**
5-155	0.1566	0.5892**	0.2471
6-134	0.1766	0.7823**	0.1591
7-154	0.2228	0.7177**	0.4173*
8-155	0.4518**	0.4247**	0.4106*
9-144	0.4508**	0.3654*	0.5648**
10-122	0.3675*	0.5819**	0.2920*
11-123	0.2938	0.7494**	0.2406
12-144	0.6731**	0.3957*	0.3483*
13-224	0.5440**	0.5488**	0.0952
14-211	0.6360**	0.4102*	0.3596*
15-224	0.4782**	0.0828	0.4946**
16-213	0.7529**	0.3399*	0.1276
17-211	0.1228	0.5221**	0.6952**
18-222	0.4856**	0.4175*	0.1122
19-234	0.3919*	0.6354**	0.0665
20-322	0.4829**	0.4175*	0.1811
21-313	0.3421*	0.6343**	0.0704
22-311	0.4424**	0.3024	0.0185
23-322	0.5934**	0.4356**	0.0358
24-355	0.5522**	0.5357**	-0.0170
25-312	0.5410**	0.6013**	-0.0191
26-322	0.5753**	0.3688*	0.2568
27-313	0.4113*	0.3236*	-0.6360**
28-445	0.5294**	0.2851	0.1467
29-422	0.6879**	0.3546*	0.1888
30-411	0.5614**	0.3670*	0.4331
31-423	0.8781**	0.0405	0.1938
32-411	.2923	0.6522**	0.3521*
33-455	0.3827*	0.6195**	-0.1197
34-434	0.4011*	0.4570**	-0.535

Table 5.3 (continued)

Explained Variance	24	24	10
No. of Significant Loadings	21/34 p>.01	18/34 p>.01	5/34 p>.01
Confounding Loadings	6/34 p>.05	11/34 p>.05	7/34 p>.05
	12	14	4

Note. ** at or above significance p>.01 99% confidence

* at or above significance p>.05 95% confidence

significance level. In examining the table, there are some confounding loads within each factor. Therefore, some participants significantly loaded at the 99% level for more than one factor which means that they subscribed to closely between multiple factors that they were removed from the overall number. For example, participant 9 loaded at greater than .01 for all three factors. As a result, this participant had a confounding load for all factors and was removed from any factor since no one factor model represented their perceptions on counseling practice.

Table 5.3 also identifies participants based on a coding system that consists of the following: the school level, years of experience as a counselor, and total years in education in case common counseling practices varied in terms of school setting or years of experience. Each participant was assigned a number which signifies the first number in the coding system. The subsequent three numbers represent their response to some demographic questions on the Post Q-sort protocol. For instance, the code 6-134 identifies the participant as the sixth of 34 participants. This individual works in the K-5 elementary setting with a range of six to ten years as a school counselor and 11 to 20 total years in education. Hence, the second number represents the grade level setting level (1 = K-5; 2= K-8; 3= 6-8 and 4- 9-12) that the participant currently works in as a counselor. The third number represents their range of experience working as a school counselor and the fourth number represents their total years in education using the following coding system: 1 = 0-2 years; 2 =3-5 years; 3= 6-10 years, 4=11-20 years, and 5= 21+ years.

Table 5.3 portrayed the macro Q-sort findings by through a representation of how each individual counselor participant loaded across the three factor arrays. Table 5.4 continues to drill down to the micro level. This table depicts counselors' factor loadings by concourse statement. From these factor loadings, the researcher shares the concourse statements that were most representative or least representative of counseling practices. For instance, Statements 3, 6, 7, 14, 15, 22, 24, and 29 all had negative loadings across all three factors. For counselors in this district, these concourse statements reflect least representative practices for school counselors. On the other hand, Statements 11, 12, 17, 18, and 27 all positively load so these concourse statements reflect most representative practices for school counselors. As the chapter unfolds, we will move further into the micro level of analysis by highlighting each factor. Table 5.4 also begins to tell the story of the similarities and differences across factors. For instance, Factor One and Factor Two counselors loaded +5 for Statement 11 which was creating an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible. These two factors similarly expressed a negative loading -4 for Statement 2 which was taking an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data. Again, these two factors were highly correlated; however, the table also reveals ways that these factors are different. Statement 12 which is modeling and teaching positive behaviors was positively loaded +4 for Factor Two; however, Factor One positively loaded at +1. This is one of the distinctions that enabled Factor One to be identified as the helping professionals and Factor Two to be identified as the skill driven professionals. As the chapter unfolds, each factor array will be further discussed to share insights on counselors' perspectives.

Table 5.4

Participants' Factor Loadings by Concourse Statement

#	Statement	Factor Loadings		
		1	2	3
1	Work collaboratively with all school staff to create a positive learning community	2	2	0
2	Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs	-4	-4	1
3	Create data driven goals and strategies that align with the school improvement plan	-1	-2	-1
4	Provide input in the selection of professional development for the school staff	-5	-3	-3
5	Provide mentoring and support for colleagues to improve the academic success and overall well being of students	0	1	0
6	Promote professional growth and participate in high quality professional development activities	-4	0	0
7	Advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning as well as equitable, student centered legislation	-2	-5	-2
8	Promote an awareness of learning styles, diversity, and individual learning needs	-1	-1	-4
9	Participate in the implementation of school wide activities to improve the education and development of all students	-1	1	5
10	Demonstrate ethical behaviors by following the American School Counselors' Association and North Carolina Educators' Standards for Professional Conduct	4	3	0
11	Create an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible	5	5	1

Table 5.4 (continued)

12	Model and teach positive behaviors through developmentally-appropriate and prevention-oriented activities that lead students to demonstrate positive relationships	1	4	1
13	Understand how a student's culture, language, and background may influence school performance and make the school counseling program responsive to student needs	1	0	-1
14	Collaborate with teachers to ensure that the presentation of the Standard Course of Study is relevant to a diverse student population	-3	-4	-4
15	Select materials and develop activities that incorporate the histories and contributions of diverse cultures and work to counteract stereotypes	-3	-1	-5
16	Maintain high expectations for all students including graduation from high school	3	2	-2
17	Appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment	2	1	3
18	Collaborate with others to create a customized plan of action that provides follow-up services to meet students' varied needs	3	1	4
19	Identify special needs using data, referrals, observation, and other sources of information	0	-1	4
20	Seek solutions that may stand in the way of effective family and community involvement in order to improve collaboration among the school, home, and community	0	1	-3
21	Align content standards and implement program models developed by professional organizations in school counseling	-3	-3	0
22	Support equity and access to rigorous and relevant curricula in order to enhance student success	-1	-2	-2

Table 5.4 (continued)

23	Apply the knowledge of theories and research about human development, student learning, and academic success to address the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students	1	-1	-1
24	Support teachers and other specialists' use of the North Carolina Guidance Curriculum to develop and enhance students' twenty-first century skills and promote global awareness	-2	-3	-3
25	Use academic, behavior, and attendance data to plan programs to meet student needs	2	0	3
26	Incorporate into the school counseling program the twenty-first century life skills that include leadership, ethics, accountability, adaptability, personal productivity, personal responsibility, people skills, self-direction, and social responsibility	0	2	2
27	Listen to students, colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders in order to identify issues to assist in overcoming barriers that impede student success	4	3	2
28	Understand the influences that affect individual student learning and provide resources to staff to enhance student strengths and address student weaknesses	1	0	2
29	Discuss the comprehensive school counseling program with school administrators and communicate the goals of the program to stakeholders	-2	-2	-2
30	Utilize the Guidance Curriculum, Individual Student Planning, and Preventive and Responsive Services in meeting the needs of students as they strive to raise achievement and close gaps	0	0	1
31	Employ technology as appropriate to enhance the delivery of the school counseling program	-2	0	0
32	Help students learn problem-solving techniques that incorporate critical thinking skills such as identifying problems, recognizing options, weighing evidence, and evaluating consequences	3	2	-1

Table 5.4 (continued)

33	Use a variety of methods to communicate effectively in support of the academic, career, and personal/social development of all students	0	3	-1
34	Assists students in developing effective listening and communication skills in order to enhance academic success, build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, advocate for themselves, and become responsible twenty-first century citizens	2	4	0
35	Examine the impact of the comprehensive school counseling program on student academic, career, and personal/social development in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program	-1	-2	3
36	Analyze student achievement, behavior, and school climate data as well as feedback from students, parents, and other stakeholders to continually develop the school counseling program	1	-1	1
37	Actively investigate and collaborate with other stakeholders to implement new ideas to improve student academic, career, and personal/social development as well as the school counseling profession	0	0	2

Factor One: Helping Professionals - “*The Helpers*”

Factor One had 21 of 34 participants’ loadings significant at p.01 level which accounts for 24% of the variance. Due to the confounding loads, twelve of the participants emerged as attributing Factor One as the one model array that represented their perceptions of counseling practices at a significant at p.01 level. Table 5.5 provides an overview of how school counselor participants loaded on Factor One. The twenty-one participants were comprised of six elementary counselors, five K-8 counselors, six middle school counselors, and four high school counselors. Seventy-five percent of the middle school counselors participating in this study loaded significantly to this factor. Seventy-one percent of K-8 counselors were represented by Factor One. The high school counselors represented 57% and the elementary counselors represented 50%.

In describing the twenty-one participants’ level of experience as a school counselor, all 4 counselors in the study with 11-20 years of experience loaded on this factor. Eight out of the nine participants who had three to five years of experience loaded for this factor. The remaining levels were the following: 50% at the 0-2 years of experience level, and 40% at the 6-10 or 21+ years of experience levels. In relation to their total years in education, the 21 counselors represented three counselors with 0-2 total years in education, six counselors with 3-5 years, three counselors with 6-10 years, 7 counselors with 11 to 20 years, and 2 counselors with 21+ total years in education. Similarly to the years as a counselor, the highest number of counselors at 85% fell in the 3 to 5 years of total years in education.

Table 5.5

Factor One: Helping Professionals “The Helpers”

Participant	Level	Years as a Counselor	Total Years in Education	Factor 1
31-423	9-12	3-5	6-10	0.8781**
16-213	K-8	0-2	6-10	0.7529**
6-134	K-5	6-10	11-20	0.7232**
29-422	9-12	3-5	3-5	0.6879**
12-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.6731**
14-211	K-8	0-2	0-2	0.6360**
23-322	6-8	3-5	3-5	0.5934**
26-322	6-8	3-5	3-5	0.5753**
30-411	9-12	0-2	0-2	0.5614**
24-355	6-8	21+	21+	0.5522**
13-224	K-8	3-5	11-20	0.5440**
25-312	6-8	0-2	3-5	0.5410**
28-455	9-12	21+	21+	0.5294**
4-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.4949**
18-222	K-8	3-5	3-5	0.4856**
20-322	6-8	3-5	3-5	0.4829**
15-224	K-8	3-5	11-20	0.4782**
8-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.4518**
9-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.4508**
1-133	K-5	6-10	6-10	0.4469**
22-311	6-8	0-2	0-2	0.4424**
27-313	6-8	0-2	6-10	0.4113*
34-434	9-12	6-10	11-20	0.4011*
19-234	K-8	6-10	11-20	0.3919*
33-455	9-12	21+	21+	0.3827*
10-122	K-5	3-5	3-5	0.3675*
21-313	6-8	0-2	6-10	0.3421*
11-123	K-5	3-5	6-10	0.2938
32-411	9-12	0-2	0-2	0.2923
7-154	K-5	21+	11-20	0.2228
2-111	K-5	0-2	0-2	0.1855
6-134	K-5	6-10	11-20	0.1766
5-155	K-5	21+	21+	0.1566
17-211	K-8	0-2	0-2	0.1228

For Factor One, six counselors representing one elementary, one K-8, two middle school, and two high school counselors loaded at the $p > .05$ significance level. According to the findings, seven of the 34 participants did not load at any level of significance for this factor. These participants represented five elementary, one K-8, and one high school counselor. Interestingly, the majority of these counselors represented elementary school counselors with five of the participants being elementary school counselors. In terms of years as a counselor, this group of counselors represented three counselors with 0-2 years, 1 counselor with 3-5 years, one counselor with 6-10, and two counselors with 21+ years of experience.

Table 5.6 further depicts the participants by providing insights into those who highly loaded at the 99% significance level and the participants who did not load for this factor. Regardless of the counselor's level, 61% of the participating counselors in this study identified with this perspective by highly loading for this factor.

During the focus group, a small group of six counselors named Factor One as the *Helping Professionals*. Counselors who were represented by this model array were viewed as respectful, supportive, and helping professionals. Factor One showed counselors valuing ethical standards and viewed their practices from a global view of helping others. Focus group participants indicated that Factor One reflected a person-centered view of counseling practices where current practices represented why school counselors chose to be in the profession which was to be "the helpers." Throughout the findings, focus group participants' comments will be recorded with the following: FG, number assigned and second number to

Table 5.6

Factor One: High and No Loading of Factor by Participant Level

Highly Loaded (p.01 99%)	K-5	K-8	6-8	9-12
Number of counselors	6/12	5/7	6/8	4/7
% by participant level	50%	71%	75%	57%
Did not load	5/12	1/7	0/8	1/7
% by participant level	41%	14%	0%	14%

denote their setting as a counselor (1= K-5; 2=K-8; 3=6-8; 4=9-12). A 9-12 focus group participant voiced “the term support comes to mind for me” (FG54). A K-5 focus group participant shared from data that the term “respectful comes up in several places” (FG12). Additionally, a K-8 counselor indicated that all of the characteristics valued in this factor seemed to be “defining the whole person that goes into the helping profession” (FG32). In fact, respectful and supportive are words found in the standards sorted in the +5 columns.

This factor array is characterized by North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards that highlight aspects of creating a respectful, supportive, and inviting environment, demonstrating ethical standards, and listening to others in order to promote student success. Figure 5.2 provides a visual representation of this model sort.

Those Q sorts that were defining for Factor One showed school counselors in most agreement with statements 11 (+5), 10 (+4), and 27 (+4) as being most like their current counseling practices.

- +5 (11) Create an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible
- +4 (10) Demonstrate ethical behaviors by following the American School Counselors’ Association and North Carolina Educators’ Standards for Professional Conduct
- +4 (27) Listen to students, colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders in order to identify issues to assist in overcoming barriers that impede student success

In terms of creating a respectful, supportive and inviting environment (+5), a high school counselor shared “The ultimate goal for me as a counselor is to create a safe and inviting environment where students feel cared about and comfortable” (32-411; Statement 11). Another middle school counselor reflected on statement 11, “Everyday with parents,

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree Nor Disagree					Strongly Agree		
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
4	2	14	7	3	5	12	1	16	10	11
	6	15	24	8	19	13	17	18	27	
		21	29	9	20	23	25	32		
			31	22	26	28	34			
				35	30	36				
					33					
					37					

Figure 5.2. Q-Sort distribution grid for factor one.

students, and teachers, I try to create an inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible environment. It is important to me to establish relationships so I can accomplish all other indicators” (20-322). A statement most characteristic (+4) of demonstrating ethical behaviors came from a K-5 counselor who stated, “I believe this statement is at the core of my being. This is what allows me to do what I do every day in the utmost professional manner. It is important to me that I be a role model for children and set an example” (3-144; Statement 10). In terms of the practice of listening (Statement 27), a high school counselor reflected, “I communicate and listen to students, colleagues, parents, and other colleagues daily identifying issues and assisting with overcoming the issues. I feel this practice reoccurs most often in my practice and therefore is most representative. I feel this practice is rooted in all of my responsibilities as a counselor” (30-411).

Interestingly, these Helping Professionals did not feel included in providing input for professional development or having the opportunity to participate in professional development activities. Also, these school counselors expressed some struggles with data especially at the state and national level due to access. Some counselors even viewed data as taking them away from their helping roles with students. Factor One’s viewpoint expressed statements that reflected statements 4, 6, and 27 as being least like these counselors’ current practices.

- 5 (4) Provide input in the selection of professional development for the school staff
- 4 (2) Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs
- 4 (6) Promote professional growth and participate in high quality professional development activities

Statements that were most characteristic (-5) of this viewpoint of providing input into professional development were shared by a K-5 counselor, “I have never in all seven years been asked for input about staff development. When I have tried to make suggestions for areas of concern that I noticed, I was not listened to so I have stopped doing that” (19-234; Statement 4). A 6-8 participant revealed “The school’s professional development is normally based on AYP, students’ EOG scores, and the like; therefore, I do not or am rarely if ever asked to participate” (26-322; Statement 4). Another high school counselor mentioned, “In my current situation, having input in staff development is not a priority [because] building the program comes first” (31-423; Statement 4). Statements most characteristic (-4) of this viewpoint of taking an active role in analyzing various levels of data included a K-5 counselor who noted, “I am still having struggles with collecting, analyzing, and using data. I do try to use my school’s data to drive my counseling program but have not ventured into district, state, or national data to make decisions about my program” (8-155; Statement 2). Another K-5 school counselor shared “I don’t actively look at state and national data to drive my counseling program. I look more at data within my school to make decisions about the counseling program” (9-144; Statement 2). A middle school focus group participant elaborated on this least common practice by sharing, “Most of us like face to face work with people. My day is so busy [and] I will always choose to interact with people versus analyzing data. If it is a really busy day, I wouldn’t make [data] a priority over all of the other things that I have to do” (FG43).

In terms of the practice of professional growth and participating in professional development, an elementary school counselor indicated “I find it difficult to get away and go to seminars about counseling practices. My county does not offer counseling related topics as a part of the staff development” (3-144; Statement 6). Another K-5 focus group participant voiced, “We don’t have access to it. A lot of us are having to pay out of pocket. If you think of the staff development coming from central office to the schools it is all teacher related. It is all academic and very little correlates to what we do. I find myself going to some of the things to stay in the loop” (FG22). A focus group middle school counselor further added “For me, it was the high quality. If you have been in the county for awhile lots of time it is the same information and the same presenter. It becomes a refresher” (FG43).

Helping Professionals is the theme of Factor One. The most common practices revealed a desire to make people feel comfortable with the motto of one high school counselor “Open it and they will come” (31-423). Factor One portrayed school counselors who valued being a helping professional through the environment created, modeling of ethical behaviors and listening to others. Even the least likely practices revealed these “helpers” showing preferences for working with people versus data. Furthermore, their lack of input in professional development showed the limited opportunities or requests for help in this area by administration. In terms of professional development, the teacher related professional development was viewed as less helpful to them in their roles and access issues were presented to counselor specific professional development.

Factor Two: Skill Driven Professionals – “*The Worker Bees*”

Factor Two had 18 of 34 participants' loadings were significant at p.01 that accounts for 24% of variance. Due to the confounding loads, 14 of the participants emerged as attributing Factor Two as the one model array that represented their perceptions of counseling practices at a significant at p.01 level. Table 5.7 provides an overview of how school counselor participants loaded on Factor Two. The eighteen participants were comprised of eight elementary counselors, three K-8 counselors, four middle school counselors, and three high school counselors. Sixty-six percent of the elementary school counselors participating in this study loaded significantly to this factor. Fifty percent of middle counselors were represented by Factor Two. Both the K-8 and the high school counselors represented 42% of the participants.

In describing the eighteen participants' level of experience as a school counselor, 83% of counselors with 21+ years of experience highly loaded on this factor. Another group of counselors who loaded significantly represented counselors with 6-10 years of experience at 80%. The remaining levels were the following: 50% at the 0-2 years of experience level, 44% at the 3-5 years of experience, and 0 counselors in the 11-20 years as a counselor level. In relation to their total years in education, the 18 counselors represented three counselors with 0-2 total years in education, three counselors with 3-5 years, three counselors with 6-10 years, five counselors with 11 to 20 years, and four counselors with 21+ total years in education.

Table 5.7

Factor Two: Skill Driven Professionals “The Worker Bees”

Participant	Level	Years as a Counselor	Total Years in Education	Factor 2
6-134	K-5	6-10	11-20	0.7823**
11-123	K-5	3-5	6-10	0.7494**
7-154	K-5	21+	11-20	0.7177**
2-111	K-5	0-2	0-2	0.7132**
32-411	9-12	0-2	0-2	0.6522**
19-234	K-8	6-10	11-20	0.6354**
21-313	6-8	0-2	6-10	0.6343**
33-455	9-12	21+	21+	0.6195**
25-312	6-8	0-2	3-5	0.6013**
5-155	K-5	21+	21+	0.5892**
10-122	K-5	3-5	3-5	0.5819**
1-133	K-5	6-10	6-10	0.5788**
13-224	K-8	3-5	11-20	0.5488**
24-355	6-8	21+	21+	0.5357**
17-211	K-8	0-2	0-2	0.5221**
34-434	9-12	6-10	11-20	0.4570**
23-322	6-8	3-5	3-5	0.4356**
8-155	K-5	21+	21+	0.4247**
18-222	K-8	3-5	3-5	0.4175*
20-322	6-8	3-5	3-5	0.4175*
14-211	K-8	0-2	0-2	0.4102*
12-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.3957*
26-322	6-8	3-5	3-5	0.3688*
30-411	9-12	0-2	0-2	0.3670*
9-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.3654*
29-422	9-12	3-5	3-5	0.3546*
16-213	K-8	0-2	6-10	0.3399*
3-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.3294*
27-313	6-8	0-2	6-10	0.3236*
22-311	6-8	0-2	0-2	0.3024
28-455	9-12	21+	21+	0.2851
4-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.2599
15-224	K-8	3-5	11-20	0.0828
31-423	9-12	3-5	6-10	0.0405

For Factor Two, eleven counselors representing three elementary, three K-8, three middle school, and two high school counselors loaded at the $p > .05$ significance level. According to the findings, five of the 34 participants did not load at any level of significance for this factor. These participants represented one elementary, one K-8, one middle school, and two high school counselors. Essentially, 28% of high school counselors did not load for factor two. The remaining levels that did not load for the factor were the following: 80% of elementary, 14% of K-8, and 12% of middle school. In terms of years as a counselor, this group of counselors represented one counselor with 0-2 years, two counselors with 3-5 years, one counselor with 11-20, and one counselor with 21+ years of experience. Table 5.8 further depicts the participants by providing insights into those who highly loaded at the 99% significance level and the participants who did not load for this factor.

During the focus group, a small group of six counselors named Factor Two as the *Skill-Driven Professionals*. From their perspective, Factor Two reflected similar qualities to Factor One in that both groups identified their primary practice as creating an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible. At the same time, Factor Two was viewed by a K-8 focus group member as “more directive and more intentional” (FG32). A K-5 focus group counselor reflected “these are skills as opposed to the others and is more active” (FG12). While Factor One was seen by one focus group participant as “why I do my job” and Factor Two was viewed as “how I do my job” (FG22). Therefore, Factor Two emerged as the Skill-Driven Professionals or “the worker bees” that based their current practices around their skills.

Table 5.8

Factor Two: High and No Loading of Factor by Participant Level

Highly Loaded (p>.01 99%)	K-5	K-8	6-8	9-12
Number of counselors	8/12	3/7	4/8	3/7
% by participant level	66%	42%	50%	42%
Did not load	1/12	1/7	1/8	2/7
% by participant level	8%	14%	12%	28%

This factor array highlighted the importance of creating a respectful, supportive, and inviting environment as well as standards that involved counselors in modeling, teaching, and developing skills in students. Figure 5.3 provides a visual representation of this model sort.

Those Q sorts that were defining for Factor Two showed school counselors in most agreement with statements 11, 12, and 34 as being most representative of their counseling practices.

- +5 (11) Create an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible
- +4 (12) Model and teach positive behaviors through developmentally-appropriate and prevention-oriented activities that lead students to demonstrate positive relationships
- +4 (34) Assists students in developing effective listening and communication skills in order to enhance academic success, build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, advocate for themselves, and become responsible twenty-first century citizens

Statements that were in most characteristic (+5) of this viewpoint of creating an environment included a high school counselor who reflected “My door is open –it’s on the main hall. It is very, very important to me to be inviting, inclusive, [and] always available. I want them to know [that] I am never too busy” (28-445; Statement 11). Statements that were most characteristic (+4) of modeling and teaching positive behaviors included counselors sharing skills taught to students. From the focus group, an elementary school counselor shared “I think social skills in general is such a big part of what I do” (FG12). Another elementary focus group participant further explained, “teaching them whatever skills to prevent or to help them in making good choices” is important (FG22). In addition, a 6-8 counselor shared “I work with the peer mediators with our school. We teach students how to

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree Nor Disagree					Strongly Agree		
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
7	2	4	3	8	6	5	1	10	12	11
	14	21	22	15	13	9	16	27	34	
		24	29	19	25	17	26	33		
			35	23	28	18	32			
				36	30	20				
					31					
						37				

Figure 5.3. Q-Sort distribution grid for factor two.

be role models” (FG53). In terms of statement 34 which was assisting students in developing listening and communication skills, one middle school counselor noted their high placement of the statement: “I feel like this is something I do every day. In the middle school setting, number 34 is the duty that I utilize [and] implement the most” (22-311). An elementary focus group participant made a comparison between statement 12 and statement 34 by saying “It is really the same thing. It is not a whole lot different than you know the relationships. [Statement 34] is more specific, [but] the same general relationship skills, resolving conflict skills, and [helping students become] responsible citizens [are in both statements]” (FG12).

This viewpoint also expressed statements that reflected school counselors in the greatest agreement with statements 7, 2, and 14 as being least like their current school counseling practices. Again, the standards reflected skill based actions such as advocating for positive changes, taking an active role with data, and collaborating with teachers to ensure the presentation of the Standard Course of Study. For these Skill-Driven Professionals, these were not activities that they commonly practiced.

- 5 (7) Advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning as well as equitable, student centered legislation
- 4 (2) Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling program
- 4 (14) Collaborate with teachers to ensure that the presentation of the Standard Course of Study is relevant to a diverse student population

One elementary counselor noted on her -5 loading of statement 7: “I unfortunately am not advocating on the national level. [I] don’t have the time or funds to join the organizations” (11-123). A K-8 counselor simply stated, “there is no one for me to advocate

to in my job” (13-224; Statement 7). Another K-5 counselor revealed “It is not an environment of openness and collaboration at my school. It is an environment of ‘do what you are told’ and ‘don’t question authority.’ No input is sought; just do the work in order to check off that it is done” (6-134; Statement 7). Statements most characteristic (-4) of taking an active role in analyzing various data included “I will be honest and say that ‘data’, numbers, percentages, etc. freak me out! Even MEASURE freaked me out at first. Because of this ‘data phobia’ I don’t actively and individually seek out data” (18-222; Statement 2). Statement 14 emphasized collaborating with teachers to ensure the presentation of the Standard Course of Study. One middle school counselor suggested, “I have a lot of trust in my teachers and trust that administration is handling that the Standard Course of Study is being taught” (20-322). A middle school focus group participant further elaborated, “I am not going to tell them how to teach in their classroom or do their job. I wouldn’t want them to do that to me. I think they know what is best for their room and I trust that they are doing it” (FG53). An elementary focus group member explained, “I don’t see that is our role. If there is a child who came to the RTI/TAT process, I would intervene. [Then,] you are looking at the interventions versus the standard course of study” (FG22). Similarly, another K-5 elementary focus group member said, “I can’t go and say what is in your curriculum today that I may be helpful and address. It is more on a needed basis. I do think it is a valid issue but on the big picture – how much influence do you really have? ” (FG12). Contrastingly, a K-8 focus group participant approached the standard from a different lens. She indicated, “I saw diverse and I thought multicultural. They are advocating counselors [to] become

attentive to the standard course of study and their kids. Our instruction has to become more sensitive to them” (FG32).

Factor Three Coordinating Professionals – “*The Cruise Directors*”

Factor Three had 5 of 34 participants’ loadings were significant at p.01 that accounts for 10% of variance. Due to the confounding loads, four of the participants emerged as attributing Factor One as the one model array that represented their perceptions of counseling practices at a significant at p.01 level. However, one of these four participants negatively loaded at p.01 significant level; therefore, Factor Three was not representative of his counseling practices. Table 5.9 provides an overview of how school counselor participants loaded on this factor array. The five participants were comprised of two elementary counselors, two K-8 counselors, and one middle school counselor. Interestingly, the middle school counselor loaded negatively for factor three at the 99% significance level. The remaining counselors represented 16% of elementary school counselors and 28% of K-8 school counselors.

In describing the five participants’ level of experience as a school counselor, one counselor had 0-2 years as a counselor, one had 3-5 years, and two had 11-20 years as a counselor. In relation to their total years in education, the five counselors represented one counselor with 0-2 total years in education, one with 6-10 years, and the remaining three had 11-20 total years in education.

Table 5.9

Factor Three: Coordinating Professionals “The Cruise Directors”

Participant	Level	Years as a Counselor	Total Years in Education	Factor 3
17-211	K-8	0-2	0-2	0.6952**
4-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.5981**
9-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.5648**
15-224	K-8	3-5	11-20	0.4946**
7-154	K-5	21+	11-20	0.4173*
2-111	K-5	0-2	0-2	0.4124*
8-155	K-5	21+	21+	0.4106*
14-211	K-8	0-2	0-2	0.3596*
32-411	9-12	0-2	0-2	0.3521*
12-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.3483*
10-122	K-5	3-5	3-5	0.2920*
30-411	9-12	0-2	0-2	0.4331
7-154	K-5	21+	11-20	0.2568
5-155	K-5	21+	21+	0.2471
11-123	K-5	3-5	6-10	0.2406
3-144	K-5	11-20	11-20	0.2365
31-423	9-12	3-5	6-10	0.1938
29-422	9-12	3-5	3-5	0.1888
20-322	6-8	3-5	3-5	0.1811
1-133	K-5	6-10	6-10	0.179
6-134	K-5	6-10	11-20	0.1591
28-455	9-12	21+	21+	0.1467
16-213	K-8	0-2	6-10	0.1276
18-222	K-8	3-5	3-5	0.1122
13-224	K-8	3-5	11-20	0.0952
21-313	6-8	0-2	6-10	0.0704
19-234	K-8	6-10	11-20	0.0665
23-322	6-8	3-5	3-5	0.0358
22-311	6-8	0-2	0-2	0.0185
24-355	6-8	21+	21+	-0.017
25-312	6-8	0-2	3-5	-0.0191
33-455	9-12	21+	21+	-0.1197
34-435	9-12	6-10	21+	-0.535
27-313	6-8	0-2	6-10	-0.6360**

Participant 27 is unique because they represent a high correlation for Factor Three but a negative loading. In the discussion of Factor Three, the contrasting viewpoint of this participant is also highlighted to gain insights to the reasons for strong opposition to this perspective of counseling practices. The participant was a male middle school counselor with 0-2 years of counseling experience and 6-10 years of experience in education. In examining the participants' post Q-sort protocol, he identified Statement 10 dealing with ethical behavior as being most representative of his every day practice. He shared that, "being ethical and following the proper procedures is very important [to me]" (27-313). The statement that he identified as least like his practices was Statement 9 which was participating in the implementation of school wide activities. He explained "with having 1,100 students in my school, there is so much going on that my time is limited" (27-313). One post-Q-sort questions asked participants to describe any dilemmas in placing the statements along the continuum. He listed Statement 3, 22, and 30 as specific statements that were difficult to place with the written explanation of "not having enough time in the day to complete [these] tasks due to overcrowding" (27-313). These statements reflected practices related to creating data driven goals, supporting equity and access to rigorous curriculum, and communicating the comprehensive school counseling program with administrators. This middle school counselor identified colleagues and professional development as sources of support in meeting the North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards. He cited, overcrowding of students and overbearing parents as impediments faced as a counselor. Table 5.9 shares all participants' loadings for Factor Three.

For Factor Three, seven counselors representing five elementary, one K-8, and one high school counselor loaded at the $p > .05$ significance level. According to the findings, 23 of the 34 participants or 67% of participants did not load at any level of significance for this factor. The participants who did not load on Factor Three represented six elementary, four K-8, seven middle school, and six high school counselors. In respect the middle school participants, the remaining participant negatively loaded; therefore, no middle school counselors in this study perceived their practices to be represented by Factor Three. Eighty-five percent of high school counselors did not load for this factor. The remaining levels that did not load for the factor represented: 57% of K-8 counselors and 50% of elementary school counselors. In terms of years as a counselor, this group of counselors represented five counselors with 0-2 years, seven counselors with 3-5 years, four counselors with 6-10, one counselor with 11-20, and five counselors with 21+ years of experience. Table 5.10 further depicts the participants by providing insights into those who highly loaded at the 99% significance level and the participants who did not load for this factor.

During the focus group, a small group of six counselors named Factor Three as the *Coordinating Professionals*. In examining the North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards that were most commonly practiced by this group of counselors, the focus group members reflected that these counselors complete more tasks and administrative duties. An elementary member of the focus group indicated:

Table 5.10

Factor Three: High and No Loading of Factor by Participant Level

Highly Loaded (p>.01 99%)	K-5	K-8	6-8	9-12
Number of counselors	2/12	2/7	1/8	0/7
% by participant level	16%	28%	12%	0
Did not load	6/12	4/7	7/8	6/7
% by participant level	50%	57%	87%	85%

“These people are the cruise directors. I just mean those are the people who are coordinating the overall services and may not be able to be as hands on as factor one people because of whatever the situation, number of kids in the schools, the expectations of your administrator. They are the managers because they have the large group” (FG22).

A K-8 focus group member noted, “They became the point of contact for everything. Again, it is not always by choice. It is what they are assigned to do. You still take your skills as a counselor to do these things” (FG32). Factor Three emerged as the Coordinating Professionals or “the cruise directors” with current practices involving implementing school wide events and collaborating with others on behalf of students.

This factor array highlighted the importance of implementing school wide activities, collaborating with others to create customized plans of action for students, and identifying special needs using data, referrals, observations, and other sources of information. Figure 5.4 provides a visual representation of this model sort.

Those Q sorts that were defining for Factor Three shows these school counselors were in most agreement with statements 9, 18, and 19 as most like their current counseling practices.

- +5 (9) Participate in the implementation of schoolwide activities to improve the education and development of all students
- +4 (18) Collaborate with others to create a customized plan of action that provides follow-up services to meet students’ varied needs
- +4 (19) Identify special needs using data, referrals, observation, and other sources of information

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree Nor Disagree					Strongly Agree		
-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
15	8	14	7	3	1	2	26	17	18	9
	14	20	16	13	5	11	27	25	19	
		24	22	23	6	12	28	35		
			29	32	10	30	37			
				33	21	36				
					31					
					34					

Figure 5.4. Q-Sort distribution grid for factor three.

Statements most characteristic (+5) of implementation of school wide activities reveal an elementary counselor who stated,

“I implement and participate in daily school wide activities. This includes classroom guidance lessons, small group social skills development, and behavior support. I also coordinate character education activities that are implemented on a monthly basis” (4-144; Statement 9).

A K-8 school counselor reflected that “one of my goals this year was to bring in programs that targeted as many students as possible. I’ve often called myself ‘the program coordinator.’ Time in my day is limited and I want to positively impact as many students as I can” (17-211; Statement 9). From the focus group, counselors at various levels listed additional school wide activities of PBIS, bullying assemblies, student government, student leadership, TAT, RTI as some additional activities to coordinate within the school. Statements most characteristic (+4) of this viewpoint were not available because no participants responded to these statements in the post sort questions; however, the focus group gave an opportunity to gain additional insights. In terms of collaborating with others for customized plans for students, one middle school counselor explained, “we have an EC kid that goes beyond the case manager. I feel very committed to helping him” (FG43). An elementary counselor echoed, “I think we get a lot of that. It is not a job description. It is nobody’s job to do it but because you want the best for the child. You are all of those things that you know what is best for the child – you do it” (FG22).

Statement 19 referenced the standard of identifying special needs using data, referrals and other sources of information. An elementary focus group member shared,

“I am the EC contact at my school. There are like two of us left in the county and it is a big part of my job where I spend my time. Is that what should be the priority? No, but it is a fact of my job. For me it becomes, I am helping those children – they may never see me, it is not like a face to face counseling relationship [but] I am helping that child. Overall, it is for me to help them get the resources they need [and] the assistance that they need. Since I have been given it, I can justify and I feel that I am doing something. The truth may be that is a big part of my time and my job where my time is spent. That is not always where you would want to be but the reality is that is where you are” (FG12).

A K-8 counselor reflected on both statement 18 and 19 by identifying with Factor 3: “See I end up on [Factor Three] because I have 634 kids. I get everything. I end up being a program manager [and] a director. [I am] pulling everyone to the table to talk about things. I am sorry I can’t pull that child everyday to help the child with skills. We can get together and write the behavior intervention plan and I get to play the mediator for that. In order to have a broad effect in my school, where there is one of me and faculty members. I end up meeting more with teachers, administrators, in the interest of a child or a group of children” (FG 32).

This viewpoint also expressed statements that reflected school counselors in the greatest agreement with statements 15, 8, and 14 as being least like their current school counseling practices.

- 5 (15) Select materials and develop activities that incorporate the histories and contributions of diverse cultures and work to counteract stereotypes
- 4 (8) Promote an awareness of learning styles, diversity and individual learning needs
- 4 (14) Collaborate with teachers to ensure that the presentation of the Standard Course of Study is relevant to a diverse student population

Statements that were most characteristic (-5) of this viewpoint of selecting materials and developing activities that incorporate the histories and contributions of diverse cultures indicated a K-8 counselor's viewpoint "our school is not as diverse as others and while I believe it is important to be culturally aware, I simply have not taken the time to really dive into this area" (17-211; Statement 15). The focus group also gave additional feedback for reasons why this standard could have been a practice least used by counselors. An elementary counselor commented, "I think typically that is not a task that is assigned to you. While we may do an activity for Black History month, no one comes to me to say [to do this.] They come to me for other things" (FG12).

Statements that were most characteristic (-4) of this viewpoint included a school counselor sharing "I do not try to make a great deal of input into how a teacher teaches their class" (22-311; Statement 14). Another middle school participant shared, "we are never asked to be involved in the development/implementation of the curriculum and with all the other tasks we do initiating this conversation seems to end up as last on the priority list" (25-312; Statement 14). This statement was also a least common practice for Factor Two. Statement 8 centered on counselors promoting an awareness of learning styles, diversity, and individual learning needs. The Q-sort participants did not reflect on this least common practice; however, the focus group was asked to elaborate with a middle school counselor

sharing, “In the scheme of my day, how often do I do a learning styles inventory?” (FG43). An elementary counselor indicated “This is a staff development thing [and] I am not working with different learning styles” (FG12). This same member also pointed out that statement 8 goes “hand in hand with statement 19 which they placed on the positive side” (FG12). The thought was that individual learning needs would be part of the discussion in creating customized plan of action for students and identifying special needs.

Sources of Support and Barriers to Change

Following the Q-sort, school counselors answered questions to provide further insights into their counseling practices in terms of both supports and barriers to change. One of the questions related to the supports and assets that help the counselor meet the ideals of the North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards. Based on the responses, some common themes of support emerged for school counselors and are found in Figure 5.5.

One of the highest resources of support was from other counselors. A middle school counselor gave credit to her co-counselor by saying “we are always talking about new things we can do to meet the social, academic, and career objectives. I can’t imagine being the only counselor at my school.” (25-312). Similarly, another high school counselor shared “collaboration with other counselors in working as a team to meet goals” (33-455). Another K-8 counselor commented on the supports of “a strong county-wide community of counselors that share ideas and support each other. [We have] monthly opportunities to meet with these counselors and keep up to date on current trends and practices.” (19-234).

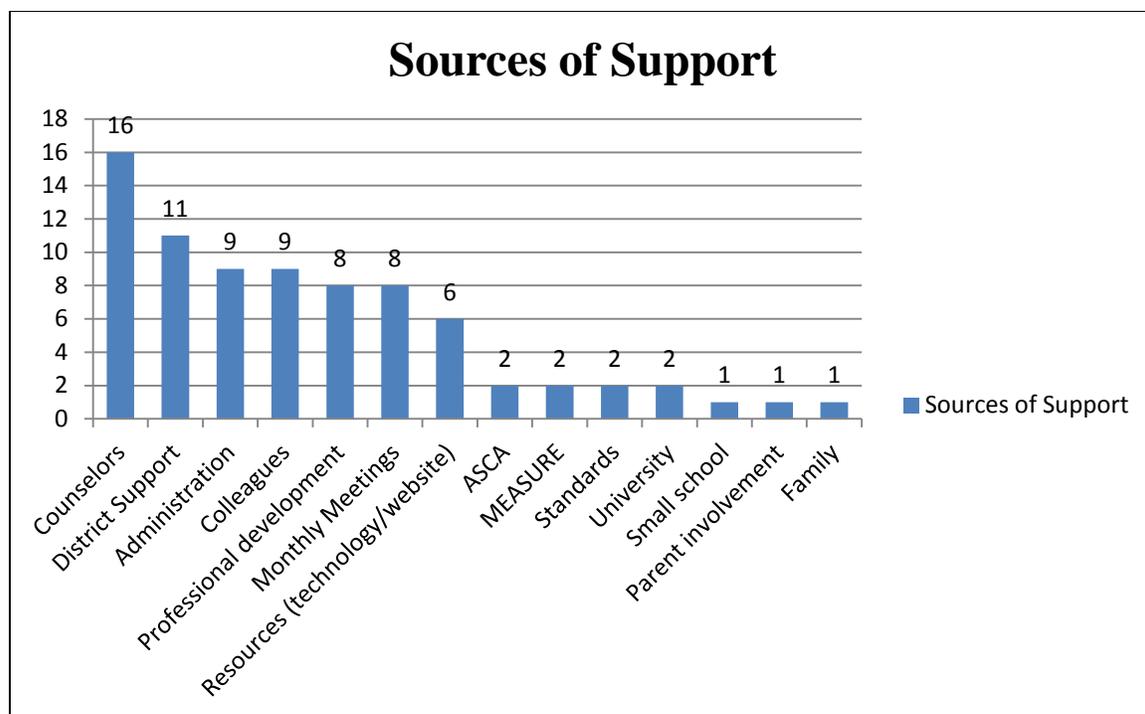


Figure 5.5. Sources of support.

In addition, supports were also found at the district level. One elementary school counselor reflected that “the student services department is a tremendous support through resources provided and monthly meetings. The focus on MEASURE has assisted in further professional understanding and implementation of National Standards. The K-8 resource directory on the website has also been a support for idea development of activities to incorporate to meet N.C. Professional Counseling Standards. Our K-8 monthly meetings are the only time I am able to participate in professional development activities due to cuts in the budget” (4-144). Some counselors commented on the Director of Student Services who was interviewed in Phase One as district level support by sharing “the previous director was a great help also” (24-355).

School counselors also indicated that other people such as administration and staff were sources of support in their roles as counselors. A K-8 school counselor shared supports that included “supportive administration who are willing to provide me necessary resources. They also provide great feedback and encourage personal growth and development” (17-211). Likewise, a middle school counselor indicated “our administration is an asset as they are supportive” (20-322). In terms of staff support, a high school counselor reflected that having “staff that will help you see students and interrupt their class time to help get students at their best learning capacity” was appreciated (29-422).

School counselors also mentioned other resources such as professional development, the ASCA model, and membership in professional organizations. A K-8 counselor stated, “the ASCA model framework provides a guide to what direction I need to be moving in” (18-

222). Another K-8 counselor indicated supports to include “terrific resources” that included “people to ask questions and materials to use as teaching tools” (16-213). A middle school counselor credited “access to professional development within North Carolina and the county” (20-322). While the district’s “materials and resources online” and the “ASCA membership” was listed by another K-8 school counselor.

Another post sort question examined the impediments and barriers that inhibit change for counselors towards twenty-first century practices. Based on the responses, school counselors identified a variety of impediments and barriers to their job as a counselor. Figure 5.6 reflects the range of responses with some of the main barriers including: time, extra duties, administration, and staff.

A high school counselor revealed the biggest barrier was “not enough time!!!! As counselors, we’re pulled in so many different directions and called on to do so many things that are unrelated to our job” (32-411). A middle school counselor echoed the barrier of “simply not having enough time to complete everything that’s expected of me and everything I want to do” (25-312). Along with time, the extra duties were commonly mentioned with barriers such as “having to do duties not related to being a counselor such as monitoring the hallways” (14-211). One elementary school counselor listed non-counseling duties that included the following: “testing, EZRTI, TAT Chair, 504, Immunization Coordinator, ESL contact, and paperwork, paperwork, paperwork” (5-155). Administrators were also viewed by some counselors as contributing to the extra duties. One counselor shared “all of the ‘extra’ duties assigned by the administration that make it hard to find time to continually

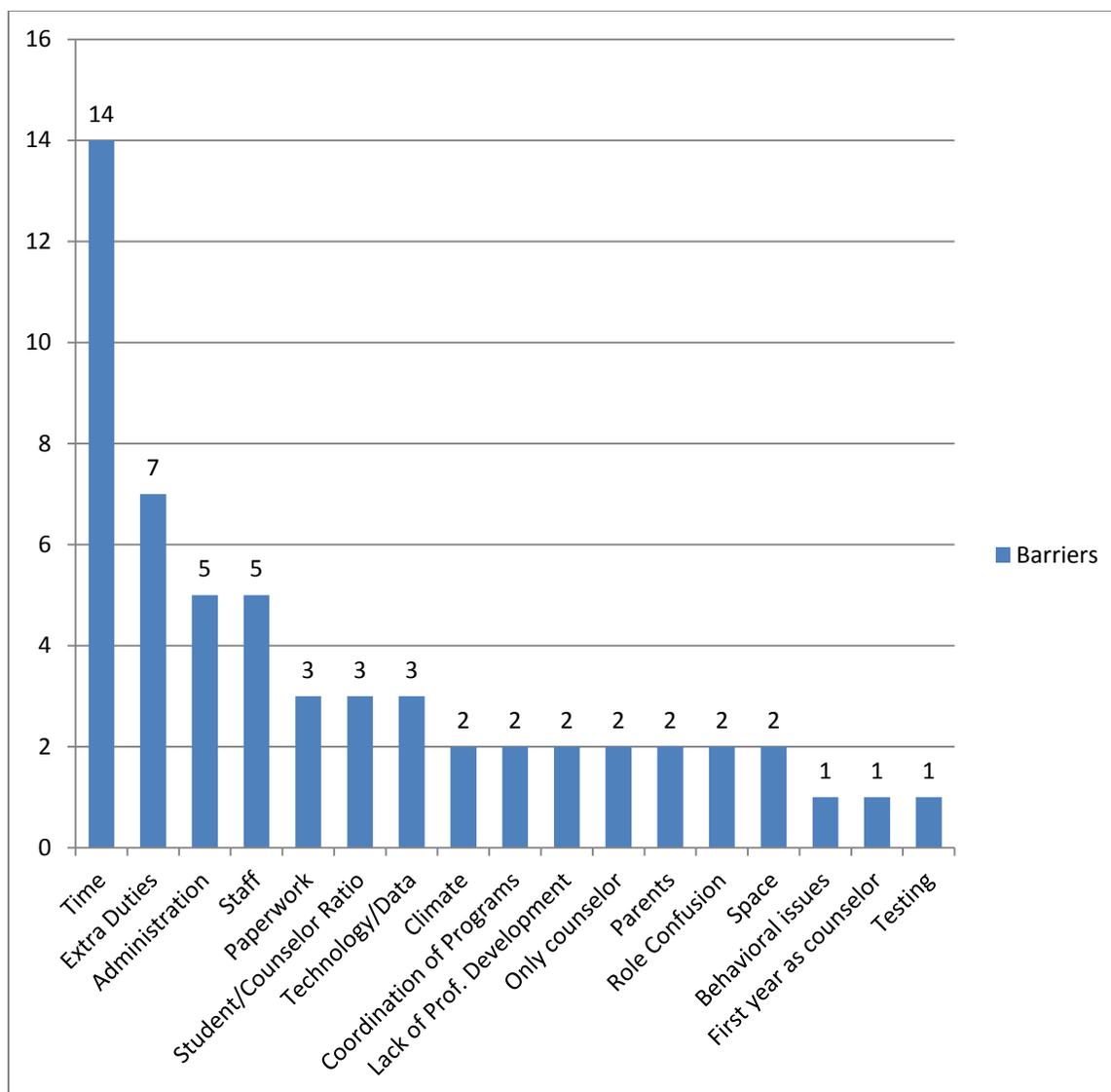


Figure 5.6. Barriers.

analyze and improve the counseling program” is an impediment (9-144). Also, a high school counselor indicated “many duties and requests from administration that take LOTS of TIME and have absolutely NOTHING to do with counseling” as inhibiting change in their practices (28-445).

A K-8 counselor shared an impediment as “administration that is not supportive and overly critical anytime I deviate from their perception of what I should have done” (19-234). Another K-8 school counselor responded “the daily requirements of administration” as a barrier and revealed “I think each counselor in [the district] has a different job description. Principals have varying views of what and how counselors should be” (15-224). In addition to administration, staff was also cited as barriers to counselors. One elementary counselor emphasized “teachers are very protective of their academic time so at times it is difficult to define a good time to do a series of classroom lessons or pull groups” (7-154). A K-8 counselor shared a barrier was a “school staff not understanding our role at times” (14-211). Similarly, an elementary school counselor cited another impediment to be, “a faculty that do[es] not accept [or] support technological advancements in the school [such as] EZRti” (2-111).

Other comments included paperwork, school counselor ratio, and the concern of data and technology. Counselors simply stated “too much paperwork” (13-224) and “some of the unnecessary paperwork” (22-311) as barriers. The issue of the student to counselor ratio was also mentioned by a few counselors with comments about the “sheer numbers” (15-224) and “student to counselor ratio at 580:1” (8-155). Moreover, some comments about “lack of

technology” (24-355) and “feeling overwhelmed and not comfortable with technology and data and how to use them effectively” were also mentioned by school counselors as impediments (8-155).

Post Q-sort questions also included questions about the implementation of MEASURE in terms of a description of training and professional development as well as information about how MEASURE may or may not have changed counseling practices. School counselors shared professional development as a source of support and one post sort question focused specifically on counselors describing their training and professional development with MEASURE. Various types of professional development were described that included district meetings, workshops, books, ED Star training, university graduate school experiences, other counselors, a packet, and not much training. Figure 5.7 shows the ranges of responses with district meetings representing the highest form of professional development with seventeen responses. An elementary counselor summarized the training experiences with the following statement: “The student services department offered many support sessions and professional development activities centered on MEASURE. In addition, [counselors] having the support through student services to review our MEASURE documents and give feedback is invaluable” (4-144). While seven participants listed Ed Star training as a type of professional development, this experience was also coordinated by the district. A K-8 counselor “spent time with EdStar in training with a think tank organization learning how to look at data in a measurable way” (13-224). Workshops were also

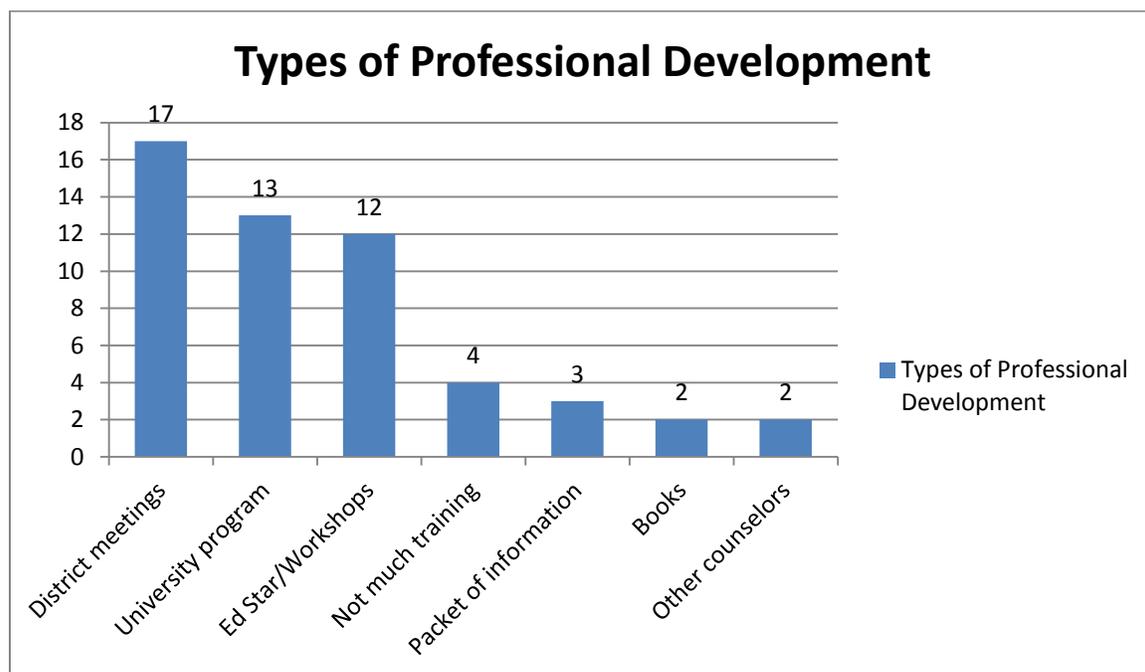


Figure 5.7. Types of professional development.

mentioned as part of professional development experiences with five counselors referring to attending the state's school counselor conference. Thirteen counselors attributed their training and professional development to graduate courses at their university. The university experience was the second highest form of professional development with MEASURE shared by the counselors. One counselor "was introduced to ASCA and MEASURE through one course in grad program! We were required to submit a MEASURE for academic credit" (18-222). Another counselor "learned a considerable amount about MEASURE in college. I feel that it has made me grow as a counselor because I can evaluate what we do and don't do" (34-434). Three counselors mentioned receiving a "packet of info to complete the MEASURE docs" from the district that gave "detailed directions provided by supervisor which walks through step by step" through the MEASURE process (2-111 and 16-213). Two counselors mentioned reading books about MEASURE such as "Making Data Work and School Counseling Accountability" as a helpful experience. Likewise, two counselors mentioned the help from other counselors as part of their training with MEASURE. A counselor shared a portion of her experiences came from "a lot of collaboration among other counselors on how to fill [MEASURE] out correctly" (6-134). From the post sort question, four school counselors revealed that they had not had much experience in training with MEASURE. A high school counselor reflected that "very little training" occurred with MEASURE due to coming to the district from "out of state and have not received any official training" (31-423). A middle school counselor indicated "this is my first year as a school counselor so I have not had much experience with the MEASURE document" (22-311).

The post sort question, “In what ways, if any, has MEASURE changed counseling practices?” received a variety of responses. Eight of the 34 school counselors did not attribute MEASURE as changing their counseling practices. The group of eight included: two K-5, two K-8, two 6-8, and two 9-12 school counselors. Two high school counselors placed an “NA” for this question; however, many school counselors elaborated more about MEASURE. One counselor shared that MEASURE is “completed as a requirement of my job but does not guide my practice” (10-122). A K-8 counselor wrote, “I don’t think it has changed my practice rather it has given me something tangible that I can share and produce with my county, administrators, and school body” (18-222). An elementary counselor reflected “it really hasn’t [changed counseling practices.] I track data on what I am already doing” (6-134). A middle school counselor indicated “none” as the response about the impact of MEASURE. This participant went on further to share “I have chosen to go through National Board which was beneficial for me but I can’t say the MEASURE in and of itself has truly affected my counseling practice” (26-322). Even though some of the respondents did not indicate that MEASURE changed practices, they still mentioned some positives. One middle school counselor shared “MEASURE has led me to be creative at finding ideas to use to gather data in order to complete the document” (21-313). Another K-8 counselor indicated “it feels very reactionary; however, next year, it will be utilized as a tool to assure that programs are data driven, relevant, and efficient” (16-213).

In analyzing the remaining 26 participant responses, some themes emerged to suggest that MEASURE was attributed to allowing counselors to focus their practice, to utilize data

to direct services, to evaluate the effectiveness of their efforts, validate their practices, prove their effectiveness, and guide the direction of their program. In terms of providing a focus, MEASURE “helps me focus on actual needs so I’m not spinning my wheels” (17-211). An elementary counselor shared that MEASURE “has allowed me to really focus on the areas of need in the school and hopefully correct those areas “(5-155). Moreover, a middle school counselor indicated “MEASURE has allowed me to focus my school counseling program into the three domains and to focus programs within my school into one topic per domain. I can have more focus on issues within our school” (20-322).

Another theme that emerged from the responses was MEASURE’s impact on counselors’ practices with the utilization of data. A K-5 school counselor voiced “I am more aware of using data, trying to collect it, and always learning how to analyze it” (8-155). A high school counselor felt their counseling practices were “more data driven” and reflected “sharing what we do that helps students gives you a drive to do more” (29-422). Another high school counselor credited MEASURE as helping “me recognize that as a member of the school team I have to prove that my job is statistically and data relevant” (28-445). A K-8 counselor wrote “it has made me think more about what I am doing and how data ties in” (19-234).

Several counselors indicated MEASURE changed their counseling practices through the reflection component. A high school counselor indicated “MEASURE has made me think more about data and how it affects a school counseling program” (30-411). While an elementary school counselor shared “I use data for reflection of the school counseling

program” (2-111). Similarly, a counselor wrote “I do think about the impact of my practice more regularly. I adjust programs based on feedback and outcomes from MEASURE” (12-144). Furthermore, another elementary school counselor wrote, “while the process of putting the MEASURE document together can be very time consuming, it does allow me to analyze what I am doing and reflect on the positive impact I am making in my school” (3-144).

In addition, school counselors attributed MEASURE as making them more accountable in their counseling practices. Statements such as MEASURE “has made me more accountable and more aware of students acquiring knowledge and understanding” (24-355) highlight this theme. A high school respondent voiced “I feel it is beneficial to counselors to keep them accountable to administrators, teachers, parents, the state, county, etc. and to show through data that their counseling program is making a difference” (32-411). The theme of using MEASURE to evaluate the effectiveness of counseling practice was also mentioned. From an elementary counselor, “I feel that MEASURE proves that counselors are effective and are making a difference in schools” (2-111). Another elementary counselor shared “MEASURE has forced me to evaluate the effectiveness of my student centered activities. It has guided my decision making each year for activities and goals for the year” (4-144). Moreover, validation was another theme for counselors. A high school counselor wrote “it has allowed me to be able to assess and validate our own counseling department and services” (34-434). A K-8 counselor wrote “OMG! I love MEASURE because it validates my efforts as a school counselor, dispels myths (all you guys do is drink coffee, read paper), and offers me opportunities to try new MEASURES” (13-224).

Counselors also shared comments that revealed that MEASURE has helped “show how counselors are important in the school. It shows how we are impacting students on personal/social, academic, and career levels” (14-211). An elementary counselor indicated MEASURE “is a very clear way to show the administration at my school what I do” (7-154). Another comment was MEASURE “has also allowed me a tool to share with others that may question what I do as a counselor” (5-155). The theme of MEASURE helping guide decision making was also shared. A middle school counselor says “it helps me to set relevant goals at the beginning of the school year and make a plan to follow up throughout the year” (23-322). This idea was echoed with a counselor sharing MEASURE is “a valuable asset in the development each year of activities/groups that will be planned for the upcoming year” (4-144).

Chapter Five focused on the perceptions of school counselors on their practices by sharing the findings of the Phase Two Q-sort as well as the Phase Three focus group. The findings began at the macro level where participants’ Q-sorts were shared across all three factors. Then, the findings were shared by the factor loading on all 37 concourse statements. The findings were then reported at the micro level by providing a description of each of three emerging Factors in the research study: Factor One Helping Professionals; Factor Two Skill-driven Professionals; and Factor Three Coordinating Professionals. The post Q-sort questions and the Phase Three focus group assisted the researcher in adding a thick description to the Q-sort data for a better understanding of counselors’ perceptions of their practices. The next chapter will look at a cross-factor analysis of the three model factor arrays by sharing

consensus and distinguishing statements. The results will be examined with the conceptual framework. Finally, the researcher will discuss implications for policy, practice, and future research.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this final chapter is to interrogate the findings in three ways. First, the consensus and distinguishing statements were examined to further refine the findings of this study. The previous chapter reported the findings of each model factor array. In the first section of this chapter, the focus is centered around the statements that were statistically the same or different across the three factor arrays. In the second section, a link will be established between this study's findings and the literature described in the first two chapters. The link will be accomplished by an examination of the findings vis-à-vis the empirical and conceptual literature as well as the district's theory of action that framed this study. In the last section, the researcher will provide implications from this work in three distinct areas: policy, practice, and research.

Consensus Statements

Consensus statements are the statements that are statistically significant among the three factors where the counselor participants felt the same about these counseling practices. I wanted to dig deeper into looking at the correlation between factors. As you recall, there was a high correlation between Factor One and Factor Two. The focus group helped identify Factor One participants as "The Helpers" and many of the practices that they valued as most like their practices were similar to the participants in Factor Two who were named as "The Worker Bees." The further statistical analysis conducted revealed seven consensus statements across the factors. These consensus statements as well as their loadings are found in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1

Consensus Statements across Factors One, Two, and Three

Number	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor3
3	Create data driven goals and strategies that align with the school improvement plan	-1	-2	-1
14	Collaborate with teachers to ensure that the presentation of the Standard Course of Study is relevant to a diverse student population	-3	-4	-4
17	Appreciate the differences and value the contributions of each student in the learning environment	2	1	3
22	Support equity and access to rigorous and relevant curricula in order to enhance student success	-1	-2	-2
24	Support teachers and other specialists' use of the North Carolina Guidance Curriculum to develop and enhance students' twenty-first century skills and promote global awareness	-2	-3	-3
28	Understand the influences that affect individual student learning and provide resources to staff to enhance student strengths and address student weaknesses	1	0	2
29	Discuss the comprehensive school counseling program with school administrators and communicate the goals of the program to stakeholders	-2	-2	-2

I utilized the post sort questions for explanations regarding the consensus statements. For Statement 3, the practice of creating data driven goals aligned with the school improvement plan was similar in the factor loadings among the three factors (-1, -2, -1). A veteran 9-12 counselor with over 21 years in education commented “although data is very important in today’s environment it creates a lot of busy work” (28-445). Another veteran 6-8 participant shared a different reason, “I had difficulty with this statement because the school improvement plan does not have the counseling goals mentioned that we spend a lot of time on. We can however tie into improving test scores” (24-355). Similarly, a K-5 counselor stated, “I create data driven goals for the program but not necessarily align them with the school improvement plan” (9-144).

Counselors are people oriented who often choose counseling practices to directly help others. Counseling practices involving data are viewed as indirect ways to serve students. In terms of the Q-sort, counselors were asked to rank practices based on least or most like their practices. Counselors work to create goals based on data at the beginning of the year, yet this counseling practice would not lend itself to an everyday practice once the goals were originated. In addition, MEASURE goals are related to the academic, career, and personal/social domains; however, these goals may not necessarily be a part of the school improvement plans.

Statement 14 negatively loaded on all three factors (-3, -4, -4). Within the focus group and the post Q-sort comments, counselors strongly reacted strongly to this practice not being part of their counseling role. One elementary focus group participant commented, “I don’t

see that is our role. If there is a child who came to the Response to Instruction process, I would intervene. [In this case,] you are looking at the interventions versus the standard course of study” (FG12). One of the post sort responses from a middle school counselor stated, “We are never asked to be involved in the implementation of the curriculum and with all the other tasks we do....initiating this conversation seems to end up as last on the priority list” (25-312).

Counselors are not trained as part of their counselor education programs in content; therefore, many counselors do not view themselves as being the experts on the standard course of study. While some counselors were former teachers, many counselors do not have a background in teacher education. From counselors participating in this study, the role of ensuring the standard course of study is being taught lies in the hands of the administrators. This practice is one that may need to be revisited as counseling professional standards or counselor evaluation instruments are developed for the state.

Statement 17 dealt with counselors appreciating the differences of students and their contributions to the learning environment. All factors had positive loadings (2, 1, 3). A K-8 counselor stated, “Each morning, I’m confronted with 630 individual faces but they are all my kids. Each child has an opportunity to be someone special. My goal each day is to get to know them a little better, understand their worlds a little better, [and] I try to be visible” (15-244).

For counselors, the practice of appreciating students and their contributions is a practice directly related to their work with students. Counselors advocate for students and

work to promote their contributions within the school environment. Often, counselors work to reward and recognize students for positive behavior, good attendance, bringing up their grades, and for character awards. It is not surprising counselors' perceived Statement 17 as a positive consensus statement since counselors appreciating students is a common everyday practice for counselors.

Statement 24 loaded negative on all three factors (-2, -3, -3). A 6-8 counselor reflected, "I have never been asked to work with teachers or anyone else for their use of the guidance curriculum" (21-313). A K-5 counselor commented: "While I believe the guidance curriculum is very important, the teachers at my school do an effective job at implementing the guidance curriculum in their everyday schedule throughout all subject areas. If my assistance is needed, I am there to help" (3-144).

The guidance curriculum is present in the standard course of study; however, counselors who are in the role of delivering classroom guidance lessons often believe the guidance curriculum is for them to cover. While these goals are intertwined into classroom activities, a teacher's focus is on content areas such as reading, math, science, and social studies. In the days of accountability, the taught curriculum is the tested curriculum which minimizes the importance of the guidance standard course of study.

Statement 29 related to counselors discussing their program with administrators with negative loading (-2, -2, -2) on all factors. A beginning K-8 counselor mentioned, "I am trying to build relationships, understand school and community...all the while meeting student needs. However, I have plans to do this more next year" (16-213). A K-5 elementary

counselor shared, “I definitely discuss my program with the administration but it is not every day” (1-133). A 6-8 counselor echoed, “other indicators that deal directly with students were more important to me but I do this regularly” (20-322).

Counselors may touch base at the beginning of the year with principals; however, may not believe this is an everyday counseling practice. The MEASURE goals require principals to review and comment on the goals at the end of the year. This indirect practice is very critical to establishing counseling roles within the school. A little time spent communicating the vision and goals of the counseling program with administrators may enable counselors to implement more 21st century counseling practices.

From the seven consensus statements, Factors One, Two, and Three loaded negative for five out of the seven statements. A common ground was shared amongst the counselor participants in practices that were least representative of what they do on an everyday basis. Several of these statements dealt with counseling practices related to curriculum such as Statements 14 (-3, -4, -4), 22 (-1, -2, -2), and 24 (-2, -3, -3). Counselors did not perceive these statements as everyday practices and possibly these practices need to be eliminated from the North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards. Two of the seven consensus statements were positively loaded or at zero across the factors which were Statements 17 (2, 1, 3) and 28 (1, 0, 2). These practices directly related to working with students. The consensus statements highlighted some similarities across the three model factors. Next, the discussion will turn to the distinguishing statements among the factor arrays.

Distinguishing Statements

The analysis yielded distinguishing statements amongst the three factors and is located in Table 6.2. Some of the distinguishing statements supported the ideas factor names generated in focus group discussion. Factor One was named “The Helpers” who valued ethics. Factor Two was named “The Worker Bees” who also valued ethics and skill driven counseling practices. Statement 10 dealing with ethical behaviors was loaded positive for Factor One and Two (+4, +3, 0). Statements 12 (+1, +4, +1) and 34 (+2, +4, 0) served as distinguishing statements and emphasized “The Worker Bees” value on skill driven practices. Factor 3 was named “The Cruise Directors” and their practices emphasized the coordination efforts of counselors in the school. Four distinguishing statements with positive loadings were Statement 2 (-4, -4, +1), Statement 9 (-1, +1, +5), Statement 19 (0, -1, +4), and Statement 35 (-1, -2, +3). Factor Three varied more from the other two factors with the following practices: implementing school wide activities, identifying special needs using data, and examining the impact of the program were viewed as indirect services to meet the needs of large student populations.

I utilized post sort Q-sort questions for explanations regarding the statistically significant distinguishing statements. For Statement 2, Factor Three loaded positive for taking an active role in analyzing, local, state, and national data (-4, -4, +1). Both Factor One and Two had counselors agreeing with a K-5 counselor who shared, “I use local data to assist in developing my program, but not state and national data” (12-144; Statement 2). An elementary counselor said, “I am still having struggles with collecting, analyzing, and using

Table 6.2

Distinguishing Statements among Three Model Factor Arrays

Number	Statement	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor3
2	Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs	-4	-4	+1*
6	Promote professional growth and participate in high quality professional development activities	-4*	0	0
7	Advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning as well as equitable, student centered legislation	-2	-5*	-2
8	Promote an awareness of learning styles, diversity, and individual learning needs	-1	-1	-4*
9	Participate in the implementation of school wide activities to improve the education and development of all students	-1	+1	+5*
10	Demonstrate ethical behaviors by following the American School Counselors' Association and North Carolina Educators' Standards for Professional Conduct	+4	+3	0*
12	Model and teach positive behaviors through developmentally-appropriate and prevention-oriented activities that lead students to demonstrate positive relationships	+1	+4	+1
19	Identify special needs using data, referrals, observation, and other sources of information	0	-1	+4*

Table 6.2 (continued)

34	Assists students in developing effective listening and communication skills in order to enhance academic success, build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, advocate for themselves, and become responsible twenty-first century citizens	+2	+4*	0
35	Examine the impact of the comprehensive school counseling program on student academic, career, and personal/social development in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the program	-1	-2	+3*

data. I do try to use my school's data to drive my counseling program but have not ventured into district, state, or national data to make decisions about the program" (8-155; Statement 2). Factor Three stood apart from Factor One and Two by agreeing this Statement 2 practice was regularly completed. While Factor One "The Helpers" and Factor Two "The Worker Bees" valued counseling practices in helping and working with people, Factor Three "Cruise Directors) valued practices in working with data. "The Cruise Directors" had a big picture view of using data for their overall counseling program efforts.

For Statement 6, Factor One negatively loaded (-4, 0, 0). A 6-8 counselor indicated, "I promote professional growth but really don't feel I have much opportunity to participate in high, quality professional development. I usually have to seek it out and pay for it on my own" (23-322; Statement 6). This counseling practice did not positively load for any factor; however, Factor One strongly viewed this Statement 6 as a least common practice. Local school district budgets limit travel for professional development and the majority of professional development is scheduled around improving academic instruction. Counselors have to attend school wide professional development centered on teacher oriented topics.

Statement 7 had loaded negative amongst all factors (-2, -5, -2); however, Factor Two was statistically significant. Strong feelings were expressed by a K-5 counselor, "It is not an environment of openness and collaboration at my school. It is an environment of 'do what you are told' and 'don't question authority.' No input is sought, just do the work, in order to check off that [it] is done and to justify practices...never improve or to be creative" (6-134; Statement 7). Another elementary participant mentioned "advocating change usually means

extra time and hours at the state level. I don't have the extra time to devote to all I would like to do at school" (5-155). Counselors may not feel that their voices are loud enough to be heard for advocating change. Even in collaborative school environments, counselors seem to place less emphasis on this practice due to all of their roles and time constraints.

Statement 8 loaded negative amongst all factors (-1, -1, -4) and dealt with promoting an awareness of learning styles, diversity, and individual learning needs. Interestingly, Factor Three counselors viewed Statement 8 as a least common practice and viewed Statement 9 as a most common practice. Both Statements 8 and 9 were emphasizing student learning and improving education of all students. Statement 9 loaded positive for Factor 3 (-1, +1, +5). Counselors shared tasks such as the coordination of 504 accommodation plans and working with at-risk students as common every day practices for some counselors.

Focus group participants also discussed the contradiction of Factor Three counselors being involved in school wide activities with working with at-risk students as one of the major efforts. An elementary focus group participant said, "to me [statement 8] goes hand in hand with statement 19 which they placed on the positive side" (FG12). Counselors within the local district are placed in the role of 504 chair, ESL contact, and the Response to Intervention contact; however, Factor Three counselors perceived themselves as completing this practice more often than their colleagues.

Statement 10, ethical behaviors, was neutral for Factor Three (+4, +3, 0) which became another distinguishing statement from Factor One and Two participants. Both "The Helpers" and "The Worker Bees" had strong feelings on ethical behaviors. An elementary

counselor stated “this statement is at the core of my being” (3-144; Statement 10). A 6-8 counselor offered this thought, “I implement ethical behaviors every day, but did not want to say that’s what I do most often because it’s not something I focus my time on, it’s just something I naturally do” (25-312; Statement 10). An elementary counselor echoed “I felt like I should rank it higher because ethical behaviors drive my practice, but other statements describe more of what I do on a daily basis” (10-122; Statement 10). Some of the counseling statements were specific tasks to complete and other statements represented ideals. Some counselors would have believed their actions in specific tasks reflected and demonstrated their underlying values and ideals in their practices.

All Factors loaded positive for Statement 12 with Factor Two representing the higher loading (+1, +4, +1). Two of the 34 participants specifically listed this practice as the most representative practice. An elementary counselor shared, “Among my various duties as a counselor, I try to model and teach positive behaviors. This, I can do in all settings (classroom, small group, individual and even on non-instructional duties such as hall and car duty)” (7-154; Statement 12). Another elementary school counselor said, “I chose that [statement] because I believe that students learn from what they see. They need the positive role models. I see individual students daily and get into classrooms to teach positive modeling” (11-123; Statement 12). Statement 34 was another skill driven statement that set Factor Two apart from Factor One and Factor Three (+2, +4, 0). One middle school counselor “chose this statement because I fell like this is something that I do every day. In the middle school setting, [this statement] is the duty that I utilize [and] implement the most”

(22-311; Statement 34). Several statements that emerged as distinguishing statements for Factor Two were viewed as skill based practices; therefore, “The Worker Bees” actively modeled, taught, and assisted students in developing skills. Factor Two counselors valued ethics as “The Helpers;” however, Factor Two distinguished counselors with statistically significant statements directly working with students. The ASCA National Model emphasizes counseling practices focused on the academic, personal/social, and career domains so it is not surprising counselors valued these practices.

Statement 35 was a distinguishing statement for Factor Three and dealt with the practice of examining the impact of the school counseling program (-1, -2, +3). Factor Three counselors favored practices focused on school wide activities and the counseling program. One veteran high school counselor offered a different perspective, “[there is] not a lot of time for change in a small counseling setting with two counselors. No extra time for many concerns... Many times our needs are outweighed by others in the school. Counseling services never come first” (34-434; Statement 35). While Factor Three counselors favored this practice, other counselors may believe that examining the counseling program is not a common practice due to time constraints. For many counselors, the practices of program evaluation occurred at moment in time during the year; therefore, these practices were not chosen as most representative of counseling practice. Another explanation is counselors viewed some counseling practices as indirectly impacting students and concentrated on direct services to students. Time and prioritizing activities were related counselors’ perceptions of common and least common practices. Focus group discussion also shared the counselor

student ratio was high in some schools and may be a reason counselors chose school wide practices in their efforts to reach the most students versus focusing on a targeted number of the student population in direct services such as individual and small group counseling.

Findings: Linked with Extant Literature

The previous section focused on the consenting and distinguishing statements with the three model factor arrays. This section will frame the findings of the research study through the lens of the extant literature and the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter Two. The literature will be re-examined for similarities or dissimilarities to previous research in the field. Next, a revised conceptual framework will be shared and the study's findings related to the personal change theory, Diffusion of Innovations (Rogers, 2003) and the institutional change theory, Policy Ambiguity (March, 1988).

Findings and Empirical Literature

As you recall, Chapter Two shared the origins of the counseling profession began with counselors matching students with jobs (Herr, 2001; Schmidt, 2000; Stone & Dahir, 2007). By the 1940s, Carl Rogers had introduced a person-centered theory that coincides with a mental health focus for counseling efforts. This study supported the link to person-centered practices with Factor One being named "The Helpers" by focus group participants. For "The Helpers," the tenants of Carl Rogers were the reasons why counselors do their jobs. In addition, Factor Two "The Worker Bees" shared some of the same practices that coincide with person-centered theory. Factor One (+4) and Factor Two (+3) placed a high value on demonstrating ethical behaviors (Statement 10). In addition, the practice of listening to

students, colleagues, and other stakeholders to identify issues was a priority for counseling practices. Factor One loaded +4 and Factor Two loaded +3 for Statement 27. The positive loadings for these counseling practices confirms Factor One and Factor Two counselors reflect a more traditional role for counselors with unconditional positive regard for students and the counselor-student relationship.

The literature also described a “shift from a mental health focus in school counseling to an academic achievement focus” for the present times (Galassi & Akos, 2004, p. 148). In addition, Stone and Dahir (2007) indicated “the traditional way no longer produces the results needed to address the magnitude of societal and achievement challenges facing our students....Working individually and not systemically risks leaving huge numbers of these students....out of the success picture” (p. 14). Factor Three emerged to represent counseling practices that focused on the larger school picture. These “Cruise Directors” emphasized counseling practices of implementing school wide activities (+5), collaborating with others for plans of action to meet student needs (+4), and identifying special needs using data (+4). Similarly, the critical role of facilitating and coordinating school and community services to meet the diverse needs of children and families was found in the literature (Gladding, 2000). Borders and Drury (1992) indicated counselors organize and manage program activities that include student orientation, classroom guidance, career fairs, and volunteer efforts.

Factor Three counselors were named “Cruise Directors” due to their time spent on coordination. Resembling the literature from Borders and Drury (1992), Factor Three counselors’ involvement was noted in working with special needs students and collaborating

on student plans. These practices in the coordination of services for the exceptional children's program such as "diagnostic assessments, placements, record maintenance and review, and IEP meetings...[which] are critical responsibilities that require much coordination" was found in the literature (Borders & Drury, 1992). Moreover, Beale and McKay (2001) identified counselor applicants who were "familiar with the special education process and ...[involved] in setting and monitoring behavioral goals" was one of the selection criteria for principals hiring counselors (p. 258).

While Borders and Drury (1992) noted the importance of coordination and effective program management, these researchers cautioned coordination practices "should allow counselors to spend the majority of their time providing direct and indirect services to students" (p. 293). Contrastingly, Fitch and Marshall (2004) credited high achieving schools with counselors who were involved in more coordination activities. In their words, the role of coordination "influence[s] systems more than individuals. By impacting systemic change, counselors reach a larger population and make more enduring changes" (Fitch & Marshall, 2004, p. 176). This literature supports the shift from the mental health model to academic model. Just as the literature revealed two sides of the argument, the three factor arrays reflected traditional practices and the academic based practices.

The literature is saturated with the concept of counselor role confusion (Amatea & Clark, 2005; ASCA, 1996; Fitch et al., 2001; House & Hayes, 2002; McCurdy, 2003). Some counselors have their roles defined for them by administrators, teachers, and other stakeholders because there is not a clear program, mission, and vision which is one reason

found in the literature for counseling practices varying by school (Borders & Drury, 1992; House & Hayes, 2002). Possibly, the school counselors are clear in their roles but stakeholders such as principals contribute to their time spent on non-counseling duties due to their perceptions of the counselor's roles and practices (Baker, 1996; Fitch et al., 2001; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; McCurdy, 2003; Perusse et al., 2004). Similar to the role confusion found in the literature, the local school district's counseling practices were not identical from school to school. It was interesting to note, administrators were listed as both supports and impediments to counselors in their practices which supports the idea that principals' perceptions of counselors may greatly influence their every day practices.

Recent counseling literature has highlighted the importance of the counselor and principal relationship (Militello & Janson, 2007). Factor One, Two, and Three had consensus with Statement 29 which was the practice of discussing the comprehensive school counseling program with school administrators (-2, -2, -2). Unfortunately, this counseling practice represented a negative loading and may be vital in counselors advocating for their ideal 21st century practices. Militello and Janson (2007) credited the school counselor-principal relationship with the distributed leadership model as a way to foster school improvement. While the counselors in this study did not perceive communicating with principals and creating goals as everyday practices, some research supports that counselors taking the time to educate principals about their roles or providing short informational sessions can change

principal perceptions of counselor's roles and functions (Leuwereke & Walker, 2009; Zalaquett, 2005).

Also found in the literature was the concept of counselors and principals "joining forces for leadership and advocacy [that] can positively affect a school's mission, its climate, and its students' ability to achieve academic success" (Stone & Clark, 2001, p. 46). Statement 7 spoke to advocating for positive changes in policies and practices affecting student learning with all factors negatively loading (-2, -5, -2). Factor Two "The Worker Bees" distinguished themselves from other factors by expressing a more negative view of this counseling practice.

Teachers represent another educational stakeholder group whose perceptions may influence counselor practices. Factor Two counselors "The Worker Bees" distinguished themselves from Factor One by valuing skill-driven practices such as modeling and teaching positive behaviors (+4) and assisting students in skill development (+4). In a Clark and Amatea (2004) study on teacher perceptions of school counselors, one of the major themes was direct services to students in small group and large classroom guidance sessions. The teachers "expressed the need for counselor support in their classrooms relating to problem solving and decision making, dealing with aggression, accepting differences, building character education, and helping establish a positive learning environment" (Clark & Amatea, 2004, p. 135). Green and Keys (2001) credited counseling and classroom guidance activities as direct services provided to students. These skill driven practices were significant to Factor Two counselors.

Counselors and academic achievement was another common topic in the literature. Borders and Drury (1992) shared the impact of an effective school counseling program on the overall school climate which ultimately supports student achievement. Factor One (+5) and Factor Two (+5) both valued the importance of creating an environment that is inviting, respectful, inclusive, and flexible which supports the literature. Factor Three also positively loaded (+1) for this practice (Statement 11). This finding corresponds with Amatea and Clark's (2005) study that identified an important practice for counselors was "helping to establish a positive learning environment" (p. 137).

While counseling practices emphasizing helper roles are part of the history of counseling, there is recent literature supporting counselors as leaders. Amatea and Clark (2005) mentioned the "relatively invisible role of helper" limits counselors being viewed "in the school [as a] leader" (p. 26). This statement contradicts the notion of counseling practices being valued for helping and supports counselors being in a more visible with school wide practices. Other literature described staff development as a way counselors could contribute as distributive leaders (Janson et al., 2009). These researchers stressed activities such as in-service trainings in academic motivation, educational planning and other critical areas would be roles to accentuate leadership practices. Factor One, "The Helpers" indicated a least common practice of selecting and participating in professional development and the other two factors were neutral on this practice (-4, 0,0).

For twenty-first century counselors, Scarborough and Culbreth (2008) suggested counselor education programs train counselors in developing support and facilitating change

“because school counseling practice seems to be affected by support of colleagues within the school setting [and] the development of leadership, advocacy, and collaboration skills . . . [are] vital to school counselor success” (p. 257). The Education Trust (1997b) expanded the school counselor focus from traditional service driven model to a transformed model that was data driven and standards based. The traditional model emphasized the three C’s which were counseling, consultation, and coordination of services. New counseling practices of leadership, advocacy, collaboration and teaming, managing resources, and using data and technology were embraced as part of the twenty-first century school counseling vision. Factor Three counselors positively loaded +3 for Statement 29. The practice of examining the impact of the comprehensive school counseling program on student academics, career, and personal/social development supports counselors shifting to the academic model of counseling. Contrastingly, Factor One (-1) and Factor Two (-2) counselors negatively loaded for this same practice (Statement 29).

Moreover, Factor Three counselors valued taking an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs which is similar to the transformed model mentioned in the literature. Factor Three counselors positively loaded +1 with both Factor One and Two negatively loading (-4, -4) for this practice (Statement 6). A middle school focus group participant summarized, “Most of us like face to face work with people. My day is so busy [and] I will always choose to interact with people versus analyzing data. If it is a really busy day, I wouldn’t make [data] a priority over all of the other things that I have to do” (FG43). White (2007) shared school counselors often

struggle with accountability due to being too busy to work with students, large case loads, difficulty with research and statistics as well as having a lack of administrative and clerical support. During this time of accountability, counselors may experience more difficulty accessing students and rely more on indirect services than working with students directly. Factor Three counselors valued more indirect services to impact higher numbers of students while Factor One and Two chose more direct counseling practices. Factor Three's viewpoint was aligned to Green and Keys (2001) statement, "changing the nature and functioning of a system be it a school, classroom, or family system could provide the most promising potential for prevention" (p. 92).

The counselor perceptions found in Factor Three emphasized the use of data and the examination of the impact of their services related to the three domains in the ASCA national model. Green and Keys (2001) further described the shifts for school counselors in the twenty-first century and highlighted the use of outcome-based evaluation. In their words, "school counselors in the 21st century not only need to document what they do, but also the contributions they make to positive outcomes for students" (p. 95). Factor Three counselors were perceived to have high student to counselor ratios and involved with school wide practices due to large student numbers or grade spans to cover in the school. Possibly, Factor Three counselors represented Green and Keys (2001) systemic-ecological model where counselors provide indirect services for improved outcomes.

The extant literature was linked to the findings of the research study. The three model factor arrays supported the literature and the concept of the traditional roles and academic

roles of counselors emerged through the practices perceived as most representative and least representative of current practices. The answer to the study's overarching question how innovative counseling practices are or are not lived in a local school district may lie in the perspective that one shares about the true role of school counselors.

Findings and Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework was presented in Chapter Two and illustrated a Theory of Action based on pressures to change such as the ASCA national model, MEASURE, and professional standards. An examination of the literature revealed conceptual and empirical literature that centered on the following counseling tenants: job satisfaction, counselor practices, role confusion, principal perceptions, counselor as leader, and counselor and principal relationships. Phase One shared the Theory of Action with the pressures within the local district to respond to accountability. A lens was identified that would be used to examine local district change in the adoption of MEASURE as the accountability tool used for program evaluation. Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovation was the lens to view personal change in our study.

Figure 6.1 highlights the Theory of Action developed in Chapter two with some revisions. In reflecting on the Theory of Action, I chose to leave the ASCA National Model and the Professional Standards as pressures for change which also coincide with the accountability pressures in the educational field with No Child Left Behind. I relocated MEASURE towards the right section of the Theory of Action due to the local school district selecting MEASURE as the accountability tool to use for their program evaluation efforts.

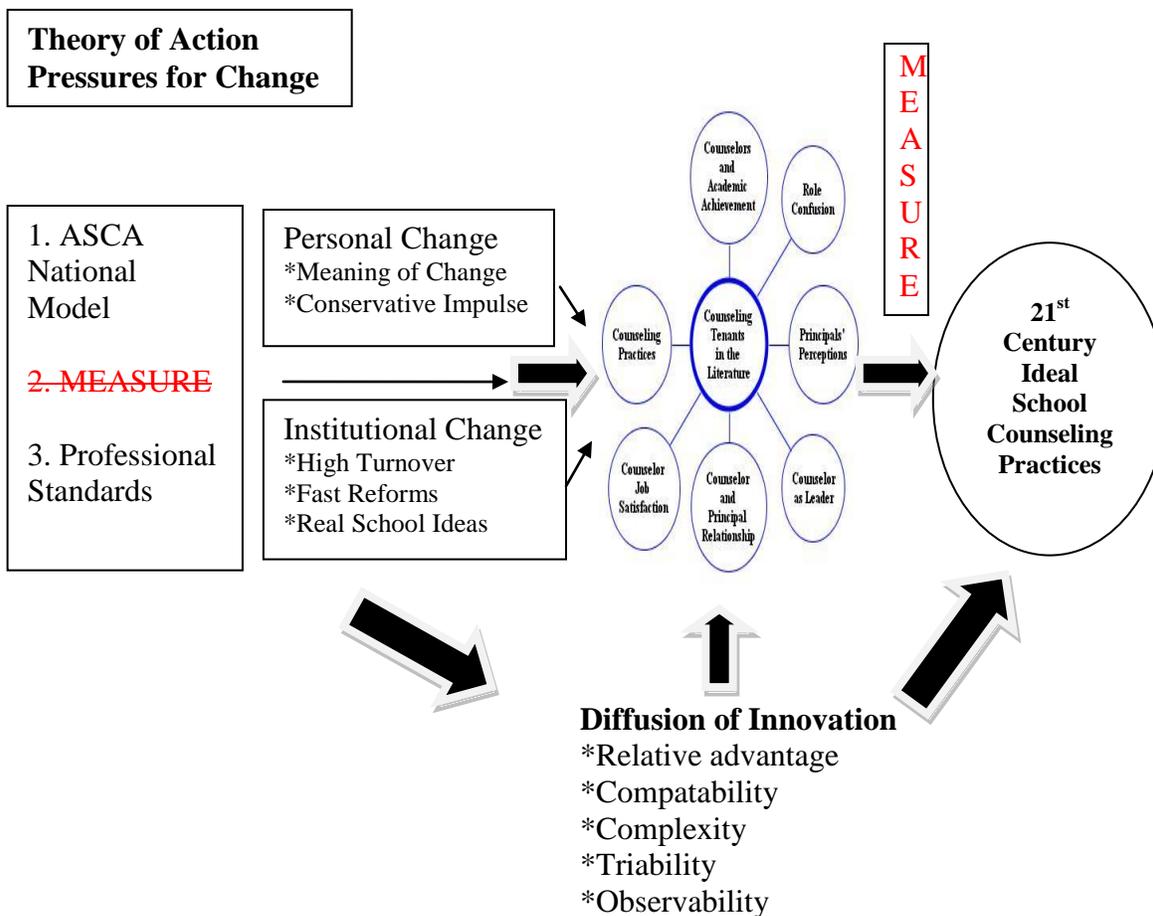


Figure 6.1. Revised theory of action.

Conceptual Lens of Change

Based on the Revised Theory of Action, the conceptual lenses of personal and institutional change theory will allow the researcher to connect the study's findings with the conceptual framework. A brief mention about a policy lens that could be used for the study since this was previously mentioned in Chapter two. The ever present literature on role confusion left the researcher with the understanding of how ambiguity impacts change which March's (1988) policy ambiguity addressed. The premise of policy ambiguity is implementation errors are due to be issues within the organization.

Even with all of the director and counselors efforts to push forward with MEASURE, the individual principals at the school level and their understanding of the change impacted efforts. All counselors in the district completed MEASURE with reviews and signatures of the administrators; however, did principals understand enough about MEASURE for them to allow counselors to enact ideal practices or did they continue current practices just as they had in the past. For this district, efforts were established to conquer the idea of policy ambiguity. In fact, the district spent a year learning about the ASCA model and selecting the evaluation instrument which was ultimately MEASURE. Additionally, counselors received ongoing feedback and support in their first year of using MEASURE. At the beginning and end of the year, counselors submitted their MEASURE documents to make sure goals were measurable, appropriate data sources were selected, and information was recorded correction which decreased the amount of confusion with MEASURE. Possibly, all of these pre-adoption to change efforts became part of the reason that MEASURE was successfully

performed in the district. Again, the ongoing information needs to be shared as counselors, principals, and district leadership turnover is unavoidable. The once clear rationale for the selection and reasons to complete MEASURE may still be at risk for policy ambiguity.

The conceptual lens of personal change was used to understand the study's findings. The Phase One interview with the director helped me to understand the power of one individual in leading a change initiative. Fullan (1991) shared how individual people could serve as change agents in altering school environments for deep change. The director's work in the district was instrumental in the transition from the old way of program evaluation to the new way through the introduction of MEASURE. In fact, the counselors in the study identified several supports for implementing MEASURE with other counselors ranking the highest. District support was the second highest ranking support followed by administrators and colleagues. Interestingly, the counselor meetings and professional development combined would also place this support as a top strategy. The efforts of the counselor to help counselors understand the meaning for the change was essential. As a director, he gave meaning to personal change and his connections within the district helped him support concepts attributed to institutional change.

While the district led change could be viewed as top down, the director was very much a part of involving all counselors at the grass roots level. While several educational stakeholders were involved in the shift towards MEASURE, the director was primary in the role of change. Basically, the director seized the opening by recognizing the timing was perfect for a change as a new Superintendent came to the district, the state's decision to

remove the testing coordinator role off of counselors, and the national, state, and local district's efforts for more accountability for all educators. The director also worked over a period of time to involve counselors in the change through their selection of MEASURE as the tool for the district. Again, the counselors understood the personal meaning to the change and the supports of professional development along with the monthly counselor meetings supported the change. Through the findings, the counselors credited the top three types of professional development towards MEASURE being the monthly meetings, their university counseling program, and workshops.

From the lens of Diffusion of Innovation that encompasses the change theory of Everett Rogers (2003), the introduction of MEASURE as the new method for counselors to evaluate their programs has several connections to the following five crucial elements necessary for change: relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability. In terms of relative advantage, the previous way of program evaluation in the district consisted of tallying work completed which was referred to by Stone and Dahir (2007) as the "so what" data. The director recognized the need for more accountability especially at a time where budgets were being evaluated each year for additional cuts. Furthermore, the counselors in the district recognized the relative advantage using MEASURE as a tool to evaluate the impact of their efforts. The director involved the counselors in the selection of the program evaluation tool. In his words, "We shared MEASURE with them. We shared a couple other evaluation instruments for counseling programs with them. The one that everyone almost unanimously were in support of was

MEASURE.” Therefore, counselors saw the relative advantage of the shift to MEASURE because this change initiative was an innovation that was better than their previous program evaluation method.

In terms of the compatibility of MEASURE, the Diffusion of Innovations concept suggests the innovation has to be assimilated into the individual’s life. The ongoing professional development and the time spent selecting and discussing MEASURE resulted in counselors eventually having the mindset – let’s just do it. This innovation was expected to be submitted at various points in the year so feedback and support could be given in the writing of the goals, collection of data, and the making of visual graphs for the data. Meetings and professional development contained information about the innovation so counselors were inundated with the innovation.

One of the major complexities of the change was counselors feeling comfortable working with data. While the compatibility of the innovation was one factor that influenced counselors to adopt the use of MEASURE, counselors sources of support also assisted them with the change. As stated previously, the district provided professional resources, multiple training, and monthly meetings with the director sharing examples to help counselors with the innovation. One of the barriers of using MEASURE was that after the initial trainings, new counselors who were hired or who had received training from various universities may not have had the same exposure to MEASURE. This speaks to turnover that is often part of institutional change with the initial group receiving information and the new personnel

coming in without as many supports. Ultimately, MEASURE would not have been successful if counselors found the innovation too difficult to use; therefore, a resistance to adopt.

The factor of trialability is how easily the innovation can be experimented with during implementation. The idea of counselors working and submitting drafts addressed this factor. In addition, counselors shared their MEASURES during the implementation phase so they could learn from each other on how best to complete a graph and what format to use in writing their goals. In terms of trialability, each counselor was able to work towards determining their own goals in an academic, career, and social/personal domain which allowed for some flexibility in the change initiative.

For observability, this component represents the extent the innovation is visible to others and how the communication channels are utilized in the social systems. The MEASURE documents were reviewed by principals at the end of the year and compiled by the district into a CD. The MEASURE documents were shared with the Board of Education as the counseling program evaluation for the district. In addition, all counselors received the CD so they could not only see their efforts, but counselors had access to all of the MEASURE documents which became a resource for others who may want to try similar counseling practices.

Based on the Diffusion of Innovations theory (Rogers, 2003), the nature and timing of the decision to diffuse the innovation, MEASURE, in the district was critical. Rogers' spoke to the necessity for a champion to emerge to stand behind the innovation. In this case, the director was definitely a champion for the innovation. There are three types of innovations

and collection innovation with the decision occurring with the consensus of counselors would characterize this innovation effort. This theory examines how, why, and what rate innovation can spread through cultures. The director utilized the communication channels that Rogers suggested were critical in connecting to the social systems that included the superintendent, principals, the board of education, and counselors for the innovation adoption.

Implications for Policy

The three factors that emerged in this study highlight what we already know: there is not one way counseling practices are lived or are not lived in schools. Therefore, role confusion continues to exist in the counseling profession. This study provided three distinct categories of how school counselors perceive their practices. The study's findings revealed some common least representative practices for counselors which support a need to revise the state's 2008 Professional School Counseling Standards. Currently, North Carolina is in the process of developing a new school counselor evaluation document. During the study, several practices such as collaborating with teachers on the standard course of study and supporting teacher use of the guidance curriculum were negatively loaded. These practices may be inappropriate for counselors and not relevant to their work. In addition, many of the practices asked for counselors to take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data; however, counselors may not have access to state and national data. As discussed in the limitations, counselors may be active with their school data but do not work with data at other levels. So, new state professional standards could consider these findings.

In response to a revision of the 2008 North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards, counselors will also need to be evaluated by a consistent and relevant evaluation instrument. The state has recently released a teacher evaluation instrument, counselors also require an instrument that reflects twenty-first century standards and practices. Artifacts will be identified to coincide with the standards so administrators will be able to rate counseling performance. Presently, the state is trying to add an additional standard to both the teacher and administrator evaluation instrument that relates to student achievement. Counselors may also anticipate a standard related to student outcomes and achievement. For the district under study, the MEASURE program evaluation tool will provide data artifacts as well as student outcome data. The old saying, “what gets measured is what gets done,” speaks volumes to the impact of a new school counselor evaluation instrument on counseling practices.

While ASCA National Standards were provided to counselors, Galassi and Akos (2004) shared “these standards propose outcomes for academic, personal/social, and career development....they do not provide a road map for developing and implementing effective counseling interventions, and they are not context or school specific” (p. 148). Therefore, individual states are left with more work to clarify their policies which ultimately are passed on to the local school districts. The policy needs to mandate clear expectations and roles for counselors in order for ideal practices to occur at the district level.

Even with mandates, districts often struggle to respond to unfunded mandates in harsh economic times with the state slashing education budgets. As states work to protect the classroom, the ongoing threat of non-instructional services such as school counseling

positions remains threatened. In order for policies to be enacted, there needs to be some teeth to the policy and supports for local school districts in the policy adoption. This study revealed a district under the leadership of a key policy actor, the Director of Student Services, who had a background in counseling which is not always a guarantee for personnel in this position across the state. The director involved the counselors in the selection of MEASURE and provided multiple professional development opportunities for the change which was a support for the adoption of MEASURE. The local school district is also responsible for communicating the roles of counselors and their part in the overall district as well as school visions. In this study, the Director had gained the support of the Superintendent who removed the major non-counseling duty of testing; however, this decision was coupled with the state recommending counselors to complete a ratio of 60% direct and 40% indirect practices.

Webb et al. (2005) spoke to the district, state, and federal mandates that called for practices to be supported with strong evidence of improving student outcomes. Clear policies are essential not just for counselors who are operating in the field but for counselor preparation programs so they can make sure training is aligned with the 21st century expectations. In this study, some counselors identified the counselor preparation program as a support for their implementation of MEASURE because they completed this as part of a university requirement. In a typical counselor education program, the training is still based on a mental health model as most programs are working with the full continuum of counselors who represent students interested in school, higher education, and agency

counseling. For the most part, counselor education programs may offer one course that is specifically targeted to school counseling.

Policymakers should consider the professionalization of school counseling by offering pre-service programs with a stronger focus on school counseling that goes beyond the typical one school counseling course. Counselors need to have knowledge of working with academic and behavioral based interventions, knowledge of the school improvement plan, and information on at-risk students in need of 504 accommodation plans or special education services. In addition, more time can be spent on the role of counselors as leaders and the collaborative relationship opportunities that exist with administrators. As counselors graduate, they arrive to school settings where “principals often have significant influence on shaping the roles and responsibilities of school counselors” (Ponec & Brock, 2000).

Research supports administrators subscribe to the role of counselors presented to them from their own training or experiences. Therefore, educational leadership programs also have a vested interest in training principals to recognize the power of the counselor-principal partnership in school improvement. The principal-counselor collaboration can begin in preparation programs for administrators and counselors through joint coursework emphasizing research, teaching and service projects (Janson et al., 2008; Militello & Janson, 2007). In addition, research supports the “importance of school counselors educating their principals about their role” (Janson et al., 2008, p. 354). In fact, one study reveals when counselors educate their principals about their roles aligned in the ASCA National Model

that principals and counselors purposely work together to meet the needs of students (Janson et al., 2008).

While this study asked the question: Are school counselors MEASUREing up? Another question that needs to be asked is: How do administrators ensure that they are all on the same page in measuring counselors? If expectations are different due to role ambiguity, then the only true measure is the individual principal who is ultimately in charge of evaluating their counselor. The ambiguous role of counselors across the state, districts, and school suggests that counselors are being set up for failure. If not failure, counselors are finding themselves in roles completely different from most of their pre-service training. Janson, Militello, and Kosine (2008) suggested leadership training for counselors in their university program through their practicum and internship coursework. Possibly, school counselors could have opportunities to work with principals and school leadership teams on academic and school improvement efforts. The politics of form versus function is present in the school counseling field. While policies impacting standards and evaluation instruments are some initial components, the pre-service training will need to align with these revisions. This training is not just for counselor education programs but for educational leadership programs training future administrators who also need to understand the new 21st century ideal counseling practices or the historical roles of counselors will continue to exist. For existing principals, local school districts can also assist with professional development activities to share ideal roles for counselors by offering information at monthly principal's meetings and sharing expectations for counselors' efforts in schools.

Implications for Practice

In the last section, the study's findings visited implications for policy. This section addressed implications on practice for both school counselors and administrators. As stated in the implications for policy, a clear link should be present in counselor certification programs, professional development of educational stakeholders, and district expectations of school counselors. In the literature, a great variation in practice is based on a counselor's preparation, evaluation, and the perceptions of other stakeholders on the role of a school counselor. Gysbers (2001) had appealed for a clarification on the role of counselors and their functions which had already been made by others in the field for the past 70 years.

In the present study, the local school district's director connected with the local university about their efforts to use MEASURE and seek support for the inclusion of MEASURE in the counselor preparation program. Since many counselors hired in the district were graduates of the program, consistent expectations between the university and school district were established to support MEASURE. For this study, the university experience was the second highest form of professional development with MEASURE shared by the counselors. One counselor "was introduced to ASCA and MEASURE through one course in grad program! We were required to submit a MEASURE for academic credit" (18-222).

Whiston (2002) emphasized that counselors may make a difference; however, they need hard data from school counseling research to support these claims. She acknowledged the lack of clarity in role definition and suggested the following: principals be made aware of the standards, more effort spent on informing educators of the standards, states more

closely aligning their standards to national standards, and more research on what counseling practices are most beneficial to students. Interestingly, the present study supported administrators as both supporters and barriers to their work. Nine of 34 participants listed administrators as a support. At the same time, five counselors cited administrators as a barrier with only time and extra duties ranked higher. As the literature suggested, principals' understanding of counselors' roles can have a huge impact on their use of time.

The emerging literature on the counselor principal relationship speaks to counseling practices where the counselor works to align their goals to the school improvement plan to measure outcomes (Janson et al., 2008). Principals have moved away from authoritarian roles to leadership practices that are distributed or servant minded. The counselor is a crucial member of the educational team and can easily take on leadership roles within the school. In terms of administrators, an appeal is made to encourage conversations with school counselors to understand the necessity of a comprehensive school counseling program. Administrators are in a critical position to allow counselors to perform ideal practices by protecting their counselors from non-counseling related duties so they can target their time on academic, personal/social, and career domains. If counselors become the people in the building for all of the catch all duties and assignments, then the counselors will struggle to meet their call to 21st century practices. Unfortunately, personnel and budget cuts often limit administrators in their abilities to redistribute some roles; however, creativity is needed to best utilize counselors' efforts. For instance, the local school district under study assigned the testing coordinator role to the assistant principals. Clerical support has often been secured for

mundane tasks such as records, school enrollment, and school withdrawal. The use of committees and school improvement teams that involves multiple people in the coordination efforts of programs such as school wide discipline programs and academic recognition ceremonies would also alleviate the counselors from being the sole provider of these services. Militello, Schweid, and Carey (2008) shared a collaboration-based approach where tasks “with several stakeholders sharing responsibility [offered] creative ways to accomplish the tasks...and compensate[d] for any ‘weakness’ in the system” (p. 28). Through the sharing of responsibilities, their study revealed higher levels of collaboration between stakeholders with the understanding school improvement work “cannot be done by any one position” with collaboration allowing “for greater flexibility for creating contextually appropriate solutions” (Militello, et. al., 2008, pp. 30-31).

The distributive leadership model also promotes collaboration and delegation. Counselors are able to step up as leaders and strong counselor-principal relationships would ultimately lead to administrators successfully meeting some of their own 21st century standards. Who better to assist a principal in meeting the Standard 1 Strategic Leadership or Standard 3 Cultural Leadership than a school counselor? Partnering for success with counselors is a win-win proposition for administrators.

In terms of school counselors, a call for advocacy is being made for counselors to advocate for job roles not just advocate for students. Pressures of change are being faced and accountability efforts are evident. In this study, a challenge of a new way of program evaluation, MEASURE, was introduced. While the change did not occur overnight and

counselors had to learn new ways of thinking, the counselors accomplished the task by all completing MEASURE. In some ways, this became another responsibility for the counselors; however, the counselors used this tool to reflect on their practices in order to increase program efforts. Furthermore, the publication of the MEASURE documents and CD allowed for counselors within the district to have an awareness of counseling practices in all school settings in order to replicate successful interventions.

Counselors hold strong convictions of advocating for students; however, counselors must advocate for themselves and the school counseling profession. While time spent on discussing the comprehensive counseling program with administrators seems low on the priority list, research supports this indirect practice could potentially reap dividends towards counselors having the ability to work in their ideal counseling roles. In this study, counselors negatively loaded across all factors for having discussions with principals. Counselors must take the initiative to engage in these conversations in order to advocated for their roles, advocate for the counseling program, share outcome data such as MEASURE, and emerge as a visible leader within the school community. The implications for policy to assist the state, district, and university training programs are a part of the picture; however, at the end of the day, counselors are in a unique position to clarify their roles to administrators each day. The power of demonstrating student outcomes and contributing practices that improve the school climate will go a long way in convincing administrators on the best use of counselors' time.

Implications for Research

In reflecting on this study's implications for research, some time will be spent on the good and bad of Q-methodology, insights into my own research, the ideas to be studied next, and the big research questions that still need to be addressed. Q-methodology was selected due to its capacity for both quantitative and qualitative data. The method provides the researcher with a way to quantify something that holds subjectivity for the participants and at the same time retain the stories behind the data. For me, I liked the ability to get hard data and link these findings to the soft qualitative data that provided a thick, rich description to the study's findings. For this study, Q-methodology helped examine local school counselors' perceptions of practices and was a good methodology for a novice researcher. The PQmethod software was free; therefore, cost efficient for the study. In addition, the P-sample of 34 counselors was an appropriate amount of participants for this type of methodology. Another way to have conducted the research that would have yielded a higher number of participants would have been to survey counselors about their practices which could have produced more generalizable results. The research design of Q-methodology does not provide conclusive or generalizable results; however, the goal was not to represent all of the lived or not lived counseling practices for all school counselors. Rather, the goal was to create an in-depth analysis of how a set of current school counselors live their professional standards. The Q-methodology allowed for the study to examine the perceptions of a group of school counselors in a local school district where three factors emerged: the helping professionals, the skill-driven professionals, and the coordinating professionals.

As a researcher, there were lessons learned through this study. In an effort to ensure confidentiality, I was unable to follow up with specific counselors about their Q-sort date. For instance, the male middle school counselor who negatively loaded at a significant level would have been a participant that further conversations may have enabled a better understanding of his viewpoint. In addition, the researcher's inability to know the counselor also limited knowledge about their school setting. The school context would have enabled the researcher to understand the counselor-student ratio as well as the school's overall performance status. How would the counselors in higher performing schools perceive their counseling practices? Would the counselor-student ratio impact a counselor's current practices? Beyond this research study, the researcher would find it beneficial to ask school administrators in the district to perform the Q-sort to see how their perceptions of school counseling practices related to the counselors' perceptions. A stratified sample where the school counselor Q-sort could be matched with their principal's Q-sort would present interesting findings.

Focus group participants also shared their ideas about future possibilities of research and ways to use similar studies. One participant shared the sorting of practices would be great way to get to know your co-counselor and offer a way to facilitate conversations for counselors working together in the same school setting. Another idea was for counselors to perform two Q-sorts with one based on actual practices and the second one based on preferred practices. The most excitement was generated by the idea of having principals see what counselors are doing in their practices versus what counselors need to be doing in their

practices. Furthermore, counselors shared it would be beneficial to see a Q-sort of how their principal's perceived counseling practices.

The final portion of this section will suggest some additional research questions that go beyond understanding current practices of school counselors. As the current study unfolded, a myriad of further questions presented themselves to the researcher. For implications, the research is clear and the study presented the concept of ongoing role ambiguity. Mandates are needed to clarify roles as well as counselor advocacy for their work in schools. The impact of an administrator was supported in this study which results in further research to determine how these key educational members view counseling practice. In addition, what are the administrator characteristics that suggest support for a counselor to perform ideal practices and to establish a positive principal-counselor relationship. Further research must focus on these questions:

- How are these standards taught (or not taught) in counselor certification programs?
- How are counselors trained in their pre-service programs in leadership skills?
- How are counselors different or not different when trained in a pre-service programs that specialize in school counseling?
- How are administrators trained in their pre-service programs in the role of a school counselor?
- What are effective measures to evaluate school counselors?

- What counseling practices should be incorporated into the new counseling standards?
- What counseling practices are most related to increased school improvement?
- How are principals and counselors partnering for student success?
- What types of characteristics are present in administrators and counselors who establish positive counselor –principal relationships?
- What are principals’ perceptions of counseling practices?
- How does principal and counselor perceptions match or not match in highly effective schools?

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to provide a glimpse into how one district chose to implement MEASURE and to see the impacts, if any, on school counseling practice. The researcher sought to answer the question: Are school counselors MEASUREing up? In other words, Are school counselors living or not living up to the professional counseling standards? The role confusion that historically existed in the counseling research continues to exist today. Moreover, the research also points to the struggle between the mental health model and academic based model for school counseling. The measures of a school counselor’s practice rely on various educator stakeholders’ perspectives such as the university training program, administrators, teachers, and ultimately the individual counselors. Basically, the answer to the research question rests in the perception of the evaluator. Simply stated, it depends on who is asked.

For this study, MEASURE, was an accountability tool championed into the district by the director to respond to the pressures for change by offering a new way to evaluate the school counseling programs in the district. For most of the counselors, MEASURE illuminated distinct ways to impact their counseling practices. Some counselors in the study did not attribute MEASURE to improved practices at all. For those who cited MEASURE as an impact, the accountability tool offered them a focus to their counseling practices. In MEASUREing MEASURE as a tool, the researcher observed a flaw in setting target goals for the academic, personal/social, and career domains. These targets were set by individual counselors who may be working to decrease behavioral issues with a select number of students; however, what percentage of reduction would make their practices successful? Therefore, counselors who set the target goals too high may not reach their goals while other counselors who set the goal too low appeared to have successful interventions. At the end of the day, MEASURE provided more information about practices and student outcomes than the previous way of doing things. Overall, the counselors in the district embraced the use of MEASURE and did make it a part of their practice whether they agreed in the tool changing their practices or becoming a tool to use to prove the effectiveness of their counseling.

During the implications, the researcher called for the professionalization of school counseling. Counselor advocacy was stressed as an important factor in advocating for counselors' true 21st century roles and practices. The extant literature was echoed for counselors to have conversations and relationships with principals who have a great influence on how school counselors spend their time in the schools. All of these things being said, what

will keep the profession from the role confusion that was evident in the past, present, and possibly the future?

The conceptual framework spoke of the Diffusion of Innovation and MEASURE was diffused into this local district by a champion who included the counselors in the process of selecting MEASURE, gave appropriate and ongoing professional development to support the initiative, and secured district level support from the top. He ensured five critical elements were met and personal change towards MEASURE as the innovation was achieved by all counselors in the district. While Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation lens analyzed the personal change, this diffusion must penetrate the institutional level. In other words, a collision of forces is needed where the entire organization that is comprised of university training programs, principals, teachers and other stakeholders meet the five critical elements for the innovation to diffuse at a higher level. Rogers' was right in his theory but the theory has to go beyond the individual to the institutional level. Counselors operate within the larger system and will continue to be constrained in their roles if the diffusion does not penetrate the higher organizational level. Future research should look at Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Model in relation to system changes. Yes, the power of one to lead change was evident in this study. At the same time, more people are needed for the diffusion of innovation to occur at both the personal and institutional levels. Ultimately, we are all connected and no one thing can change all on its own.

Post Script

At the beginning of the research study, I began with a Phase One interview with the Director of Student Services who had recently resigned from the position to leave the school district for a promotion in the university setting. In his role, he was a strong advocate for the student services program and for counselors. The research on change mentions institutional turnover as one of the barriers. The loss of this influential leader saddened the local district and especially the school counselors, school social workers, and school nurses under his supervision. The counselor group completed the remainder of the school year with a retired part-time superintendent filling in for the position. At times, there were questions about this position being filled with the posting of the job in January only to get pulled one week later. Eventually, a new director was named six months after the previous director vacated the position. As the new director came into the position, central office positions were shifted or downsized resulting in the student services department losing a secretary to the main switchboard operations and the part-time retired 504 coordinator not being provided a contract for the new school year.

In a recent principal's meeting, district leadership shared the MEASURE documents were being looked at so counselors' goals could be more aligned with the school improvement plans. This change could be for the better or this change could be the unraveling of a change initiative that took years to implement with counselor buy in, professional development, and ongoing time, energy, and support poured into this endeavor.

Only months after the Director left the position, one middle school received the honor of becoming a RAMP recognized school which was something that ultimately the data from MEASURE and other efforts was helpful in securing. In addition, the counselor group rallied around the leadership efforts of a counselor colleague to go into a neighboring district that needed support after a tornado destroyed one of their local schools. The highest ranked support identified in this study was other counselors. I met some passionate, caring individuals in the local district who I have all the confidence in the world that their commitment to children and the amount of support that they provide each other will keep moving them forward in their 21st century counseling practices.

Systems are very complex and both personal and systems change is needed to fully maximize the diffusion of an innovation. For this study, the innovation, MEASURE, had been introduced into one local eastern North Carolina school district. While there may not be one single way counselors are living or not living practices, the current North Carolina Professional School Counseling Standards need revision. The study's implications made a call for counselors to advocate for their job roles and educate administrators about the ASCA National Model. The change in this study was driven by one key champion, yet the importance of deeper change at the systems level was also seen. The district's counselors responded to the change in program evaluation and produced accountability data for their practices. This study affirmed counselors ongoing efforts to demonstrate their accountability efforts in their school counseling programs.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Conceptual and Empirical Literature

Table A.1

Conceptual and Empirical Research Review

Citation	Literature Typology	Research Questions	Research Design	Theoretical Foundations	Main Findings
Amatea, E. S. & Clark, M. A. (2005).	Empirical	How school administrators conceptualized the school counselor role?	Qualitative	26 administrators in public elementary, middle, and high schools	Grounded Theory Four distinctive role sets were found. Need for development of counselor leadership skills and role expectations by counselors themselves and by counselor preparation programs
Baggerly, J., & Osborn, D. (2006).	Empirical	How satisfied are school counselors with their career? How committed are school counselors to their career and does this vary by level? Do appropriate duties, inappropriate duties, self-efficacy, frequency of district and peer supervision, and stress correlate with school counselors' career satisfaction? Do these variables correlate with school counselors' career commitment? Do these variables predict school counselors' career commitment?	Quantitative	1,280 out of 2,400 Florida public school counselors responded to a survey (53%) return rate	School counseling is satisfying profession (does not vary by level). Frustration by not being able to implement appropriate duties significantly increases school counselor's level of career dissatisfaction.

Table A.1 (continued)

Baker, S., Robichaud, T., Westforth, Dietrich, V., Wells, S., & Schreck, R. (2009)	Conceptual	Presents 4 vignettes to demonstrate school counselors are advocates, collaborators, and leaders when engaged as consultants Highlights the role of consultation as possibly being overlooked as a pathway to achieving recognition from stakeholders as advocates, collaborators, and leaders.			
Baker, S., Grimmett, M., Cannon, S., Ting, S., Nassar-McMillan, S., Gerler Jr., E., & et al. (2009).	Empirical	What are the effects of the School College Community Collaboration (SC3) enhancements in the introductory school counseling college course?	Mixed Methods	35 college counseling students participated in an evaluation questionnaire in fall 2007.	The overall response was positive with “some modest changes or enhancements” to be added to future courses (p. 293).
Beale, A., & McCay, E. (2001).	Conceptual	A more decentralized responsibility for hiring counselors with recommendations of using panels to fill this critical role. Principals are in an “unique position to identify and to ultimately employ outstanding counseling applicants” (pg. 26).			
Blakely, C. (2009).	Empirical	What are the supervision readiness levels and supervision activities of school counselors in traditional school counseling programs and Recognized ASCA Model Programs (RAMP)?	Quantitative	181 school counselors participated in the study with 68 (62.4%) in RAMP programs and 113 (37.6%) in traditional programs with a School Counselor Supervisor’s Checklist and a School Counselor Supervision Questionnaire.	Two major findings surfaced: significant difference between RAMP counselors supervising trainees utilizing the ASCA model and counselors with more work experience utilize the ASCA model more often during counselor supervision.

Table A.1 (continued)

Borders, L., & Drury, S. (1992)	Conceptual	Describes 30 years of empirical research and professional standards. Authors compiled a review with computerized and manual searches from 1960s through 1990 with attention to empirical studies from refereed journals. Seven Areas were highlighted: core principals of program, program resources, interventions, evaluation, renewal, policies, and climate.			
Brown et al., (2004).	Empirical	Counselors' perceptions of state's testing program (North Carolina)	Quantitative	Two Studies conducted – 1 with 141 N.C. counselors responding to survey and the 2 nd 139 responding to a questionnaire	NC testing program requires a substantial amount of counselor's time. Counselors perceived their involvement in testing program as having a negative impact on their counseling role by their ability to deliver services, the way they are regarded by other educational professionals, and their future career plans.
Brown, D., & Trusty, J. (2005).	Conceptual	Does a Comprehensive School Counseling Program improve academic achievement?	Examines research literature regarding school counselors' efforts related to academic achievement such as Sink and Stroh (2003), Whiston (2002), and Sink (2002). Concludes that there is little support for comprehensive school counseling programs improving academic achievement. Calls for more strategic interventions. Highlights differences between distal and proximal outcomes.		
Burnham, J. J., & Jackson, C. (2000).	Empirical	What school counselors are actually doing? How their time is being spent? Results were related to other counseling studies.	80 certified school counselors completed a questionnaire. – used in an introductory of school counseling course. Convenience sample drawn from two southeastern states.	Counselors are performing the functions of the models but discrepancies and variations do exist. Counselors continue to meet students through traditional approaches such as individual counseling; however, should begin to include brief counseling models, consultation, collaboration, and referral skills. Increased uses in this study call for more inclusion of consultative concepts on counselor training programs. Study indicated some misunderstandings of group work. Nonguidance duties should be reassigned to appropriate staff which would involve administrators. Clear call for efforts to transform the role of counselor to move closer to current model.	

Table A.1 (continued)

Dahir, C., Burnham, J., & Stone, C. (2009).	Empirical	Purposes of the study: 1) Collect baseline data to measure readiness toward implementing a comprehensive school counseling program. 2) Examine school level differences. 3) Identify aspects of school counselor's attitudes, beliefs, and priorities that would benefit from prof. development.	1,691 Alabama school counselors were targeted with 1,244 participating at a 74% return rate for the self-reported survey of attitudes, beliefs, and priorities (ASCNPD) – data analysis with MANOVA	High school counselors emphasize a higher priority on academic development/career. Middle school counselors' highest mean scores were aligned to state plan and ASCA model, elementary school counselors were more focused on the personal/social growth domain.	
Dahir, C. (2004).	Empirical	Would school counselors see national standards as important and necessary for school counseling programs?	Quantitative	Survey with 2,000 K-12 school counselors randomly selected from ASCA membership database with a 56.4% return rate	Primary finding was 82% supported the development of national standards in order to clarify role confusion on the purpose, scope, and practice of school counseling. Personal/Social activities has the strongest level of support followed by academic and career development.
Dahir, C. (2009).	Conceptual	Where Lies the future of school counselors in 21 st century?	Programs aligned with goals of school improvement. Relate how academic rigor and affective development is formula for student success. School counselors key members to educational leadership team. Social justice agenda to close the achievement gap.		

Table A.1 (continued)

Dahir, C., & Stone, C. (2009)	Empirical	Which school improvement goals were identified as most important by school counselors to focus on? As a result of the action research plans, what were the contributions of school counselors to school improvement goals?	175 school counselors voluntarily submitted their MEASURE documents between 2003 to 2006.	Article discusses action research by counselors who use data informed practice. "The partnerships that were most successful, effective, and powerful directly engaged parents and promoted parental involvement as critical influences in a child's success in school" (p. 16). Elementary school counselors had parents in more involved roles where as high school counselors involved parents more in "an informational receptor position" (p. 16). "Successful plans also promoted counselor-principal partnerships to promote systemic change with the expressed purpose of furthering the academic success of every student" (p. 16).
Dimmitt, C. (2009).	Conceptual	Why does evaluation matter so much in school counseling?	Emphasizes the importance of evaluation and shares that it "is done to determine whether it is likely that a specific practice, intervention, or program is effective in a particular context" (p. 1). Types of evaluations are shared such as needs assessment, outcome research, formative and implementation evaluation.	
Dodson, T. (2009).	Empirical	Question was not stated; however, researcher wanted to compare administrators' perceptions in RAMP versus non-Ramp schools.	10 RAMP designated high schools and high schools in Rocky Mountain region that were non-RAMP. 132 questionnaires were distributed and 60 administrators responded (19 from RAMP and 41 from non-RAMP).	The most significant finding in the administrator perceptions was that RAMP administrators viewed their school counselors as having a significant role in collaborating with teachers to present guidance curriculum lessons (abstract). Also, principals at both schools shared similar perceptions which may mean elements of the ASCA model are already occurring at schools that do not have the RAMP designation.

Table A.1 (continued)

Dollarhide et al., (2007).	Empirical	What are the critical incidents that supportive principals identify as meaningful and significant in their appreciation of school counseling?	Qualitative, phenomenological interview methodology	61 principals were invited to participate with 19 responding for a 31% response rate. Principals were identified by ASCA presidents across the 50 states, principals nominated by members, and principals of eight national RAMP schools.	Counselor and principal relationships impact school climate. Principals identified counselors who were communicative, supportive, and sincere as valued attributes. Principals valued many roles and activities of counselors that are aligned with the ASCA model.
Edwards, L. (2009).	Dissertation	How school counselors are collecting, analyzing, and using achievement and achievement related data? What data driven initiatives school counselors in Alabama are implementing? What assistance school counselors in Alabama need to analyze, collect, and share accountability data about their school counseling programs?	Quantitative – cross sectional survey design.	A sample of 420 school counselors completed the School Counselor Accountability Practices Questionnaire.	59% professional school counselors do not participate in accountability activities. Some open ended responses provided information on what assistance counselors need to implement data driven initiatives.

Table A.1 (continued)

Fitch, T., & Marshall, J. (2004).	Empirical	How did counselors perceive the importance of different counseling duties?	Quantitative	Full time counselors in Kentucky (N=62)	Counselors at high performing schools spent more time on program management, evaluation, and research; adhering to professional standards; and coordination.
Fitch et al., (2001).	Empirical	How administrators in training perceived the role of the school counselor? Do graduate students perceive the professional school counselor differently than counselor role outlined in Kentucky/ASCA standards?	Quantitative	86 out of 100 (86% response rate) for a 15 item survey of graduate students in the educational administration program at two universities in Kentucky	Categorized school roles appropriately, were aware of the importance of school counselor duties, viewed crisis management as essential task, some misperceptions still exist (role of counselor in discipline and record keeping).
Galassi, J., & Akos, P. (2004).	Conceptual	Idea of Counselor Transformation is moving from mental health to academic focus model. A summary of the role transformation of school counselors, current school counseling models, and national standards for programs is discussed. The article proposed a “developmental advocate role” for the counselor where the “school counselor is a leader within the educational community who works with students, teachers, admin., parents, and other members...that nurtures the development of academic, career, and personal/social competence among students.” (p.155).			
Green, A., & Keys, S. (2001).	Conceptual	Principles of developmental guidance programs are shared along with discussion on the transition of school counseling. The articles shares that counseling is shifting towards indirect services model, use of collaboration to achieve comprehensive program, alignment of goals to school improvement, and evidence/outcome based evaluation.			

Table A.1 (continued)

Gysbers, N. (2004).	Conceptual	Article traces evolution of accountability from 1920s to 2003. Throughout the article, a sampling of empirical studies in the counseling field provides evidences of the impact of guidance and counseling programs.			
Herr, E. (2001).	Conceptual	Federal legislation supporting comprehensive guidance programs, ASCA, history of guidance and policies that impacted counseling was shared.			
House, R., & Hayes, R. (2002).	Conceptual	The article asked the question “do counselors make a difference?” and looked at counselors as leaders, advocates, and the present focus of counselors along with the new vision was highlighted. Presented reasons for why counselors need to be proactive leaders. A need for counselors to be an integral part of school reform and documenting success – in times of financial crisis a worry of their extinction shared.			
Jacques, C., & Brorsen, B.W. (2002)	Empirical	How specific categories of student expenditure affect student achievement?	Quantitative	Standardized test scores from 1994-1995 from Oklahoma	3 of 11 expenditure categories had a statistically significant relationship to test scores (instructional, transportation, and student support)
Janson, C. (2007).	Dissertation	What are high school counselors’ perceptions of their educational leadership behaviors?	Q methodology	49 high school counselors from five states sorted 40 statements related to leadership behaviors.	The following leadership behaviors emerged: self-focused and reflective exemplar, collegial and institutional support, engaging systems change agent, and empathetic resource broker. Leadership is expressed in multiple ways and is impacted by school, community, and student on texts.

Table A.1 (continued)

Janson, C., Militello, M., & Kosine, N. (2008).	Empirical	How school counselors and principals perceive their professional relationship?	Q methodology used to develop 45 opinion statements about the relationship between principals and school counselors		Four factors emerged: Working Alliance, Impediments to Alliance, Shared Leadership, and Purposeful Collaboration.
Janson, C., Stone, C., & Clark, M. (2009).	Conceptual	“The distributed leadership perspective seems to be an effective and enlightening model for viewing how school counselors practice as school leaders.” Three key ideas: examining practice, leadership occurs between two or more leaders, and leaders interact within their contextual situations.”			
Kirchner, G. L., & Setchfield, M. S. (2005).	Empirical	How would counselors and principals respond to congruent/incongruent role statements?	Quantitative	Participants had taken a university course and were later surveyed about their perceptions (23 counselors and 42 administrators)	School counselors and principals were introduced to each other’s roles in a course. Principals were more likely to endorse incongruent role standards.

Table A.1 (continued)

Kolodinsky et al., (2009).	Empirical	How K-12 school counselors allocate their time?	Quantitative	Survey – 5 page – paper and pencil – counselors perceive their roles in schools (level of satisfaction and frustration) in Arizona	Specific job-related components related to job satisfaction or job frustration of counselors. The greatest satisfaction for counselors who were directly serving students (69%).The greatest frustration (61%) was being overwhelmed by duties such as data entry/paperwork. In terms of preparedness, 40% reported that they were not prepared in conducting parent meetings/crisis intervention; (41%) and not prepared with exceptional ed/504/IEP issues.
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Table A.1 (continued)

Lapan et al., (2001).	Empirical	Questions related to the impact of fully implemented comprehensive guidance and counseling programs on student perceptions of school safety, education satisfaction, teacher relationships, and relevance of education to their future	Quantitative	22,601 seventh graders and 4,858 teachers in 184 Missouri schools	Provided additional support that fully implemented programs is associated with student safety and success. Counselors implementing the comprehensive programs had a greater likelihood of having a positive impact on students.
Lapan et al., (1997).	Empirical	Questions related to the level of implementation and three program elements of the Missouri Comprehensive Guidance Program model.	Quantitative	Survey data collected between 1992 and 1995 with approximately 100 students and 434 High school counselors	Students with fully implemented comprehensive school guidance programs rated climate as more positive, higher grades, and education was preparing them for their futures.

Table A.1 (continued)

Leuwerke, W. C., & Walker, J. (2009).	Empirical	3 specific hypotheses: 1) Principals have not been exposed to ASCA National Model. 2) Principals who have brief information will support counselor time allocations than those not exposed. 3) Principals who have brief information session about ASCA national model, school counseling outcome research or both will rate counselor activities as more important and inappropriate tasks as less important.	Quantitative	1415 school principals in Iowa (337 completed survey) 23.8% response rate (online – e-mail)	
Lewis, T. (2010).	Dissertation	Is there a relationship between student services staff to student ratios and student achievement? And Is there a relationship between student services staff to student ratios and dropout rates?	Quantitative	Student services staffing totals, dropout rates and performance data from all 115 N.C. school districts	Statistically significant relationship exists between school psychologist-to-student ratios and district growth status at the $p < .05$ level.
McMahon et al., (2009).	Conceptual	The article “represents a call for school counselor educators to become more intentional about transforming the way they approach their jobs so that their actions are more congruent with their teaching” (p. 1).			

Table A.1 (continued)

Militello, M. (2004).	Empirical	How are school districts using evidence of student learning to guide decision-making and instructional improvement? If so, what sorts of data?	Qualitative case study	Urban School District Personnel Cybernetics; Theories of Information District created quarterly assessment system generated use for student placement. Impediments to effective use included the lack of timely data reports, incongruence with teacher curriculum, and the lack of resources, support and oversight for use...
Militello, M., & Janson, C. (2007).	Empirical	How school counselors and principals perceive their relationships?	Q methodology	The study revealed four factors on the relationships of counselors and principals which were the following: traditional roles in activities and tasks, constricted interaction, helping and delegating leadership, and socially focused, situationally driven leadership. Factor D has implications for distributed leadership. "If systemic change has a chance to be introduced, implemented, and sustained in our schools, school level leaders need to forge a meaningful professional relationship" (p. 436).

Table A.1 (continued)

Militello, M., Schweid, J., & Carey, J. C. (2008).	Empirical	How Inspiration award winning high schools narrowed the college placement achievement gap?	18 College Board Inspiration Award winning or honorable mention schools with site visits, data collection that included interviews and observations.	The study yielded the following eight themes in schools closing the gap: outsourcing mundane tasks, developing college centers, creating community partnerships, mentoring students, streamlining the application process, focusing staff on college placement, increasing enrollment in Advance Placement courses, and celebrating student success. Collaborative strategies were used to achieve the closing of the gap.
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Table A.1 (continued)

Mustaine, B. L., & Pappalardo, S. (1996).	Empirical	What are reasons for the discrepancy between actual and preferred practice?	Quantitative	Random sample survey sent out to 100 school counselors in Ontario, Canada	A school counselor's years of experience is not a significant variable in actual counseling practices. The greatest percentage of respondents listed administration dictating their role (49%) and the school counselor ratio (39%) as reasons for the discrepancy.
Ponec, D., & Brock, B. (2000).	Empirical	What are the relationships among school counselors and principals in exemplary guidance and counseling programs? How do the relationships among school counselors and principals support these programs?	Qualitative	Four Midwestern elementary schools participated. The study included five counselors, four principals, and two assistant principals who were interviewed and observed.	Several components were identified that helped build the counselor and principal relationship: clearly defined role, mutual trust and clear communication, and support strategies for working with principals and teachers.
Poynton, T., A., Schumacher, R. A., & Wilczenski, F. L. (2008).	Empirical	How school counselors perceive the Massachusetts Model?	Quantitative	Questionnaire to MASCA membership 1400 (online, newsletter, and conference)	Awareness is a first step for change. Ongoing professional development is needed.

Table A.1 (continued)

Reiner, S. M., Colbert, R. D., & Perusse, R. (2009)	Empirical	Teachers were asked about their perceptions of the professional school counselor role as defined by the American School Counselor Association	Qualitative	National survey of teachers – N=1,000 of high school teachers. Random sample of Market Data Retrieval – company that does educator mailing lists.	Teachers agreed that school engage in a variety of tasks. 13 out of 16 appropriate and only 5 out of 12 inappropriate activities.
Scarborough, J., & Culbreth, J. (2008).	Empirical	Do counselors prefer to spend more time in interventions associated with a comprehensive program (counseling, curriculum, consultation, coordination)? Which variables (or combination of variables) relate to discrepancies between amount of time counselors spend on counselor activities and the time they would prefer to spend?	Quantitative	N=361 Study of elem., middle, and h.s. counselors 600 counselors were selected in two southern states with a total of 300 (100 per level) randomly selected from each state. Surveys – asked to complete the SCARS (school counselor activity rating scale) – designed to measure the frequency of counselors performing job related activities.	Supported previous research with discrepancies. School counselors “indicated they wanted to be engaged in the interventions associated with positive student outcomes and wanted to spend less time in non-guidance-related activities” (p. 455). School counselors who were implementing national standards were more likely practicing as they preferred. The results of study provided support for comprehensive school counseling models.

Table A.1 (continued)

Shoffner, M. F., & Williamson, R. D. (2000).	Conceptual				A seminar was described that would focus on collaboration of school counselors and principals. The focus was to share the roles, responsibilities and perspectives of both professions.
Sink, C., & Stroh, H. (2003).	Empirical	Does school counselors' work in elementary schools with well established CSCPs promote higher academic achievement in students?	Quantitative	150 elementary schools in Washington state were randomly selected to participate. Telephone survey. ITBS for achievement and Washington Assessment of Student Learning was used to look at Grade 3 and Grade 4 academic achievement.	Findings provide some causal comparative evidence for research question. Early elementary aged students enrolled for several years in well established CSCP (Comprehensive School Counseling Programs) produce higher achievement test scores than those enrolled in non CSCP schools.

Table A.1 (continued)

Stone, C., & Clark, M. (2001).	Conceptual	School principal and counselor should join forces to ensure student access to information and experiences. Some ways school counselor can assist principals are highlighted in article such as staff development, data analysis, & advocacy.			
Studer, J. R., Oberman, A. H., & Womack, R. H. (2006).	Conceptual	Summarized assessment considerations and to provide guidelines for counselors to design assessment inventory. Questions to consider with assessment design: who will use results, what is being assessed, where will the assessment take place, when will the assessment occur, and why is the assessment being conducted. Enumerative data is not enough. Action based research is a way counselors can produce tangible results.			
Whiston, S. C. (2002).	Conceptual	Examines the effectiveness of school counseling activities and programs and covers research on counseling programs, collaboration, and evidence based counseling. "School counselors need more research that examines what works" (p. 8). Whiston reflected, "unless more emphasis is placed on documenting the effectiveness of school counselors, school counseling programs can easily be eliminated in these times of budgetary constraints" (p. 8).			
Webb, L., Brigman, G., & Campbell, C. (2005).	Empirical	Replication of research on school counselor led intervention using structured group counseling approach. Goal was to strengthen support for the intervention.	Qualitative	418 students from 20 schools were involved in the study with treatment and comparison groups. The Florida achievement test was used along with the School Social Behavioral Scale (SSBS).	Establishes a link between school counselors and improved learning outcomes for students. The study supported positive outcomes of previous studies and suggested that gains in academic achievement and behavior were reported as a result of structured group counseling.

Table A.1 (continued)

Zalaquett, C. (2005).	Empirical	How elementary school principals view school counselors in Florida?	Quantitative	Sample of 1,110 elementary school principals were surveyed in the state of Florida with a 140 item questionnaire. 500 usable surveys were used for a 45.5% return rate.	Principals had positive views of the impact of counselors in the areas of academic, behavioral, and mental health development. Also, there was a “considerable degree of agreement with the ASCA model” (p. 8).
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Appendix B. District Student Services Director Questions

Phase One Protocol

Interview Questions for District Student Services Director

1. What are the ideal school counseling practices for counselors within the district?
2. Why did the district choose to use MEASURE as a program evaluation tool?
3. What did you do to support the implementation of MEASURE within the district?
 - a. What was the timeline for implementation?
 - b. What were the supports provided in terms of personnel and professional development?
 - c. How did you work with other stakeholders to share the direction of the change?
(superintendent, board of education, principals)
4. What are the factors that foster and/or inhibit change towards counseling innovations?
5. In what ways, if any, has MEASURE changed counseling practices?

Appendix C. School Counselor Q-Sort Instructions

Phase Two Protocol

Please sort the statements on a continuum (+5 to -5) from the functions that you feel are most representative of your current school counseling practices (+5) to those functions that you feel are least representative of your current school counseling practices (-5).

Instructions:

1. Lay out the numbers horizontally from -5 (left) to +5 (right).
2. Read through all 37 cards to become familiar with the statements.
3. As you read through the statements for a second time, organize them into three piles:
 - On the right, place the cards that represent the functions that are most representative of your current school counseling practices
 - On the left, place the cards that represent the functions that are least representative of your current school counseling practices
 - In the middle, place the cards that you feel more undecided about
4. Beginning with the pile on the right (most representative of your practices), place the one card that represents the most important current practices for you as a counselor, in any order
5. Next, turning to your left side (least representative of your practices), place the one card that represents the least important current practices for you as a counselor, in any order
6. Returning to the pile on the right, choose two cards that represent the next most representative practices and place these cards under marker +4, in any order
7. Do the same with the pile on the left, following this pattern as you work your way to the center pile.
8. You are free to change your mind during the sorting process and switch items around, as long as you maintain the requested number of items under each marker
 - You should have 1 card under markers +5 and -5
 - You should have 2 cards under markers +4 and -4
 - You should have 3 cards under markers +3 and -3
 - You should have 4 cards under markers +2 and -2
 - You should have 5 cards under markers +1 and -1
 - You should have 7 cards under marker 0
9. Your sorted cards should match the diagram below. After sorting the cards, please record the number on the cards onto the diagram in the order in which you placed them.

After you record your sorts, please answer the following questions:

1. Briefly describe what went into your choices of statements that are “most representative of your current counseling practices?” Please list at least one number of a statement in the +5 column and your reason for placing it there.
2. Briefly describe what went into your choices of statements that are “least representative of your current school counseling practices?” Please list at least one number of a statement in the -5 column and your reason for placing it there.
3. What were other specific statements that you had difficulty placing? Please list the number of the statement and describe your dilemma.
4. What are the supports and assets that help you meet the ideals of the North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards? What are the impediments to you meeting more of the ideals of the North Carolina Professional Counseling Standards?
5. Describe your training and professional development with MEASURE and counseling innovations.
6. In what ways, if any, has MEASURE changed counseling practices?

Appendix D. School Counselor Focus Group

Opening Script

Good afternoon. Thank so much for coming. I am interested in school counselors' perspectives on how new innovative counseling practices are or are not lived in the local school district. The guidelines for our discussion are the following:

1. First, there are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in understanding school counselors' perspectives.
2. Second, you shouldn't feel that you have to agree with everyone else in this room if that's not how you really feel. There are 6 people in this room, so we expect that people will have different views that are represented here. If you feel yourself feeling upset about the talk, you can leave at any time.
3. Third, I want you to feel comfortable saying good things as well as critical things. I am not here to promote a particular way of thinking. I just want to understand school counselors' perspectives.

After completing the Q-sorts, they were entered into a statistical program that worked to analyze into factors. Three distinct factors of counselors' perceptions of their current practices emerged. Factor One is the first Factor that explained 24% of the variance which means approximately 1/4th of school counselors participating in the study would agree with these practices.

A packet of Factor One has been provided for you to see the Q-sort along with the statement numbers – the chart also has the visual of the sort with post-sort statements written by counselors explaining why they chose these practices to be most or least representative of their practices. I would like to get additional feedback on reasons that counselors may have chosen most or least representative practices.

1. Let's look at statement 2: Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs. This was a current practice that fell on -4 (least representative of practices). Why would this statement fall here?
2. Let's look at statement 6: Promote professional growth and participate in high quality professional development activities. This was a current practice that fell on -4 (least representative of practices). Why would this statement fall here?

Please review the comments for statements +5, +4, -4, and -5 for Factor One below.

- +5 (11) Create an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible
- 5-155 K-5: “When people feel they are welcomed and invited they will try their best to do what is asked and required.”
 - 8-155 K-5: “Above all else I think I have developed and continue to maintain a warm, inviting, confidential and respectful environment. Students, parents, and colleagues are comfortable coming to me:
 - 18-222 K-8: “I always have an open door policy and go into classrooms, conferences, meetings, etc. as needed. Counselors have to be flexible.”
 - 23-322 6-8: “This is the one thing I have control over every day and it comes from within rather having to develop a system to support it or rely on others to implement it with me.”
 - 24-355 6-8: “This will allow students and staff to be willing to access the counseling program. They will feel more comfortable”
 - 20-322 6-8: “Everyday with parents, students, and teachers I try to create an inviting, respectful supportive, inclusive, and flexible environment. It is important to me to establish relationships so I can accomplish all other indicators.”
 - 21-313 6-8: “I work daily to try to create an environment that students will want to come to.”
 - 32-411 9-12: “The ultimate goal for me as a counselor is to create a safe and inviting environment where students feel cared about and comfortable. That is probably the one thing that covers everything else that I do as a counselor. If I can achieve that goal, then everything else will fall into place.”
 - 28-445 9-12: “My door is open – it’s on the main hall. It is very very important to me to be inviting, inclusive, always available. I want them to know ‘I am never too busy’.”
 - 31-423 9-12: “Creating the appropriate environment is essential in maintaining a solid student services department. ‘Open it and they will come’.”
- +4 (10) Demonstrate ethical behaviors by following the American School Counselors’ Association and North Carolina Educators’ Standards for Professional Conduct
- 14-211 K-8: “I always think about ethical guidelines and policies while doing my job.”

- 3-144 K-5: “I believe this statement is at the core of my being. This is what allows me to do what I do every day in the utmost professional manner. It is important to me that I be a role model for children and set an example.”
 - 27-313 6-8: “It’s an oath that I take because being ethical and following the proper procedures is very important. I view myself as a role model to students because I want them to view me being positive.”
- +4 (27) Listen to students, colleagues, parents/guardians, and other stakeholders in order to identify issues to assist in overcoming barriers that impede student success
- 16-213 K-8: “This best represents what I do every day as a counselor, ...have to seek to understand what people are...so that you can plan appropriately to meet those needs.”
 - 19-234 K-8: “I spend the vast majority of my time working with my students and consulting with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders.”
 - 26-322 6-8: “Each day I am pulled by stud/parents/colleagues/stakeholders to address the “good, bad, and ugly” for the day/week/month..and daily concerns are usually what is the basis of our counseling team’s method of addressing or interaction that also has some influence on the climate of our school and the way we do business.”
 - 30-411 9-12: “I communicated and listen to the students, colleagues, parents, and other colleagues daily identifying issues and assisting with overcoming the issues. I feel this practice reoccurs most often in my practice and therefore is most representative. I feel this practice is rooted in all of my responsibilities as a counselor.”
- 5 (4) Provide input in the selection of professional development for the school staff
- 4-144 K-5: “Professional development activities are determined by administration. I have no input on development of staff...”
 - 10-122 K-5: “I do not have the opportunity to provide input...”
 - 14-211 K-8: “I don’t have any input.”
 - 15-224 K-8: “I was not a member of SIT this year so had no input.”
 - 19-234 K-8: “I have never in all seven years been asked for input about staff development. When I have tried to make a suggestion for areas of concern that I noticed, I was not listened to so have stopped doing even that.”
 - 26-322 6-8: “The school staff’s p. d. is normally based on AYP; students’ EOG scores, and the like. There is some account given to those environmental or social concerns as well as mental that impede learning but is not the highlight of

- professional development for teachers – therefore, I do not or am rarely if ever asked to participate.
- 28-445 9-12: “Although staff development is important to my growth as a counselor. I find it very frustrating that I sit through so much staff development that has nothing to do with my role.
 - 29-422 9-12: “Most PD is geared toward teaching strategies in the classroom. Never really thought to give input.”
 - 31-423 9-12: “In my current situation, having input in staff development is not a priority – building the program comes first.”
- 4 (2) Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling programs
- 8-155 K-5: “I am still having struggles with collecting, analyzing, and using data. I do try to use my school’s data to drive my counseling program but have not ventured into district, state, or national data to make decisions about my program.”
 - 9-144 K-5: “I don’t actively look at state and national data to drive my counseling program. I look more at data within my school to make decisions about counseling program.”
 - 12-144 K-5: “I use local data to assist in developing my program but not state and national data.”
 - 18-222 K-8: “I will be honest and say that ‘data’ – numbers, percentages, etc. freak me out! Even MEASURE freaked me out at first. Because of this data phobia, I don’t actively and individually seek out data.”
- 4 (6) Promote professional growth and participate in high quality professional development activities
- 3-144 K-5: “While I do take time to read professional magazines and articles that relate...I find it difficult to get away and go to seminars about counseling practices. My county does not offer counseling related topics as a part of the staff development.
3. Based on the information shared for counselors’ reflections about practices that are most and least like their current practices depicted in Factor One - What do you think Factor One should be called if we were to name it?

Another counseling perspective that emerged from the study is Factor Two. You have a picture of the Factor 2 Q-sort grid. Factor Two explained 24% of the variance which means

approximately 1/4th of school counselors participating in this study would agree with these practices.

I would like to get additional feedback for Factor Two.

4. Let's look at statement 12: Model and teach positive behaviors through developmentally appropriate and prevention-oriented activities that lead students to demonstrate positive relationships. This statement fell in the +4 (most representative) on Factor 2. Why would this statement fall here?

5. Let's look at statement 34: Assists students in developing effective listening and communication skills in order to enhance academic success, build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, advocate for themselves, and become responsible twenty-first century citizens? What makes this a most representative (+4) of counseling practices?

Please review the comments for statements +5, +4, -4, and -5 for Factor One below.

+5 (11) Create an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible.

- See Statement 11 counselor reflections under Factor One.

+4 (12) Model and teach positive behaviors through developmentally-appropriate and prevention-oriented activities that lead students to demonstrate positive relationships

- No comments shared

+4 (34) Assists students in developing effective listening and communication skills in order to enhance academic success, build positive relationships, resolve conflicts, advocate for themselves, and become responsible twenty-first century citizens

- 22-311 6-8: "I feel like this is something I do every day."

-5 (7) Advocate for positive change in policies and practices affecting student learning as well as equitable, student centered legislation

- 1-133 K-5: "I am not as involved as I could be in helping to raise awareness at the state and national level."

- 5-155 K-5: “Advocating change usually means extra time and hours at the state level. I don’t have the extra time to devote to. I would like to do at the school.”
- 6-134 K-5: “It is not an environment of openness and collaboration at my school. It is an environment of ‘do what you are told’ and ‘don’t question authority.’ No input is sought, just do the work in order to check off that it is done and to justify practices never to improve or to be creative.”
- 7-154 K-5: “I have not involved myself in policy change.”
- 11-123 K-5: “I unfortunately am not advocating on the national level. Don’t have the time or funds to join the organization.”
- 13-224 K-8: “There is no one for me to advocate to in my job.”
- 30-411 9-12: “I’ve never advocated for state legislation for change affecting student learning.”

-4 (2) Take an active role in analyzing local, state, and national data to develop and enhance school counseling program

- See statement 2 reflections under Factor One.

-4 (14) Collaborate with teachers to ensure that the presentation of the Standard Course of Study is relevant to a diverse student population

- 14-211 K-8: “I don’t have any input into what is taught or shared.”
- 20-322 6-8: “I have a lot of trust in my teachers and trust that the administration is handling that the SCOS is being taught... I am always there to help but I don’t find myself being a resource for that at this time.”
- 22-311 6-8: “I do not try to make a great deal on input into how a teacher, teaches their class.”
- 23-322 6-8: “Although I think it is important, teachers usually don’t want to have this conversation unless we are dealing with a specific student and specific situation usually because of a behavioral/attendance problem.”
- 25-312 6-8: “We are never asked to be involved in the development/implementation of the curriculum and with all the other tasks we do, initiating this conversation seems to end up as last on the priority list.”

6. Based on the information shared for counselors’ reflections about practices that are most and least like their current practices depicted in Factor Two and the additional

feedback added about these statements today - What do you think Factor Two should be called if we were to name it?

Factor Three is the final factor that emerged and this factor explained 10% of the variance which means 10% of school counselors participating in the study would agree with these practices.

I would like to get additional feedback for Factor Three.

7. Let's take a look at statement 18: Collaborate with others to create a customized plan of action that provides follow-up services to meet students' varied needs. This statement fell on +4 most like my practices - Why is this an everyday counseling practice for some counselors?
8. Let's take a look at statement 19: Identify special needs using data, referrals, observation, and other sources of information. This statement was +4 most representative of counseling practices for some school counselors. Why did this statement fall here?
9. Let's look at statement 15: Select materials and develop activities that incorporate the histories and contributions of diverse cultures and work to counteract stereotypes? Why was this statement a least representative counseling practice for some counselors?
10. Let's look at statement 8: Promote an awareness of learning styles, diversity, and individual learning needs. This statement fell on the -4 (least representative practices) – Why would statement 8 fall here?

Please review the comments for statements +5, +4, -4, and -5 for Factor One below.

- +5 (9) Participate in the implementation of school wide activities to improve the education and development of all students
- 4-144 K-5: “As a K-5 counselor working with kindergarten and first grade students, I implement and participate in daily school wide activities. This includes classroom guidance...”

- 17-211 K-8: “One of my goals this year was to bring in programs that targeted as many students as possible. I’ve often called myself ‘the program coordinator’.”
- +4 (18) Collaborate with others to create a customized plan of action that provides follow-up services to meet students’ varied needs
 - No comments shared
- +4 (19) Identify special needs using data, referrals, observation, and other sources of information
 - No comments shared.
- 5 (15) Select materials and develop activities that incorporate the histories and contributions of diverse cultures and work to counteract stereotypes
 - 17-211 K-8: “Our school is not as diverse as others and while I believe it is important to be culturally aware, I simply have not taken the time to really dive into this area.”
- 4 (8) Promote an awareness of learning styles, diversity and individual learning needs
 - No comments shared.
- 4 (14) Collaborate with teachers to ensure that the presentation of the Standard Course of Study is relevant to a diverse student population
 - See statement reflections under Factor Two.

11. Based on the information shared for counselors’ reflections about practices that are most and least like their current practices depicted in Factor Two and the additional feedback added about these statements today - What do you think Factor Two should be called if we were to name it?
12. What surprises, if any, did you notice when looking at the counselors’ perceptions of their current practices in the district?
13. As we looked at Factor One, Factor Two, and Factor Three – What did you notice about school counselors’ perceptions and the level that they worked in as a counselor (K-5; K-8; 6-8; 9-12)?
14. In summary, how do you feel the counselors of Pitt County perceive their enactment of the N.C. School Counseling Professional Standards?

15. Part of the study was looking at changes in the school counseling profession – ASCA Model, NC Standards revised, MEASURE, professional development, etc. – when you reflect on counseling practices – What drives you to make changes in your counseling practices? What are key influences to your practice?

Appendix E. Institutional Review Board

North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research SUBMISSION FOR NEW STUDIES

GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Date Submitted: November 2010
1a. Revised Date: _____
2. Title of Project: <i>Implementing Innovative Counseling Practices: Are School Counselors MEASUREing Up?</i>
3. Principal Investigator: <i>Nicole Tripp Smith</i>
4. Department: <i>Department of Leadership, Policy, and Adult & Higher Education</i>
5. Campus Box Number: <i>608A Poe Hall CB 7801</i>
6. Email: <i>smithn.east@pitt.k12.nc.us</i>
7. Phone Number: <i>252 321-7352</i>
8. Fax Number: <i>252 752-7508</i>
9. Faculty Sponsor Name and Email Address if Student Submission: <i>Dr. Matthew Militello</i> <i>matt_militello@ncsu.edu</i>
10. Source of Funding? (required information): <i>Student</i>
11. Is this research receiving federal funding?: <i>No</i>
12. If Externally funded, include sponsor name and university account number: <i>NA</i>
13. RANK: <input type="checkbox"/> Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Student: <input type="checkbox"/> Undergraduate; <input type="checkbox"/> Masters; or <input type="checkbox"/> PhD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): <i>Doctoral Candidate EdD</i>

As the principal investigator, my signature testifies that I have read and understood the University Policy and Procedures for the Use of Human Subjects in Research. I assure the Committee that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in the Proposal Narrative and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to the Committee in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.

Principal Investigator:

Nicole Tripp Smith _____* _____
 (typed/printed name) (signature) (date)

As the faculty sponsor, my signature testifies that I have reviewed this application thoroughly and will oversee the research in its entirety. I hereby acknowledge my role as the principal investigator of record.

Faculty Sponsor:

Dr. Matthew Militello _____* _____
 (typed/printed name) (signature) (date)

***Electronic submissions to the IRB are considered signed via an electronic signature. For student submissions this means that the faculty sponsor has reviewed the proposal prior to it being submitted and is copied on the submission.**

Please complete this application and email as an attachment to: debra_paxton@ncsu.edu or send by mail to: Institutional Review Board, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (Administrative Services III). **Please include consent forms and other study documents with your application and submit as one document.**

For SPARCS office use only

Reviewer Decision (Expedited or Exempt Review)

Exempt Approved Approved pending modifications Table

Expedited Review Category: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8a 8b 8c 9

Reviewer Name

Signature

Date

**North Carolina State University
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human Subjects in Research
GUIDELINES FOR A PROPOSAL NARRATIVE**

In your narrative, address each of the topics outlined below. Every application for IRB review must contain a proposal narrative, and failure to follow these directions will result in delays in reviewing/processing the protocol.

A. INTRODUCTION

1. Briefly describe in lay language the purpose of the proposed research and why it is important.

The purpose of this study is to examine school counselors perceptions of how new innovative counseling practices are or are not lived in the local school district. The study will offer insights into current counseling practices and suggest implementation ideas for local districts for new program evaluation efforts.

2. If student research, indicate whether for a course, thesis, dissertation, or independent research.

The proposed study will be conducted as dissertation research.

B. SUBJECT POPULATION

1. How many subjects will be involved in the research?

The study will consist of one lead researcher in the counseling field, one district student services director, and approximately 55 K-12 school counselors in a local NC school district.

2. Describe how subjects will be recruited. Please provide the IRB with any recruitment materials that will be used.

The researcher will contact a lead researcher in the counseling field who developed MEASURE, a program accountability tool to interview. In addition, the researcher will contact a local district's student services director for an interview. All interview subjects will be asked to volunteer for the research study. In terms of school counselor recruitment, an email explaining the purpose of the study will be sent out to all potential participants. Recruitment strategies will also include offering a meal for the school counselor study participants and a raffle drawing. During the Phase Two – Q-sort/Post Q-Sort, any participant who is willing to participate in the focus group for Phase Three will be asked to sign a volunteer sheet if willing to be contacted as part of the Phase Three portion of the study.

3. List specific eligibility requirements for subjects (or describe screening procedures), including those criteria that would exclude otherwise acceptable subjects.

The eligibility requirements for the school counselors in the Pre-Study Phase would be volunteers who had experiences working as a K-12 school counselor. The eligibility requirements for the researcher would be published work in the counseling field and an author of MEASURE, a school counselor program accountability tool. The district student services director and school counselors will be employees of the local school district who would be currently working in these positions. The focus group school counselors would have been participants in Phase Two who were willing to participate in the focus group follow up.

4. Explain any sampling procedure that might exclude specific populations.

For the Phase Three, focus group, the researcher is unsure of the numbers of school counselors who would be willing to participate. If a large number of school counselors are willing to participate in the focus group, the

researcher will randomly select school counselor volunteers from the large pool. The selection would work to include school counselors for the focus group that represented all K-12 grade levels so an elementary, middle, and high school random selection would occur. Also, the researcher may not be able to include school counselors from all K-12 settings if the researcher did not receive volunteers to cover all grade levels.

5. Disclose any relationship between researcher and subjects - such as, teacher/student; employer/employee.

The researcher is a current principal in the local school district and has served as an administrator in the district from 2004 to present. Therefore, the researcher knows the student services director as a central office administrator prior to the study. The researcher serves as an employer/supervisor of one school counselor that works at her present school. The principal researcher plans to exclude this school counselor from the study. In addition, the researcher was a former school counselor in the local school district from 1999-2004 so has served as a former colleague with some of the school counselors that continue to work in the district which would have involved attending monthly counselor meetings with them or professional development. The principal researcher has not worked as a co- school counselor in the same building with any of the school counselors in the district from the researcher's former counseling experiences. The researcher has taught in the counseling department at a local university and has served as a former teacher for one course to some of the school counselors (5) who are presently working in the district.

6. Check any vulnerable populations included in study:

- minors (under age 18) - if so, have you included a line on the consent form for the parent/guardian signature
- fetuses
- pregnant women (some female participants may be pregnant)
- persons with mental, psychiatric or emotional disabilities
- persons with physical disabilities
- economically or educationally disadvantaged
- prisoners
- elderly
- students from a class taught by principal investigator
- other vulnerable population.

7. If any of the above are used, state the necessity for doing so. Please indicate the approximate age range of the minors to be involved.

C. PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED

1. In lay language, describe completely all procedures to be followed during the course of the experimentation. Provide sufficient detail so that the Committee is able to assess potential risks to human subjects. In order for the IRB to completely understand the experience of the subjects in your project, please provide a detailed outline of everything subjects will experience as a result of participating in your project. Please be specific and include information on all aspects of the research, through subject recruitment and ending when the subject's role in the project is complete. All descriptions should include the informed consent process, interactions between the subjects and the researcher, and any tasks, tests, etc. that involve subjects. If the project involves more than one group of subjects (e.g. teachers and students, employees and supervisors), please make sure to provide descriptions for each subject group.

Initially, after the researcher receives both IRB and the district approval to conduct the research, the researcher will contact the researcher for an interview as well as the director of student services. For Phase I of the research study, the lead counseling researcher was selected based on authoring the MEASURE document. There are two authors of the MEASURE document and the principal researcher will select base on their availability. The district's student services director would be selected based on position and because of the decision to use MEASURE in counseling program evaluation. The principal researcher has already discussed the potential research with the director to make sure this is something that the district would be open to for research study. For Phase II, participants will be selected based on their employment as a school counselor in the local school district. An email will be sent out to all K-12 school counselors describing the purpose of the study and inviting their participation. The researcher will arrange to have the research site (Phase Two) at the location of the monthly counselor's meeting. Volunteer participants will remain to participate in the study and to receive their meal/chance for the raffle drawing. The Q-sort activity will involve school counselors who choose to participate sorting counseling standards based on their practices before and after MEASURE. After the Q-sort activity, school counselors will be provided a meal along with raffle drawing. A volunteer sign up sheet will also be available for any school counselors who would be willing to participate in the focus group. For Phase III, the researcher will conduct a focus group with some school counselors (approx. 5 to 7) in order to further understanding about the implementation efforts of MEASURE. Participants would be selected based on their employment, position, grade levels served in the district. In addition, these participants would have indicated in Phase II that they would be willing to participate in the focus group. Based on the numbers, the researcher would randomly select school counselors for the focus group from the elementary, middle, and high school settings. A copy of research findings will be provided to the district and the researcher would present the research findings to the school counselors as part of the focus group and at a subsequent counselor's meeting for all school counselors in the district to have access to the study's data and findings.

Data collection includes recorded interviews with the counseling researcher and district director. The interviews for Phase One will be approximately one hour. The interviews will be face to face; however, the interview with the researcher may be by phone due to availability and the distance from principal researcher and interview participant.

Phase Two – Q-sort activity will last approximately one hour. Q-methodology will be used to focus on counselors' perceptions of their current practices. School counselors will sort the concourse statements that were derived from the N.C. Professional Counseling Standards into a forced distribution that will allow factor analysis to determine significance of concourse statement list items.

Phase Three focus group will be audiotaped and videotaped in order for transcription. This will take approximately one hour. The principal researcher plans to use a neutral school site at their current school for Phase Three that is only communicated with the participants to protect their anonymity in participation of the focus group. Please see interview protocols at the end of the IRB application for a list of the intended interview questions and procedures for all Phases of the research study.

Phase One and Phase Three will be transcribed into digital format and imported into either AtlasTI or NVIVO qualitative analysis software to be analyzed for thematic consensus or distinction. The principal researcher will work closely with the dissertation chair through this process. Phase Two Q-sort data will be inputted into PQMethod2.0 in order to perform factor analysis on the model Q-sorts. All data sources (hard copy/electronic) will be safeguarded by the principal researcher and locked. The data will be retained for the standard period of time after the research is complete and dissertation successfully defended. The principal researcher will continue to safeguard study data to protect anonymity. The counseling lead researcher will be named in the research study with permission. If data sources happen to refer to school counselors, appropriate steps will be taken to protect the identities of the school counselors with the assignment of pseudonyms. The Phase Two research phase with school counselors will be completely anonymous; however, pseudonyms will be provided all school counselors who participate in the Phase Three focus groups.

2. How much time will be required of each subject?

The interview with the researcher in the counseling field and district student services director will last approximately one hour. The Q-sort activity and post Q-sort questions with K-12 school counselors who choose to participate will last approximately 45 minutes. The focus group will last approximately an hour.

D. POTENTIAL RISKS

1. State the potential risks (physical, psychological, financial, social, legal or other) connected with the proposed procedures and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

The participants are voluntary and will only be asked to share insights and opinions about the proposed subject.

2. Will there be a request for information that subjects might consider to be personal or sensitive (e.g. private behavior, economic status, sexual issues, religious beliefs, or other matters that if made public might impair their self-esteem or reputation or could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability)?

No information of the above nature will be requested.

a. If yes, please describe and explain the steps taken to minimize these risks.

b. Could any of the study procedures produce stress or anxiety, or be considered offensive, threatening, or degrading? If yes, please describe why they are important and what arrangements have been made for handling an emotional reaction from the subject.

None of the study procedures will produce stress to the participants.

3. How will data be recorded and stored?

The interviews will be audio taped or videotaped and later transcribed. The Q-sort data will be collected and analyzed. The focus group will be videotaped, audiotaped, and later transcribed. Research data will be stored under lock and key at the home of the researcher.

a. How will identifiers be used in study notes and other materials?

Name of the lead researcher will be revealed with the permission of the interviewee. Names of other subjects will be withheld and replaced with unique pseudonyms on all study materials which will also include the name of the local school district. A “master list” that links pseudonym and subject identity will be stored separately from data.

- b. How will reports will be written, in aggregate terms, or will individual responses be described?

The reports will have individual responses that will specify the experience level or grade level that the school counselor.

Interviews with researcher and student services director will be transcribed in order to code for themes. Q-sort methodology will be collected and coded for common themes and ideas expressed by the participants along with open-ended responses to questions related to the Q-sort. These common themes will be described and interpreted by the researcher in an analysis of the data.

4. If audio or videotaping is done how will the tapes be stored and how/when will the tapes be destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

Audio tapes of the interviews will be stored under lock and key in the researcher’s home. The audio tapes will be destroyed at the completion of the dissertation project. The videotape and audio tapes of the focus group will also be stored under lock and key in the researcher’s home and destroyed at the completion of the dissertation project.

5. Is there any deception of the human subjects involved in this study? If yes, please describe why it is necessary and describe the debriefing procedures that have been arranged.

No deception techniques will be used to complete this study.

E. POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This does not include any form of compensation for participation.

1. What, if any, direct benefit is to be gained by the subject? If no direct benefit is expected, but indirect benefit may be expected (knowledge may be gained that could help others), please explain.

The subjects will gain knowledge about the current K-12 counseling practices in the local school district. The primary benefit of the study will be to offer the district information about their program evaluation efforts and current counseling practices. At the same time, other states, districts, counselors, and other educational stakeholders could also benefit with the findings of the study as more districts are seeking ways to meet the new expectations established by the ASCA model and counseling professional standards in this high stake accountability era. In terms of the district, the study’s findings will be presented to the school counselors so they can reflect on their practices, the practices of all school counselors in the district, and to know their current practices at this time in the field to help guide future directions for themselves and the district.

F. COMPENSATION

Please keep in mind that the logistics of providing compensation to your subjects (e.g., if your business office requires names of subjects who received compensation) may compromise anonymity or complicate confidentiality protections. If, while arranging for subject compensation, you must make changes to the anonymity or confidentiality provisions for your research, you must contact the IRB office prior to implementing those changes.

1. Describe compensation

The researcher will ask for volunteers for the proposed study with a recruitment strategy of providing lunch to participants along with a raffle drawing.

Appendix F. Phase One Interview Consent Form

North Carolina State University

INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: Implementing Innovative Counseling Practices: Are School Counselors MEASUREing Up?

Principal Investigator: Nicole Tripp Smith
Militello

Faculty Sponsor (if applicable): Dr. Matthew

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to examine school counselors' perception of how new innovative counseling practices are or are not lived in a local school district. The research sub questions will seek to understand how school counselors perceive their enactment of new professional counseling standards as well as provide an understanding of what fosters or inhibits change towards innovative school counseling practices. In addition, the study will seek to find out what ways, if any, MEASURE has changed counseling practices? This study will offer insights into current K-12 school counseling practices and what districts can do to improve the resources and support for school counselors.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview with the researcher. The researcher will provide the interview questions to you prior to the interview and will schedule the interview for a time, date, and location that is convenient to the participant. The interview will take approximately one hour for the duration of the study.

Risks

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this research study.

Benefits

This study aims to give you (the participant) a better understanding of current school counseling practices within the district.

In addition, your participation in this study will allow the researchers to gain a better understanding of counseling practices, what fosters or inhibits change towards innovative counseling practices, and experience with MEASURE.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in locked site. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. You will NOT be asked to write your name on any study materials so that no one can match your identity to the answers that you provide.

Compensation

For participating in this study you will not receive anything for participation.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Nicole Tripp Smith, at [REDACTED], or [REDACTED]

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

Consent To Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature _____ **Date** _____

Investigator's signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix G. Invitation to Participate in Study

Dear School Counselors,

I am a doctoral candidate in NCSUs Educational Research and Policy Analysis EdD program. Presently, I also serve as a principal at [REDACTED] and have previously worked as a school counselor for six years. I am writing to you because I am interested in studying school counselors' perceptions of their current school counseling practices as my topic for dissertation research. My intended dissertation study would require approximately forty-five minutes to one hour of your time on March 2, 2011, 8:30 AM [REDACTED]

The research would involve me providing you with statements derived from the North Carolina School Counseling Professional Standards and requesting for you to sort these statements based on your current practices. In addition, there would be a few open ended questions following the sorting of statements to gain additional knowledge about the sources of support and inhibitors to implementing MEASURE. If you choose to participate, your responses would be submitted without your name and would be anonymous.

While there is no compensation provided for the research study, I appreciate your time and willingness to volunteer for this research. I plan on providing breakfast to all study participants as well as an opportunity to have your name placed in a raffle drawing for a monetary donation of \$100 to be allocated to your school's counseling program.

In the attached consent form, you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information.

If at any time, you have questions, please do not hesitate to call me about your participation at (252) 321-7352. I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Nicole Smith

Appendix H. Phase Two School Counselor Consent Form

North Carolina State University

INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: Implementing Innovative Counseling Practices: Are School Counselors MEASUREing Up?
Principal Investigator: Nicole Tripp Smith Faculty Sponsor (if applicable): Dr. Matthew Militello

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to examine school counselors' perception of how new innovative counseling practices are or are not lived in a local school district. The research sub questions will seek to understand how school counselors perceive their enactment of new professional counseling standards as well as provide an understanding of what fosters or inhibits change towards innovative school counseling practices. In addition, the study will seek to find out what ways, if any, MEASURE has changed counseling practices? This study will offer insights into current K-12 school counseling practices and what districts can do to improve the resources and support for school counselors.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to sort cards that are comprised of statements derived from the North Carolina Professional school counseling standards based on your current counseling practices and answer open-ended questions about at the end of the Q-sort activity. The open ended questions will be reflective of your responses to the Q-Sort activity and to gain a better understanding of the supports and impediments that school counselors experience in the profession. The Q-sort and open-ended questions will take approximately one hour. The research will take place at a central meeting location in the district following the March school counselor's meeting K-8 and 9-12.

Risks

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this research study.

Benefits

This study aims to give you (the participant) a better understanding of current school counseling practices within the district.

In addition, your participation in this study will allow the researchers to gain a better understanding of counseling practices, what fosters or inhibits change towards innovative counseling practices, and experience with MEASURE.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in locked site. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study.

Compensation

For participating in this study you will not receive any compensation; however, participants will receive a meal and an opportunity to have a chance to win a raffle drawing. The raffle drawing will be a monetary donation of \$100.00 to your school to be designated for school counseling program needs. If you withdraw from the study prior to its completion, you are welcome to stay for the provided meal.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Nicole Tripp Smith, at [REDACTED], or [REDACTED].

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

Consent To Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature _____ **Date** _____

Investigator's signature _____ **Date** _____

Appendix I. Phase Three Focus Group Consent Form

North Carolina State University INFORMED CONSENT FORM for RESEARCH

Title of Study: Implementing Innovative Counseling Practices: Are School Counselors MEASUREing Up?

Principal Investigator: Nicole Tripp Smith

Faculty Sponsor (if applicable): Dr. Matthew Militello

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to be a part of this study, to choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty. The purpose of research studies is to gain a better understanding of a certain topic or issue. You are not guaranteed any personal benefits from being in a study. Research studies also may pose risks to those that participate. In this consent form you will find specific details about the research in which you are being asked to participate. If you do not understand something in this form it is your right to ask the researcher for clarification or more information. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you. If at any time you have questions about your participation, do not hesitate to contact the researcher(s) named above.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this study is to examine school counselors' perception of how new innovative counseling practices are or are not lived in a local school district. The research sub questions will seek to understand how school counselors perceive their enactment of new professional counseling standards as well as provide an understanding of what fosters or inhibits change towards innovative school counseling practices. In addition, the study will seek to find out what ways, if any, MEASURE has changed counseling practices? This study will offer insights into current K-12 school counseling practices and what districts can do to improve the resources and support for school counselors.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a focus group with the researcher. The researcher will ask share the research data findings from the Q-sort activity in Phase Two and ask some open ended questions. The focus group will take approximately one hour for the duration of the study.

Risks

In terms of the school counselor participants who participate in the focus group (Phase Three), there is some risk since you will be asked to share information about current counseling practices as well as supports/inhibitors. The principal researcher will take steps to minimize the possibility of school counselors being personally identifiable by securing a location for the focus group that is private, discussing confidentiality among focus group participants, and the assignation of pseudonyms for study participants.

Benefits

This study aims to give you (the participant) a better understanding of current school counseling practices within the district.

In addition, your participation in this study will allow the researchers to gain a better understanding of counseling practices, what fosters or inhibits change towards innovative counseling practices, and experience with MEASURE.

Confidentiality

The information in the study records will be kept confidential to the full extent allowed by law. Data will be stored securely in locked site. No reference will be made in oral or written reports which could link you to the study. You will NOT be asked to write your name on any study materials so that no one can match your identity to the answers that you provide.

Compensation

For participating in this study you will not receive anything for participation.

What if you have questions about this study?

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact the researcher, Nicole Tripp Smith, at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or your rights as a participant in research have been violated during the course of this project, you may contact Deb Paxton, Regulatory Compliance Administrator, Box 7514, NCSU Campus (919/515-4514).

Consent To Participate

“I have read and understand the above information. I have received a copy of this form. I agree to participate in this study with the understanding that I may choose not to participate or to stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.”

Subject's signature _____ Date _____

Investigator's signature _____ Date _____