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across numerous school staff counselors, thus expanding its potential impact on students while also serving to build a stronger sense of school community. When leadership is distributed among multiple leaders, their collective strengths and talents are better utilized. This shift in perspective then can serve to build leadership capacity and promote leadership density within schools. Additionally, an important corollary to this shift might be the reduction of anxiety that some pre- and in-service school counselors experience as they begin to view leadership as something beyond isolated, unilateral practices.

CONCEP ALI ING CHOOL CO N ED LEADE HIP

As noted previously, there has been a growing body of scholarship regarding school counselor leadership. This literature has largely focused on the unique position and skills of school counselors to be

schools does not occur through one individual. Rather, leadership is best understood as a collection of collaborative practices , professionals within schools and the communities in which they are located. Thus, there are limitations to focusing only on positional leadership capacity and leadership skills of school counselors. Possibly the most significant limitation is rooted in the de-contextualized nature of such approaches.

Leadership theory has long focused on the characteristics, skills, and behaviors of individual leaders. Many authors have criticized these conceptualizations of leadership—particularly within educational settings. For example, the idea that principals are the only figures who do or should behave as leaders is an assumption that is now widely disputed (Lambert, 2002; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1999; Pounder, Reitzug, & Young, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1992). Spillane (2005) further challenged the narrative of the "heroic school leader" by pointing out two problems with this persisting story. One problem, he argued, rests with the notion that school leadership is enacted by heroic individual leaders who are most commonly principals. A more accurate examination of school leadership, Spillane noted, is that it invariably involves many key personnel who employ existing school structures and tools in their efforts. The second problem, in Spillane's (2006) view, is that these "heroic leader" stories focus too much on the roles and functions of school leaders, and too little on leadership practices. In other words, the "what" of school leadership is important, but the examination of the "how" of leadership might better contribute to improved practice.

Like the tradition of "heroic school leader" narratives that Spillane (2006) critiqued, the professional literature regarding school counselor leadership generally has focused on the individual school counselor as the primary unit of analysis. That is, most of the research and conceptual literature have focused on the capacity and will for individual school counselors to lead. There are a few key areas in the current literature that represent departures from this focus on the individual school counselor as leader.

There is, for example, some literature discussing and examining the relationship between school counselors and principals—including collaborative leadership practices (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Janson et al., 2008; Militello & Janson, 2007; Riddile & Flanary, 2008; Walker, 2006). In an article in which she challenged school counselors and principals to work together as part of a leadership team to build community and school multicultural capacity and competency, Walker proposed that the two sets of professionals must combine their skills and training in order to share leadership toward that aim. Walker argued that the "skills and areas of expert knowledge of each leader are crucial in the work of a complementary team" (p. 121). Similarly, Riddile and Flanary posited that "successful schools share practices that support and enhance student performance, and one of the promising strategies is effective collaboration between the principal and school counselors" (¶ 5).

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More recently, another Q methodology study focused exclusively on how 49 high school counselors perceived their leadership behaviors (see Janson's "High School Counselors' Views of Their Leadership Behaviors: A Q Methodology Study," in

school. Within the distributed leadership perspective, the key features of the situation are tools, routines, and structures that permeate school life (Spillane, 2005). Some examples of these features of the situation are tools such as student achievement data, routines such as student referral meetings for alternative placement, and structures such as student course selection procedures (Clark & Stone, 2007). The distributed leadership perspective holds that "there is a two-way relationship between situation and practice" (Spillane, p. 149). These features of the school situation impact leadership practices and are impacted by them as well. The situations in which leadership practices mingle can either inhibit or allow those practices to take place. At the same time, leadership practices can serve to transform the situation in order to harness the structures or procedures that compose them for new and innovative uses. For example, student referral meetings for alternative placement might be transformed into mechanisms to identify systemic barriers for groups of students who are referred for alternative placements disproportionately by group such as race / ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or gender (Janson & Militello, in press).

CHOOL CO N ELO A DI IB ED LEADE

Emergent trends in school counseling seem to be resonant with the paradigmatic shift embodied by the distributed leadership perspective. Just as this model has emerged, in part, "because of increased external demands and pressures on schools" (Harris & Spillane, 2008, p. 31), having such pressures has led to calls for increased school counselor involvement in school leadership practices (Clark & Stone, 2000, 2007; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Hayes & Paisley, 2002). It has been noted that because leadership has not been adequately explored and emphasized in both school counseling practice and preservice preparation, school counselors are not always given credit for their participation in leadership practices (Clark & Stone, 2007). In this regard, our understanding of school counselor leadership practices might be better conveyed through the distributed leadership perspective, which illuminates key areas of leadership practices that may have been previously unseen. In describing this purpose, Spillane (2006) wrote that distributed leadership can focus "attention to hidden dimensions of school leadership," adding that "it can be a way to acknowledge and perhaps even celebrate the many kinds of unglamorous and unheroic leadership that often go unnoticed in schools" (p. 10).

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The distributed leadership perspective can help school counselors view themselves as natural educational leaders by recognizing how they are already contributing as distributed leaders. Such a perspective assumes a collaborative approach in looking for opportunities to join other school staff members in leadership practices critical to promoting success for all students. The following describes three traditional domains of school counseling that are opportune sites for distributed leadership and offers concrete examples of how school counselors are currently engaged in distributed practices.

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Staff development is a key area for school counselor participation in distributed leadership. For example, school counselors can engage in distributed leadership by developing and conducting in-service training with other school leaders for teachers and parents in crucial areas such as educational planning, academic motivation, student appraisal and achievement, identification of and interventions for special needs students, and issues of student diversity and related attitudes. Although school counselors are knowledgeable and skillful in many rtunities to join othit

ance can be transformed within the distributed leadership perspective to have even greater impact. An example of this is school counselors working with math teachers and a media specialist in one school to incorporate more direct advocacy for student success. In this case, the school counselors and math teachers worked together to develop ways to incorporate the use of specific data to encourage a positive "mindset" for achievement and success for all students. These school counselors joined the math teachers in their classes to share statistics with students regarding how education affects lifetime salaries in order to encourage a higher degree of academic motivation and understanding of course relevancy. These interactions transformed the formerly mundane procedure of simply presenting course signup sheets for students to complete. Next, the school counselors worked with the school's media specialist to provide the students with training on Web sites that gave students opportunities to explore data related to the income earning potential of various occupations. Each leader in this informal team brought his or her own unique skill sets and perspectives that were then "stretched" over the distributed leadership goals.

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School counselors have traditionally shouldered much of the work and leadership activities involved with helping students navigate the college preparation and application processes. The distributed leadership perspective, however, offers an invaluable lens for how school counselors can interact with other school staff on leadership teams that can transform how schools build student college aspirations while also facilitating the application process. An example of this can be found in one urban high school in a high-poverty area that has made a commitment to require and assist students in applying for colleges and student financial aid (Militello, Schweid, & Carey, 2008). In this high school, school counselors engaged in leadership practices with teachers, administrators, and members of the school's parent-teacher association (PTA). School counselors and the math teachers required students to bring in their parents' financial data necessary for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The language arts teachers helped students to craft more effective personal statements for their college applications. The school counselor, PTA, and the assistant principal worked together to find funding for the college application process for students in need. Finally, this team of leaders changed the graduation policy requiring each student to personally deliver two completed college applications to the principal in order to graduate.

In this example, leadership was distributed across school counselors, principals, content teachers, and PTA members. Each leader's specific knowledge and skill sets interacted with all others'—resulting in transforming many key structures, procedures, and tools in the school in order to not only increase the percentage of students continuing their education after high school graduation, but also to develop a college-going culture within the school.

IMPLICA ION AND ECOMMENDA ION FO P AC ICE AND P EPA A ION

Distributed leadership provides an innovative perspective for understanding school counselor leadership practice. This perspective is not a prescription for how school counselors can lead more effectively, but it does provide a framework for systematically understanding how school counselors participate in leadership practices in schools and can help reinforce the concept of interdependence among multiple school leaders. In this way, distributed leadership can help school counselors "interpret and reflect on practice as a basis for rethinking and revising it" (Spillane, 2006, p. 87).

As we reflected on school counselor leadership practices through the distributed leadership perspective in the examples explored in this article and beyond, some distinct implications and recommendations for school counselor leadership practice and preparation emerged. First and foremost is the importance of viewing leadership as practice, rather than simply personal characteristics, position, or professional role of the school counselor leader. By focusing on school counselor practices—the routines and actions that compose the school days—we can assess whether they are coupled to our professional ideals, philosophies, and visions. For example, the school counseling profession has made impressive efforts to embrace a fundamental philosophy of promoting optimal student achievement by removing barriers that impede academic success (Dedmond, 1998; DeVoss & Andrews, 2006; Education Trust, 1997; House & Martin, 1998). The distributed leadership perspective can serve as a tool to analyze whether school counselor practices, the "how" of school counseling work, are aligned with the noble philosophy that should serve to frame that work. In the examples of school counselor leadership practices discussed in this article, there seems to be a high level of fidelity to the philosophical underpinning of increasing student achievement. However, other common school counselor practices may not show this degree of alignment to our professional commitments to social justice and educational equity. For example, too often school counselors have a role in student course selection

A distributed leadership approach with valuable contributions from each individual will form the basis for a stronger and more cohesive school community.

and scheduling processes in schools where academic tracking patterns may have blunting effects on some students' vocational aspirations (Akos, Lambie, Milsom, & Gilbert, 2007).

Because of such potential disparities between philosophy and practice with regard to leadership, we recommend that school counselor education programs place an increased emphasis on school counselor practices and the fidelity of those practices to the mission and vision of the school counseling profession, rather than on the personal attributes and characteristics of individual school leaders. School counselors may be dynamic and influential leaders, but if their leadership is expressed through practices that do not enhance the lives of students and promote achievement, then the end results may be the creation or reinforcement of, rather than the removal of, barriers that impede student success. School counselor educators should encourage student analysis of leadership by providing opportunities for students to reflect on their own emerging leadership practices as well as those they observe during their fieldwork. By viewing leadership as practices that are distributed among multiple leaders, preservice school counselors can see it as a developmental and teaming process, rather than a solely individual undertaking. For example, when engaging with other school leaders to increase student access to college, school counselors can view their contributions and results in a distributed leadership framework. No one individual educator, whether a principal, school counselor, or teacher, can take on complete responsibility, credit or blame, for programs or results. Rather, a distributed leadership approach with valuable contributions from each individual will form the basis for a stronger and more cohesive school community.

The distributive perspective that leadership only occurs when stretched among two or more leaders contains other valuable implications for practice and preparation. Given the specialized training and skill set that school counselors have in coordination of services, consultation, communication, group dynamics, advocacy, systems, and multiculturalism, there is an ethical imperative that they are involved in a significant amount of leadership practice in schools (Stone & Dahir, 2007). Again, recent research has indicated that leadership practices are generally distributed "among three to seven people, including administrators and specialists" (Spillane, 2006, p. 145). Given school counseling training and skills that are both specialized and widely applicable within the school situation, the involvement of school counselors as distributed leaders is extremely important—particularly because of the positive impact such involvement might have on the instructional program in schools (Stone & Dahir, 2006).

The school principal, while not the sole leader of

among leaders. School counselor preparation programs should emphasize the importance of understanding the idiosyncratic context in which each school is situated.

Leadership practices that school counselors participate in also influence the situation—that is, the tools, routines, and structures of the school. This potential for transformational action on the situation should be an important part of school counselor leadership practices. The examples we provided earlier demonstrate how school counselors as distributed leaders can contribute to a team approach to transform key structures and procedures such as staff development, large-group guidance, and college advising in order to use them as mechanisms to close achievement and opportunity gaps for students.

Certainly, there are numerous other examples that could be identified. It is important for school counselors to be mindful of opportunities for the transformation of aspects of the school situation—particularly those potential barriers that do not seem to be serving students well. School counselor preparation programs might facilitate such awareness by providing case studies of similar transformations through collective action, as well as by emphasizing the importance of creativity in the work of school counselors.

CONCL ION

The idea that school leadership occurs most often through among leaders is one that should be embraced more fully by school counselors and school counselor educators. In this article we have presented the distributed leadership perspective and discussed how it might be of value in understanding school counseling leadership. Distributed leadership hinges on three key ideas: (a) Examining practice, rather than an individual leader's personal or professional characteristics, is most important; (b) leadership occurs most often between two or more leaders and it is the actual interactions between or among them that constitute leadership; and (c) leaders also interact with their contextual situation—both influencing it and being influenced by it. The distributed leadership perspective seems to be an effective and enlightening model for viewing how school counselors practice as school leaders because it is, in part, designed to highlight the smaller, more mundane acts of leadership that sometimes escape attention. Continued application of distributed leadership to school counselor practice may reveal additional insights that might contribute to our basic understanding of "how" school leadership occurs, as well as how it might be improved. ▮

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