

Promoting Girls' Leadership Development in Secondary Schools

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Abstract

Leadership programs and services have burgeoned over the past decade to encourage greater representation in leadership among girls and teens. Yet, little is known about the prevalence and type of girls' leadership programs or services adopted in secondary schools, whether they are perceived as important or effective by school counselors, or what barriers exist to prevent adoption of such programs. Based on an online survey of 239 school counselors, we explored the promotion of girls' leadership within the education system. We also offered implications for girls' leadership promotion in the schools and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: girls' leadership, leadership development, school counselors

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School counselors are important advocacy agents, and this includes working with students and administrators to ensure gender equity in their programming (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012). Further, school counselors are tasked with promoting gender equity through their language, expectations, communication, and presentations (ASCA, 2014). The emphasis on gender equity is not surprising given that gender is an important factor in one's life and can "deepen disparities associated with important socioeconomic determinants such as income, employment, and social position" (World Health Organization [WHO], n.d., p. 2). These disparities favor boys and men because men are afforded greater power and privilege in most societies globally (Basow, 2006; Ryle, 2015). In the U.S. there has been progress in closing the gender gap in areas such as educational and career attainment (Weissbourd, Ross Anderson, Cashin, & McIntyre, 2015) and division of household labor (Barnes, 2015); however, disparities persist, particularly related to leadership.

For example, women make up half the U.S. population, yet they only represent 19.3% of Congress (Center for American Women in Politics [CAWP], 2018). Similarly, women account for 44% of master's degrees in business and management, yet represent only 14.6% of the top five leadership positions, and less than 5% of CEOs at Fortune 500 companies (Warner, 2014). The percentage of minority women in these leadership positions is even lower. Inability to reach these levels of power where important policy, legislative, economic, and organizational decisions are made puts girls and women at a disadvantage. Further, women in leadership positions are important as role models and mentors to help navigate leadership paths and overcome barriers.

Mentors act as advocates and are vital to professional growth and leadership development for girls and women (Achard, 2012; Haber-Curran & Sulpizio, 2017).

Leadership, however, is more than achieving high ranking corporate and political positions. Rather, leadership is a skill set that can be learned to address complex problems (Haber-Curran & Sulpizio, 2017). In this respect, leadership development is important to *all* girls and women. Recognition of the need for girls' leadership development is evident in the proliferation of girls' leadership programs over the past few decades; however, there is a lack of quantitative study pertaining to girls' leadership. Further, it is not clear which leadership development programs are being made widely available to youth (i.e., in schools), whether they are targeted to the needs of girls, or whether they are perceived as important or effective by key school personnel, such as administrators or school counselors.

School counselors are ideally positioned to promote and assess girls' leadership in the schools because they attend to student development needs, school-wide programming, including gender equity in programming (ASCA, 2014), and program assessment (ASCA, 2012). Given the importance of girls' leadership development and the vital role schools and school counselors play in promoting both student development (ASCA, 2012; Erford, 2015) and gender equity (ASCA, 2014), study of girls' leadership promotion within the school system is warranted. Gaining a better understanding of the current state of girls' leadership programming in the schools, from the perspective of school counselors, will contribute to our understanding of how to address girls' leadership development within the schools.

Gender Socialization, Bias, and the Leadership Gap

Although leadership development can occur across the lifespan, it may be important for schools to intervene early to mitigate the impact of gender socialization. *Gender socialization* is a process through which individuals come to learn and adopt gender roles, which are imbedded with culturally prescribed expectations for gender behaviors (Fulton, 2017; Ryle, 2015). Gender role expectations are often based on stereotypes, or generalized assumptions about attitudes, traits, or behavior patterns of men and women (Brannon, 2008). Gender socialization begins at a young age and can impact a girl's belief in her ability, her view of what constitutes a leader (Haber-Curran & Sulpizio, 2017), her political aspirations (Lawless & Fox, 2013), her overall confidence and confidence as a leader, and which talents she cultivates and careers she pursues (Shapiro et al., 2015).

Another challenge girls face is a biased perception about leadership that favors boys as leaders; these biases are held by boys, girls, and sometimes parents (Lawless & Fox, 2013; Weissbourd et al., 2015). Based on a survey of 19,816 students from 59 diverse middle and high schools, Weissbourd et al. (2015) found that bias against women as political leaders still existed among 23% of teen girls and 40% of boys. Girls also showed a bias toward giving more power to boys over girl leaders. This bias against girls having power may be explained by competitive feelings among girls, lack of confidence and self-esteem (which they project onto other girls), or stereotyping, such as viewing girls as overly emotional or expressive (Weissbourd et al., 2015). The latter finding is not surprising given that traits associated with traditional leadership align with societal views of male traits rather than female traits (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Gender socialization and bias also have material consequences. Gender expectation can limit girls and teens from making choices in middle school and high school which may influence their college education, career paths, and earning potential (Bian, Leslie, & Cimpian, 2017; Shapiro et al., 2015). Brannon (2008) noted that the female gender is stereotypically equated with *communal* traits (e.g., nurturing and expressive) while the male gender is stereotypically equated with *agentic* traits (e.g., being competitive and rational) in many cultures. Based on these stereotypes, it is not surprising that women more commonly enter careers in which communal traits are valued (e.g., homemaker, nurse) and men pursue careers in which agentic traits are desirable (e.g., physician, manager); thus, careers that favor women are lower paying and less prestigious (Swanson & Fouad, 2010). Further, stereotypes such as *boys are better at math* limit girls' engagement with science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses, which are valued in the job market (Leaper & Brown, 2014).

Given these biases, it is important that girls are not only exposed to leadership development opportunities and career options, but that intentional efforts are made to create programs that overcome these barriers. In other words, universal (not gender accommodating) leadership programming may not be sufficient to address some of the leadership barriers faced by girls and teens. In addition, girls' leadership programs (e.g., Girl Scouts) can increase their self-confidence, broaden career options, and mitigate the power of gendered messages (Shapiro et al., 2015). Furthermore, youth development is moving toward a model of shared leadership, which is more inclusive and empowering; this approach is more aligned with what girls value and more likely to engage them

(Baric et al., 2009). Leadership programs/services are needed to reduce the commonly noted metaphor of the leaking pipeline to leadership among girls and women.

Outcomes of Girls' Leadership Programs and Services

The girls' leadership development literature is varied and includes topics such as redefining leadership to include the experiences of women and girls (Baldwin et al., 2016), developing leadership models (Baric et al., 2009) or frameworks (Achard, 2013b) to support girls' leadership development, and researching girls' experiences in same-gender environments such as Girl Scouts (Shapiro et al., 2015) or girls' schools (e.g., Achard, 2012, 2013a). Based on a review of the literature, school programs and services such as Girls Scouts (Shapiro et al., 2015), STEM programs (e.g., Dasgupta, Scircle, & Hunsinger, 2015), and sports (Duguay, Loughhead, & Munroe-Chandler, 2016; Galante & Ward, 2017) have been examined related to girls' leadership development. Participation in Girls Scouts has been associated with a stronger sense of self, positive values, better grades, interest in STEM careers, healthy relationships, and community problem-solving (Girl Scout Research Institute, 2017). Although middle school girls are already thinking of careers in gendered terms, participation in Girl Scouts and building leadership potential mediated this relationship because more girls involved in Girl Scouts see themselves in STEM or other traditionally male dominated careers (Shapiro et al., 2015). In addition, researchers have found support that leadership develops through athletics and sports as female athletes have more leadership skills than non-athletes (Galante & Ward, 2017). Participation in girls' leadership programs was also associated with increased likelihood of seeing one's self as a leader with requisite skills (Conner & Strobel, 2007; Duguay et al., 2016; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Lafreniere &

Longman, 2008). The benefits obtained from participation are sustained (Taylor, 2014) and lead to movement into leadership positions within six months (Lafreniere & Longman, 2008).

Although there is evidence that girls' leadership programs are associated with positive outcomes, much of the research is qualitative (e.g., Achard, 2013b; Conner & Strobel, 2007; Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Whittington, 2006); there is a need for more outcomes research examining the efficacy of these programs. Furthermore, it is unclear how pervasive such programs are in the school system and whether they are being evaluated for their effectiveness.

Why Focus on Schools?

The educational environment is one of the four most often identified agents of gender socialization (Fulton, 2017). Children and adolescents not only learn content in schools, but also gender role expectations (Shapiro et al., 2015). Schools are, therefore, an ideal place to challenge the status quo regarding gender equity, and school counselors are called on to do so (ASCA, 2014). When students are faced with important decisions, such as which career aspirations to follow, teachers and school counselors are a vital source of guidance (Shapiro et al., 2015). Further, school environments are sometimes the only source of formal leadership experiences and programming to which students are exposed. Girls' organizations (e.g., Girls Scouts) and learning experiences combined with the influence of school professionals, such as school counselors, can counter gender related messages that impact leadership development and professional aspirations (Shapiro et al., 2015). Girls who participated in a girls' leadership camp with school counselors in training, had positive outcomes and

the school counselors in training reported learning skills that increased their leadership skills as well (Briggs, 2009). Yet, school counselors reportedly struggled with how to address inequity versus providing programming to all students (Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & College Board Advocacy & Policy, C., 2011). Further, because schools play an important role in student development (ASCA, 2012; Erford, 2015), and school programming is a key resource for achieving equity goals (ASCA, 2016), understanding how leadership is promoted by school counselors is an important step toward growing the literature on girls' leadership development.

Given the ASCA (2014) position statement on gender equity, this is an area of needed advocacy by school counselors. Thus, this research is framed by the need for advocacy by school counselors and by feminist theory. Viewing individuals within their social and political context, and empowering individuals to challenge and overcome societal oppression (including gender equity), is a core aspect of feminist theory, and in alignment with the goals of multiculturalism (Jodry & Trotman, 2008).

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to determine the prevalence and types of leadership development programs and services in secondary schools, if they are targeted (e.g., to girls), and school factors associated with the availability of such programs. Additionally, we sought to understand how programs are being delivered, whether girls' leadership development is considered important and effectively addressed within the schools, and what barriers may exist in promoting girls' leadership in secondary schools. Following, our research questions were: (1) what is the prevalence and patterns (i.e., most common types, intended demographic targets, delivery sources, and school factors) of leadership development programs/services

among secondary schools?, (2) how do school counselors rate the importance and effectiveness of leadership programs/services?, and (3) what do school counselors perceive as barriers to promoting girls' leadership in the schools? Understanding these trends may help guide school counselors, administrators, and researchers in their approach to identifying effective girls' leadership development programming in secondary schools.

Method

Participants and Procedures

The study sample consisted of 239 secondary school counselors. A random sample of Texas secondary schools were identified from a database provided by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). Texas is the fourth most demographically diverse state in the U.S. (Kolmar, 2019). The National Center for Education Statistics (US Department of Education, 2017) shows that Texas is the second largest state in terms of total number of students enrolled in public schools. To obtain information about leadership programs and services in these schools, we recruited school counselors given their knowledge of, and central role in, school programming, assessment (ASCA, 2012; Erford, 2015), gender equity (ASCA, 2014), and career and educational planning (Shapiro et al., 2015) which can influence leadership aspirations. Thus, school counselors were contacted using their publicly-available district email addresses listed on their school or district website. Based on the NCES database, Texas has 3,346 secondary schools. Correctional, disciplinary, specialty population schools (e.g., expectant mothers), and schools with 50 or fewer students were eliminated from the list. These schools do not necessarily represent the

average school and may require different types of programs and services. Thus, using the remaining 3,226, a random sample of 1,697 were identified (for a 95% CI and estimated 4% error and 30% response rate); however, not all schools had a designated school counselor nor an available or working email address. This resulted in a survey distribution of 1,571 of which 280 were returned for a 17.8% response rate. Because some respondents did not identify as school counselors as indicated on their school website and some did not complete the entire survey, there were 239 useable surveys (15.2% response rate). Based on the tailored design method (TDM; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2008), which offers guidance for communication with potential participants toward increasing response rates by increasing incentives for participation while reducing risks, perceived and real, school counselors received an initial notice of the study followed by four rounds of email recruitment. Each notice was personalized with the potential participant's name to increase participation (Dillman et al., 2008). Participants were offered access to a document of girls' leadership activities as incentive for participation (Trespacios & Perkins, 2017) and were provided with a link to the survey.

School location demographics include were diverse: rural ($n = 72$, 30.1%), small town ($n = 57$, 23.8%), suburban ($n = 63$, 36.4%), and urban ($n = 47$, 19.7%). These are location categories used in the NCES database. The majority of schools were public ($n = 224$, 93.7%) with the remaining schools identified as charter ($n = 9$, 3.8%) and magnet ($n = 6$, 2.5%) schools. Among the sample, 19.2% of schools were recognized ASCA model program (RAMP) schools (44.4% were unsure of RAMP status) and 60.7% were Title I schools (3.8% were unsure of Title I school status). The average number of

school counselors per school was 2.27 ($SD = 1.7$, Range = 1-10) with an average estimated number of students per school of 828 ($SD = 629.8$, Range = 90-3,300).

Because some of the questions were based on the perceptions of the school counselors themselves, their demographics are also reported. Respondents were mostly female (96.2%) and Caucasian/White/European American ($n = 155$, 64.9%). Other racial/ethnicities were reported as African American/Black ($n = 33$, 13.8%), Hispanic/Latino/a ($n = 45$, 18.8%), Biracial/Multiracial ($n = 1$, .4%), Native American/American Indian ($n = 2$, .8%), Asian or Pacific Islander ($n = 1$, .4%), and Other ($n = 2$, .8%). The number of years of experience as a school counselor ranged from less than one year to 47 years with an average of nine years of experience. Additionally, 95% of respondents were teachers prior to working as a school counselor, 95.4% were certified school counselors, and 73.2% graduated from a program accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP). It is noteworthy that the state of Texas requires that school counselors have prior formal teaching experience to qualify as a school counselor.

Measures

The authors created a quantitative descriptive survey to obtain information about Texas schools regarding the prevalence and types of leadership development programs and services offered in the schools as well as school counselors' perspectives related to these offerings. Survey items were developed by a five-member research team which included three licensed professional counselors who are experienced in counseling girls and teens and two school counselors with combined 22 years of experience in the schools. Five currently practicing school counselors across Texas reviewed and provided feedback on the survey stating they were satisfied with the content and length of the survey and suggested additional programs to assess. The final survey consisted

of 53 items: six items on school profile (e.g., number of students, Title I status); nine items on school counselor demographics including items regarding training, certification, and licensure; 31 items on the availability of varied leadership programs and services, one item on delivery of services, two items on school counselor-perceived importance of, and effectiveness in delivery of programs, and four open-ended items, one of which was used in this study (e.g., perceived barriers to promoting girls' leadership), and three were used for a later qualitative study related to a school counselor's training and role in promoting girls' leadership. Items on available leadership programs and services were identified based on a review of the girls' leadership literature, online searches, and consulting with school counselors. Programs were defined as formal, intentional girls' leadership programs such as Girl Scouts, Girls' Empowerment Network, Girls Inc., or GirlUp. After consulting with school counselors, other programs were also included such as Peer Assistance and Leadership (PAL) and Rural Talent Search, even though they were not specifically targeted to girls. Services were defined as activities that develop leadership, but are not necessarily formal programs. These included activities such as individual or group counseling with a leadership focus, classroom guidance lessons on leadership, sports, and student government. Respondents were asked to indicate whether each endorsed leadership program or service was offered to (a) girls only, (b) minority girls only, (c) boys only, or (d) both boys and girls.

Results

Descriptive statistics were used to identify: prevalence, demographic target, importance and effectiveness (as rated by school counselors), types, and delivery of programs/services offered across the sample. Pearson product-moment correlation

coefficient (PPMCC) was used to determine if school factors (e.g., locale of the school, number of school counselors, Title I designation) were associated with availability of programs and services. Enumerative content analysis (ECA; Grbich, 2009) was utilized to code and count the results of an open-ended question about barriers to promoting girls' leadership in the schools. ECA involves coding the qualitative data in terms of how often particular words or phrases occur across participants' answers. This frequency coding was done in conjunction with coding the data for meaning and utilizing ECA to discover repetitions in both participants words and the codes. ECA was utilized due to the shortness of the participants' responses to that particular question and the repetitions inherent in their responses. ECA allowed the researchers to uncover patterns in the numbers of particular responses and codes.

In terms of the prevalence of leadership programs and services offered in Texas secondary schools, 77.4% ($n = 185$) of schools in the sample offered at least one type of leadership program and all but one offered a leadership development service. On average schools offered 2.0 programs ($SD = 1.65$, range = 0-7) and 4.76 services ($SD = 1.83$, range = 0-9). Thus, leadership services were more prevalent across the sample and more of them were offered on average than were leadership programs.

In terms of the percentage of schools offering leadership programs and services specifically for girls, racial minority girls, or boys, 17.6% of the schools ($n = 42$) offered at least one leadership program to girls-only (two schools were girls-only schools). Only one school offered a leadership program specifically to minority girls and none offered programs to boys only. Many schools did identify programs using the "other" category and, in some cases, indicated that the program or service was intended for boys only or

minority girls only, but these were very few. In terms of services, only four schools (1.6%) offered leadership services for girls only (including the two girls-only schools), none indicated services just for minority girls or just for boys.

The number of distinct types of programs and services were assessed to understand the breadth of leadership promotion activities occurring in schools. There were 108 distinct leadership programs and 51 distinct leadership services identified as being offered in the schools. By population, there were 86 distinct programs for both girls and boys, 25 for girls, 6 for boys, and 2 for minority girls. Likewise, there were more services intended for both boys and girls together (49), but only two just for girls and none for minority girls or boys only. In sum, there are few common programs across schools in the sample and the majority offer leadership programs and services that are not gender specific.

The most frequently provided programs and services among schools in the sample (see Table 1 for full list) included: sports ($n = 208$, 87.0%), classroom guidance lessons ($n = 189$, 79.1%), student government ($n = 184$, 77.0%), volunteerism ($n = 176$, 73.6%), and individual counseling with a leadership focus ($n = 132$, 55.2%), and these programs were provided to both girls and boys. Only four programs or services were targeted to girls specifically by more than two percent of respondents: Girl Scouts ($n = 28$, 11.7%), STEM-related programs other than classes ($n = 5$, 2.1%), Girls Leadership/CEO Rachel Simmons/Girls Leadership Institute ($n = 5$, 2.1%), and Girls Inc. ($n = 5$, 2.1%). Finally, some respondents ($n = 71$) identified other programs or services not listed on the survey such as student council ($n = 29$), national and junior

honor societies ($n = 20$), Future Farmers of America ($n = 8$), and Teen Leadership/Capturing Kids Hearts Curriculum ($n = 8$).

Table 1

Most Frequently Provided Leadership Programs or Services by Population (N = 239)*

Program/Service	Both Girls and Boys**		Girls Only	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Student government/council	184	77.0%	1	0.4%
Sports	208	87.0%	2	0.8%
Classroom guidance lessons	189	79.1%	2	0.8%
Volunteerism	176	73.6%	2	0.8%
Individual counseling (leadership focus)	132	55.2%	2	0.8%
STEM-related program (other than classes)	102	42.7%	5	2.1%
Service learning programs	95	39.7%	1	0.4%
Small group counseling (leadership focus)	92	38.5%	3	1.3%
Community mentoring program	67	28.0%	4	1.7%
Peer mentoring program	67	28.0%	2	0.8%
Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID)	66	27.6%	2	0.8%
PAL® Peer Assistance and Leadership	50	20.9%	2	0.8%
Leadership days	43	18.0%	2	0.8%
No Place for Hate	28	11.7%	N/A	N/A
TRiO Talent Search – Rural	8	3.3%	N/A	N/A
YMCA – youth & government	6	2.5%	N/A	N/A
Girl Scouts	2	0.8%	28	11.7%
Girls Leadership/CEO Rachel Simmons/Girls Leadership Institute	2	0.8%	5	2.1%
Girls Inc.	N/A	N/A	5	2.1%

Note. *Programs/services reported by 2% or more of participants for at least one population.

**Data descending by both girls and boys population.

In terms of profiling which types of schools were more likely to offer leadership programs, we computed a PPMCC and found a significant positive relationship

between: (1) the number of school counselors ($r = .22, p < .01$) and the size of the student population ($r = .24, p < .01$), and (2) the number of leadership programs offered. School size and the number of school counselors did not have a significant relationship with the number of girls' specific leadership programs. Furthermore, no other variables, including Title I designation, locale of the school, or ASCA designation were related to the availability of leadership programs in general or for girls.

Regarding delivery of programming, 84.1% ($n = 201$) of school counselors reported that the majority of the leadership programs and services available at their school were offered by the school while 15.9% ($n = 38$) reported that the majority were offered by outside agencies and the school equally. None reported that the majority of programs were offered by outside agencies alone. Therefore, it appears the schools rely more on their own resources for providing leadership training and support.

Given that school counselors have a key role in the types of developmental programs/services offered at their school, they were queried about their perception of leadership development opportunities for students in their school. School counselors rated how important it is for their school to address leadership training and support for girls and how effectively they are in doing so. School counselors reported a mean score of 7.8 ($SD = 1.97$) on a 10-point scale measuring *importance* and 5.25 ($SD = 2.32$) on a 10-point scale measuring *effectiveness*. Thus, there was a gap in perceived leadership training importance and effectiveness among school counselors.

Finally, an open-ended question about barriers to promoting girls' leadership in the schools was included. Enumerative content analysis (ECA) was utilized to code and count the results of that question (Grbich, 2009). For the prompt regarding barriers to

girls' leadership promotion in the schools, 213 of school counselors provided a response. The most common barrier noted was a lack of time to engage in girls' leadership programming (44.1%, $n = 94$). A distant, but second most common, answer was that there were no perceived barriers to promoting girls' leadership (16.4%, $n = 35$). A lack of funding to support leadership programs and services and the perception that girls' leadership is not a priority were noted by 13.6% ($n = 29$) of school counselors. Additional barriers included a lack of personnel to support programs and services (13.1%, $n = 5$), lack of resources, unspecified (13.1%, $n = 5$), inability to work programming into the schedule (9.9%, $n = 21$), insufficient administrative support (5.6%, $n = 7$), gender stereotypes (4.2%, $n = 9$), rule/regulations/legalities (3.8%, $n = 8$), and lack of knowledge or awareness of girls' leadership (3.3%, $n = 7$). Finally, 6.1% of responses were categorized as other barriers. Although some of these responses were deemed too vague to categorize, one theme that emerged was related to gender and the interaction of boys and girls. For example, one respondent noted that it would be difficult to find time to separate girls from boys to engage in leadership programming, another stated that girls are impacted by gender dynamics and boys inhibit girls from being leaders, and finally, one respondent stated that parents of boys may feel that a focus on girls' leadership is unfair.

Discussion

There has been considerable attention to the leaking pipeline of women's leadership, which continues to result in a gender leadership gap even though women have been found to be equally effective as leaders (Hyde, 2014). Many programs and services, often provided within the education system, have emerged to close this gap;

yet, there has been limited study of girls' leadership within the schools. A number of key findings from the current study shed light on girls' leadership promotion in the schools.

Perhaps the most important finding was the notable absence of girls-specific leadership training in the schools. More than three-quarters of schools in the sample offered at least one type of leadership program, and virtually all offered some type of leadership development service. Although we did not find similar studies for comparison, results offer encouraging evidence that youth leadership development is commonly attended to in public secondary schools. It would appear, however, that schools are not necessarily choosing programs and services specifically targeted to girls, as only 17.6% of schools indicated that programs were offered just to girls, and only one school offered a leadership program specifically to minority girls. In addition, the programs and services most frequently provided by schools (i.e., sports, classroom guidance lessons, student government, volunteerism, and individual counseling with a leadership focus) were not tailored to girls' leadership development. In fact, only four programs or services were targeted to girls specifically by more than two percent of schools (i.e., Girl Scouts, STEM-related programs other than classes, Girls Leadership/CEO Rachel Simmons/Girls Leadership Institute, and Girls Inc.) despite the availability of numerous girls' leadership programs and services. It is important to note that this may not reflect the will of school administrators, teachers, and counselors, but rather may be a function of barriers to promoting girls' leadership. School counselors in the current study noted that important resources such as time, funding, and sufficient personnel were all barriers to providing such programs to girls.

Regardless, the lack of targeted programming found in this study is of concern considering that girls' leadership development needs are different from boys' in some respects. Haber-Curran and Sulpizio (2017) noted that leadership development among girls and women should involve viewing leadership as a developing capacity that is not position dependent (i.e., hierarchical and authoritative and primarily associated with men in leadership roles), but rather something anyone can do to encourage collaboration and change. Girls are more engaged when there is an inclusive and empowering approach to leadership instead of a more masculine command and control approach (Baric et al., 2009). Haber-Curran and Sulpizio (2017) also emphasized the need to attend to factors that are more uniquely a concern for girls and women such as finding and using their voice, addressing issues of power, and developing self-esteem. Similarly, Baric (2013) noted that confidence, voice/assertion, decision-making, organization, and vision and ability to motivate others were found to be important competencies or characteristics of girl leaders. These factors may be particularly important to leadership development among girls as their self-esteem can suffer during pre-teen and teenage years (Anderson & Choate, 2008), and they are often caught between being self-affirming and stifling their voice to avoid conflict and preserve relationships with others (Choate, 2008). Girls-only leadership training is also important because gender biases can keep girls from seeing themselves as leaders or leadership as desirable for them (Hoyt & Kennedy, 2008; Webb & McDonald, 2007) and single-gender leadership development environments can directly address gendered messages (Shapiro et al., 2015).

The second key finding was that there were 108 distinct types of programs and 51 types of services identified across the sample. More specifically, among 239 schools there were 159 distinct programs and services; thus, few specific programs and services were widely adopted. Although it is potentially positive that there are so many methods and choices for youth leadership development, it may also reflect the fact that few programs or services emerged as being well tested and widely adopted in the literature. Evaluating programs for effectiveness is not only an ethical imperative (ASCA, 2016) but is a necessary step in determining best practices. It is possible, however, that schools lack the resources to engage in evaluating their own programs towards establishing best practices. Furthermore, only 19.2% of schools in the study identified as RAMP schools, a designation that involves documenting evidence-based practices and program evaluation. Regardless of RAMP designation, school counselors should be evaluating their programs, including leadership programs (ASCA, 2016), for girls and minority girls.

Third, it appears that only school size and the number of school counselors were related to the number of leadership programs offered (but not girls' specific leadership training). It is possible that other factors also influence the focus on girls' leadership. For example, school counselors in the current study identified that girls' leadership is not always a priority noting that state testing and other priorities consume their time and that lack of administrative support is sometimes a barrier. The lack of girls' specific leadership programs could be due to a lack of priority, due to barriers, or both. Furthermore, most schools (84.1%) reported that they rely on their own resources for providing leadership training and support versus relying on outside agencies. Given the

multitude of responsibilities and demands placed on schools and school personnel as well as the lack of funding many schools struggle with, it is not surprising that girls-specific leadership training is not common, as this might be a greater burden than offering a universal approach to leadership development.

Finally, school counselors indicated a gap between how important they perceived girls' leadership training to be and how effective they thought their schools were in addressing it. This may also reflect competing priorities among schools (e.g., state testing), lack of knowledge, stereotypes, or other such barriers as indicated by school counselors in the study. The most often noted barrier to promoting girls' leadership was lack of time. Perhaps if schools were able to garner greater community support in providing such programming it would be more widely available. Surprisingly, many schools did not feel that there were barriers to promoting girls' leadership, but others identified barriers such as lack of funding, priority, administrative support, personnel, knowledge, and other resources, as well as scheduling issues, gender stereotypes, and rules, regulations, and legalities (e.g., programs must be offered to all genders). Despite these barriers and the discrepancy between the gap between perceived importance and effectiveness of girls' leadership programs, schools are continuing to offer leadership programs at high rates.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the current study offers some insight regarding the promotion of girls' leadership in secondary schools, there are some limitations in the study design and sample. First, results were based on an online survey design and non-responders may have differed systematically from those who responded. Online surveys may be biased

against participants who are less comfortable in an online environment, such as older school counselors (Burt, Gonzalez, Swank, Ascher, & Cunningham, 2011). Second, given the sample size and response rate, it is possible that responders may not be representative of Texas schools nor school counselors. Third, the sample was mainly Caucasian women trained in CACREP-accredited programs, so results based on their perspectives may not generalize to men, ethnic minorities, or graduates of non-CACREP accredited programs. Finally, the survey was solely self-report which can be influenced by degree of self-knowledge and social desirability; however, given the nature of the survey questions, this is not likely a significant limitation. Consequently, in future studies, researchers may want to consider addressing these limitations by using mailed surveys to a larger, more geographically and racially/gender diverse sample to understand if the current findings generalize to secondary schools and school counselors in other states. In addition, researchers may want to consider surveying school counselors via qualitative methods to determine how they think barriers to girls' leadership could be overcome. Finally, researchers should consider working with schools to evaluate the effectiveness of the most common girls' leadership programs found in this study.

Despite the study limitations, we identified findings related to promotion of girls' leadership in the schools, including the prevalence and types of youth leadership programs offered, the degree to which they target girls and minority girls specifically, how important and effective school counselors perceive current efforts are to promote girls' leadership, and what barriers exist. Although there has been progress in closing

the gender leadership gap, concerted efforts are still needed so girls and women are equally represented in society and can reach their potential.

Summary of Implications and Recommendations

Based on results of the study we offer several implications and recommendations for school counselors and administrators. First, although schools may be engaging in youth leadership development, the majority offered universal rather than girls-only programs. Because single-gender environments are associated with positive outcomes (e.g., Girl Scout Research Institute, 2017), and can address issues of stereotypes more directly (Baric et al., 2009), ideally counselors and administrators would find ways to increase their offerings of programs and services tailored to the needs of girls. This would include offering leadership programs specifically for minority girls as such programs were practically non-existent in this sample. These programs should attend to girls' leadership needs such as promoting confidence, voice/assertion, decision-making, organization, and vision and ability to motivate others (Baric, 2013) as well as learning about racial barriers (Swanson & Fouad, 2010) and gender expectations that may influence career paths (Bian et al., 2017; Shapiro et al., 2015).

Second, school counselors and administrators may ideally want to offer more gender-specific programs; however, they are limited by lack of time, money, personnel, and knowledge. Due to such barriers, it is possible that universal rather than gender-specific programming will remain a reality for many schools. One stair-step approach to addressing this might be to attend to issues of gender and power within currently offered universal programs and services. Given that boys and men have greater power and privilege in most societies, they may be important change agents (Baric, 2013), and

working with both boys and girls to understand the influence of stereotypes and how they impact race and gender inequities may prove helpful. If this approach were to be supported empirically, it might offer schools greater flexibility in how leadership is addressed.

Schools may also reduce the number of services currently offered to enable adding girls-only services. Schools only offered two programs on average but nearly five leadership services. Conducting an evaluation of students' needs and the effectiveness of existing programs and services is not only a professional and ethical standard for school counselors (ASCA, 2016), but could help determine the optimal array of leadership offerings. Further, school counselors must assess needs related to disparities including those associated with gender and race and should use these data to inform interventions that help close achievement and opportunity gaps (ASCA, 2016). A final option is for schools to collaborate with community resources to provide girls' leadership development since most schools in the sample identified they currently provide most programs and services themselves. Given that leadership is important to overall problem solving (Haber-Curran & Sulpizio, 2017), effecting change, and improving girls' and women's representation in all areas of society, finding a means to overcome these barriers and provide leadership development to girls is essential.

A final implication of the study is that the existence of numerous varied programs and services may be an impediment in determining which programs are effective. In other words, because there are many different types of leadership programs and services, it is difficult to find commonalities that are efficacious for developing girls' leadership and establishing best practices. Identifying empirically supported programs is

a necessary step toward assisting school counselors and administrators to confidently adopt and use programs. In addition, counselors and administrators need to be well versed in program evaluation so they can choose empirically-supported programs as well as evaluate their own programs. School counselors could increase their knowledge and execution of program evaluation by collaborating with counseling programs at universities in their area.

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