

THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S ROLE IN PARENT-ADOLESCENT
COMMUNICATION

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BY

KATHRYN EVANGELINE SOHNE, B.A., M.S.S.W.

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DEDICATION

For my students, past and present.

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ABSTRACT

KATHRYN EVANGELINE SOHNE

THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR'S ROLE IN PARENT-ADOLESCENT COMMUNICATION

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This study applied a descriptive phenomenological approach to the exploration of the school counselor's role in parent-adolescent communication. While there is an abundance of research regarding issues of adolescence and parenting, an inordinate amount of studies concentrates on atypical development. The purpose of this qualitative dissertation is to provide new knowledge regarding normative parent-adolescent communication as experienced by school counselors. As the key informant, the school counselor is in a unique position, with special knowledge, and is able to provide a fresh perspective and deeper insight to explore this issue. The school counselor's viewpoint of parent-adolescent communication provides insight from their own interactions receiving information that parents and adolescents often share with a school counselor, but not with each other.

The participants consisted of five counselors employed in private independent middle and high school settings. Data were gathered through group meetings and individual interviews utilizing Zoom video, audio, typed chats, and field notes. Data analysis framed by a descriptive phenomenological approach included in vivo and descriptive coding, pattern coding, and a reduction of descriptions to unfold the essence

of the phenomenon. This process revealed five themes: Parental self-efficacy and adolescence, parental knowledge and boundaries, adolescent information management and expectations, the school counselor-adolescent relationship matters, and parent support and partnerships. The findings contribute to knowledge regarding foundational parent-adolescent processes and demonstrates that school counselors can be a catalyst for parent-adolescent communication. The findings can inform parents, school counselor education and certification programs and policy.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The School Counselor's Role in Parent-Adolescent Communication

Adolescence is a significant period of human development encompassing biological, cognitive, behavioral, and conceptual growth for an individual (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Steinberg, 2014). The adolescent's understanding of identity begins to expand and their understanding of the world begins to shift as they develop the ability to think outside of what they have been told, and begin to formulate and test their own hypotheses, and accurately observe the results (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Steinberg, 2014). Along with cognitive and psychological development, an adolescent's psychosocial sensitivities also experience growth. During this time, adolescents continue to be impacted by family, but often find more meaning in their interactions with peers and other influences in their environment (Muuss, 1996). In this study, I challenged the cultural and societal belief that parental influence on adolescent developmental processes becomes less significant as the contributions of peers and environment increase. Empirical research indicates that parental influence is still a significant determinant of health and well-being during this time. In fact, the vulnerability or resilience of an individual, even in adulthood, is potentially generated by parenting processes during adolescence (Dahl et al., 2018).

Problem Statement

The significance of child development has been thoroughly studied and serves as a foundation for knowledge in human development. Childhood is often considered the most crucial time of development and attachment, but emerging developmental science indicates that adolescence is an equally sensitive period of learning and enhanced growth (Dahl et al., 2018; Sheffield Morris et al., 2018). In fact, historical epidemiological research indicates that experiences and developmental outcomes that occur during adolescence continue to impact an individual throughout adulthood. This includes outcomes on individual health and longevity (Fuligni et al., 2018). Parental influence is important. Evidence indicates parenting impacts an adolescent's cognitive development including empathy, perspective taking, and prosocial skills (Farrant et al., 2012). Parents may also influence their offspring's adaptive or resilient functioning. This includes the ability to construct attachments to people involving encouragement and emotional support and the ability to improve knowledge, problem-solving abilities, and develop intellectual skills. Adolescents learn to regulate cognitions and emotions. This functioning also includes the ability to self-motivate, to master new skills and achieve goals, and the ability to find meaning in life (Khrapatina & Berman, 2017).

The desire for autonomy surges during adolescence and individuals often become increasingly independent from their parents as they acquire new knowledge and skills causing dramatic changes in family relationships (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Stuart & Jose, 2012). Even with increasing autonomy, most adolescents require guidance in navigating stressors and tasks of their age because they have not fully developed the

ability to regulate their emotions and behaviors independently (Rosenberg et al., 2016). Adolescents have an improved ability to formulate thoughts and communicate, yet they experience increased communication difficulties with their parents due to more conflict and discrepancies (Stuart & Jose, 2012). Parents tend to view the family more positively than adolescents and adolescents overestimate the number of major differences between them and their parents. An adolescent's feelings, experiences, and ability to communicate with parents impacts overall family functioning (Stuart & Jose, 2012). Parents often feel ill-prepared for the new and specific changes that occur during adolescence. They may experience a decrease in parental self-efficacy during this stage (PSE), the belief that they are competent and effective in their parenting role, and may become distanced from their offspring (Glatz & Buchanan, 2015). The school counselor is often key in providing family intervention by collaborating with parents to reach the shared goal of fostering optimal functioning in adolescents (American School Counselor Association, 2019; Sheridan & Wheeler, 2017).

Purpose Statement

Much of an adolescent's social learning and competency becomes dependent on interactions with peers, but parental relationships and interactions still make a substantial impact on their development (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Steinberg, 2011). While there is an abundance of research regarding issues of adolescence and parenting, an inordinate amount of studies concentrates on atypical development. Research often focuses on parenting strategies regarding specific issues such as adolescents with medical or mental health illness, learning differences, or demonstrating delinquent behaviors, but a gap in

the research exists regarding normative or “typical” parent-adolescent interpersonal processes. More insight is needed to better understand the parental influence on normative processes and positive development during adolescence as most adolescents do not demonstrate high levels of atypical behavior or problematic emotions (Fuligni et al., 2018). Parents and their offspring experience a disconnect in communication during the formative years of adolescence.

The purpose of this qualitative study is to provide new knowledge regarding normative parent-adolescent communication as experienced by school counselors (Durdella, 2019). As the key informant, the school counselor is in a unique position, with special knowledge, and is able to provide a fresh perspective and deeper insight to explore this issue (Durdella, 2019; Rasmussen & Goodman, 2019). The school counselor’s viewpoint of parent-adolescent communication provides insight from their own interactions receiving information that parents and adolescents often share with a school counselor, but not with each other (Miles et al., 2020). This study capitalizes on the renewed interest in adolescent research and typical developmental processes spearheaded by more recent findings in developmental cognitive and affective neuroscience research (Fuligni et al., 2018; Sheffield Morris et al., 2018; Spear, 2013).

Research Design

The research design is shaped by Amedeo Giorgi’s descriptive phenomenological method for qualitative research (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). The philosophical approach of phenomenology is comprehensive, reflecting on the first-person experience and the particular individualities of human behavior, allowing participants to provide an

understanding of their conscious experience of their daily lives (Daly, 2007; Wertz, 2005). The purpose of a phenomenological research design is not to form theories, calculate probabilities, or test hypotheses, but to *faithfully* discover the meanings and subjective processes of an individual's lived experience (Boss et al., 1993; Wertz, 2005; Reiter et al., 2011). Phenomenological methodology is a significant form of inquiry and will be described in more detail in future chapters.

Research Questions

Agee (2009) noted that the development of a study's research question consists of reflective and interrogative processes. Questioning is an ongoing process and fundamental for understanding another's perspective. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research may not always begin with a question, rather questions may develop and evolve as the researcher and participants collaborate. The researcher must still have a plan for the study, but the participant-driven data provided serve as a navigational tool for the inductive research (Agee, 2009).

1. What is the school counselor's perception of parent-adolescent communication?
2. How do school counselors perceive their role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication?

Delimitations and Assumptions

Several delimitations created the appropriate boundaries and focus for this study.

1. Participants earned a degree and/or hold a certification that qualifies them to be a school counselor.

2. Participants must be currently employed as a school counselor in a private independent middle school or high school.
3. Each participant was 18 years of age or older, fluent in English for reading, writing, and speaking as all communication for the study used the English language.
4. This study explores the perspective of school counselors and does not include first-hand information from adolescents or their parents.

As with any study, the researcher made assumptions regarding participants and the data provided.

1. The researcher assumed that the participants have experienced the central phenomenon in their work with parents and adolescents, and that they provided information based on their own experience as a school counselor.
2. The researcher assumed that participants responded truthfully in all methods of data collection.
3. The researcher reduced subjectivity by bracketing *a priori* knowledge throughout the data collection process.

Definitions

Key terms in the study are defined for a better understanding of the central phenomenon, the school counselor's role in parent-adolescent communication.

Adolescence

A period of biological, psychological, social, and economic transitions occurring during the "second stage" of life. The age boundaries of adolescence may begin around 10 years

of age and end around 24 years of age, but the rate of development during this transition from childhood to adulthood may vary for each individual (Steinberg, 2014).

Adolescent Disclosure

Disclosure of personal information regarding an adolescent's activities without parental supervision, initiated by the adolescent or prompted by parental solicitation (Smetana et al., 2019).

Adolescent Information Management

Strategies an adolescent uses to maintain information regarding their activities or to disclose information to parents (Smetana et al., 2019).

Family

A co-residing unit of interacting members related by biology and/or adoption, sharing affective relationships with focus on the parent-adolescent relationship (Segrin & Flora, 2011).

Parental Knowledge

Parental knowledge includes information that adolescents provide to their parents regarding their activities outside of parental supervision, and knowledge gained through parental monitoring strategies (Darling & Tilton-Weaver, 2019).

Parental Self-Efficacy or Parental Efficacy

This includes a parent's feelings of competency and security in one's abilities to effectively navigate their adolescent through periods of development and influence their positive adjustment (Bandura, 1994; Glatz & Buchanan, 2015).

Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is a person's perception about their own ability which influences an individual's thoughts and their decision making practices (Mullen & Lambie, 2016).

School Counselor

A certified/licensed educator who improves student success for all students by implementing a comprehensive school counseling program including collaboration with families for student success (American School Counselor Association, 2019).

Social Competency

Social competence is developed by integrating feedback from multiple experiences instead of reasoning and memorizing rules. An individual learns from social information obtained from positive and negative peer interactions (Dahl et al., 2018).

Summary

Adolescence is a critical period of human development involving significant biological, behavioral, and psychosocial growth (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Muuss, 1996; Steinberg, 2014). Adolescents typically begin to find more meaning in their interactions with peers and other influences in their environment, but can still be greatly impacted by their family system (Muuss, 1996). Parents often experience a decrease in parental self-efficacy and communicate less with offspring during the same period that adolescents experience improved ability to formulate thoughts and communicate (Glatz & Buchanan, 2015; Stuart & Jose, 2012). This descriptive phenomenological explored the school counselor's role in parent-adolescent communication. The school counselor has special

knowledge and provides a broader perspective and deeper insight to explore parent-adolescent communication (Rasmussen & Goodman, 2019).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A review of the literature that supports the need for the current study is emphasized in Chapter II. The chapter begins with a description of the exploratory process including keywords and search methods. The philosophical approach and theoretical framework of the researcher and study are described. Descriptive phenomenology guided this study as it is a philosophical approach that provides an understanding of an individual's conscious experience of their daily lives (Daly, 2007). The holistic perspectives of family systems theory (FST) and the ecological theory of human development also create a framework to understand the thorough literature review emphasizing issues of adolescence, interpersonal processes within parent-adolescent relationships, and school counselor partnerships. The chapter ends with a brief critique of findings from the literature review.

Search Methods

A depth and breadth of understanding of a particular phenomenon is vital for qualitative research (Saldaña, 2015). A more holistic perspective of information is acquired and the researcher is able to engage in the research process with a "beginner's mind" (Saldaña, 2015). Edmund Husserl, the pioneer of the phenomenological perspective, suggested that a fresh and unbiased description of a subject leads to scientific knowledge (Wertz, 2005). This practice encourages the researcher to be open to new

pathways in understanding the central phenomenon of the study. I constructed an assumption from previous inspiration and readings and planned to focus on the phenomenon of how parents shape adolescent social fluency, especially for individuals with social deficits. The literature review provided the means to explore current findings and gaps regarding this interpersonal process, but reviewing with a beginner's mind led me through a qualitative inquiry of more foundational issues in the parent-adolescent relationship (Creswell, 2016).

Ebscohost was the primary database used to search for articles. Each search was delimited to peer reviewed academic journals, mostly with a publication range from 2000 to 2020. References with older publication dates provide foundational information that has seen little to no change and are considered to be primary sources in the study of Family Sciences. My earliest searches contained a combination of keywords such as "adolescence," "parent," and "communication." A search for "social fluency" generated few articles, so I began to search for other terms such as "social competency, skills, and deficiencies." Knowledge acquired in these articles led to additional searches for "self-efficacy," "parental self-efficacy," and "parent-adolescent interpersonal processes." I discovered more terms and began a focused search for "adolescent information management," "secrecy," "disclosure," and "parental knowledge." I also continued searches for general "parent-adolescent interpersonal processes" with a new lens, looking for articles that mentioned "school partnership." The search ended with variations of "school counselor roles in parent-adolescent communication." Additionally, I used a snowball technique by identifying and reviewing sources cited in the articles I found

(Cohen & Crabtree, 2008). I also subscribe to several Family Sciences journals, so I searched printed journals from 2016–2020 searching for issues related to “adolescence and parenting.”

My search ended with more intentionality, seeking information on “phenomenology” as a philosophy and as a research method. I also conducted a deeper search for “school counselor, school counseling, mental health in schools” and “private schools and private education.” The outcome of my search certainly pointed to a deficiency in the available literature regarding typical parent-adolescent communication, and an even greater lack of literature focused on the school counselor’s contribution to this interpersonal process.

Philosophical Approach and Theoretical Framework

A theory is generally created to explain why or how a fact pattern or phenomenon occurs (Segrin & Flora, 2005). Aligned with the researcher’s epistemological beliefs, understanding the complexity of human development requires a multidisciplinary approach (Saldaña, 2015). Before psychological studies, human development theories were rooted in philosophy, theology, and education. Plato postulated that innate ideas were present at birth and the attainment of knowledge was a process of remembering these ideas through the course of development. Aristotle provided stages of development from infancy to young manhood and described the instability of the youthful character during adolescence (Muuss, 1996). The theory of preformation, the belief that humans were preformed miniature adults even within the sperm, was rampant in the Dark Ages

and caused children to be treated as adults despite their differences in physiological and mental abilities.

Advancements in modern science and medicine emphasized distinct physiological changes during pubescence challenging the belief that children were miniature adults and led to a new understanding of human nature (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Muuss, 1996). Over time, more insightful theories have conceptualized the study of human development and family interpersonal processes. The ontological perspective of holism demonstrates that a phenomenon could be best understood by the interpersonal relationships of those involved (Boss et al., 1993). Several holistic theories informed this study.

Family Systems Theory

FST was influenced by general systems theory which was formed to explain how parts of a system work together to provide outputs based on inputs given (Segrin & Flora, 2005). FST applies this perspective specifically to intrapersonal family processes. The family is a dynamic system experiencing change during ages of development such as family functioning, communication, conflict, and adaptive processes (Boss et al., 1993; Segrin & Flora, 2005). FST not only considers each family member's function and impact as an individual, but also as a whole family unit. Family plays a significant role in the development of an individual. For children to develop a healthy self-regard, developmental researchers recommend a secure parent-child attachment as it influences the child's development of self (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Boss et al., 1993). FST acknowledges and appreciates the unique roles and functions that each family member has, and how they combine to create a family unit. The family as a whole, changes when

one part experiences change, which is commonly observed in human development (Boss et al., 1993).

FST fosters the understanding of adolescent development within the context of the family. Family life and family contexts impact emotional functioning and the development of social skills in adolescents (Wikle & Hoagland, 2019). From a family systems perspective, discrepancies in parental and adolescent beliefs regarding the family could be an outcome of poor family functioning or it could indicate the adolescent's increased ability to practice autonomy (Steinberg, 2014). Disagreement and conflict are normal family processes that will not cause poor adolescent adjustment if the adolescent feels connected and remains a valued element of the family system (Stuart & Jose, 2012). The family is open and ongoing. FST demonstrates that all members of a family are interdependent and have mutual influence on each other. Adolescents increasingly receive input from their environment and provide output in return, impacting family relationships (Segrin & Flora, 2005). The family system fosters the psychosocial development of an adolescent. This includes personality growth and the gaining of social attitudes.

Ecological Perspective

Urie Bronfenbrenner (Steinberg, 2014) emphasized the importance of examining the broader context and settings in which human development occurs. This ecological perspective on human development is appropriate for the exploration of interconnected processes of individuals and their environments (Sheridan & Wheeler, 2017). The current study explored the impact of two ecological systems on an individual's development. The

microsystem is a complex network consisting of the immediate settings and relationships in which a person develops such as home, peer groups, and school. The impact of the interconnection of an individual's microsystems is represented by the *mesosystem* (Boss et al., 1993; Sheridan & Wheeler, 2017; Steinberg, 2014). An ecological perspective on human development guided the exploration of interpersonal processes of the adolescent's home and school (microsystems), and the impact of the home and school linkage (mesosystem) on adolescent development (Boss et al., 1993; Steinberg, 2014).

Bronfenbrenner's theory of human development explains that adolescents must negotiate learning in family and school, which may often be complicated by incongruent boundaries, rules, and expectations (Eppler & Weir, 2009). Collaboration between home and school supports adolescent development.

Phenomenology

The philosophical approach of phenomenology involves a certain subjectivity as it emphasizes the individual's experience and the meaning they attach to that experience (Boss, et al., 1993; Reiter et al., 2011). Grounded in the traditions of the humanities and philosophy, phenomenology is widely applied to social sciences, psychology, and other domains (van Manen & Adams, 2010). Edmund Husserl introduced phenomenology as a method for analyzing and thematizing consciousness and its functions (Giorgi et al., 2008). It is a profoundly influential approach emphasizing the faithful reflection of the human experience (Wertz, 2005). A phenomenological approach fosters exploration of the natural attitude of everyday life and the taken-for-granted reality of the individual using intentionality to direct attention on particular objects or situations in the

individual's experience (Daly, 2007). Using this approach helps find meaning regarding how and why the central phenomenon happens rather than focusing just on the fact that it does happen. This approach constructs meaning for the interpersonal processes studied (Boss et al., 1993). The phenomenological approach requires the researcher to examine the human experience with a fresh mind. As the researcher, I have set aside my understanding of the natural sciences and "bracketed" scientific explanations, theories or conceptualizations, and my own personal perceptions and bias regarding the subject matter (Saldaña, 2015; Wertz, 2005).

Literature Review

The literature review establishes a conceptual framework to gain perspective and support the significance of the current study regarding the school counselor's role in parent-adolescent communication (Boss et al, 1993; Creswell, 2016). Key concepts are described within the literature review to provide a clear understanding of foundational information (Creswell, 2016). The literature review emphasizes issues regarding family processes, adolescent development, and school counselor involvement.

Family

Although we refer to a person as an individual, all intrinsic and extrinsic influences that facilitate the development of that individual must be considered. A person neither comes into being completely on their own, nor enters existence with an entirely blank slate (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015). Influences from genetics, environment, and individual differences must be considered. The first influencers, who model how to be human, are typically the parents or other caregivers and family within an individual's

microsystem (Boss et al., 1993; Segrin & Flora, 2005). A child first learns the imperative tasks of behavior, speech, and values through family interactions. Despite the extant research regarding families and their processes, there is no universal definition of family. Families vary and can be explained by criteria of form, function, and interaction. Family membership may depend on the provision of support and resources. Family functions and relationships also change during transitions and times of development (Steinberg, 2014). Some traditional definitions of the family do not reflect the complexities of modern or contemporary families, which may include legal, biological, and intergenerational ties or cultural differences (Berger & Carlson, 2020). For the purpose of this study, a family was considered a co-residing unit of interacting members related by biology and/or adoption, sharing affective relationships with focus on the parent-adolescent relationship (Segrin & Flora, 2005). Many elements of family impact parent-adolescent interpersonal processes.

Family Structure and Parenting Practices

A significant amount of the literature reviewed exploring parent-youth relationships focused on family structure and their ecological context (Glatz & Buchanan, 2015; Murry & Lippold, 2018; Wikle & Hoagland, 2019). Glatz and Buchanan (2015) reported that socioeconomic status, gender, ethnicity, and other elements of family structure greatly influence parenting practices. Family structure includes an individual's living arrangements with parents or guardians and other family members. In their study, Wikle and Hoagland (2019) found that family structure differentially shaped adolescent emotional functioning and social development. A family's structure formed family interactions. Adolescents in traditional nuclear homes benefited from interactions with

their parents and were less influenced by siblings and other family members, while adolescents in nonnuclear homes benefited from interactions with nonresident parents, and other supportive family members (Wikle & Hoagland, 2019).

Many studies that highlighted two parent or single parent family structures, emphasized the mother's role in the youth's upbringing. Mothers are typically the primary caregiver for offspring and spend more time with them than fathers or other adult family members (Champion et al., 2009). The changing role of the mother, especially single status mothers, was studied as it related to youth developmental stages. In contrast, a study by Murry and Lippold (2018) indicated that family relationships are actually a stronger indicator for positive adolescent development and adjustment rather than family structure. This would indicate that no matter who is in the household, the relationships that adolescents form with family members, resident and nonresident, matter most.

Father involvement was found to be a critical factor in child development, health, character-building, social competencies, and success in academics. The association between father involvement and healthy child outcomes is consistent across geographic and socioeconomic groups (Planalp & Braungart-Rieker, 2016). Father involvement includes the amount of time the father is directly involved (engagement), how accessible or available the father is, and how responsible the father is with indirect tasks (Goodman et al., 2014). Research indicates that fathers play a key role in the healthy development of a child promoting positive attachments, an increase in cognitive development and decreased behavioral problems. Fathers should establish positive engagement beginning in the prenatal stage (Schoppe-Sullivan & Olsavasky, 2016).

Parenting style is another factor that predicts children's development and outcomes. This provides a context for socialization of an adolescent's emotional and social skills and self-worth (Salo et al., 2020). Authoritative parenting is the parenting style that is generally accepted as most ideal and yields successful developmental outcomes in offspring (Steinberg, 2014). This style of parenting is child-centered by engaging the adolescent in decision making and offering flexibility while establishing firm behavioral guidelines. Authoritative parents offer warmth, support, and high responsiveness to the needs of their adolescent (Manzeske & Dopkins Straight, 2009; Steinberg, 2014; Yahav, 2006).

Self-Efficacy

Along with opportunity and talent, beliefs of self-efficacy provide an advantage for achievement in many human domains (Caprara et al., 2003). Self-efficacy is a person's perception about their own ability which influences an individual's thoughts and their decision making practices (Mullen & Lambie, 2016). These perceptions impact how people feel, think, motivate and behave. A strong perception of efficacy improves a person's well-being and helps them to challenge themselves and act with assurance. This means that an individual is more likely to act in ways to accomplish a task if they believe they actually can accomplish that task (Shumow & Lomax, 2002). Low perceptions of self-efficacy cause people to be consumed by personal deficiencies and avoid difficult tasks. Individuals may experience different levels of self-efficacy specific to each domain in their lives (Bandura, 1994).

Parental Self-Efficacy

Individuals may experience different levels of self-efficacy specific to each domain in their lives. An individual might feel confident regarding their communication skills at work, but may believe that they cannot apply these same skills at home. Bandura (1994) emphasized that individuals with strong perceptions of self-efficacy concerning their parenting practices exercise the ability to adequately guide their children through development without severe difficulties. Parental self-efficacy (PSE) includes a parent's feelings of competency and security in one's abilities to effectively navigate their adolescent through periods of development and influence their positive adjustment (Bandura, 1994; Glatz & Buchanan, 2015). Measuring PSE may also include the parent's perception of their ability to influence or mediate the impact of peers on adolescent behavior (Shumow & Lomax, 2002). Parents' positive perceptions of PSE can predict positive parenting practices and improve the sense of competence and well-being in their adolescents (Issurdatt & Whitaker, 2013). It is essential for parents to feel confident in order to facilitate continued success in their parenting role.

Just as adolescents develop over the lifespan, parents experience changes as well (Glatz & Buchanan, 2015). Variation often occurs in a parent's perception of parental self-efficacy throughout their offspring's development. In fact, some parents experience a decrease in parental self-efficacy during their offspring's transition between early adolescence to middle adolescence (Glatz & Buchanan, 2015). This transition brings new challenges for the entire family. As offspring grow and become more able and autonomous, families may experience confusion with role and rule ambiguity-the

changing of rules, roles, and boundaries (Murry & Lippold, 2018). Establishing and following routines will be essential for effective parenting during this time. Parents will need to set limits and boundaries and parent with optimism (Issurdatt & Whitaker, 2013).

Adolescence

Childhood is generally considered to be the most pivotal period of human development and attachment, but emerging developmental science indicates that adolescence is an equally complex period of learning and enhanced growth (Dahl et al., 2018). In fact, historical epidemiological research indicates that experiences and developmental outcomes that occur during adolescence continue to impact an individual throughout adulthood (Fuligni et al., 2018). Adolescence is a significant part of human development that is often difficult to define based on diverse criteria according to respective fields of study. It is astutely described as a stage of unlearning and relearning (Muuss, 1996). Laurence Steinberg (2014) defined adolescent development as a period of biological, psychological, social, and economic transitions occurring during the “second stage” of life. The age boundaries of adolescence may begin around 10 years of age and end around 24 years of age, but the rate of development during this transition from childhood to adulthood may vary for each individual. Generally, adolescents begin to think of self and others differently due to growth in abstract thinking and are able to consider consistencies and discrepancies in personality characteristics and functions. They develop an integrity of self, and are able to construct identity through past experience, the present, and an imagined future. Adolescents at this age also have an

increased awareness of social roles which brings about many changes within a family system (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Steinberg, 2014).

Brain Development

Volatilities during this second stage of life often leave adolescents and adults bewildered. Adults may become frustrated with the impulsive and inconsistent behaviors of their offspring. Aristotle wrote of their absence of self-control and described adolescents as unstable and fickle in their desires. Stanley Hall describes the *Sturm and Drang* or storm and stress of adolescent emotional life (Muuss, 1996). The complexities of this period have been studied for centuries, but our understanding is now heightened by discoveries in brain development. The human brain alters throughout childhood and adolescence, and even experiences age-related changes in brain organization and function in adulthood (Spear, 2013). Advances in neuroimaging techniques have contributed to an increase in knowledge regarding adolescent neurodevelopment (Morris et al., 2018). Discoveries in adolescent neurodevelopment aided by functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) indicate that the brain typically reaches adult size by age 10, meaning the continued development beyond this is not reflected in the overall size of the brain, as previously believed, rather brain growth and changes are reflected in structure and function (Steinberg, 2011). Adolescent psychological and behavioral functioning is linked with structural and functional changes in the brain and other biological changes along with cultural, economic, and psychosocial influence (Dahl et al., 2018; Spear, 2013; Steinberg, 2011). Even though advancements in neuroimaging have increased

knowledge of brain development, the findings have not been fully integrated into developmental research or adolescent theory (Morris et al., 2018).

Social-Emotional Development

Development during early adolescence, ages 10–13, consists of pubescent physical changes and sexual characteristics (Steinberg, 2014). Social changes also occur including difficulty in parent-adolescent communication. Adolescents begin to take on a more active role in decision making which may add to increased conflict or differences of opinion. Emotion and behavioral changes often include an increase in negative feelings and depressive symptoms (Glatz & Buchanan, 2015). This is a period when the amount of time spent with peers increases, and peer influence intensifies (Muuss, 1996).

Research indicates that adolescents respond emotionally to those who are present (Wikle & Hoagland, 2019). Along with parents, peers become increasingly influential socialization agents changing the context in which adolescents learn social-emotional management. During this time, individuals are transitioning to secondary school and this is a change that can create difficulty for some (Steinberg, 2014). Adolescents cope with the transition less successfully if they previously struggled with academic issues and psychosocial problems. Adolescents are more vulnerable when they have fewer sources of social support (Steinberg, 2014).

A substantial amount of research has examined the impact of family and social influences on adolescent development (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Steinberg, 2014). Erik Erikson's theory regarding identity development emphasizes the impact that peer influences have on adolescents. This theory describes the formation of identity through

the organization of an individual's beliefs, drives, and history. Erickson posited that identity development is a mental and social process; there is mutual recognition between the individual and society (Muuss, 1996; Steinberg, 2014). An adolescent's beliefs and goals are influenced by those around them. Adolescents also experience an identity crisis. Individuals are often caught in the crossroads between personal values, typically formed by family influence and experience, and the pressure to conform to society.

Social Relationships and Media Influence

The adolescent brain is primed for social influence and relationships (Morris et al., 2018). Brain maturation during adolescence improves an individual's reasoning ability, but also increases risk taking (Steinberg, 2011). Many studies emphasize parenting and the impact on atypical development and delinquent behaviors including alcohol and drug use, criminal activity, risky sexual activity. Internalizing processes included mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation are also commonly studied, but a lack of research regarding typical parent-adolescent interpersonal processes remains (Animosa et al., 2018; Berns, 2010; Rosenberg et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2005).

It is generally understood that adolescents increasingly depend on their peers to understand social norms, and seek recognition and acceptance from them. With this, adolescents may experience new challenges as they learn to negotiate changing social relationships in a broader context than in childhood (Salo et al., 2020). Exposure to harmful behaviors can be crucial during this period of identity crisis (Berns, 2010). Increased time spent with peers amplifies influence from peers (Muuss, 1996; Steinberg,

2014). Along with peer influence, adolescents are impacted by the availability and ease of use of technological modes of communication such as smartphones and other digital devices and social media. Adolescents are often influenced by media and may repeat the behaviors that media exposes them to (Berns, 2010; Elmore et al., 2017).

Not all peer influence is negative. Adolescence is a crucial time for individual growth and maturity, and environmental influences are still significant. Much of an adolescent's social learning becomes dependent on interactions with peers (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Steinberg, 2011). Social learning theory emphasizes an individual's ability to learn from direct experience, observation, and modeling (Bandura, 1971). Adolescents may build their social competency by observing the interactions or emotional responses demonstrated by their peers. Social competence is adaptive and demonstrates an individual's ability to take another person's perspective, learn from past experiences, and apply this learning to the social landscape (Hukkelberg et al., 2019).

Unlike other processes in development, social competence may not develop by reasoning and memorizing rules, but by integrating feedback from multiple experiences. An individual learns from social information obtained from positive and negative peer interactions (Dahl et al., 2018). Many adolescents are able to navigate social interactions, but others lack this ability or do not feel motivated to interact with others in normative or positive ways. Some adolescents may suffer long term consequences as a poor social interaction may influence them to avoid future interactions, thus limiting their opportunities to build social skills. The danger being these adolescents often struggle with emotion regulation, may not develop empathy, and often lack problem-solving

skills. Others may also exhibit aggressive and disruptive behaviors (Hukkelberg et al., 2019). These adolescents may also be more inclined to experience social loneliness, lacking and longing for close, intimate, emotional attachment (Salo et al., 2020).

Adolescents exhibiting social deficits often experience social exclusion. Research indicates that the promotion of social competence in adolescence supplements efforts in reducing behavioral problems. Research indicates that family relationships continue to influence adolescents during this stage of development (Dahl et al., 2018).

Adolescent Information Management

Parents are still able to influence and shape their offspring's behavior in adolescence, but this depends on the accuracy of information that adolescents provide to their parents (Darling & Tilton-Weaver, 2019). A normative decline in communication often continues in middle adolescence, ages 14–17, as offspring begin to detach from parents and shift interest from parental interests to peer interests (Masche, 2010; Steinberg, 2014). An adolescent's routine disclosure of information to parents declines and secrecy increases (Smetana et al., 2019). Although, adolescent information management is impacted by family relationships, adolescent adjustment, and parental strategies used to acquire parental knowledge, a groundbreaking study by Stattin and Kerr (2000) introduced the importance of active strategies used by adolescents (Dong et al., 2020; Smetana et al., 2019; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Stattin and Kerr (2000) determined that previous measurements regarding how parental knowledge was acquired usually emphasized the parents' active monitoring, but excluded the active strategies used by adolescents to manage their information. Common information management strategies

include disclosing accurate information, lying, or concealing information (Darling & Tilton-Weaver, 2019).

Parental Knowledge and Adolescent Disclosure

Adolescents spend less time under direct parental supervision, which allows them to actively regulate parental knowledge. Research indicates that adolescent disclosure is the primary method of attaining parental knowledge rather than parental control and solicitation, as previously assumed (Smetana, 2019; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Parental knowledge is the information parents have regarding their adolescent's relationships and activities in the absence of parental supervision (Darling & Tilton-Weaver, 2019; Dong et al., 2020). Research demonstrates that parental knowledge is a significant protective factor for adolescents associated with less engagement in antisocial and delinquent behavior, and lower levels of internalizing and externalizing issues (Dong et al., 2020; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Strategies for acquiring parental knowledge vary and can be either parent-driven or child-driven. Parent-driven strategies include parental solicitation, parental warmth, and behavioral (or parental) control (Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Psychological control involves manipulating offspring emotionally and psychologically through inducing guilt, shame, or withdrawing love (Dong et al., 2020). Some parents engage in parental monitoring which may consist of more controlling behaviors to attain knowledge of adolescent activities. Controlling strategies may lead adolescents to concealment and lying. Adolescent disclosure is the primary source of parental knowledge, and is also a protective factor for psychosocial adjustment (Baudat et al., 2020).

Adolescent disclosure is a child-driven strategy and may include disclosure initiated by the adolescent or disclosure prompted by parental solicitation (Laird et al., 2010; Smetana et al., 2019; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). Adolescents often struggle to disclose information unless parents ask questions, but parents are more likely to ask for further information when adolescents initiate communication with them (Baudat et al., 2020). While it is widely accepted that parental knowledge is greatly achieved through voluntary adolescent disclosure, some research indicates that parents can successfully solicit disclosure when they use a warm autonomy-supportive style rather than a controlling one. Adolescents may manage their information based on their interpretation of their parents' solicitation, attempting to determine whether parents inquire out of care and concern or as an intrusion of privacy (Keijsers & Laird, 2010; Tilton-Weaver, 2013). Perceived parental warmth, or affectionate caregiving and emotional nurturance, and a supportive climate are key for adolescent disclosure (Dong et al., 2020; Tilton-Weaver, 2013).

Although disclosure has not been linked with poorer family relationships as with concealment and avoidance, disclosure does not indicate idyllic family relationships and adjustment. Smetana et al. (2019) suggested that disclosure is not always voluntary, but can be strategic when adolescents believe they cannot avoid a situation without disclosing. Stattin and Kerr (2010) discussed the need for more research from the adolescent's point of view, including questions of trust: Do adolescents believe their parents are willing to listen? Will parents be receptive? Will they be ridiculed or punished?

Role of the School Counselor

An adolescent's socialization extends through formal education. The effectiveness of the school as a socialization agent greatly depends on the relationship between the family and school (Berns, 2010). Family intervention work through school partnerships has increased over recent decades with the shared goal of fostering optimal functioning in children and adolescents. Sheridan and Wheeler (2017) emphasize the importance of this increasingly present topic in social science and educational literature. The struggle is often translating the findings of research and theorizing into effective practice for families and schools.

In addition to teachers and administrators, school counselors often communicate and collaborate with parents to help adolescents succeed (American School Counselor Association, 2019). While school counselors often refer students and families to community resources, they also use a variety of techniques to provide equitable services to all students and their families (Eppler & Weir, 2009).

Direct Student Services

School counselors provide an array of services to students, parents, and school personnel. Along with providing educational services, school counselors facilitate direct services such as counseling and consulting in order to promote social, emotional, behavioral, and academic growth in students. They serve as a resource and advocate for all students in a given educational setting and must be prepared to provide services for any need (Gallo et al., 2020). Research indicates that these services reduce students' problem behavior and improve problem solving skills (Mullen & Lambie, 2016). These

practitioners spend much of their time providing preventative and responsive services. Although research indicates that mental health services available in schools are underutilized by adolescents, many adolescents do seek help when needed, (Huggins et al. 2016).

School counselors provide effective interventions by cultivating a warm, trusting relationship with struggling students (Gallo et al., 2020). A nationally represented study by Reback (2010) investigated the provision, financing, and impact of mental health services in schools. An association was found between expanded mental health services and improvements in student learning, behavior and mental health in elementary schools. Whiston and Quinby (2009) found that interventions provided by school counselors produced large effect sizes in the areas of problem solving, discipline, and increasing career knowledge. Participating in group counseling also proved to be helpful for students experiencing difficulties.

Parent Support and Partnerships

School counselors also impact adolescents indirectly by collaborating with teachers and parents. School counselors provide consultations for teachers and other school personnel on behalf of an adolescent, providing strategies to foster student achievement (American School Counselor Association, 2019). Providing support for parents is also a means of supporting adolescents. School counselors often recommend additional resources and make referrals to community agencies to support families (American School Counselor Association, 2019; Issurdatt & Whitaker, 2013). School counselors can also focus on family work by exploring family history and patterns,

identifying family strengths, and determining strategies the family can implement to support their adolescent (Eppler & Weir, 2009).

Research Findings and Critique

There is extant research regarding parenting and adolescence, but a gap in the research exists regarding typical parent-adolescent interpersonal processes such as parent-adolescent communication, parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure. The cultural and societal belief that parental influence on adolescent development becomes less significant as the contributions of peers and environment increase has been challenged. The literature review emphasized the significance of adolescence as a crucial time for individual growth and maturity. Much of an adolescent's social learning and competency becomes dependent on interactions with peers, but parental relationships and interactions can still make a substantial impact on their development (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Steinberg, 2011). Advancements in neuroscience are reported, but they are not fully integrated in concepts and theories of the family (Morris et al., 2018). Many aspects of everyday life make a significant impact on adolescent development; yet these interpersonal processes remain understudied compared to atypical development and deficiencies in family life (Animosa et al., 2018; Berns, 2010; Rosenberg et al., 2016; Schwartz et al., 2005).

The conceptual framework of the literature review helped me, as the researcher, to conduct a reflective search and shift my focus to the foundational interpersonal process of parent-adolescent communication (Boss et al., 1993). Although the literature review revealed related areas of interest that provide a foundation of knowledge for the central

phenomenon of my study, research directly addressing the school counselor's role in parent-adolescent communication is lacking. The perspective of the school counselor is especially underrepresented in the literature. Most studies focus on the methods counselors use to assist their students with academics, but not all emphasize the significant role of providing mental health services in the school setting (Sheridan & Wheeler, 2017; Whiston & Quinby, 2009). The findings in the literature review necessitate further exploration of parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure, and how the school counselor's perspective could inform a better understanding of this crucial central phenomenon.

More insight is needed and school counselors will be able to inform this topic by providing their lived experience. Positive parenting practices are still crucial during the transitional period of adolescence. Adolescents are learning from those around them and from those who are willing to provide information. Parents need to stay "in the game" and invest in their parenting practices. The overall multidisciplinary foundation and perspective of this qualitative study will add to the existing body of knowledge in family studies. This study has the potential to inform parents, family practitioners, legislature and other policies, and the public in general. Families are worth the investment.

Chapter Summary

Chapter II described the theoretical framework guiding the current study. The use of a phenomenological approach to find meaning regarding how and why the central phenomenon happens rather than focusing just on the fact that it does happen. This approach constructs meaning from the school counselor's perspective of the parent-

adolescent interpersonal processes (Boss et al., 1993). FST and an ecological lens foster the understanding of adolescent development within the context of the family and guide the exploration of interpersonal processes of the adolescent's home and school (microsystems), and the impact of the home and school linkage (mesosystem) on adolescent development (Boss et al., 1993; Steinberg, 2014). Chapter II also expanded on the purpose and significance of the study by exploring related literature regarding adolescent development, the family, and the role of school counselors to provide a foundation of understanding through study findings and paths to discovery. The search methods were described and significant concepts informing the central phenomenon were defined. A brief summary and critique of findings from the literature presents a need for further study of the school counselor's role in parent-adolescent communication, and leads to the next chapter's focus on methodology and procedures.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study's descriptive phenomenological research design emphasizes the school counselor's special knowledge and unique perspective of the central phenomenon, parent-adolescent communication. Chapter III provides details regarding the participants and recruitment, data collection and analysis, and the role of the researcher. The school counselors, as the key data providers, partnered with the researcher to explore the central phenomenon. The school counselor's perspective is central to the research questions regarding parent-adolescent communication and is discussed in detail. School counselors employed in private middle and high schools participated in interest group meetings and interviews to provide information. Ethical principles are a foundation of quality qualitative research and are crucial for this study. Potential risks and protective measures are discussed.

Purpose of the Study

There is extant research regarding parenting and adolescence, but a gap in the research exists regarding normative parent-adolescent interpersonal processes. More insight is needed to better understand the parental influence on normative processes and positive development during adolescence as most adolescents do not demonstrate high levels of atypical behavior or problematic emotions (Fuligni et al., 2018). This study explores the school counselor's perspective of normative issues in the parent-adolescent

relationship. As the key informant, the school counselor is in a unique position with special knowledge and provided a broader perspective and deeper insight to explore this issue (Rasmussen & Goodman, 2019). Findings of this research will inform parents, adolescents, school counselors, and other family practitioners (Wertz, 2005).

Methodology and Philosophical Framework

Humans are complex and the study of humans requires complexity (Hansen, 2004). Qualitative inquiry provides a depth and richness of understanding which allows a researcher to focus on a person's lived experience and locate the meaning of that experience by revealing complexities (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2015). The qualitative approach helps one with "learning to see" an experience for the first time (Daly, 2007). This is a significant process for the researcher, the participants, and for the advancement of the field of study.

The methodology for this study reflects my epistemological perspective. Robert Dubin (1969) described a theorist as a person who observes and seeks to find meaning or explanations. He characterized the human mind as the locus of theory and emphasized the human mind as where the need for theory exists. Yes. Humans were created to experience, to wonder, to formulate, and to describe to the best of our abilities. We have the desire and ability to discover meaning and to construct meaning in the world we live in. We possess the ability to improve the quality of life for ourselves and for those we study. I believe that humans were gifted the ability to create meaning, I also accept that some phenomena will remain beyond our understanding. Dubin (1969) explained that humans attempt to understand God's universe from a human vantage point. When

humans create theories it is accomplished with human capabilities and is not without human limitations. A researcher must acknowledge the limitations and boundaries of their methodology and their knowing (Miles et al., 2020). Jacob Cohen (1990) provided insight on knowing and learning, which also aligns with my philosophy of science and methodology. Cohen acknowledged that things he has learned, have been learned *so far*. I think that this demonstrates that learning and knowing are ongoing. We are often able to learn things in addition to what we already know, or we may learn things that dispel what we already *think* we know. This is a quality well suited for qualitative inquiry. Cohen also posited that a scientist must use informed judgement in research. Our judgment helps us to conceive an idea, plan and execute our methods, and write a report, which demonstrates a researcher is never separated from their work and must acknowledge and bracket their beliefs as they gather information (Cohen, 1990; Saldaña, 2015). This perspective aligns with the purpose of phenomenological philosophy and methodology (Saldaña, 2015).

Descriptive Phenomenological Perspective and Research Design

The research design of this study is shaped by principles founded by Edmund Husserl and Amedeo Giorgi (Giorgi et al., 2008; Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). As noted in the first chapter, Husserl established phenomenology as a philosophy and method of scientific study. Husserl believed that a researcher should bracket *a priori* biases and fully embrace the exact description of an experience by participants to reach the essence of an experience. Giorgi asserted that any study of an authentic human experience should start with phenomenology and the method of study should be adapted to the phenomenon

being studied (Giorgi et al., 2008; Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). This unique perspective of the phenomenon provided insight that parents and adolescents often share with a school counselor, but not with each other. This study spotlights and makes sense of the commonalities and variances among the participants' experiences. School counselors provide insight needed to explore the complexities of communication between parents and adolescents. A researcher could direct the research process based on their own assumptions, create their own theories, and produce findings that best fit their understanding of the world, but it would not emphasize the participants' voice. Phenomenological methodology is significant for qualitative inquiry as it is certainly participant-driven. Even with the researcher's perspective bracketed, and the participants' lived experiences highlighted, a researcher still may not be able to report the purest interpretation, but it will be more accurate if the researcher allows the participants to partner with them (Saldaña, 2015; Wertz, 2005).

Role of the Researcher and Reflexivity

As the researcher, I engaged in an ongoing reflexive method throughout the study in order to monitor my own subjectivity regarding the central phenomenon (Daly, 2007). Tracy (2010) posited that a researcher's practice of reflexivity regarding biases and subjective values provides sincerity and is a necessary criterion for excellent qualitative research. An expectation of sincerity requires honesty and transparency. The researcher must be earnest and vulnerable in their qualitative work. Reflexivity is a practice I have learned to engage regularly as a licensed master social worker and school counselor. It is not uncommon for me to consider how my own bias or assumptions might impact my

work with adolescents and families. I do have bias, but as an ethical practitioner and researcher, this study was created and conducted seeking to understand the participants' view of the issue. I bracketed, or set aside, my previous knowledge, experience and opinions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Giorgi et al., 2008; Saldaña, 2015). My education, training, and work experience led me to recognize and seek a deeper understanding of this study's central phenomenon, a significant area of study that deserves greater consideration (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2015). As a family practitioner and researcher, I feel that I am responsible for seeking knowledge regarding an issue I recognize in order to contribute to my field. Keeping a reflexive journal helped me to check and separate my personal values or opinions throughout the study as the outcome/s developed from the information provided by the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

All participants were made aware that I am (currently) employed as a school counselor in a private independent school and that I would conduct the study with prior knowledge bracketed (Giorgi et al., 2008; Miles et al., 2020). Although this study involved interviewing and facilitating group discussions with some of my professional contemporaries, as the researcher, I understood that participants might view me as an authority figure. I conducted the study with the responsibility to build trust and to ensure feelings of safety. I continuously monitored and managed my collaboration and interactions with the participants by remaining aware of my voice, tone, body positioning, facial expressions and nonverbal communication. I also managed my own vulnerability regarding participants and the research process (Creswell, 2016; Daly, 2007).

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were shaped by findings in the literature review, interests of the researcher, and the research design. A phenomenological design allowed me to identify the essence of the school counselor's experiences of parent-adolescent communication. The following research questions provided a broad perspective of the study and I proceeded with the understanding that these questions could evolve throughout the study consistent with the information participants provide (Agee, 2009; Creswell, 2016).

1. What is the school counselor's perception of parent-adolescent communication?
2. How do school counselors perceive their role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication?

Method

The plan for data collection included each participant participating in two group meetings with select participants completing individual follow-up interviews. Follow-up interviews provide an opportunity for more in-depth discussion and deeper reflection.

Target Population

The target population for the current study included middle school and high school counselors employed at private schools due to their "revelatory relationship" with the central phenomenon (Wertz, 2005). These school counselors work directly with adolescents between 10–18 years of age, and their parents. Middle adolescence is a period of social and emotional development which typically includes changes in parent-

adolescent communication (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Stuart & Jose, 2012). A school counselor is also able to gain understanding through their own observation, aided by their educational training and professional experience (Miles et al., 2020). Counselors employed by private independent schools have been selected as their responsibilities typically focus on social, emotional, and behavioral issues as opposed to the many non-mental health related responsibilities often assigned to counselors in public school settings. Public school counselors may not be required to have a mental health certification and their school counseling degree/certification may only require minimal hours in mental health counseling (American School Counselor Association, 2019). Many public school counselors focus on academic planning, class scheduling, state testing, and other non-counseling responsibilities (American School Counselor Association, 2019). Each participant was also 18 years of age or older, and were fluent in English for reading, writing, and speaking as all communication for the study used the English language. Details regarding the mental health certification of this study's participants are provided in the findings.

Sample and Recruitment

Qualitative sampling generally consists of in-depth study of a smaller number of people in a particular context (Miles et al., 2020). A purposive sampling method was used to recruit the sample. I sent a recruitment email to more than 200 counselors employed in private independent schools. The email addresses were obtained through two distribution lists of private school counselors. The recruitment email included key information about the study and linked a participant screener and information regarding

consent (see Appendix A). As indicated on the participant screener, the participants were required to be 18 years of age or older and be employed as a school counselor at a private independent middle school or high school. The participants showed their willingness to participate in the study by completing the screener, selecting the best dates/times to participate, reviewing consent information, and submitting the form. I aimed to recruit at least 8–10 school counselors or until saturation had been met, which is sufficient to achieve an understanding of the central phenomenon (Daly, 2007; Wertz, 2005).

Seven school counselors agreed to participate in two interest group discussions with the possibility of a one-on-one follow up interview. I planned to divide the participants into two separate groups, and hold two meetings with each group. Each participant selected their first, second, and third choices for their first and second meetings. Two participants dropped out of the study leaving five to participate, still a sufficient sampling for in-depth data collection in descriptive phenomenological inquiry (Wertz, 2005).

Instruments

The researcher is the key instrument in qualitative inquiry, gathering information attentively and with empathy (Miles et al., 2020). A participant screener and demographic survey were also used to gather data. The web-based platform, Zoom, and a separate audio recorder were used to record group meetings and individual interviews. Face-to-face data collection was not allowed at the time of the study due to Texas Woman's University (TWU) regulations regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews and group discussions were the most appropriate method of data collection as the

participants cannot be directly observed in the field due to client confidentiality and school policies and procedures (Creswell, 2016). I used a flexible question guide in order to allow participants to generate discussion (see Appendix F).

Ethical Considerations

Tracy (2010) emphasized that ethics are both a means and an end goal for quality qualitative research. A researcher should consider ethics in their research procedures and the various contexts throughout their study. The interdependence of the researcher-participant relationship should also be ethically driven as relational ethics consists of mutual respect, collaboration, and dignity (Daly, 2007; Tracy, 2010). A researcher must also consider ethics when ending a study and when presenting the research and findings. Ethical considerations shaped the design and implementation of this research in several ways including the provision of protective measures for participants, and engaging a reflexive and trustworthy approach to data collection and analyses.

Protection of Human Subjects

As a researcher, it is my ethical responsibility to protect the rights of those participating in my study (Daly, 2007). TWU is committed to the protection and safety of human subjects involved in research. As such, we take very seriously the need for compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations for human subject's research, and the need for compliance with the terms of the University's Federal Wide Assurance for Protection of Human Subjects (as approved by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protections), which provides our authority to carry out such research and receive federal funding for its support. TWU is

equally committed to the continued enhancement of our Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) in a manner that promotes compliance without compromising the conduct of outstanding research.

Potential Risks and Protective Measures

The protection of the participants was a priority of this study, but potential risks associated with involvement were described to participants. Protective measures were applied to minimize these risks and were also explained to participants (Daly, 2007). The risk of potential emotional distress was minimized by the participant's ability to take breaks or end their participation at any time without penalty (Creswell, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The risk of potential fatigue was also minimized by the participant's ability to take breaks or end their participation at any time without penalty. Although the researcher was bound by confidentiality with regard to participants in the study and with regard to their disclosures, other group participants were not. There was a risk that anything a participant disclosed during group discussions could be shared by other study participants with others outside of the sessions. There was a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings and internet transactions. This was minimalized as confidentiality was protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The Zoom video and audio recordings, and chat transcripts were saved directly to an external drive. Recordings were transcribed verbatim and also saved to an external drive. Only the principal investigator (PI), and faculty advisor, had access to the data. The recordings and transcripts were securely stored and will be destroyed within 3 years after the study is finished. The participants' names and any other identifying information were

not included. The risk of potential coercion was also minimized. Although participants may have had contact with the researcher through their place of employment or her place of employment, participation in this study was completely voluntary and participants had the ability to stop participation at any time without penalty. Their choice to participate or decline participation had no bearing on their potential relationship with the researcher (Daly, 2007).

Procedures

Upon approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at TWU, a recruitment email was sent to school counselors employed in private independent schools. I used two distribution lists for private independent school counselors. This did not require permission from a gatekeeper or administrator as I had access to the lists due to my employment. The recruitment email contained an embedded link to a participant screener. This included key study information, delimitations, and consent information (see Appendix B). Two participants agreed to participate in the study after the first round of recruitment. One participant selected a meeting date within a week of the recruitment email. I contacted this participant to see if she would be interested in rescheduling for another date with more participants or if she would be willing to participate in a “pilot interview.” I submitted modifications to the IRB eliminating the licensure criteria and changed the scheduling choices to offer greater flexibility for participants in hopes of recruiting more participants. Upon approval from the IRB, I emailed the second participant asking if she could select new dates for participation. I sent the recruitment email with the modified screener to the same email distribution lists and received five

additional participants (see Appendices C and D). I reviewed the first, second, and third choices each of the seven participants made for their first and second meetings. I scheduled three participants for the first group meeting and four participants for the second group meeting and emailed each participant to confirm the dates/times of their meetings. I sent a reminder email containing the Zoom link and passcode 24 hours before the first meeting.

Data Collection and Trustworthiness

As the primary investigator of this qualitative inquiry, I acted as the primary instrument for data collection via interest group meetings and individual interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Locke et al., 2010). Rich rigor directed the collection of data as I dedicated my time to gather interesting and significant information in an appropriate context for my study. I used appropriate procedures in my interviewing practices, recording of field notes, and in the collection of video/audio recordings (Tracy, 2010). It was important to me that my approach included objectivity, neutrality, and a certain distance allowing the participant's experience to be spotlighted (Daly, 2007). The triangulation of data collection is a validity strategy that assures trustworthiness. Triangulation involved collecting data from multiple sources (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Locke et al., 2010). I facilitated interest group meetings, individual interviews, and in-depth follow up interviews, via Zoom.

I began each interest group and interview with a greeting and provided time for questions from the participants before beginning the discussion. A phenomenological approach requires very little structure with questioning allowing the rich descriptions of

the participants to inform the direction of the discussions. I used a printed discussion guide with open-ended questions and prompts to facilitate discussions (Creswell, 2016). A semi-structured approach for the interviews and group discussions fostered a conversational flow where participant responses often prompted more discussion and additional questioning not included in the guide (Creswell, 2016). Prompts and probes were used in the interest group discussions and interviews when more information or an explanation was needed for better understanding. They were also used to seek commonalities and discrepancies regarding perspectives shared by participants. Information was gathered with the understanding that the participants have developed subjective meanings of their experience (Crotty, 1998).

Triangulation of the data included detailed notes taken during the interest group discussions and interviews. I also noted statements made in group discussions and asked participants to elaborate on these thoughts during individual interviews (Locke et al., 2010). I used the recording feature on Zoom, which captured video and audio. An additional audio recording device, the Zoom H1n, was used to save audio data to an SD card, as a backup. I also saved the transcripts of the Zoom chat feature when information was entered (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The trustworthiness of data collection was increased by having each participant select and use a code name which was used for identification with the recordings and interview notes. Data collection ended when I felt I had reached saturation, or no new information was being provided (Daly, 2007; Wertz, 2005). The data were organized and prepared for analysis. Table 3.1 indicates the events of participation for each participant.

Table 3.1*Participation in Data Collection*

Participant	Pilot (Individual)	Group 1 Meeting 1	Group 2 Meeting 1 (Individual)	Group 1 Meeting 2 (Individual)	Group 2 Meeting 2	Individual Follow Up	Individual Follow Up
P1	X		X				
P2		X			X		
P3		X		X			
P4		X					X
P5					X	X	

Note. Participation in individual interviews, group discussions, and follow-up interviews are indicated by “X”.

Pilot Interview

The pilot interview occurred due to a lone participant who signed up for a particular group discussion date. The participant agreed to complete an individual interview in addition to the agreed upon group discussions. The pilot interview allowed me to “test” specific questions as well as the potential sequence of questions in the question guide. I took field notes throughout the interview and made changes to the question guide as I analyzed the data. The pilot interview was audio and video recorded via Zoom and audio recorded on a separate device. The Zoom chat function was available, but not utilized. The pilot interview allowed me to test the sound and video quality of my devices and plan adjustments for future data collection events.

Group Meetings

I facilitated the first group meeting for Group 1, which included three participants. This discussion focused more on the school counselor's role with parents, parental knowledge, and parental self-efficacy. Through this meeting, it became clear that in order to provide sufficient time for discussion I would need to divide topics between the first and second group meetings. I decided the first meeting would focus primarily on topics related to the parent, and the second meeting would emphasize the counselors' experiences with adolescents. I adapted the questions in my question guide before the next meeting.

I sent a reminder email for the first group meeting for Group 2, which included four participants. One participant indicated that she would no longer be able to attend that meeting, but could reschedule. One participant indicated that she could no longer participate in the study. One participant was a "no-show," and only one participant attended. This was the same participant from the "pilot interview." We completed another individual interview. I had already analyzed the data from our first interview and asked the participant to elaborate on a few statements and ideas generated from that meeting. We were also able to spend more time discussing the role and characteristics of the school counselor. I emailed the next dates of participation to the participant who did not show up.

Two out of 3 scheduled participants attended the second group meeting for Group 1. The discussion focused on school counselor and adolescent relationships, adolescent information management, and school counselor characteristics. One participant was a

“no-show.” I emailed a reminder for the next group meeting. The second group meeting for Group 2 became another individual interview as only one participant attended. I adapted, added, and rearranged questions in my question guide to prepare for follow up interviews.

The group meetings were a collaborative method of data collection. The participants were able to lead the discussion and often asked each other questions. At times, I just observed their interactions and then asked questions when there was a natural break in the conversation. Group discussions allowed the participants to learn from each other and experience validation.

Follow-Up Individual Interviews

Individual interviews provided an opportunity for more in-depth discussion regarding thoughts generated in the interest group meetings. Two participants were selected for follow-up interviews. The first participant was selected so I could gather more information related to statements she made in a group discussion. I also wanted her to have the opportunity to provide descriptions for the topics discussed in the meeting she missed. The second participant was also selected so I could gather information regarding topics she missed. I used open-ended questions, encouraging participants to speak freely. My field notes from previous discussions and semi-structured interview guide allowed me to gather information regarding key points that I received from each participant, but it also offered flexibility in the questioning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Locke et al., 2010).

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

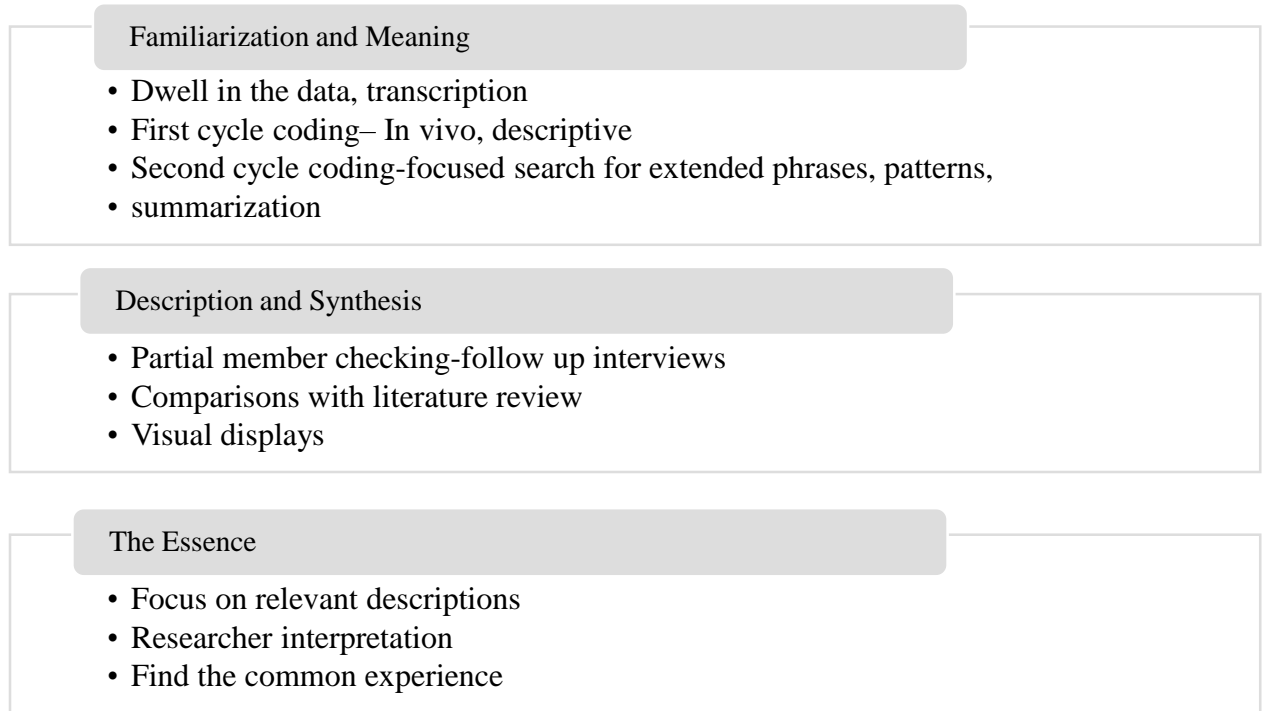
Trustworthiness continued in the triangulation of data analysis beginning with a continuous reflexive method of clarifying my bias as I reviewed the data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Qualitative analysis of data is often complex, involving reflection within each step. I believe it is important to note that analysis even occurs throughout data collection due to the interactive process of interviews and group discussions. Dialogue naturally requires interpretation, finding meaning, and connectedness between participants and the researcher (Daly, 2007). Qualitative research is a collaborative effort and participants are considered to be co-researchers (Miles et al., 2020). My analysis of the data began with my first event of data collection. This analysis was influenced by Amedeo Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method (Phillips-Pula, 2011; Wertz, 2005). The purpose of this approach is to set aside prior knowledge of the subject, dwell in the descriptions of the experience provided by the participants, analyze those descriptions, and reduce it to the essence of the phenomenon. Phillips-Pula et al. summarized the process in five general steps (2011):

1. Familiarization of the raw data
2. Dividing descriptions into meanings
3. Describing the meaning
4. Synthesizing into consistent description
5. Finding the common experience, essence of the phenomenon

As shown in Figure 3.1, my approach to data analysis was influenced by Giorgi's method by combining multiple steps for each stage of analysis.

Figure 3.1

Combined Steps for Data Analysis.



Note. The researcher combined steps for the descriptive phenomenological method.

Familiarization and Meaning

The first step involved processing the raw data collected to prepare it for analysis, allowing me to dwell with the data or become familiar with it. This involved transcribing interviews and organizing field notes (Miles et al., 2020). Each discussion from the group meetings and individual interviews were reviewed and transcribed, verbatim, prior to the next scheduled data collection event generating a constant comparative analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I used an automatic transcription service to convert the audio to a text transcript. I listened to the audio file of each Zoom recording while reading through an electronic copy of the transcripts. I correctly labeled researcher texts

and participant texts, and corrected any errors found in the transcripts. I printed a copy of each transcript and saved the electronic file to an external hard drive. I also reviewed Zoom chat data, when the function was used, and reviewed the field notes I wrote during data collection. These notes were handwritten on a hard copy of the question guide for each discussion (Daly, 2007).

First Cycle Coding. Giorgi's second step for data analysis requires dividing the data into meaning units (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). Aligned with the principles of qualitative inquiry, I began an inductive analysis using the raw data to create codes, rather than expecting the data to match preassigned codes created before analysis. Codes are used to assign symbolic meaning to data (Miles et al., 2020; Saldaña, 2016). The coding process requires the researcher to view the data with an analytic lens, considering the filters and angles used to interpret the data (Saldaña, 2016). I used printed hard copies of each transcription to highlight text and write codes in the margins of the transcript. First cycle coding, which involves retrieving, reflecting on, and summarizing data segments, included In Vivo coding. This is one of the most widely used coding techniques for qualitative data analysis, and it is helpful for inexperienced researchers, and is appropriate for phenomenological studies.

Honoring the voice and perspective of the participants, I coded direct quotes, words and phrases, used by the participants during discussions and interviews (Miles et al., 2020). Participants often used key words and spoke about topics that were not included in the verbiage of my questioning. This provided a true richness to the overall discussion. Additionally, I occasionally used descriptive coding to help summarize

words, phrases, and topics provided by multiple participants in order to begin categorizing (Saldaña, 2016). Triangulation enhanced the rigor of data analysis by verifying the credibility of the study's data and conclusion (Tracy, 2010). As the primary investigator, I continued my reflexive method by clarifying my bias as I reviewed video data and transcribed the information verbatim.

Second Cycle Coding. I began second cycle coding, or pattern coding, which is a focused search for themes, or extended phrases or sentences, allowing me to build categories and themes by organizing the summarized data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saldaña, 2015). This allowed me to rearrange and reorganize codes and themes, creating more selective concepts to work with (Saldaña, 2016). I used PowerPoint slides to create a codebook. I grouped similar codes on a slide and this formed a theme which was added to the title of the slide. An interpretation of the data was created drawing meaning from the data analysis, not my own personal experience. I kept a separate document for analytic memoing, which helped me to record my thinking processes and reflections regarding the data (Miles et al., 2020).

Description and Synthesis

Although member checking is not included in the approach I selected for data analysis, participants verified some themes and my interpretation of the data during the individual follow-up interviews (Giorgi et al., 2008; Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). This occurred after group discussions were completed. I took quotes or concepts from an initial meeting with a participant and asked them to explain further in a follow-up interview.

My synthesis of descriptions included all data collected in individual interviews, group meetings, and follow up interviews. I also compared these with my field notes and analytic memos. I continued my analysis by interpreting the themes and analyzing the meaning units across all data collected. I focused on the essential units creating typologies and structures of underlying meaning in the third step of analysis. This assisted in identifying overlaps in the data, similarities, and differences (Daly, 2007; Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). I also created visual displays to help organize and summarize the data (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013; Wertz, 2005). Interpretation of the data also included comparing findings within my literature review in order to confirm or find differences. One interesting method of analysis and synthesis included creating a poster presentation for one of the more significant themes. I created a visual data display and highlighted supporting themes and data (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013). I began to analyze additional themes with this method, which encouraged ongoing analysis of all parts of the dissertation, reviewing the problem and purpose statements, research questions, and finding support in the literature review. This process also pointed to new questions that should be asked for further research (Creswell, 2016).

The Essence of the Phenomenon

Giorgi's method of analysis includes imaginative variation, Edmund Husserl's concept that allows the researcher to disregard data that are unrelated and focus only on relevant descriptions that will lead to the essence of the phenomenon (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011). While I considered all the data to be important, some information was not relevant to the research questions or the themes that became clear during data synthesis. These

data were set aside as ideas for future studies. Some of these findings will be discussed in Chapter V (Creswell, 2016). I was able to focus on the *common experience* provided in the school counselors' concrete descriptions (Wertz, 2005). This also encouraged my own interpretation of the data based on my experience of receiving it from the participants. This process developed the essence of the phenomenon, the main findings described in Chapter IV (Giorgi et al., 2008; Phillips-Pula et al., 2011; Wertz, 2005).

Chapter Summary

Chapter III detailed the descriptive phenomenological methodology applied to the data collection and analysis, along with the philosophical framework. The researcher's role, method of reflexivity, and constant comparative analysis were presented. The research design was described in detail including information regarding the central phenomenon, the selection of participants and recruitment. Ethical principles such as the protection of human subjects, risk management, and researcher-participant relationships were also described. Procedures for the study were discussed in detail including treatment and triangulation of the data. Data were gathered through video, audio, typed chats, and field notes. The researcher's analytic memoing and reflexive processes were combined with the participants' descriptions for data analysis. A descriptive phenomenological method was applied and consisted of In Vivo and descriptive coding, pattern coding, and a reduction of descriptions to unfold the essence of the phenomenon.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter describes the results of the data analysis and emphasizes themes found in the study's findings, showcasing the common experience or essence of the phenomenon. This information is supported by data and visual displays or figures. Chapter IV reviews the research questions and introduces the corresponding interview and discussion questions, helping the reader to understand how the data answers the research questions for this study. A more detailed description of the sample is given including pertinent demographic information.

Description of the Sample

The study's sample consisted of five participants providing data over seven data collection events, including individual interviews and group meetings. Demographic information was also collected through a participant screener and a demographic survey, provided in Table 4.1. The participants included one licensed master social worker, one licensed marriage and family therapist, one licensed professional counselor, one national certified counselor, and one doctor of clinical psychology. The participants' years of experience ranged from 2.5 years of experience to more than 20 years. Two participants provide services to students in pre-kindergarten through 12th grades. Two participants are high school only, 9–12th grades. One counselor provides services to middle school and high school students, 7–12th grades. Information regarding the number of students served

and the number of years the participants have been employed at their current school were included due to the impact these factors might have on their current roles.

Table 4.1

Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Years of Experience	License or Other	State	Years at current school	Grade levels serviced	Number of Students
P1	20+	LMSW	TX	7	9–12	400+
P2	2.5	LMFT	KY	2.5	PreK-12	560
P3	18	LPC	TX	5	7–12	550
P4	-	PhD	TX	3	PreK-12	490+
P5	18	NCC	GA	18	9–12	280

Special Considerations during Recruitment

Recruitment began in November 2020 after receiving IRB approval. Along with scheduled breaks from school, the researcher and participants may have been impacted by unscheduled quarantines due to COVID-19. Participants were also impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic with schools incorporating new health and safety protocol and procedures, such as distancing six feet apart and using personal protection equipment. The participants also spoke about changes in education and counseling service delivery including hybrid and online learning options for students. I considered these issues may have impacted my recruitment efforts.

Special Considerations during Data Collection

Data were collected from November 2020 through February 2021 as shown in Table 4.2. Along with the changes that COVID-19 safety protocol brought, many other factors impacted participants during this time period and could account for some

departures from the research design originally proposed. At least one participant worked remotely during the time of the study. The additional challenges introduced by the pandemic were not the focus of this study, but several participants noted the impact of COVID-19 related issues on their work with adolescents and parents. I also considered the nature of the participants' work. School counselors provide responsive services and often must handle crisis situations that may have disrupted plans to participate in this study. Also, a severe winter storm in February 2021 caused widespread power outage, water shortage, and extended school closings in Texas, the home of the researcher and several study participants, causing delay in the collection of demographic data.

Table 4.2

Occurrence of Data Collection Events

	Demographic Information	Pilot Interview	Group 1 Meeting 1	Group 2 Meeting 1	Group 1 Meeting 2	Group 2 Meeting 2	Individual Follow Ups
November 2020	X						
December 2020		X	X	X			
January 2021					X	X	X
February 2021	X						X

Note. Data collection occurred between November 2020 and February 2021.

Research Methodology Applied to Data Analysis

The preferred model of qualitative analysis applied to this study was influenced by Amedeo Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011

Wertz, 2005). This approach required me to set aside *a priori*, or prior knowledge, of the subject, dwell in the descriptions of the experience provided by the participants, analyze those descriptions, and reduce it to the essence of the phenomenon. School counselors provided a unique perspective of parent-adolescent communication, revealing insight that parents and adolescents often share with a school counselor, but not with each other. Viewing this information with a descriptive phenomenological lens allowed me to spotlight and make sense of the commonalities and variances among the participants' experiences. School counselors provided the insight needed to explore the complexities of the normative interpersonal process of communication between parents and adolescents. I followed five general steps of data analysis outlined by Phillips-Pula et al. (2011):

1. Familiarization of the raw data
2. Dividing descriptions into meanings
3. Describing the meaning
4. Synthesizing into consistent description
5. Finding the common experience, essence of the phenomenon.

Research Questions

In qualitative inquiry, the researcher must be able to adapt their plan for the study, by allowing participant-driven data to serve as a navigational tool for the research (Agee, 2009). I began with three research questions that were shaped by findings in the literature review, my own interest, and the research design. These questions evolved during the stages of data collection and analysis, analytic memoing, and through a reflexive process,

remaining consistent with the information participants provided, causing me to adapt my questions (Agee, 2009; Creswell, 2016). A variation of questions shown in Table 4.3 were used in most interviews and group discussions. The nature of this study was participant-driven and allowed the participants to lead the direction of the conversation.

Table 4.3

Research Questions and Related Discussion Questions

Research Question	Sample Questions from Question Guide
1. What is the school counselor's perception of parent-adolescent communication?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In your experience as a school counselor, describe communication in the parent-adolescent relationship. 2. What explanation do parents give for seeking your help with their adolescent? 3. What do parents share about how they acquire knowledge about their kid's life/activities? (Parental monitoring, solicitation, voluntary disclosure?) 4. Why do adolescents choose not to share information with their parents? How do you facilitate disclosure to their parents?
2. How do school counselors perceive their role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please describe a common experience when a parent seeks help regarding their adolescent. 2. What do parents share about their parental self-efficacy?

3. What reasons do adolescents give for speaking to the counselor?
4. Describe your experience when an adolescent shares information they have not/will not disclose to their parents. How do you respond to the information they share?
5. What characteristics do you have and what strategies do you use that encourage adolescents to disclose information to you? Would it help parents to have these characteristics/skills?

Presentation of the Data and Findings

Data were collected using a flexible question guide. A one-on-one pilot interview was conducted with one participant. Data were collected through small interest group discussions to gain understanding of each participant's perspective and followed up with individual interviews. The small group discussions and interviews were facilitated through an online video platform, Zoom. Video, audio, and chat features were recorded on Zoom. A separate audio recording was also collected on an additional device. The researcher also wrote field notes during the discussions and interviews. The interviews and discussions were transcribed and analyzed to discover the study's findings. As stated in Chapter IV, my synthesis of descriptions included all data collected in individual interviews, group meetings, and follow up interviews.

The study's findings are presented through narratives and visual displays. The visual displays enhance the representation of key findings (Verdinelli & Scagnoli, 2013).

Although the aim of the current study was not to find a consensus among the participants, many commonalities unfolded in the descriptions provided, leading to the identification of several thematic patterns. These themes helped me to adapt my own lens while exploring the findings. It became clear that my initial aim to provide knowledge regarding parent and adolescent communication as told from the school counselor's perspective was not enough. School counselors do not simply observe parent-adolescent communication. There is more to the school counselor than seeing, hearing, and reporting. The study's participants described their active involvement in parent-adolescent communication. They facilitate this process by listening, providing skill building, modeling, and connecting all parties involved. The participants spoke of helping parents and adolescents through the most ordinary issues to the most life challenging events. The findings speak to the contributions school counselors make.

The themes, theme definitions, and their relation to the research questions are shown in Table 4.4. Before describing the themes as they relate to the research questions, it will be helpful to understand how an adolescent or parent is referred to a school counselor.

The participants reported the typical methods for a student referral:

1. Student self-referral
2. Parents/family
3. Teacher or other school personnel
4. Counselor, based on observation or information received

The participants shared that school counselors also typically engage in communication with parents for responsive services by the following methods:

1. Parent initiated contact
2. Recommendation from school personnel
3. Request from student
4. Urgent/crisis situation that necessitates parent contact by the counselor

Table 4.4

Research Questions, Related Themes, and Themes Defined

Research Questions	Themes	Themes Defined
1. What is the school counselor's perception of parent-adolescent communication?	1. Parental self-efficacy and adolescence	1. A parent's feelings of competency and security in one's abilities to effectively navigate their adolescent through periods of development.
	2. Parental knowledge and boundaries	2. The knowledge parents have about their adolescents while they are not under parental supervision
	3. Adolescent information management and expectations	3. Adolescents consider expected responses from parents and others when deciding whether to disclose or maintain personal information.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 2. How do school counselors perceive their role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication? | 4. The school counselor-adolescent relationship matters | 4. School counselors are student advocates, help adolescents with problem-solving skills, and facilitate communication with their parents. |
| | 5. Parent support and partnerships | 5. School counselors collaborate with parents to help adolescents reach optimal functioning, and provide support for parents. |

Research question 1: What is the school counselor’s perception of parent-adolescent communication?

Theme 1: Parental Self-Efficacy and Adolescence

One theme developed regarding normative development in adolescence. All participants acknowledged that adolescence is a difficult period and a normative decline in parent-adolescent communication occurs during this time. Many participants reported that parents often consider their offspring’s developmental changes when deciding how to interact.

For the most part, I think that most people have a great relationship with their adolescent, their teen. It can be hard at times, it can be difficult at times, it can be a struggle at times, but I think that's the same with any relationship. Um, teens, because of their hormone, hormones and emotions, it sometimes can be maybe slightly more difficult or a little bit more of a challenge. But um, overall, I think most parents do really, really well. Um, and remember back to their own adolescent years and kind of how it was and, and do a great job for the most part. So, I think overall um, most adults do a great job in kind of communicating with their teen and understanding them. (P5)

Many participants echoed the sentiment that adolescence is a difficult time to navigate for all involved.

It's hard to raise...teenagers...they're not easy, you know, and they're never in the same mood twice. And so you don't really always know how to approach him or what to say, what you said yesterday won't work tomorrow. And so I try to extend a lot of grace and mercy to parents and try to help them understand that, yeah, life can be challenging, it can be difficult, especially right now...showing your child love and showing your child that you care about your relationship with them, and that you care about them and their well-being can heal a lot of past hurt, right? And I try to build that up with parents, because I feel like sometimes parents are overly critical of themselves versus overly critical of their child. (P3)

Parents are often confused about the changes their adolescent is experiencing and may be uncertain about what to do. Participants shared that parents experience many emotions and struggle with parental self-efficacy.

I think fear gets in the way of communication, but I also think, self-blame. I think our culture of blaming parents, um gets in the way. And so not just fear, but also blame like that, that I'm going to look like a bad parent, or it's my fault, gets in the way of communication with parents and teens. (P1)

Participants shared that parents often take blame for the experiences of their adolescent. They may experience shame, guilt, or self-doubt regarding their parenting practices.

I hear a lot of mom guilt. Um, a lot of like, kind of self-deprecating, you know, like, "I feel like I could have done this differently" or "this is because of the divorce" or "this is because we need to get divorced" or "this is because, you know, the whatever --" "I struggled with her, I'm anxious and she got that from me." Or "if I would have just dealt with my own stuff sooner then maybe this wouldn't be so hard for them." Um, I do get that. I feel like more in this setting than in other settings I've worked in. A lot more self-deprecating, a lot worse, you know, internalization and guilt, and I always tell them, "you know, guilt's not productive, and we're gonna move forward and not look backwards". And, "you know, no one's a perfect parent" and you know all my set little phrases. And "you know, we've, we all make mistakes, we all, we all want to redo certain things that

we say to our own kids.” And so just to try to really encourage parents, it’s hard, right? (P3)

Some parents acknowledge the impact a family system might have on the adolescent.

There’s been a few parents, it’s not, it’s the minority, who in my conversation with them do seem pretty self-reflective and do recognize that it’s, maybe some of the difficulties a child is having is a result of the family system or their particular relationship with that child, um and in those conversations, I do get the chance to kind of do that parent coaching piece. And, and they’re receptive to it because they’ve kind of opened the door. (P2)

Participants shared that it is common for parents to refer to their own mental health issues or other struggles when discussing their adolescent’s experiences.

I can think of several occasions, where parents have referenced their own, either historical or current, like mental health problems when talking about what’s going on with their kids, so I can think of several parents who have said, “You know, I have anxiety” or “I have ADHD”, or “I have a history of depression or self-harm”, and seem to understand how that could be connected to what’s going on with their kid. (P2)

Several participants shared that they believe parents mostly follow through with recommendations, but it can be difficult for parents who may also need mental health care.

I feel like most of my students get any recommended interventions, whether it’s academic or for mental health that the school recommends, occasionally I’ll get a parent who’s resistant, typically due to their own health issues, so they don’t want to kind of deal with their own stuff that’s kind of creating the problem for the child. And so they know that if they take the child in for intervention, that, that that they’re going to have to look in the mirror, and that’s uncomfortable for them. I have, like two of those situations now one in middle and one and upper. (P3)

The participants shared that parents will often reach out to them for guidance on ways to communicate with their adolescents. School counselors are also asked to educate

parents regarding adolescent issues such as technology and media, relationships, and even drug use.

I do get quite a few of both middle and upper school parents who are like, “I don't know what to do with them at this age... or I don't know how to motivate them or help them.” I mean, like, I do get parents who are like, “help me, what do you do with this kid?” You know? (P3)

The uncertainty or tumultuous period may cause some parents to “give up” on reaching out or soliciting information if their youth don't seem receptive to their attempts to communicate.

I think it's, what comes up a lot is developmental appropriateness, right? I think it's totally developmentally appropriate when kids kind of stop confiding in their parents, and they want to go and talk to their peers. Um, but I think that's hard for parents. And then I think parents give up and stop trying to talk, um or they hear it's normal for kids not to talk to their parents, so they don't try it anymore. Um, so those are a few of my thoughts. And so I, you know, one thing I always do is remind parents all the time, like, “yes, it's normal, that doesn't mean it has to be that way. Keep trying, keep trying, keep trying.” (P1)

Participants shared that the adolescents often recognize their problems and can provide insight regarding the type of care they need. They are sometimes ready for the next step before their parents.

I had a student the other day who told his mom, “just pretend I'm one of your clients and, and for just a minute, help me like you would help one of your clients.” His mom is a lawyer. And I just loved that. But that kind of language, I think, even if parents are, just pretend that they're your niece or your nephew and not your kid and, and try to keep your emotions out of it. Um, because I think parents know the skills and can learn the skills, it's the emotions that get in the way... So, you know, I think more than anything, this kid saw that mom has taken on self-blame, getting trapped in self-blame and not helping the kid. And so I think he was trying to say, like, “stop blaming yourself, this isn't about you. It's about me. So treat me like, I'm just--” He's a smart kid. (P1)

Theme 2: Parental Knowledge and Boundaries

Boundaries became a theme, especially as they relate to parental knowledge. Participants discussed an array of parenting practices and “permeable” boundaries. Participants provided descriptions of parents who might have unhealthy expectations regarding communication with their adolescent including asking the school counselor for an update as soon as they have spoken with their adolescent. Participant 3 noted the ecological influence.

I think that the relationships have gotten to be a lot more enmeshed and a little less healthy in terms of boundaries. I feel like parents show up at school more in the secondary grade levels, and text their kids during the day, want to be in constant communication with them, have unhealthy expectations of how much they should have perceived communication and knowledge of what’s going on in their kids’ lives. Not about like, necessarily the big things but even, even trivial things. And that’s been concerning to me to see that that change. I think that's a societal change. (P3)

Some parents “over intervene” by trying to fix situations and relationships for their adolescents rather than helping them develop problem solving and decision making skills. Participant 3 noted, “there is some hyper concern, like over concern, but I think some of it is legitimate concern...many parents over intervene and don't always allow the kids to learn resilience.”

In contrast, some parents may step away from active strategies to acquire knowledge, or may not be involved in the everyday lives of their adolescents.

It does feel like parents, um, frequently want the school, or I feel like we as school personnel have, they want to have like these blurry boundaries, where we're kind of stepping in and being a parent. So doing some of the parents’ job that I would like to see them do. And it can be something as simple as like just mon- again, monitoring behavior... maybe a lot of parents don’t feel like they have the tools to handle some of these bigger areas like substance abuse, or, you know, talking about human development, sexuality with their kid, which I know

is nothing new there. And then also the technology and peer conflicts, they just kind of want the school to handle that stuff and they don't really have to do too much for it. (P2)

Healthy strategies for parent knowledge are also used.

You know, I think we have some kids who are pretty open with their parents and disclose what's going on in their lives. And but most of them, I think it's noticing, like just noticing something is different, more than it is. And but I also think a lot of parents miss it, though, like they notice but they think, oh, that's just teenagers. That's just what they do, and they don't notice. Um, so I think it's a mix. (P1)

Social media as a source of parental knowledge was discussed by a few participants. Again, participants provided contrasting descriptions regarding parental monitoring.

...I can think of several, several instances of our middle school head, getting calls from parents complaining about how their child is being treated online, um by other students or any other kind of behavior, like a concerned behavior they're seeing from another student via their child's technology, and wanting to pass that on to our administration and have her handle it, um that happens frequently. (P2)

No, for the most part, they're not monitoring social media that need to be, no. In fact, it's the opposite. I have had parents that I've had to empower to look at their child's phone, or, you know, it is, "this room belongs to you, it's at your house, it is okay for you to go into that room, if you feel that there is something up." So it's actually the opposite. And that parents feel like they can't don't do that...it's not something that was part of their adolescent experience. And so they don't really know firsthand all of how it affects our adolescents today. (P5)

Participant 4 noted that there is often a disparity between reports from parents and their adolescents. Parents might believe that they know more about their adolescents than they actually do.

Um, we've had parents that kind of, oftentimes, it's, you know, parents who um, are, you know, high powered career kind of parents who are your dual career parents, where they're not necessarily home a lot, or things along those lines. And I think sometimes they, they don't know, as much as they think that they do. And so they're, you know, they're, I just one jumps out to mind that, you know,

parents actually took the student for like, a, an evaluation. And, you know, parents' reports were like, oh, everything's great. And the student's report was, everything is just complete, you know, awful, like, completely awful. And, like, the disparity in between the two reports was just was almost like, people were living in different homes, you know... (P4)

The disparity could be partly influenced by the strategies adolescents use to manage their information.

Theme 3: Adolescent Information Management and Expectations

Participants emphasized the reasons why adolescents speak with them before or rather than speaking with a parent. Participants shared that adolescents often question the way their parents will handle disclosure. Some adolescents believe their parents will not understand. They also report that adolescents often share information that they do not want to admit to their parents.

I think it comes back to that basic kind of relationship between the two of them, and how close and maybe accepted by, or understood by, their parent that they feel. And the previous experience thing, too...I have found that some, hmmm, because they'll often make predictions, right? Like, "oh, if you tell my mom this, she's gonna, this is what she's going to say" or "this is how she's going to respond" ...they have these predictions and sometimes they're right...kids almost always predict that the parent is not going to be understanding or not going to want to help them in the way they need. (P2)

The participants were asked if their students make the choice not to disclose to parents based on assumptions or previous experience. Participants stated that it depends on the situation or relationship.

I think it's both, I think some of them, um, know that their parents are a certain way or a certain personality type. If you have a type A parent and you are a type B child, you can see that and you kind of know how they, or you feel that you know how they will respond with certain things, and then sometimes it is because "I've talked to them about something similar before and it didn't go well." (P5)

Several participants shared that adolescents anticipate strong emotional responses from their parents, expecting parents to poorly handle a disclosure. Along these lines, adolescents may fear disappointing their parents.

So there are times when I know the family well enough to know that what they're (the kid) telling me is valid, and there's also times when it's a total assumption, you know, um where I'm like, "well, maybe, but what if it didn't go that way?" "How else could it go?" You know, um and I really stressed my students, the importance of using their voice, and being validated, and how important it is to be heard, that "you can't blame your parents for not hearing you when you're not talking." Right? So if you don't, if you don't tell somebody how you're feeling, you can't be mad at them for not being understanding, right? (P3)

The participants shared the emotions that parents and adolescents discuss. One participant emphasized the need to normalize negative emotions and to get comfortable with uncomfortable conversations in order to advance communication.

Resilience...grit...I think that's kind of, what I'm trying to kind of cultivate in the students is that it's okay to feel "not okay" for a day, you know. And I think trying to kind of make it that it's okay, it's okay to feel disappointed. It's okay to feel stressed to a degree and giving them the barometer and those abilities to kind of gauge that for themselves. When they can kind of say, "Hey, you know, this is getting to a point that, that needs additional attention." But that's, that's where, what I see, because I think, I think when it comes to resilience, and when it comes to grit, and things like that, and and some of those kind of protective factors for, you know, a whole host of things, it's the ability to handle disappointment, handle a setback, come back from it...I've never met a permanent feeling. And just helping them to see that emotion states are fluid, and are transient, and are normal and expected. (P4)

Participant 1 stated that she often discussed brain development and functioning to help students understand emotion and communication.

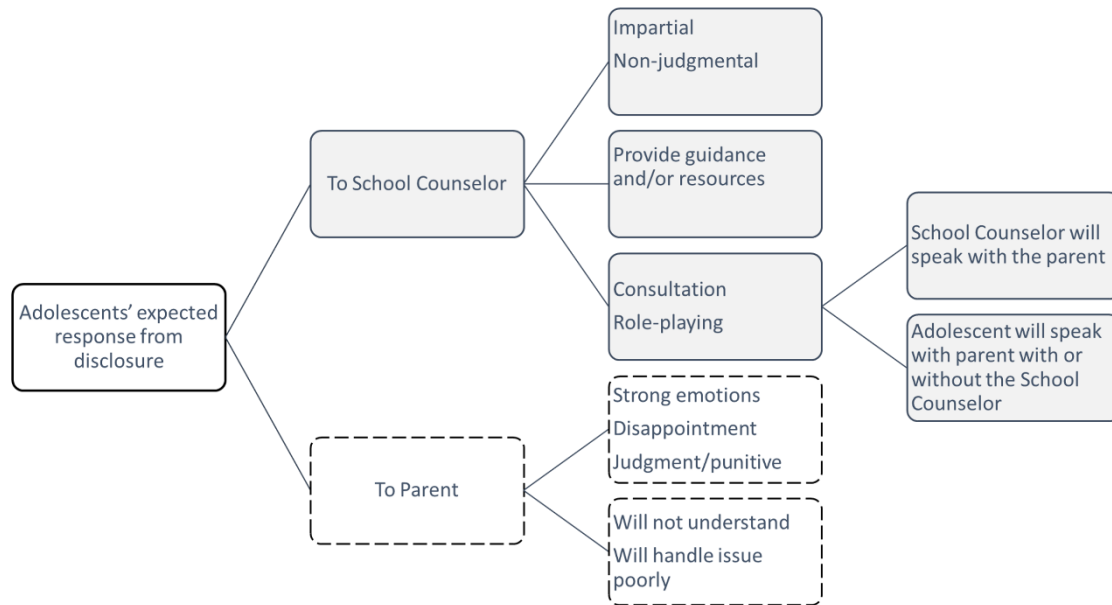
... I often talk to students about why they don't want to tell their parents, try to help them to understand the reason. And the reason is generally because they're going to get mad. So then we talk about what's under anger is often fear. So how do you talk to your parents, so that you don't have to receive the anger, but also, they can let go of some fear and hear what you're actually saying...So then we get to the point of have you ever thought about putting it in writing? And I tell

them this because I let them know, that helps them to put it into their, you know, free prefrontal cortex and think it out about how they want to say it, but it also helps their parents get out of the emotional part of their brain and into the prefrontal cortex to read it... When I talk to them about the prefrontal cortex and getting out of the emotional part of the brain, especially when I talk to them about getting their parents out of the emotional part of their brain, so that they can process with their kids, the kids wanting to say to their parents, most of them are like, “Oh, I get it.” (P1)

The participants explained the responses that adolescents expect from their parents if they disclose information in contrast to what they expect from school counselors. Figure 4.1 indicates these descriptions. As mentioned, adolescents may expect emotional or punitive responses from parents. They might think their parents will judge them and even punish them. In contrast, participants shared that adolescents expect them to be impartial, non-judgmental, and to offer advice and resources. The participants shared that some adolescents will come for counseling, others may want to consult with the school counselor on how to talk to their parents, while some may want the school counselor to speak with parents on their behalf.

Figure 4.1

Expected Responses



Note. This displays the responses adolescents expect from their parents in contrast to those expected from school counselors.

In addition, some participants noted that adolescents also consider how the information could impact their parents, especially those who experience mental health issues or are struggling with other concerns.

I think most kids don't tell their parents stuff because they might get emotional, and those are particularly emotional parents for one, or they know, "Oh, my gosh, my parents are really struggling, I don't want to burden them with more stuff to be sad or upset or anxious about." And so I think it stops kids from going to their parents, if they know their parents, either A. can't handle the information, or B. are going to handle the information really poorly. Then they're not going to go to their parents and I think a parent who's struggling with mental health issues, especially if they're really actively in that moment of struggle, um, I think kids are a little even more so afraid to go to their parents. (P1)

One participant discussed a time when a student asked her to address her parents due to her anxiety and being overwhelmed by extracurricular activities. This adolescent expressed the thought that difficult topics might be best presented by another adult.

“...I just need you to say all that to my parents ‘cause I can’t do it.” I said, “Okay, I’m happy to do that, but tell me why, you know, tell me what your thought process is.” “I don’t want to disappoint them, and I don’t want to hurt their feelings, and I don’t want to make them angry.” “And I’m afraid they won’t listen if I say.” Um, so being heard is a theme. Right? So like they need to be heard and validated. But they feel like that their voice is minimized if it’s the kid’s voice, right? Like, they feel like, “oh, I’m just a kid saying it. If you’re, you’re an adult, who my mom respects and if you call my mom and you say that this is what I said it’s different than if I say it.” So... (P3)

The descriptions provided by participants demonstrate that adolescents often make information management decisions based on the expected responses of their parents.

Research question 2: How do school counselors perceive their role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication?

Theme 4: The School Counselor-Adolescent Relationship Matters

The participants discussed what adolescents expect when they seek help from a school counselor. It’s a different relationship with different expectations. In contrast with their parents, adolescents expect a school counselor to show empathy, be impartial, and not respond with strong emotions. They don’t believe a school counselor will be disappointed regarding information they share with them.

I think there’s an expectation of non-judgmental space, and there’s an expectation of confidentiality, and you’re the neutral person, they’re not worried about how you feel. You know, “when I go and talk to my mom, am I going to make her sad? If I share with her that I’m upset with her”, you know, or that “she’s been, you know, hard to handle lately, and I tell her that and that’s gonna hurt her feelings.” They’re not worried about hurting our feelings, you know. So I think

that the neutrality of it, but I also think that they think that we get them because we're around them all the time. (P3)

The participants acknowledged that their relationship with the adolescent is very different. They do try to receive information with an impartial lens, and they will not take things personally.

I think that it is because we are impartial. And adolescence is such a, um, can be confusing for the adolescent and the parents or family members, um, can at times be tumultuous and just kind of, um, turning up of lots of different things. So I think having an impartial person who is not necessarily going to- our feelings won't necessarily change about them. Or we won't necessarily be disappointed if they tell us certain things. Or we don't have these specific expectations from birth that a family member would have, um, kind of relieves the pressure a little bit I think and allows them to say things a little more freely to us, um, about what they truly feel. (P5)

Participants discussed the reasons why adolescents seek their help. They often help adolescents with their own problem solving skills, and also build communication skills. I asked if students speak with the school counselor with the intention of eventually speaking to their parents or if they go to the counselor instead of their parents.

...they come to me in lieu of their parents. And then I may say, "I really think you might need to talk to your mom about this" or "you may want to talk to your dad about this." And then they may not know how to do that. Or they may say "I've tried and it didn't work." And then we talked through how perhaps you can do that and maybe get a more functional result. (P5)

Participant 2 noted that the age of the adolescent might influence whether their students want parents to be involved in their problem-solving or not.

I've noticed that probably more often with middle school students, they will have already talked to their parents, or at least their parents have talked to them about whatever might be going on. With Upper School students, it's most often they haven't talked to their parents, think their parents have/has no clue what they're struggling with, aren't really keen on bringing the parents in to the loop. Even, not definitely just talking about like safety concerns, where that becomes non-negotiable, to bring the parents in, but some of the lower level stuff. They are like,

“no, don’t, don’t want to talk to my parents about it.” And “I’d rather you didn’t try to talk to them either. Just want to figure it out on my own or with my friends or with you.” (P2)

The participants were asked to share their qualities that encourage adolescents to seek their counsel. Several discussed having healthy boundaries, providing confidentiality, empathy, and being consistently available. Figure 4.2 highlights these and additional responses.

Figure 4.2

School Counselor Characteristics



Note. The participants shared the characteristics they possess that encourage students to speak with them.

Participant 1 shared her thoughts regarding whether or not her students would be more likely to talk to their parents if they had the same characteristics as school counselors. She emphasized the significant role the school counselor plays in the lives of adolescents:

Honestly? I don’t think so...relationship matters, I think the relationship matters. Um, you can have amazing parents who are doing all the right things and still have a kid who doesn’t want to talk. I mean, I’m an example. My kids don’t tell

me everything, but it's the role that I play, right? Like, even if I say 100 times, "I will not be disappointed, I will love you, we will get through it." They don't want to disappoint me. And even if I say I'm not disappointed, they feel I'm disappointed because of the role that I play. So I do think that, I do think that there are some things that they just aren't going to tell their parents comfortably, that they would tell a counselor, every kid's different. There's some kids who don't do that, but I think a lot of kids, that role of the parent is so significant. Um, that they're, they're just not going to do it. (P1)

Several participants discussed regular contact with some students, while other students seek advice as needed. Participant 1 has "some that are frequent fliers, but I see more one on one just one offs than I see frequent fliers at my school."

I have probably a core group... maybe 20 or 30 people who come all the time. Whether it's even just to say I made an A on in my methods, or in my math class, it just various reasons that they come, they feel like we'd have a connection in that way. And so that I'm kind of a part of their world a little bit. And they come all the time. (P4)

School counselors often work with students to build their communication skills, problem solving skills, and decision making skills. They also coach students on how to talk to their parents about difficult topics. Participant 1 shared, "Part of that is I don't, I try not to just give advice, I try to help kids come to their own solutions. So that's a big part of it...I think some of it, too, is I don't overreact." The participants discussed that they are charged with equipping adolescents with decision making skills. Several participants emphasized the importance of encouraging students not to become dependent on the counselor.

Theme 5: Parent Support and Partnerships

A common experience among participants was the emphasis on encouraging their students to have open communication and involvement with their parents. The

participants described offering options including addressing issues with parents on behalf of the adolescent, but they try to steer them toward speaking with parents themselves or with the assistance of the school counselor. They help them to understand the significance of that relationship.

“Do you want this to stop? Whatever this is?” Whether it’s, you know, cutting or drinking, or whatever the situation is, “do you want this to stop?” The answer usually is “yes”, because that’s why they ended up talking to me, is because they want this to stop and they want my help. So then I explain, “the way we get to the stop, will have to be through your parents.” They may have to pay for it or they may have to have some sort of discussion and get on the same page. (P5)

Participant 5 added to this statement when asked to elaborate during a follow up interview.

Yeah, there are some students that they just feel like there’s not a connection with their parent or their parent is somehow going to go against whatever that next step may be, whether it’s therapy or something like that. Um, then some feel like they don’t want their parent to know all of what has taken place previously. So, um, those tend to be the reasons. But if there’s pain there, or if there’s change that needs to occur, we have to have your parent on the team. And so I can be the asset for helping them get on the team in the way that we need. Even though you may feel like your past experiences or your past conversations, or your recent conversations will not get to that point, I can kind of be that neutral person to help us get to that point. (P5)

Another participant shared a similar sentiment regarding students seeking support describing parents as the “key to help.”

What I’ve always told students is, “your key to help at your age is your parents.” Right? “That doesn’t mean you have to tell them every nitty gritty thing that’s going on in your life, right?” We don’t have to give them every detail, but I do encourage the communication. And I always say “I’m happy to help you with that.” So, like, “is this something that you want me to set up an appointment and we can talk to mom or dad together? Or is this something that you want me to do?” ... “or is this something that you want me to give you the time and the space to do that, and you’ll circle back with me?” And a lot of times they’ll say, “I need you to help me.” And so, we’ll talk together. And occasionally they’ll say, “Oh, well, I don’t mind you talking to them. I just don’t want to say.” I’ll say, “that’s

fine”. I can say anything, to anybody, you know...I really, I want to give them ownership and autonomy and what it looks like, but I try to really help them see that like trying to cut their parents out of it is actually doing them a disservice, not just their relationship with their parents, but their parents are the gateway for them to getting more support. So if they need therapy or other intervention, they’re not getting it without their parents at 13 and 14, and even 17 years old. So, I mean very few 18 year olds that I have will really take the initiative to go find their therapist and follow the insurance and do it all. (P3)

Participants also discussed the willingness of adolescents to use the skills they have practiced with the counselor.

I think when one of the parents validates some of the emotions shared, they keep trying... If both parents don’t, it can be hard, right? Because then the lesson they learn is “I’m gonna keep my mouth shut.” And that’s not, uh that’s a dangerous lesson with kids this age, right? You don’t want to, you don’t want them to keep their mouth shut because that’s when bad stuff happens, right? So, if one parent validates, yes... um I do feel like if they feel validated by at least one of them they’re willing to try. (P3)

The participants shared that they use their role and relationship to connect students with their parents. The participants also described direct services provided to parents. They explained their role as an educator or coach for parents. Parents often seek guidance on how to approach a situation or topic with their adolescents. They may rely on the school counselor to teach them about relevant topics such as peer or romantic relationships, social media, and normal adolescent development. One participant expressed her responsibility to “empower” parents with knowledge.

I’ll be honest, I think sometimes when parents call me it’s more just as a sounding board, they just need someone else to like, I think most parents actually do have the skills and the knowledge to handle things on their own. I think that fear gets in the way. I think a lot of people are afraid of teenagers. And so, um, they just need someone to bounce ideas off of and talk things through. Um, and usually when I give advice to parents, I just, I usually will say, “you probably already do this”, or “you probably already know this.” Um, because I think they do, they’re just afraid to actually do it. (P1)

Receiving feedback would emphasize the collaborative partnerships that the participants seek when providing services for students and families. School counselors are prepared to continue providing strategies if the initial attempts do not produce the desired outcomes.

“...was that helpful? or did you try it and that didn’t work?” “And and you didn’t want to tell me because you didn’t...” you know, I can’t...I have one parent who I’ve been working with a child for multiple years, and it’ll be a lot of knee jerk calls. And then I’ll recommend pretty similar interventions over the years. And then it’ll be a while until I hear from her again. And then it’s panic. (P3)

To foster parent support and partnership, several participants voiced their desire for feedback from parents regarding the outcomes of strategies suggested.

I get a lot of like initial um conversations like so I said, a lot of parents will email me first off, but often pick up the- schedule a call and have an in depth discussion with them about their student or child. But then it’s, it’s more difficult to get any kind of good follow up, it’s like it’s like a one and done, they want to have with me. So we’ll have this nice conversation, I’ll make some suggestions, or we’ll kind of put a plan in place, and then follow up. I may or may not get another call with them reach out by email, and is kind of just short updates. And I really don’t get a lot of feedback even on whether or not what I suggested was helpful, or if they used one of the resources that I gave them or any of that. So that’s a little frustrating for me is I hope, feel like, or hope that I’m giving helpful information. But I don’t know for sure, because the follow up isn’t great for me. (P2)

The participants described their role as a liaison, connecting parents and adolescents. There are times when a parent contacts the school counselor for additional resources or to be referred to community resources. The participants shared that they are often happy just to be available to support parents. Several participants spoke up when I asked if they had advice to share with parents.

Wait time is a big one. And that took me a long time as a counselor to perfect because I’m not patient by nature. And I want to get right into the meat of it. If they’re quiet... I’ve had to learn wait time, and that’s super hard when you’re a parent. (P3)

I would say, listen, and be present. Everything else you can kind of figure out as you go along. Listen means don't have necessarily an expectation that they will automatically do what you say or see things the way you see them because that's not always going to be the case. So I would say as long as you listen, and you just kind of, um, accept them for who they are, but also lovingly guide them to that next phase, everything is going to be fine. It won't always be pleasant, but it'll be fine. (P5)

Advice from Participant 1 involved the need for parents to support each other by openly and honestly communicate with each other.

I think parents need to talk more with other parents about their struggles...they don't do that...they talk about other kids, they talk about other teachers, they don't talk about their own parenting struggles. They try really hard to make it look like they've got it together... instead of being honest with fellow parents and saying, "I don't have this together, can I process with you? I'm really emotional." I don't think they do that in my community. And so when, when parents call me, I think I'm doing more of that than anything else, like listening to their emotions so that they can be less emotional at home. (P1)

Overall, the participants shared a desire to collaborate with parents to help them build healthy relationships with their adolescents.

Chapter Summary

Chapter IV described the findings of the study by answering the research questions with the themes discovered during data analysis. The participants provided rich descriptions of their role in parent-adolescent communication. Three themes addressed the school counselor's perception of parent-adolescent communication. They acknowledged that adolescence is a difficult developmental period and parents may struggle with their parental self-efficacy. The participants emphasized the role of relationships and boundaries in parental knowledge. Lastly, the expected response from parents impacts the strategies adolescents use for information management. They are able

to choose who they speak with regarding particular subjects. The second research question addressed the counselor's perception of their own role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication. This was answered by two themes. The school counselor's role and relationship matters to the adolescent. The participants also described their active role in parent support. They help educate and equip parents to best meet their adolescent's needs. Ultimately, school counselors aim to connect adolescents with their parents and foster healthy communication.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter IV described the study's findings based on the descriptions provided by the participants. Chapter V provides a brief summary of the study, emphasizing the researcher's interpretation of the findings through the descriptive phenomenological lens. Additionally, the strengths and limitations of the study are described. Recommendations for future directions of study are discussed. Finally, this chapter addresses implications of the study's findings and how they might be applied to further knowledge and improve practices for family practitioners, parent education, popular press, academia, and policy.

Summary of the Study

This study applied a descriptive phenomenological approach to the exploration of the school counselor's role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication. This unique perspective of the phenomenon provided insight that parents and adolescents often share with a school counselor, but not with each other. This study spotlights and makes sense of the commonalities and variances among the participants' experiences. School counselors provide insight needed to explore the complexities of communication between parents and adolescents.

Five school counselors participated in the study and provided data over seven data collection events, including individual interviews and group meetings. Demographic information was also collected through a participant screener and a demographic survey.

The participants included one licensed master social worker, one licensed marriage and family therapist, one licensed professional counselor, one national certified counselor, and one doctor of clinical psychology. Participants participated in group meetings, individual interviews, and in-depth follow up interviews, via Zoom. I transcribed these discussions verbatim and used this, along with my field notes to analyze the data. The data analysis included five steps influenced by Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method, which aims to set aside prior knowledge of the subject, dwell in the descriptions of the experience provided by the participants, analyze those descriptions, and reduce it to the essence of the phenomenon (Phillips-Pula et al., 2011):

1. Familiarization of the raw data
2. Dividing descriptions into meanings
3. Describing the meaning
4. Synthesizing into consistent description
5. Finding the common experience, essence of the phenomenon

This process was applied in order to answer the research questions. The research questions for this study were shaped by findings in the literature review, interests of the researcher, and the research design. A phenomenological design allowed me to identify the essence of the school counselor's experiences of parent-adolescent communication.

1. What is the school counselor's perception of parent-adolescent communication?
2. How do school counselors perceive their role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication?

Discussion of Findings

The discussion of this study's findings will provide a comparison of the findings with the literature reviewed. A comparison of the findings with the study's theoretical framework, FST and the ecological perspective, will also be presented. Literature support is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1

Literature Support

Research Question	Themes	Literature Support
1. What is the school counselor's perception of parent-adolescent communication?	1. Parental self-efficacy and adolescence.	(Bandura, 1994) (Boss et al., 1993) (Caprara et al., 2003) (Dahl et al., 2018) (Dong et al., 2020) (Eppler & Weir, 2009) (Gallo et al., 2020) (Glatz & Buchanan, 2015) (Fuligni et al., 2018) (Issurdatt & Whitaker, 2013) (Murry & Lippold, 2018) (Salo et al., 2020) (Segrin & Flora, 2005) (Shumow & Lomax, 2002) (Steinberg, 2014)
	2. Parental knowledge and boundaries	(Baudat et al., 2020) (Dong et al., 2020) (Darling & Tilton-Weaver, 2019) (Eppler & Weir, 2009) (Issurdatt & Whitaker, 2013) (Murry & Lippold, 2018) (Stattin & Kerr, 2000)

	3. Adolescent information management and expectations	(Darling & Tilton-Weaver, 2019) (Dong et al., 2020) (Masche, 2010) (Smetana et al., 2019) (Stattin & Kerr, 2000) (Steinberg, 2014)
2. How do school counselors perceive their role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication?	4. The school counselor-adolescent relationship matters	(American School Counselor Association, 2019) (Berns, 2010) (Eppler & Weir, 2009) (Gallo et al., 2020) (Huggins et al., 2016) (Mullen & Lambie, 2016) (Reback, 2010) (Sheridan & Wheeler, 2017) (Whiston & Quinby, 2009)
	5. Parent support and partnerships	(American School Counselor Association, 2019) (Berns, 2010) (Boss et al., 1993) (Eppler & Weir, 2009) (Issurdatt & Whitaker, 2013) (Planalp & Braungart-Rieker, 2016) (Segrin & Flora, 2005)

Note. This display shows the literature that supports the research questions and related themes.

Comparison of Findings with Theoretical Framework

FST and the ecological theory of human development guided a holistic framework to understand the breadth and depth of the issue. FST was applied to gain understanding of adolescent development within the context of the family. FST demonstrates that all members of a family are interdependent and have mutual influence on each other. The family as a whole changes when one part experiences change, which

is commonly observed in human development (Boss et al., 1993). FST recognizes parents and adolescents as interdependent and they have mutual influence on each other. Family functions and relationships also change during transitions and times of development. Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective asserts that adolescents may experience new challenges as they learn to negotiate changing social relationships in a broader context than in childhood (Steinberg, 2014). It was also used in this study to explore the impact of the home and school linkage on adolescents (Boss et al., 1993; Sheridan & Wheeler, 2017; Steinberg, 2014).

Theme 1: Parental Self-Efficacy and Adolescence

The study's participants spoke about the impact of the family system on adolescents. Several participants also noted that parents will reference factors like divorce, parental mental health issues, and parent-child relationships when discussing issues regarding their offspring. This helped inform theme one focusing on parental self-efficacy and adolescence. Adolescents increasingly receive input from their environment and provide output in return, impacting family relationships (Segrin & Flora, 2011). This belief, along with the ecological perspective on human development, guided this study's exploration of interpersonal processes of the adolescent-parent relationship, the adolescent-school counselor relationship, and the parent-school counselor relationship, and the impact of each on adolescent development (Boss et al., 1993; Steinberg, 2014).

Theme 2: Parental Knowledge and Boundaries

For Theme 2, descriptions provided by the participants highlighted the role of expectations and boundaries on parental knowledge and parent-adolescent

communication. The theory of human development explains that adolescents must negotiate learning in family and school, which may often be complicated by incongruent boundaries, rules, and expectations (Eppler & Weir, 2009). As offspring grow and become more able and autonomous, families may experience confusion with role and rule ambiguity. The literature reviewed supports the participants' descriptions regarding the need for families to establish healthy boundaries. This helps adolescents to gain knowledge and acquire necessary skills to be successful in life. Parents should help adolescents to understand the changing of rules, roles, and boundaries during this time (Murry & Lippold, 2018).

Comparison of Findings with Literature Review

The study's findings are consistent with the literature reviewed regarding human development, family processes, and school and family collaboration. The literature review emphasized research that identified adolescence as an equally complex period of learning and enhanced growth when compared to development during childhood (Dahl et al., 2018).

Theme 1: Parental Self-Efficacy and Adolescence

This review examined the impact of family and social influences on adolescent development, noting that experiences and developmental outcomes that occur during adolescence continue to impact an individual throughout adulthood (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015; Fuligni et al., 2018; Steinberg, 2014). Theme one encompassed parental self-efficacy as it relates to the developmental changes in adolescence. Much of the literature reviewed addressed social changes that occur including difficulty in parent-adolescent

communication. It is important for adolescents to continue connecting with their parents during this time. The participants readily acknowledged the normative decline in parent-adolescent communication, and reported that parents acknowledge this when they seek help. Many participants reported that parents often consider normative adolescent development when deciding whether to communicate with their offspring or not. The participants reported that parents may doubt their ability to communicate with their offspring, and may contact school counselors for guidance or additional resources. They often cite confusion due to their offspring's hormonal changes and heightened emotions. The participants shared that they are often able to teach parents about human development and how to best navigate this turbulent stage. Several participants shared that parents often just need someone to listen or encourage them regarding the appropriate decisions they already make. Participants demonstrated empathy regarding parents who doubt their abilities, stating that they are often doing a great job. It is essential for parents to feel confident in order to facilitate continued success in their parenting role and improve the sense of competence and well-being in their adolescents (Issurdatt & Whitaker, 2013). It is common for parents to experience fluctuations in parental self-efficacy during this time.

Theme 2: Parental Knowledge and Boundaries

The literature reviewed indicated parental knowledge as a significant protective factor for adolescents associated with less engagement in antisocial and delinquent behavior, and lower levels of internalizing and externalizing issues (Dong et al., 2020; Stattin & Kerr, 2000). This means that parents are still able to make a great impact on the

choices their offspring make during this stage of development, but they must have accurate information. The participants discussed the difficulty that some parents experience creating and maintaining healthy boundaries. They discussed a range of parenting styles from “heavy handed” to “hands off.” Adolescents consider these issues when deciding who they should speak to. The participants shared that they are able to educate and empower parents with positive strategies and avoid harmful controlling behaviors as noted in the literature (Dong et al., 2020; Stattin & Kerr, 2000).

Adolescents practice more autonomy and begin to confide in and seek advice from others, including school counselors. The school counselor is a catalyst for parent-adolescent communication. The participants shared how they are able to help facilitate adolescent disclosure of accurate information to increase parental knowledge. School counselors will often work with their students to build their skill sets in communication, problem solving, and decision making. The participants emphasized that they do not want students to become dependent on them as school counselors, but to practice autonomy, and encourage communication with their parents. The participants also shared that they practice these same strategies with parents. School counselors “train” parents on how to receive information from their offspring and how to address difficult topics. They also teach parenting practices that help foster autonomy and resilience in adolescents within healthy boundaries.

Theme 3: Adolescent Information Management and Expectations

A normative decline in parent-adolescent communication occurs as adolescent interests shift and adolescents begin to practice more active decision making (Glatz &

Buchanan, 2015; Masche, 2010; Steinberg, 2014). Adolescent information management is impacted by adolescent adjustment, family relationships, and parental strategies used to acquire parental knowledge, but mostly by the active strategies adolescents use (Dong et al., 2020; Smetana et al., 2019; Stattin & Kerr, 2000).

The participants shared that a student's decision to talk to them is often impacted by the relationship they have with their parents. Their decision to disclose will also be impacted by the expected response of their parents. This aligns with the questions of trust that Stattin and Kerr (2010) discussed: Do adolescents believe their parents are willing to listen? Will parents be receptive? Will they be ridiculed or punished? The participants stated that their students do not disclose to parents because they often expect responses that are emotional, judgmental, and punitive. Some studies emphasized in the literature review focused on common information management strategies adolescents utilize, such as disclosing accurate information, lying, or concealing information (Darling & Tilton-Weaver, 2019; Smetana et al., 2019). Adolescents become more active in their own decision making, but parents are still able to influence and shape their offspring's behavior in adolescence, depending on the accuracy of information that adolescents provide to their parents (Darling & Tilton-Weaver, 2019). This information supports the descriptions shared by participants regarding adolescent information management and expectations. The participants stated that adolescents often choose not to disclose information to parents to avoid disappointing them. The participants explained that these expectations are often based on previous experiences when their students have discussed an issue with their parents. Other times, it is based on assumptions. Adolescents consider

these factors, and others, when deciding whether to communicate with their parents or seek advice elsewhere.

Theme 4: The School Counselor-Adolescent Relationship Matters

The literature reviewed demonstrated that school counselor's serve as a resource and advocate for all students in a given educational setting, providing preventative and responsive services, and must be prepared to handle any issue at any time (Gallo et al., 2020). Although research indicates that mental health services available in schools are underutilized by adolescents, many adolescents do seek help from them. The participants noted that many students may stop by as needed, others meet with the school counselor more regularly, and others might be referred for urgent or crisis issues. Some participants spoke about building rapport with students by being involved in other areas of their school life as they are "in their world" in the educational setting. This helps them to be considered another trusted adult in an adolescent's support network. Research indicates that adolescents respond emotionally to those who are present (Wikle & Hoagland, 2019). Several participants noted that their students consider them to be accessible and consistently available. It is natural for adolescents to build rapport with school personnel as they are socialization agents in their school environment (Berns, 2010). The participants provided many accounts of helping students build resilience, practice decision making, and refine their communication skills. The literature reviewed indicated that these services reduce students' problem behavior and improve problem solving skills (Mullen & Lambie, 2016; Whiston & Quimby, 2009).

Theme 5: Parent Support and Partnerships

School counselors provide an array of services to students, parents, and school personnel. The participants were in agreement that it is not the school counselor's job to create a dependency on them, but to help facilitate healthy parent-adolescent communication. They emphasized the significant influence that parents have, describing them as "the key" to help. Several participants described the ways they guide students back to their parents. School counselors also impact adolescents indirectly by collaborating with parents. The participants described experiences when parents reach out to them asking how to handle certain situations. They also often ask for guidance in handling issues such as social media and technology use, relationship drama, and motivation for schoolwork. Another participant described herself as a "sounding board" and stated that parents often just need to "bounce ideas." School counselors often recommend additional resources and make referrals to community agencies to support families (American School Counselor Association, 2019; Issurdatt & Whitaker, 2013). Some may partner with parents, exploring family history and patterns, identifying family strengths, and determining strategies the family can implement to support their adolescent (Eppler & Weir, 2009). Many participants provided descriptions of partnering with parents to create a supportive "team" and to "get on the same page" for the adolescent. Some participants shared that some parents "give up" on reaching out to their adolescents if they do not seem receptive to their attempts to communicate. School counselors encourage parents to keep trying and teach them strategies to build relationships as parental influence is significant during adolescence.

Study Limitations

As with all research, this study had limitations. Time constraints along with availability and access to potential participants created boundaries for recruitment and data collection. The target participant population was limited to private middle and high school counselors. The study was implemented in the months of November through February in the 2020–2021 school year. The researcher and participants were impacted by disruptions including Thanksgiving and winter breaks, COVID-19 related quarantine, and weather related days off school. Participants were also impacted by safety protocol such adapted schedules, six feet distancing, and using personal protection equipment.

Participants also faced the challenge of adapting their counseling and programs for online and hybrid learning. I believe these issues may have impeded the recruitment of additional participants. An additional limitation of this study is that the first hand perspectives of parents and adolescents were not explored. The researcher trusted participants to be authentic. Another limitation is that a participant may have shared information about a parent, but not about the corresponding adolescent, which could produce inaccurate accounts (Creswell, 2016). Although I believe using Zoom helped me to recruit participants from multiple states, participants may have experienced “screen fatigue” as the use of technology has increased during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Study Strengths

A strength of this study is that school counselors, as participants, provided their expert opinion and a unique perspective regarding their role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication (Rasmussen & Goodman, 2019). The review of the literature

revealed that the school counselor's perspective is underutilized in family research. Current literature does not emphasize the role of the school counselor in normative interpersonal processes of the parent-adolescent relationship. This study allowed participants to provide uninhibited insight. Also, private school counselors often experience longitudinal relationships with their students and families. All of the participants provided services to more grades levels and more students than the typical public school counselor. This population is typically able to focus on behavioral, emotional, and social issues, rather than academic concerns.

Another strength of this study is the method of data collection. Due to research restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face interviews were not allowed, but I believe more participants were available due to the ease of access via Zoom. I was able to recruit participants from multiple states. Another strength was the triangulation of data collected in group discussions, individual interviews, field notes, and analytic memoing. The group discussions allowed participants to guide the direction of conversation.

Future Directions and Recommendations

While findings from this study add to the body of knowledge regarding family studies, more insight is still needed to better understand normative processes in the parent-adolescent relationship. There are several possible directions for future research. An in-depth case study could be conducted with each participant. I would recommend a future study applying the same research design with parents and adolescents as participants for a comprehensive perspective. Another study could include public school

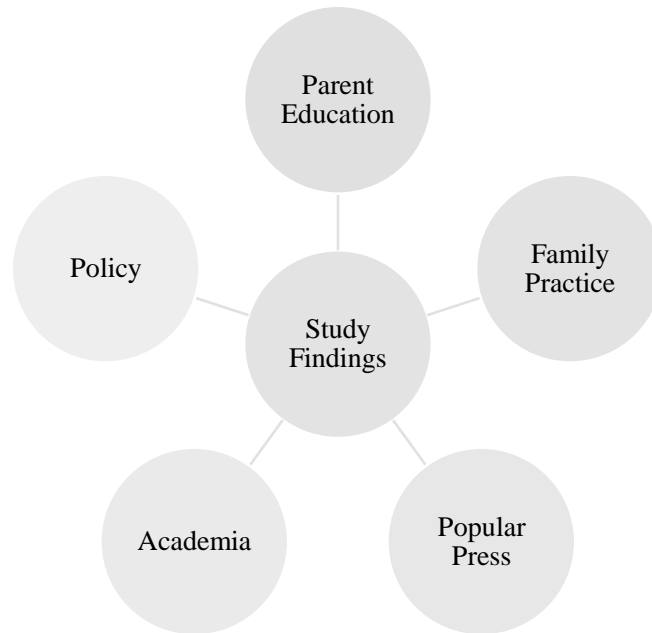
counselors to compare and contrast their experiences with those of private school counselors.

Implications and Applications

The results of this study have the potential to make a significant impact on the daily practice of researchers and practitioners in various disciplines. The study of human development has a rich historical background in philosophy, theology, education, and a multitude of sciences including medicine and psychology (Boss et al., 1993; Muuss, 1996). The literature review, the theoretical framework, and phenomenological methodology applied to this study were all driven by multidisciplinary thinking, which Saldaña (2015) described as a necessary method of mind. He emphasized how the researcher's perspective will be broadened and knowledge will be increased. While there is an abundance of research regarding issues of adolescence and parenting, an inordinate amount of studies focus on atypical development. Researchers often target specific issues and strategies regarding parenting offspring who demonstrate externalizing behaviors, mental health diagnoses, medical illness, or learning disabilities, but a gap in the research exists regarding parenting an adolescent with normative or "typical" developmental outcomes (Fuligni et al., 2018; Glatz & Buchanan, 2015). Findings of this study could advance the discipline of Family Sciences as well as other domains. This research has the potential to inform academics, parent education, popular press, policy and federal regulations. It is important to discuss the practical applications of research findings as shown in Figure 5.1 (Wertz, 2005).

Figure 5.1

Application for Study Findings



Note. This figure indicates the areas of application for study findings.

Family Practitioners and Parent Education

This research has the potential to inform parent education programs and practices which will lead to opportunities for parents to strengthen their parenting knowledge and skills (Morawska et al., 2014). Parents will receive better education and training when family practitioners are best informed regarding current issues and strategies used for parenting adolescents (Segrin & Flora, 2005). Family educators must learn the skill of extracting the usable concepts and principles of theories and available research, and teach them in ways that parents will understand the applicability to family life (Duncan & Goddard, 2017).

The results of this study could inform school counseling degree programs, and certification programs, and strengthen an emphasis on family issues (Mullen & Lambie, 2016). Findings from this study could also inform professional development for school counselors and other school personnel, improving their knowledge and skills to empower families. School counselors can guide family work that helps a family determine strategies to support their adolescent (Eppler & Weir, 2009). School counselors are in a unique position to empower parents and adolescents (Issurdatt & Whitaker, 2013). Individual development does not take place in a vacuum. One must consider every factor and influence on the individual, including the family unit. Lev Vygotsky emphasized the social aspect of cognitive development when scaffolding is employed by a more accomplished individual (Bornstein & Lamb, 2015). We have learned that adolescents are still greatly impacted by parenting practices which means parents must make a strategic investment regarding the development of their offspring (Dahl et al., 2018). Parents are able to learn from experts such as school counselors.

Popular Press and Academics

As demonstrated in this study, parents are seeking information and it is our responsibility to provide quality research and findings that yield sound advice. Findings from this study will add to the body of literature regarding parent-adolescent communication and benefit families (Creswell, 2016). Researchers and writers must remember the lay audience when reporting findings. Practitioners and scholars have an array of resources to stay current with family research and literature. Professors are charged with teaching, service, and research. This population often has access to

university libraries, databases, and peer-reviewed journals to help them stay current. How does the general public stay informed? Parents seek information and assistance and often receive it from the “armchair quarterbacks” or armchair scientists and philosophers. Magazines, online blogs, YouTube channels, sections of bookstores, and friend groups are dedicated to telling parents how to be parents. There might be just as many resources dedicated to telling adolescents how to be adolescents. It is vital for researchers to publish their work to inform popular press and popular science. While the general public does not have access to peer-reviewed journals, research may inform the lay audience through programs, books, articles, lectures, podcasts and other forms of information dissemination (Duncan & Goddard, 2017).

Policy

The findings of this study contribute to new and ongoing policies regarding family life, specifically mental health services in school settings (Huggins et al., 2016). Legislation informed by family research brings awareness and action for the field (Duncan & Goddard, 2017). The finding of this study help increase support for counseling programs in schools. Policymakers often use research findings to construct and formulate an argument and to prepare for counterarguments. Policymakers are more likely to gain backing and earn trust when their proposals are supported by research. The findings of this study contribute to the creation of new legislature, continue current legislature, or help to cease legislature that does not support best practices for families (Bogenschneider et al., 2019).

Conclusion

This study fulfilled the aim of a phenomenological research design, which is to *faithfully* discover the meanings and subjective processes of an individual's lived experience (Boss et al., 1993; Wertz, 2005). This exploration of the school counselor's perception of parent-adolescent communication and their perceived role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication was framed by the FST and the ecological perspective. It was also supported by a literature review driven by multidisciplinary thinking. As the researcher, my perspective was broadened and my knowledge was increased. I collected data with thoughtful intention and reflection, allowing the participants to share their lived experience. Following Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method, I set aside prior knowledge of the subject, dwelled in the descriptions of the experience provided by the participants, and analyzed those descriptions. These were reduced to the common experience or essence of the school counselor's role in facilitating parent-adolescent communication: parental self-efficacy and adolescence, parental knowledge and boundaries, adolescent information management and expectations, an emphasis on the importance of parents, and parent support and partnerships. The findings of the current study not only highlight the guidance and support provided by school counselors, but also emphasize the active role of the school counselor in facilitating parent-adolescent communication. Adolescence is a significant part of human development described as a stage of unlearning and relearning and parents often begin to struggle with parental self-efficacy. Parents may benefit from additional support provided by school counselors. School counselors often work with adolescents to build problem solving and

communication skills, emphasizing the importance of keeping parents informed and involved in their lives. The findings indicate that school counselors are not only student advocates, but also support the entire family. This study's findings have the potential to make a significant impact regarding the work of school counselors.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL REFLECTION

When I concluded this doctoral dissertation, I shared that my perspective was broadened and my knowledge was increased as a researcher. What I didn't share is that the same occurred for me as a school counselor and social worker. My discussions with the participants were invaluable, affirming the purpose of this paper, to provide new knowledge regarding normative parent-adolescent communication as experienced by school counselors. Parents can still positively influence their offspring during adolescence, and school counselors can help. To be honest, I already knew this through my daily work for the past 20 years, but I still made new discoveries through the research process. Qualitative inquiry allowed me to set aside my own knowledge and experience and learn from others. This dissertation did not end the way it began. I originally started with a related topic and adapted my work as I found new areas of interest in the literature. My intentional exploration of parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure rather became a closer examination of a fundamental concept, parent-adolescent communication. More adaptations came about as I began gathering information from the study's participants. As I sifted and simmered the information, I began to recognize themes that were not completely aligned with my initial plans for the study. The participants did not simply provide observations of parent-adolescent communication or second person information. They provided rich descriptions of their active contributions to the phenomenon. It would be unjust to report the school counselor's perspective of parent-adolescent communication without emphasizing their active role as a facilitator of that process. I adapted my methods to best fit the data, allowing the study to be truly

participant driven. Afterall, the phenomenological method emphasizes the faithful reflection of the human experience (Wertz, 2005). I hope the study's participants would agree that I have faithfully reflected their lived experiences through this work. The publication of this work is just the beginning. I believe that researchers and family practitioners are not only responsible for seeking and sharing knowledge, but for applying knowledge as well. It is my hope that you have gained new knowledge from this study, and like me, you are planning how to apply it to your life.

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Appendix A
Original Recruitment Email

Subject: Seeking Participants for a Study...

Hello School Counselors!

As a school counselor, myself, I know that another request for your time and energy may not be ideal at this moment. Like you, I am juggling my usual counseling responsibilities and “additional duties as assigned” - which now include mastering hybrid/remote learning tools and techniques, and training my students to be distancing and disinfecting experts. Like you, COVID-19 has caused a significant disruption in my work flow, but it has not caused me to lose sight of why I do the work that I do. This is why I am not only asking for your time and energy, but asking for knowledge and expertise that only you can provide.

I am completing my doctoral dissertation on the school counselor’s perspective of parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure. I whole heartedly believe that school counselors are in a unique position to bridge the gap in communication and relationships that adolescents and their parents often experience. I believe that your experiences and perspective are significant, and I am asking for your help.

If you would be interested in sharing your knowledge with other school counselors, and contributing to research, please continue reading.

To participate in the study, you must meet the following criteria:

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Be currently employed as a school counselor in a private middle school or high school
- Hold one of the following current/active certifications or equivalent in your State of practice: LCSW, LMFT, LMSW, LPC, LSSP.

Participation includes participating in two interest group discussions, via Zoom. Some participants may also choose to participate in an individual follow-up interview, via Zoom. Your participation is voluntary, and you have the option to stop participating at any point in the study.

(Date/time for Group 1, Meeting 1) (Date/time for Group 1, Meeting 1)

(Date/time for Group 2, Meeting 1) (Date/time for Group 2, Meeting 1)

If you are interested, please complete the linked google form ([link here](#)). If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact me, Kathryn Sohne, the principal investigator, at ksohne@twu.edu or call XXX-XXX-XXXX. You may also contact my research advisor, Dr. Catherine Dutton, at cdutton@twu.edu. As with any study, there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.

If you decide to participate, I will be in contact soon. If you choose not to participate, I wish you all the best with the “normal for now” school year.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Kathryn E. Sohne, LMSW, PhD Candidate

Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling

Appendix B
Original Participant Screener

Study Participation

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY (TWU) RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Title: Parental Self-Efficacy and Adolescent Disclosure: The School Counselor's Perspective

Principal Investigator: Kathryn Sohne, LMSW ksohne@twu.edu

Faculty Advisor: Catherine Dutton, PhD cdutton@twu.edu

Please provide the following information if you are interested in participating in this stud.:

* Required

1. Email address *

Study Participation Eligibility

This section determines eligibility for participation.

2. First name and Last name. *

3. Are you 18 years of age or older? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No (If no, you are not eligible to participate in this study).

4. Are you employed as a counselor at a private independent middle school or high school? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ yes

☐ No (If no, you are not eligible to participate in this study).

5. Which is your current license/certification? (please select all that apply). *

Mark only one oval.

☐ LPC or LPC-S (no interns)

☐ LCSW or LMSW

☐ LSSP

☐ None of the above (or equivalent) apply

11/2/2020

Study Participation

Scheduling

Please select your first choice for meeting dates/times. *Overflow will be moved to another date.

6. Please provide your preferred email to be used for this study. *

7. Which set of dates would be your first choice for participation? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ (date/time) first interest meeting and (date/time) second interest meeting--Group 1
- ☐ (date/time) first interest meeting and (date/time) second interest meeting--Group 2
- ☐ The above dates and times do not work for me, and I will not be able to participate.

Consent Information

This section contains consent information. Please read the consent information carefully.
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY (TWU) RESEARCH PARTICIPATION
Title: Parental Self-Efficacy and Adolescent Disclosure: The School Counselor's Perspective
Principal Investigator: Kathryn Sohne, LMSW ksohne@twu.edu
Faculty Advisor: Catherine Dutton, PhD cdutton@twu.edu

Please provide the following information if you are interested in participating in this stud.

Study Summary and Key Information

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ms. Kathryn Sohne, LMSW, a student at Texas Woman's University, as a part of her doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this research is to gather information regarding the school counselor's perspective on parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure. As a participant you will be asked to participate in at least two interest group discussions via Zoom. You may also volunteer to take part in an individual follow up interview. The interest group discussions and interviews will be video and audio recorded. The Zoom chat feature will be enabled and saved. The total time commitment for this study will be approximately 2.5-3 hours. This study involves risks including potential loss of confidentiality, potential loss of anonymity, potential emotional discomfort, and fatigue, potential risk of coercion. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings and internet transactions. These risks, efforts to minimize risks, and study procedures are discussed in more detail below.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please review this consent information carefully. Please contact Kathryn Sohne, the principal investigator (PI), if you have any questions/concerns about the study (see contact information above).

Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you will be assigned to a group of 4-5 participants, and asked to participate in two interest group discussions with the principal investigator (PI), approximately 60 minutes each, via Zoom. An additional 30-45 minutes of your time will be required if you choose to participate in a follow up interview. The principal investigator will facilitate the interest group discussions focusing on your experience as a school counselor working with adolescents and their parents. The discussions will focus on your perspective of parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure. The follow up interview will be free flowing and in-depth discussions of information generated from the interest group discussions. The discussions and interviews will be video recorded on Zoom, audio recorded on a separate device, and the Zoom chat feature will be saved for accuracy in data collection and analysis. In order to be a participant in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age or older, be employed as a school counselor in a private independent middle or high school, and you must hold at least one of the following licenses/certifications or equivalent according to your State of practice: LCSW, LMFT, LMSW, LPC, LSSP.

<https://docs.google.com/forms>

2/3

Potential Risks and Risk Minimization

1. The risk of potential emotional distress will be minimized by your ability to take breaks or end your participation at any time without penalty.
2. The risk of potential fatigue will be minimized by your ability to take breaks or end your participation at any time without penalty.
3. Although the researcher is bound by confidentiality with regard to your participation in the study and with regard to your disclosures, other group participants are not. There is a risk that anything you disclose in your sessions could be shared by other study participants with others outside of the sessions. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings and internet transactions. This will be minimal as confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The Zoom video and audio recordings, and chat transcript will be saved directly to an external drive. Recordings will be transcribed verbatim and also saved to an external drive. Only the PI, and faculty advisor, will have access to the data. The recordings and transcripts will be securely stored and will be destroyed within three years after the study is finished. The results of the study will be reported in the PI's qualitative doctoral dissertation. Your name and any other identifying information will not be included. The recordings and/or any personal information collected for this study will not be used or distributed for future research even after the PI removes your personal or identifiable information (e.g. your name, contact information).
4. The risk of potential coercion will also be minimized. Although you may have had contact with the researcher through your place of employment or her place of employment, participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may stop participation at any time without penalty. Your choice to participate or decline participation will have no bearing on your relationship with the researcher or any institution with which she is involved.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will try to help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. All participants will receive a \$10 gift card following completion of the study. You may contact the PI if you are interested in the results of this study after publication.

8. Please type your name and submit this form. Thank you. 

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Appendix C

Modified Participant Screener

Study Participation

Thank you for your interest in this study. I look forward to meeting you and learning from you as the group discusses parent and adolescent communication.

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY (TWU) RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Title: Parental Self-Efficacy and Adolescent Disclosure: The School Counselor's Perspective

Principal Investigator: Kathryn Sohne, LMSW ksohne@twu.edu

Faculty Advisor: Catherine Dutton, PhD cdutton@twu.edu

Please provide the following information if you are interested in participating in this study.

* Required

1. Email address *

Study Participation Eligibility

This section determines eligibility for participation.

2. First name and Last name. *

3. Are you 18 years of age or older? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No (If no, you are not eligible to participate in this study).

4. Are you employed as a counselor at a private independent middle school or high school? *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ yes
- ☐ No (If no, you are not eligible to participate in this study).

5. Which is your current license/certification? (please select all that apply). *

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ LPC or LPC-S (or equivalent)
- ☐ LCSW, LCSW-S, or LMSW (or equivalent)
- ☐ LMFT (or equivalent)
- ☐ LSSP (or equivalent)
- ☐ Other: _____

Skip to question 6

Scheduling

Please select your first choice for meeting dates/times. *Overflow will be moved to another date.

6. Please provide your preferred email to be used for this study. *

7. Please select your preferences for scheduling your first meeting. *

Check all that apply.

	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Not available
Thursday, January 7, 2021 at 3:00 pm (CST)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuesday, January 12, 2021 at 3:00 pm (CST)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Please select your preferences for scheduling your second meeting. *

Check all that apply.

	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Not available
Wednesday, January 13, 2021 at 3:00 pm (CST)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Thursday, January 14, 2021 at 4:00 pm (CST)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wednesday, January 20, 2021 at 3:00 pm (CST)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tuesday, January 26, 2021 at 3:00 pm (CST)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Consent
Information

This section contains consent information. Please read the consent information carefully.

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY (TWU) RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Title: Parental Self-Efficacy and Adolescent Disclosure: The School Counselor's Perspective

Principal Investigator: Kathryn Sohne, LMSW ksohne@twu.edu

Faculty Advisor: Catherine Dutton, PhD cdutton@twu.edu

Please provide the following information if you are interested in participating in this stud.:

Study Summary and Key Information

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ms. Kathryn Sohne, LMSW, a student at Texas Woman's University, as a part of her doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this research is to gather information regarding the school counselor's perspective on parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure. As a participant you will be asked to participate in at least two interest group discussions via Zoom. You may also volunteer to take part in an individual follow up interview. The interest group discussions and interviews will be video and audio recorded. The Zoom chat feature will be enabled and saved. The total time commitment for this study will be approximately 2.5-3 hours. This study involves risks including potential loss of confidentiality, potential loss of anonymity, potential emotional discomfort, and fatigue, potential risk of coercion. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings and internet transactions. These risks, efforts to minimize risks, and study procedures are discussed in more detail below.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you are interested in learning more about this study, please review this consent information carefully. Please contact Kathryn Sohne, the principal investigator (PI), if you have any questions/concerns about the study (see contact information above).

Description of Procedures

As a participant in this study you will be asked to participate in two interest group discussions with the principal investigator (PI), approximately 60 minutes each, via Zoom. An additional 30-45 minutes of your time will be required if you choose to participate in a follow up interview. The principal investigator will facilitate the interest group discussions focusing on your experience as a school counselor working with adolescents and their parents. The discussions will focus on your perspective of parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure. The follow up interview will be free flowing and in-depth discussions of information generated from the interest group discussions. The discussions and interviews will be video recorded on Zoom, audio recorded on a separate device, and the Zoom chat feature will be saved for accuracy in data collection and analysis. In order to be a participant in this study, you must be at least 18 years of age or older, and be employed as a school counselor in a private independent middle or high school.

Potential Risks and Risk Minimization

1. The risk of potential emotional distress will be minimized by your ability to take breaks or end your participation at any time without penalty.
2. The risk of potential fatigue will be minimized by your ability to take breaks or end your participation at any time without penalty.
3. Although the researcher is bound by confidentiality with regard to your participation in the study and with regard to your disclosures, other group participants are not. There is a risk that anything you disclose in your sessions could be shared by other study participants with others outside of the sessions. There is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings and internet transactions. This will be minimal as confidentiality will be protected to the extent that is allowed by law. The Zoom video and audio recordings, and chat transcript will be saved directly to an external drive. Recordings will be transcribed verbatim and also saved to an external drive. Only the PI, and faculty advisor, will have access to the data. The recordings and transcripts will be securely stored and will be destroyed within three years after the study is finished. The results of the study will be reported in the PI's qualitative doctoral dissertation. Your name and any other identifying information will not be included. The recordings and/or any personal information collected for this study will not be used or distributed for future research even after the PI removes your personal or identifiable information (e.g. your name, contact information).
4. The risk of potential coercion will also be minimized. Although you may have had contact with the researcher through your place of employment or her place of employment, participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may stop participation at any time without penalty. Your choice to participate or decline participation will have no bearing on your relationship with the researcher or any institution with which she is involved.

The researchers will try to prevent any problem that could happen because of this research. You should let the researchers know at once if there is a problem and they will try to help you. However, TWU does not provide medical services or financial assistance for injuries that might happen because you are taking part in this research.

Participation and Benefits

Your involvement in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. All participants will receive a \$10 gift card following completion of the study. You may contact the PI if you are interested in the results of this study after publication.

9. Please type your name and submit this form. Thank you. *

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

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Appendix D

Modified Recruitment Email

Subject: Seeking School Counselors as Study Participants

Hello School Counselors!

As a school counselor, myself, I know that another request for your time and energy may not be ideal at this moment. Like you, I am juggling my usual counseling responsibilities and “additional duties as assigned” - which now include mastering hybrid/remote learning methods and training students in the art of distancing and disinfection.

I am also completing my doctoral dissertation on the school counselor’s perspective of parent and adolescent communication. I believe that school counselors are in a unique position to bridge the gap in communication that adolescents and their parents often experience.

If you would be interested in sharing your knowledge with other school counselors, and contributing to research, please continue reading.

To participate in the study, you must meet the following criteria:

- Be 18 years of age or older
- Be currently employed as a school counselor in a private middle school or high school

Participation includes participating in two interest group discussions, via Zoom. Some participants may also choose to participate in an individual follow-up interview, via Zoom. Your participation is voluntary, and you have the option to stop participating at any point in the study.

(Dates/times for Meeting 1)

(Dates/times for Meeting 2)

If you are interested, please complete the linked google form ([link here](#)). If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact me, Kathryn Sohne, the principal investigator, at ksohne@twu.edu or call XXX-XXX-XXXX. You may also contact my research advisor, Dr. Catherine Dutton, at cdutton@twu.edu. As with any study, there is a potential risk of loss of confidentiality in all email, downloading, electronic meetings, and internet transactions.

If you decide to participate, I will be in contact soon. If you choose not to participate, I wish you all the best with the “normal for now” school year.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Kathryn E. Sohne, LMSW, PhD Candidate

Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling

Texas Woman's University

Appendix E
Confirmation Email

Hello,

Thank you in advance for your time and participation in this study. You have been assigned to group (enter group number). The interest meeting dates are as follows:

Meeting 1: (date and time TBD)

Meeting 2: (date and time TBD)

Please follow these guidelines for the interest group meetings.

Please change your screen name to a code name, keep your camera and microphone on. Please consider efforts to increase privacy such as a quiet, private location, using headphones or earbuds if others are nearby.

(Zoom link and password here)

Thank you. I look forward to our meetings! Please feel free to contact me if you have questions prior to our meeting.

Kathryn E. Sohne, LMSW, PhD Candidate

Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling

Texas Woman's University

Appendix F
Question Guide

The parents:

1. In your experience as a school counselor, describe communication in the parent-adolescent relationship.
2. Please describe a common experience when a parent seeks help regarding their adolescent.
3. What explanation do parents give for seeking your help with their kid?
4. What do parents share about their parental self-efficacy?
5. What do parents share about how they acquire knowledge about their kid's life/activities?
 - a. Parental monitoring, solicitation, voluntary disclosure? (DO PARENTS ASK KIDS? WHY NOT?)
 - b. The kids:
6. Describe your experience when an adolescent shares information they have not/will not disclose to their parents.
7. How do you respond to the information they share?
8. Why don't adolescents share information with their parents?
9. What do you do to facilitate disclosure to their parents?
10. What characteristics do you have and what strategies do you use that encourage adolescents to disclose information to you?

- a. Would parents having these characteristics/skills improve parental self-efficacy?
- b. Would parents having these characteristics/skills facilitate adolescent disclosure?

Greeting 1 and 2:

“Hello! **Welcome** to the (first group/2nd) interest meeting. **My name is Kathryn Sohne** and I am a Doctoral student at Texas Woman’s University. **I truly appreciate** your willingness to participate in these discussions and to help me gather information regarding the school counselor’s perspective on parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure. I’m looking forward to hearing the information you have to share. **Just a reminder**—if you want--please change your screen name to a code name if you haven’t already. I would appreciate it if you will keep your video on—microphones should stay off unless you are speaking. **Please feel free** to use the chat function to add information or ask questions. **To help foster participation and confidentiality**, I will ask that everyone refrain from sharing the information gathered in these discussions and please don’t discuss other members of the group outside of the group. Let’s begin our discussion with your thoughts regarding...

Greeting 3:

“Hello! Welcome **back**. **Thank you for agreeing to an individual interview**. **Just a reminder: you are free to take a break if needed and you** may end your participation at any time without penalty. Do you have any questions before we begin? Let’s begin our discussion with your thoughts regarding...

Closing: “Thank you for your participation. The information you all have shared will be very helpful and I look forward to our next discussion. You will receive a reminder e-mail. Please feel free to leave the meeting at this time if you do not have any questions for me at this time.”

Appendix G
Reminder Email

Hello,

This is a reminder that you have signed up to participate in a research study regarding the school counselor's perspective of parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure. I look forward to our (first, second) interest meeting with Group (1,2) on (date/time here).

(Zoom link and password here)

Reminder:

Please change your screen name to a code name, keep your camera and microphone on. Please consider efforts to increase privacy such as participating in a quiet, private location, using headphones or earbuds if others are nearby.

Thank you,

Kathryn E. Sohne, LMSW, PhD Candidate

Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling

Appendix H

Final Email

Hello,

Thank you for completing the study on the school counselor's perspective of parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure. Your time and shared experiences are truly appreciated. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to learn the results of the study. Please complete a brief demographic survey linked here (insert link). You may access your electronic gift card valued at \$10 here (insert link).

Thank you,

Kathryn E. Sohne, LMSW, PhD Candidate

Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling

Appendix I
Modified Final Email

Hello,

Thank you for completing the study on the school counselor's perspective of parental self-efficacy and adolescent disclosure. Your time and shared experiences are truly appreciated. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to learn the results of the study. Please complete a brief demographic survey linked here (insert link). You may access your electronic gift card valued at \$10 here (insert link).

Thank you,

Kathryn E. Sohne, LMSW, PhD Candidate

Human Development, Family Studies, and Counseling

Appendix J
Demographic Survey

Demographic Information- Study Participant

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY (TWU) RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Title: Parental Self-Efficacy and Adolescent Disclosure: The School Counselor's Perspective

Principal Investigator: Kathryn Sohne, LMSW ksohne@twu.edu

Faculty Advisor: Catherine Dutton, PhD cdutton@twu.edu

Thank you for participating in the current study.

Please complete the following demographic information.

* Required

1. Email address *

2. What is your name? *

3. Please identify your gender *

4. Please identify your race/ethnicity *

5. Please indicate how many years of experience you have as a school counselor: *

6. Please indicate how many years you have worked in your current place of employment. *

7. Please indicate the State you work in: *

8. Please indicate the grade levels you work with: *
