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The University of San Francisco

IMPACT OF COLLEGE COUNSELING WITHIN PRIVATE HIGH SCHOOLS
ON FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE-BOUND STUDENTS'
ENROLLMENT IN FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES: A CASE STUDY

A Dissertation Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Department of International and Multicultural Education

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Ana Maria Sauthoff Soler
San Francisco
December 2014

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Impact of College Counseling within Private High Schools
On First-Generation College-Bound Students'
Enrollment in Four-Year Colleges: A Case Study

First-generation college-bound students (FGCBS), students whose parents do not have a college degree, are at a disadvantage during the preparation for and enrollment in 4-year colleges, according to the literature. A majority of these students either never enter 4-year colleges, or enroll in 2-year colleges and never complete a bachelor's degree. With the demand in the work force for college degrees, much research has been conducted on understanding the experiences of these students. Previous research has focused on college counseling for FGCBS within public schools, traditionally low-resourced public schools, as this is where most FGCBS are enrolled.

This study addresses a void in the literature by focusing on the college-counseling experiences of FGCBS enrolled in private schools, which are schools that traditionally send close to 100% of their graduates to 4-year colleges. The key question is whether FGCBS in private schools experience a gap in resources and outcomes despite college counseling opportunities comparable to those of their non-FGCB peers.

This case study focused on FGCBS in two private high schools in San Francisco. A survey adapted from the CHOICES Project at UCLA was used to survey 156 seniors at both schools (74% response rate) about their college-counseling experience. Additionally, five FGCBS at each school were interviewed and all three college

counseling staff at each school were interviewed. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed.

The major findings from the study complement previous research about FGCBS, extending knowledge of students' experiences from the public school to the private school sphere. Four main constructs were addressed throughout the study: students' educational aspirations, students' perceived access to resources, barriers to 4-year college, and students performance indicators. First, FGCBS' educational aspirations were found to be no different than non-FGCBS: FGCBS had high aspirations to attend college and, in fact, they had similar aspirations as non-FGCBS to attend selective colleges. Second, perceived access to resources of FGCBS statistically were no different than non-FGCBS, but through interviews, it was evident that FGCBS did not feel as comfortable taking advantage of the resources they knew were available within the school, resulting in them not having the same level of information and support during the college application process. Third, many perceived barriers to a 4-year degree were identified. Through both quantitative statistical and qualitative methods, there was a difference in perceived barriers to a 4-year degree, where FGCBS identified more barriers to this goal than non-FGCBS. They identified many barriers consistent with the literature, such as lack of parental educational capital and lack of financial capital. Additionally, there was a statistical difference between perceived barriers between FGCBS enrolled at each high school, where FGCBS at Woodcrest identified more barriers than FGCBS at Stoneholt. It is interesting because at Woodcrest the students were taught and encouraged to realistically face their situation as FGCBS and at Stoneholt their first-generation status was not really addressed through college counseling. All the FGCBS faced the same

barriers but only their perception differed. Fourth, performance was assessed. Overall, despite lower test scores and lower GPAs than non-FGCBS, and a difference of GPAs between the FGCBS at the two high schools (Stoneholt FGCBS had lower GPAs), 100% of FGCBS at both high schools graduated and enrolled in 4-year colleges for the fall.

Several recommendations arose that need further research concerning the role of college counselors in order to improve success rates for FGCBS. College counselors should be trained in financial aid information, FGCBS should start the college counseling process sooner than their non-FGCBS counterparts and college counselors should give extra attention to FGCBS to compensate for the lack of parental educational and financial capital. The bigger question still to be explored is how the private school structure itself contributed to the findings and therefore how it can be changed in order to better support the counseling staff to ultimately support FGCBS better.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the school of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Ana Maria Sauthoff Soler

December 2014

Candidate

Date

Dissertation Committee

Patricia Mitchell

December 2014

Chairperson

Shabnam Koirala-Azad

December 2014

Uma Jayakumar

December 2014

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving and supportive husband Peter. I pursued a doctorate because of his encouragement and belief in me. Without him this entire degree, let alone this dissertation, would never have happened. He is my rock and my support and I am truly grateful for all the sacrifices he has made to ensure I become Dr. Soler.

Secondly, I dedicate this dissertation to my students at SMART. Their daily lives, energy and courage inspired the topic for this dissertation. They breathed life into the words I was able to write. Their stories touched my heart, and I am forever grateful that they allowed me to be a part of their lives. I know each of them will be incredibly successful because they are determined, motivated, hard working and resilient young women and men. I am very proud of what they have accomplished thus far, and I know this is only the beginning for each of them.

Third, I dedicate this dissertation to my parents who have stood by me through every academic adventure I have embarked on. Without their support along the way I would not have been able to tell the stories of the students in this study.

Acknowledgements

I would like to again acknowledge my husband Peter. We spent many hours working together on our dissertations, encouraging each other when we got tired, stressed or overwhelmed. He was there with me when I questioned by ability to do this, and was there with me for every small milestone along the way. I need to acknowledge his belief in my abilities, the strength he gave to me, and the love he showed me on a daily basis during this entire process. Thank you, I love you.

I would like to acknowledge my parents Ana and Ned for the support they have given me these past 30 years. Every step of my educational journey they have been there encouraging me, guiding me and giving me feedback. They have served as soundboards for all of my ideas, they have challenged me and told me I was capable. They supported my decision to move across the country when I didn't have a plan, and they were over the moon when they found out I was enrolling in a doctoral program. I am truly honored to be their daughter and I hope they are as proud of me as their daughter as I am proud of them for being such great parents.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Patricia Mitchell for her amazing guidance and support during my dissertation journey. As my professor in my O&L classes and as my dissertation chair, I have felt myself challenged and focused. She always motivated me and made sure I believed in myself. She kept me on the path I needed to complete my degree and for that I am so grateful.

Thank you to Shabnam Koirala-Azad for teaching my first IME class at USF and teaching my last IME class at USF. Her enthusiasm and passion for Human Rights

Education was a motivating factor throughout this journey. Thank you to Uma Jayakumar for her support in finding my research questions to examine the unexamined space of college access for marginalized youth, as well as for helping to secure the approval from Dr. Allen for the use of his research instrument for this study.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Jones, for her emotional encouragement from the start of my graduate career. She has served as a mentor and friend to me during every step of this process. She believed in me, listened to me, and shared her life stories with me, providing wisdom. She is an inspiration; she is the type of educator I hope to be.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Educational access is a matter of equity (Goodlad, 2009). Since the creation of the education system within the United States, achieving equal access to a quality education for all people has been a challenge (Tyack, 2003). Race, ethnicity, gender, immigration status, and socioeconomic status (SES) level are some of the factors that are related to educational access inequity (Kozol, 2005; Noguera, 2003; Tyack, 2003). This is particularly evident with regard to access to post-secondary education. Despite the idea of the American Dream being that all students have access to higher education, historically marginalized youth struggle to access the same level of higher education as their mainstream counterparts (Allen, Kimura-Walsh, & Griffin, 2009).

Significant research has been conducted addressing limited access to higher education for racial minorities (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001; Gandárra & Bial, 2001; Herndon & Hirt, 2004; Oakes, Rogers, Lipton & Morrell, 2002) as well as other minority groups. A specific focus in the literature is access for *first-generation college-bound students* (FGCBS). These students are defined as “students whose parents have no more than a high-school diploma” (Gandárra, 2002, p. 84). FGCBS specifically face the challenge of gaining an understanding of higher education and working within the educational system to gain admission without the motivation, guidance or participation of college-educated parents (Ishitani, 2003). Traditionally, FGCBS are enrolled in low-performing, under-resourced, often-public high schools; in addition, many are also low-SES, students of color, immigrants or a combination of these (Walpole, 2007). Understanding the barriers that FGCBS face within these environments has been well documented (Gibbons & Borders, 2010; Horn & Nuñez, 2000; Ishitani, 2003). Less

documented are the barriers these FGCBS students face in high-resourced specifically private high schools and the effectiveness of associated mitigation actions; this topic will be the focus of this dissertation.

Literature and statistics indicate that students enrolled in under-resourced schools have a more difficult time accessing higher education (Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2009; Corwin, Venegas, Oliverez, & Colyar, 2004; Griffin & Kimura-Walsh, 2009). So one might assume that with increased resources, students from under-resourced communities would have a higher success rate of going to college. While this reasoning is logical, research conducted by Griffin & Kimura-Walsh (2009) suggest that even within a well-resourced public high school, minority students struggle to access these resources due to inequitable allocation.

An important factor in access to higher education for all students is the high school college counselor. College counselors serve as gatekeepers to higher education and are the sources of critical college application information as well as financial aid information (Gandárra, 2002; Rosa, 2006). They have relationships with college admissions representatives, and understand how to navigate the complex college admission system. The advice, recommendations and information college counselors share or withhold can have significant consequences on the type of school a student ultimately attends. In the case of FGCBS, the college counselor's role assumes an even greater significance in a FGCBS's college attendance since they tend to lack complete parental guidance due to parental education level and college-application experience (Auerbach, 2004).

Private high schools traditionally serve wealthy students, and advertise themselves as college-prep schools where 100% or almost 100% of students graduate and enroll in 4-year universities (Hayden, 1988). The study conducted by Griffin & Kimura-Walsh (2009) was conducted within a public high school and focused specifically on racial minority students, but their results do not address the question of resource allocation and effectiveness within private high schools. Traditionally, minority students and FGCBS aren't highly represented in private high schools, and so there is little research addressing the FGCBS population within a college-prep high school environment, be it public or private.

In order to explore the unexplored question of FGCBS's access to higher education within private high schools specifically, this dissertation focused on the influence of the college counselor within the private high school environment, and FGCBS's educational aspirations, perceived access to resources, barriers to college and performance indicators such as their enrollment in 4-year universities; in addition, this dissertation addresses effective college counselor actions, providing direction for increased effectiveness in the counseling of FGCBS in private schools.

Statement of the Problem

In 2008, there were 4.5 million first-generation, low-income students enrolled in post-secondary education in the U.S. (Engle, 2008). While this number seems high, FGCBS are less likely to pursue post-secondary education than students whose parents completed a bachelor's degree (Horn & Nuñez, 2000). Students whose parents don't have bachelor's degrees lack navigational information to assist in the college application process. Such families lack the knowledge, information, experience and resources to

properly motivate and guide their child to and through the complex college system (Herndon & Hirt, 2004). Families that lack this particular type of information find it difficult to navigate academic requirements, the application process, financial-aid applications, extra-curricular resources, and institutional selection (Oakes, 2002). Hence, the role of the college counselor becomes even more crucial for FGCBS.

Research indicates that, when students who historically have less access to higher education are enrolled in resourced college-preparatory high schools, they still struggle to access college information and resources, making their likelihood of enrolling in 4-year universities lower than the likelihood for their non-FGCBS counterparts (Griffin & Kimura-Walsh, 2009). In the same case study conducted by Griffin & Kimura-Walsh, counselors acknowledged that not all students had equivalent access to opportunities, particularly minority students had fewer resources and access; the same counselors concluded that it was the students' responsibility to seek out the resources and know what to ask for. This position that it is the student's responsibility is problematic for students who grow up in households where this awareness is absent due to parent's education level; it is more a matter of parental unawareness than parental or student lack of interest. The role of the college counselor in privileged schools plays a significant role in minority students' access to college, and the college counselor needs to attempt to compensate for the difference in parental understanding and experience (Auerbach, 2004).

Background and Need for the Study

Obtaining a bachelor's degree is important within today's society; it is associated with increased lifetime earning (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011) and associated lifestyle and societal position; higher education is a major enabler in achieving upward mobility.

According to a report in Occupational Outlook Quarterly (2002), those whose highest educational level was a bachelor's degree earned \$2.1 million over the course of a lifetime, as opposed to those whose highest educational level was a high school diploma, who earned only \$1.2 million over the course of a lifetime. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011) report the median weekly income for someone with a bachelor's degree (age 25+) is \$1053 as opposed to someone with a high school degree, which is \$638 per week. And the unemployment rate is significantly higher for those who do not have a bachelor's degree, 9.4% for those with high school diplomas versus 4.9% for those with bachelor's degrees. If FGCBS are able to obtain bachelor's degrees, they have an increased chance of upward social mobility with the potential to have higher lifetime earnings than their parents who do not have bachelor's degrees. Therefore, exploring the present role of college counselors in the FGCBS access to higher education is an important first step to attempt to address this issue.

In an effort to tackle an enormous problem, this dissertation aims to shed light on the experience of a subset of FGCBS within a unique environment - private high schools. As private high schools are embracing their mission to have and support a more diverse student body, they need to recognize, understand and address the specific barriers FGCBS face. These barriers are different from those experienced by the traditional student population that private school college counselors are used to working with. A lack of awareness and understanding can result in inequitable access to post-secondary education, particularly to 4-year institutions.

Only 24% of students enrolled in post-secondary education (PSE) are FGCBS (Engle, 2008). FGCBS who do enroll in PSE are less likely to graduate from a 4-year

college than their more affluent non-first generation peers. Attrition rates for FGCBS within PSE are 71% higher than for students who had both parents with bachelor's degrees (Ishitani, 2003). The attrition rate for FGCBS in PSE is 43%, with 2/3 of those students dropping out of college after the first year (Engle, 2008). Only 7% of non-FGCBS more affluent students drop out of college after the first year, whereas 26% of FGCBS drop out after the first year of college. In the same report by Engle, it was noted that six years after beginning at 4-year institutions, only 11% of first generation low-income students completed their bachelor's degrees, as opposed to 55% of their more affluent non-first generation peers.

Frequently, FGCBS are encouraged to enroll in 2-year community colleges first, in order to save money, and then transfer to a 4-year institution. While this advice at first glance might sound logical, practical and sound because community colleges are open-access institutions, and serve a significantly large minority population, due to budget cuts and the difficulty of getting necessary classes, such advice can in reality be very detrimental to FGCBS. Evidence shows that students who enroll in 2-year community colleges are seven times less likely to complete a bachelor's degree than if they had enrolled directly into a 4-year institution after high-school graduation (Engle, 2008). Twenty-four percent of FGCBS who enroll directly into a 4-year institution after high-school graduation completed a bachelor's degree (Engle, 2008), whereas only 5% of FGCBS who go the community college route after high-school graduation complete a bachelor's degree. The unfortunate statistic is that whereas 63% of FGCB low-income students enrolled in 2-year colleges expressed a plan to transfer to 4-year institutions to complete their bachelor's degrees, only 14% (as opposed to 50% of their more affluent

non-first generation peers) successfully transferred from 2-year institutions to 4-year institutions, and many still never completed a Bachelor's degree (Engle, 2008).

Given the unfortunate lack of information, resources and experience of the parents of FGCBS students and in light of this data, the effectiveness of college counselors in mitigating or exacerbating the FGCBS's barriers to obtaining a bachelor's degree warrants a closer look (Auerbach, 2004), particularly within the unexamined space of private high schools.

Theoretical Framework

This study is rooted in the theoretical framework established by McDonough (1997) in her study entitled "Choosing College: How social class and schools structure opportunity". She was looking at *how* and *why* high school seniors make their college choice, specifically focusing on the influence of SES level. McDonough asserts three propositions which affect college choice:

- “1. a student's *cultural capital* will affect the level and quality of college education that student intends to acquire;
2. a student's choice of college will make sense in the context of that student's friends, family, and outlook, or *habitus*; and
3. through a process of *bounded rationality*, students will limit the number of alternatives actually considered.” (p. 8)

Additionally, to explore the role of the family in the student's college choice, the theory of Funds of Knowledge (González, Moll and Amanti, 2005) guided this study.

Cultural Capital Theory

Bourdieu (1986) is the father of Cultural Capital Theory, discussed in his chapter entitled *The Forms of Capital* in Richardson's *Handbook of Theory and Research of the Sociology of Education*. Bourdieu defined cultural capital theory as the collection of information and resources that privileged groups utilize to achieve economic capital, ensuring the access to and maintenance of their privilege. Social capital consists of the understanding, motivations, expectations, and networks or connections that are established by members holding cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) – these become a form of currency. Social reproduction occurs as a result of this transmission, effectively ensuring that privilege remains within privileged groups, and those who are marginalized are not allowed to gain access, condemned to remain in their marginal position, reproducing their position in society.

McDonough uses Bourdieu's theory to explain college choice stating that "middle and upper class families highly value a college education and advanced degrees as a means of ensuring continuing economic security, in addition to whatever money or financial assets can be passed along to their offspring" (p. 8). These families are aware that college in general and more selective colleges specifically, can influence future success and therefore try to provide their children with the resources and information necessary to access college. This in turn can maintain privilege across generations.

Organizational Habitus

"(T)he concept of habitus...refer(s) to a deeply internalized, permanent system of outlooks, experiences, and beliefs about the social world that an individual gets from his or her immediate environment" (McDonough, 1997, p. 10). It is "a common set of

subjective perceptions held by all members of the same group or class that shapes an individual's expectations, attitudes, and aspirations" (McDonough, 1997, p. 9). Within the context of McDonough's college choice theory, the habitus of the school significantly influences the student's college choice. She goes further suggesting that the schools' habitus informs the students' expectations and college aspirations and when students observe their surroundings they become *entitled* to assume they are intended for a particular form of college education. High-SES students feel entitled to selective colleges and low-SES students feel entitled to community colleges, thus reproducing and maintaining social status within each SES level.

Bounded Rationality

The third element of McDonough's theory is that of bounded rationality which "refers to behavior that is rational but limited by the cognitive constraints on decision making" (p. 10). Factors that influence a student's decision include "their physical location, social networks, and environmental stimuli, as well as the anticipated goals and consequences for college" (p. 10). Students absorb values from their environment, in this context the expectations of college placed on them by their school. Bounded rationality defines the frame of the school's organizational habits, which can "[limit] the universe of possible choices into a smaller range of manageable considerations" (p. 10).

Hegemony and the School Setting

The maintenance of this status quo is what Gramsci (1975) refers to as hegemony. "[H]egemony means the ideological subordination of the working class by the bourgeoisie, which enables it to rule by consent" (Anderson, 1977, p. 20). According to Gramsci, the elite, or as he referred to them, the bourgeoisie, create values and ideologies

that permeate through society and exist to serve and maintain the elite. Through the passage of time, most members of society subscribe to these beliefs as common sense and without question, allowing the elite to dominate without the use of fear.

Within the school, these social theories play out rather vividly. Students' school environment helps to transition them from one social institution to another (ie. from high school into college). Private high schools, the focus of this dissertation, are typically populated by wealthy white students where the transmission of white wealthy values occurs. For students who do not subscribe to these beliefs, or are excluded based on their background, the question at hand is how this environment impacts their future. Specifically, how do a college counselor and a college counseling program transmit or re-write these values? Can the private school's college counseling systems be adapted to mitigate the barriers of the upper class and enable college access for the less privileged?

Bourdieu addressed social reproduction within schools, suggesting that the impact of access to college pathways differs for students based on which group students belong, high-SES or low-SES (when SES is determined by income and parent educational level) (McDonough, 1997). In this way, the social hierarchy is maintained through the transmission of habitus within the school. This results in the devaluing of marginalized groups' habitus within these academic settings. Bourdieu argues that, in order for one to move up in the social ladder, one must either inherit these values, or learn them through socialization: essentially calling for the less privileged to abandon their culture and adopt the culture of the dominant upper class in order to succeed (Yosso, 2006). It is further argued that education or schooling is an ideal location to learn these values and gain cultural capital.

Funds of Knowledge

González, et al. (2005) hold that families within these communities also carry valuable capital. González, et al. argue that children within these communities develop skills and have access to resources within their families. Just as with elite families, marginalized families transmit habitus to their children, and educators should utilize that – the college counselors must be aware and appreciative of these in order to properly guide FGCBS students. González, et al. focused on the specific practices within the home that generate information that students bring into the classroom. González and his team were interested in understanding why families behaved the way they did within the home, and how this can be accessed and utilized by teachers. Funds of knowledge are defined as: the way in which “families generated, obtained, and distributed knowledge, among other aspects of household life” (González, et. al., 2005, p. 5). If college counselors and other administrators within private high schools are able to identify the specific funds of knowledge FGCBS possess within their homes, they can more readily build on them through the college application process.

Agreeing with Freire (1970), they argue that educators have a responsibility to recognize what the child brings into the school setting and expand upon it. “The underlying rationale for this work [funds of knowledge project] stems from an assumption that the educational process can be greatly enhanced when teachers [and in this case college counselors] learn about their students’ everyday lives” (González, et. al., 2005, p. 6).

These funds of knowledge need to be validated within mainstream society. Children from marginalized communities possess experiences and expertise that they can

contribute to their own education and the education of their peers. Furthermore, González et. al, argue that schools should actively learn about these home assets and encourage students to bring them into the classroom to be built upon, specifically with the goal of ensuring marginalized groups have access to college pathways.

Assumptions

For the purposes of this dissertation, the following assumptions are made based upon the theoretical framework laid out above.

- United States society is set up in a way that creates barriers for marginalized students in general and specifically barriers to access to 4-year college pathways.
- Reproduction of cultural capital through the transmission of habitus provides new generations with capital to maintain their privilege.
- Education is seen as one of the very tangible ways for students from marginalized groups to access cultural capital that is valued by society.
- Within the educational system there are many agents of transmission of habitus but this dissertation will limit itself at looking at the college counseling environment within private high schools and its impact on facilitating or hindering access to 4-year college education by FGCS.

Access to institutionally valued cultural capital for marginalized groups, however, is very challenging because of the role of hegemony in society. Since the values of the elite are considered legitimate and values of marginalized groups are not, these *legitimate* values are viewed as common sense and serve to maintain the status quo.

In response to these concerns, the theory Funds of Knowledge recognizes the capital that exists within marginalized families, and in particular the students themselves. Therefore, it can be assumed that the families of FGCBS possess a wealth of cultural capital in the form of funds of knowledge which can be utilized to facilitate access to 4-year college for these students. Such capital must be first recognized and second valued by private schools in order to ensure the success of FGCBS within an academic setting.

The goal of this research was to understand the experiences of FGCBS' school environment or organizational habitus and how the experience within college counseling specifically within private high schools impacted access to 4-year college in the midst of these assumptions. It was the hope that high school college counselors were able to identify and validate the assets within FGCBS and harness them to provide access to college pathways.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to understand the factors influencing college access for first-generation college-bound students (FGCBS) in private high schools, specifically the influence of the college counselors. In the study, a survey adapted from the CHOICES Project at UCLA (Allen, Dano & Brauer, 2009) was used to explore FGCBS' experiences navigating the college application process within their schools. Additionally, this study provides insight into the perspective of the college counselor at each school – their role, and understanding of and expectations for students, and provides some comparisons between FGCBS and non-FGCBS enrolled at each school on educational outcomes such as enrollment in 4-year universities.

A case-study approach was utilized, focusing on two private high schools in San Francisco. The reason for combining both qualitative and quantitative data is i) to better understand the role of college counselors as gatekeepers for FGCBS within private high schools and ii) to advocate for population-specific comprehensive support for FGCBS within private high schools.

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of this study, the following three research questions were explored:

1. How does the college-going culture created in part by college counselors within a private high school context impact first generation college-bound students?
Specifically, how does this environment affect their student educational aspirations, student perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators?
2. How does the experience of FGCBS differ from non-FGCBS within the private high school environment? Specifically, to what extent is their experience different as it relates to student educational aspirations, student-perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators?
3. To what extent do college counselors and students have differing perspectives on student educational aspirations, student perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college? Specifically between college counselors and first-generation college-bound students?

Delimitations and Limitations of the Study

While the role of parents/family is key for FGCBS (Auerbach, 2004), this study did not focus on them. Teachers and other administrators significantly influence college access resources to all students; the college-going culture within each high school was discussed, however the focus was primarily on the college counseling program within each high school. This study focused specifically on the experiences of FGCBS as compared to non-FGCBS.

The limitations of this study were based on the relationships the researcher had with private high schools. There are many private high schools within San Francisco, and preexisting relationships impacted access to participants. See sampling in Chapter III for details. This study utilized a case study format, and was limited to two private high schools due to the time available to collect the data. A limitation of this study is the fact that there are very few FGCBS enrolled in private high schools. However, based on the sampling method, 74% of the senior class at both schools (including both FGCBS and non-FGCBS) served as participants, and of those that participated, 12% were FGCBS. Lastly, San Francisco is a unique city and not very representative of all cities in the U.S. let alone different regions of the country. Results of this study were statistically significant, so it is recommended that study methods are replicated in different and diverse regions to validate the generalizability of the results.

Significance of the Study

Private high schools are often actively seeking ways to increase the diversity of their student population; this may be in the form of racial/ethnic diversity, SES, immigration status or parental education level. In so doing, schools must (and often do)

recognize how diverse students present diverse needs, barriers and assets. For private high schools, which within the scope of this study are all college-preparatory schools, understanding the diverse needs and barriers particularly related to college access is critical for success of their students.

Private high schools can use the information collected in this study to identify successful strategies and resources that are particularly beneficial for FGCBS to replicate and increase them. In participating in this study, private high schools had the opportunity to explore their current college counseling model and identify ways to improve it to better serve all of its students. In the same token, strategies, resources and assumptions that have been unsuccessful in removing barriers - or worse, increasing barriers – have been identified and can now be eliminated.

FGCBS enrolled within private high schools are in a unique position, straddling two spaces and determining how to manage their habitus. As McDonough addressed, these students will be making their college decisions within their bounded rationality, which is different than their non-FGCB peers. Since this is an unexplored space, results from this study will contribute to the body of literature discussing the experiences of FGCBS and their access to 4-year colleges.

It was clear that all participating schools in this study intend to best support all members of their student body in pursuit of a college degree. They agreed to participate in the study in order to learn more about FGCBS. Results of this study suggested that while there are many successes with supporting FGCBS, there are still many ways in which college counselors can more proactively support FGCBS. Successful resources and methods are showcased, unpacked and explored in Chapters IV & V of this study.

Ultimately, understanding how to work with FGCBS (who are often also low-SES, racial/ethnic minorities, or immigrants) will improve not only the lives of these students, but increase the success of the college preparatory high school.

Definition of Terms

The following section is intended to assist the reader by defining specific terms used within this proposal. For several of these terms there are many definitions, so for the purposes of this study, the following definitions were used when referring to these terms.

College Counselor: Within a private schools the college counselor is responsible for working with an “assigned caseload of students (usually in the realm of 50-55 each in recent years) in evaluating their academic and personal needs as they consider post-secondary choices. Field questions from and conduct conversations with students and parents of every grade level on all college-related issues. Communicate clearly with parents and students, showing awareness of and respect for family and student views, values, and goals (Woodcrest High School Job Description: Co-Directors of College Counseling).

Cultural Capital: Cultural capital “which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications” refers to the information and resources that privileged groups utilize to achieve economic capital, ensuring and maintaining their privilege (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 281).

First generation college bound student: FGCBS are “students whose parents have no more than a high-school diploma” (Gandára, 2002, p. 84).

Funds of Knowledge: The theory referred to as Funds of Knowledge describes the ways “families generated, obtained, and distributed knowledge, among other aspects of household life” to their children (González, et. al., 2005, p. 5).

Guidance counselor: Guidance counselors differ than college counselors, and are typically employed within a public school, they are “responsible for student attendance, behavioral interventions, homeless youth, Peer Resources, home bound students, students involved in the juvenile justice system, and students who need additional supports to fulfill the requirements of a long term graduation plan” (SFUSD Job Description: Counselor).

Habitus: The theory of Habitus, coined by Bourdieu “refer(s) to a deeply internalized, permanent system of outlooks, experiences, and beliefs about the social world that an individual gets from his or her immediate environment” (McDonough, 1997, p. 10).

Hegemony: The theory of Hegemony, coined by Gramsci is “[t]he ideological subordination of the working class by the bourgeoisie, which enables it to rule by consent” (Anderson, 1977, p. 20).

Private College Counselor: Within the world of college counseling, there are private college counselors who have the specific role of “provid[ing] access to specialized knowledge, coach[ing] on tests and essays, ‘hand-hold[ing]’ students through the admissions process, keep[ing] the admissions process organized and the student on schedule, and help[ing] with peer pressure and learning disabilities or other special circumstances” (McDonough, 2005, p. 26).

Private Schools: As opposed to public schools a “private school is a school that is not supported primarily by public funds. It must provide classroom instruction for one or more grades k-12 (or comparable ungraded levels), and have one or more teachers. Organizations or institutions that provide support for home schooling but do not offer classroom instruction for students are not included” (Broughman, Swaim, & Hryczaniuk, 2011, p. A-1).

Summary

In summary, the question of the experiences of FGCBS within private high schools is largely unexplored. Evidence suggests that the experience of underrepresented students within high-resourced schools is not much different from their peers in low-resourced schools. Since FGCBS do not have access to college-educated parents, they are at a disadvantage in terms of pursuing a college degree. In a time in history where a bachelor’s degree is essential for financial success, assisting FGCBS in pursuit of it is critical. While there traditionally are not many FGCBS enrolled in private high schools, this number is increasing as these schools are attempting to increase the diversity of their student bodies. Understanding the barriers and strengths FGCBS face and possess is very important for college counselors within these schools, in order to prevent social

reproduction of non-college educated students and to pull from their strengths to help them achieve their goals. The next chapter is a summary of the literature focusing on four primary bodies of literature: inequity in education, college counseling, public versus private schools, and the experiences of first-generation college-bound students. This summary set up the study, which was a mixed methods case study explained in more detail in Chapter III. In Chapter IV both qualitative and quantitative data are presented, and in Chapter V the data is discussed. Both implications and recommendations are made at the end of Chapter V given the results of the study.

CHAPTER II

THE REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The ideal U.S. educational model assumes that all students have equal choice and equal access to an appropriate range of schools and curricula (Kozol, 2005). The reality is quite a different matter. A public school system that is generally funded by real-estate taxes inherently creates pockets of excellence in rich neighborhoods and pockets of substandard schools in poor neighborhoods making school choice geographically limited (Noguera, 2003) by the economic reality of families. Unless all substandard schools in the poorer neighborhoods are revamped and good teachers redistributed, the economically challenged students, who are disproportionately people of color (Kozol, 2005), will not have access to the better schools or the better educational choices. In reality, there is an inherent and implicit inequality built in such a system and it automatically limits equal access to the best educational options to certain parts of the population, automatically leaving others behind.

A potential solution to this inequity is access of the marginalized student population to private schools. Private schools are not governed by the state and its funding structure, and they are more independent of geographic location. Unfortunately, private schools are very costly. Those who can afford the high cost of a private school can remove their children from the public school system and place them in academically rigorous private schools that prepare students for college (Hayden, 1988). Private schools historically served white males, but with the change in times have adapted and opened their doors to a wider variety of students (Herr, 1999). While private schools are making a commitment to actively support under-represented students through outreach efforts

and scholarships, the reality remains that these schools are predominately white and upper-middle class (Herr, 1999) “[P]rivate schools are touted as one of the solutions to the failure of public schools, what actually transpires when minority students enter private educational settings, particularly those previously occupied predominantly by children of the dominant culture, has yet to be sufficiently explored” (Herr, 1999, p. 111). The price for the *lucky* minority students who get to have access to a private school education with better curriculum and resources is the burden of surviving within a different culture and the impact the experience has on their self-esteem and their future educational success.

This chapter will review the literature on four areas. First, it will look at equity within education in general and how race and SES play a factor in access to quality education and college access specifically. Second, it will focus on college counseling and the role of the college counselor and the associated creation of a college-going-culture within a school. Third, it will explore the differences between public and private schools, narrowing in on how private schools function. Fourth, it will look at the assets of first generation college-bound students and their families specifically. This chapter will conclude with a summary of the literature prior to addressing the methodology of the proposed study.

Inequity within the US Educational System

Historical Perspective

Since the birth of this nation, the structure of education has always been controversial and the process for deriving that structure akin to a battle (Tyack, 2003). The question of whether to strive for a uniform curriculum across the US dates back to

the Revolutionary War and the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Signers like Jefferson believed that the goal of education was to create an *American*, to teach morality and citizenship (Tyack, 2003). But the question of who was responsible for education was also a topic of debate; should decisions be made at the national, state, local or even individual level? (Ravitch, 2010; Tyack, 2003). And finally, the question of who gets to be educated and how has also been an issue for heated discussion for generations (Kozol, 2005). As these debates continue, given our present educational structure, the concrete reality is that a majority of children of color, immigrants and the poor, many of whom are potential first generation college bound students in the U.S., are continuously and consistently denied a quality education.

Throughout the 19th century, there was a feeling of urgency to unify everyone under a national identity (Tyack, 2003), and education was seen as the way to accomplish this. “The common school, a public institution that mixed students from all walks of life, was to teach a common denominator of political and moral truths that was nonpartisan and nonsectarian” (Tyack, 2003, p. 20). During this time, the push for public schooling was big, with the goal of increasing enrollment, luring students away from private and religious schools. In order to achieve this goal, educational leaders were willing to accept cultural diversity. But at the turn of the 20th century, when enrollment surpassed levels imagined in the 19th century, acceptance of diversity decreased as states were given more power over who could be educated and in what ways. This shift had the biggest impact on immigrants, students of color and those who didn’t identify with Protestant values.

In the second half of the 20th century, the question of uniform standards and expectations was brought into question as a result of the Civil Rights Movement and

other social movements at that time (Tyack, 2003). They demanded that children and families stop being blamed for the failure of the schools to educate the diverse students, and advocated for programs such as bilingual or multicultural education. To address these concerns, fancy tests, such as IQ tests were employed in schools to determine where each child belongs and what type of education would best suit them in preparation for their position in the work world. This approach referred to as Genetic Determinism had the effect of justifying and validating the classification of entire groups of children as being labeled *inferior* (Tyack, 2003). Unfortunately, such tracking didn't and still doesn't take into consideration any psychosocial, economic, language difference and non-dominant cultural thought patterns that will influence all test performance, resulting in perpetuating institutionalized racism (Noguera, 2003).

In the area of school governance, throughout the 19th century, local American school boards held a significant amount of political power (Tyack, 2003). Since the general consensus of Americans was a distrust of the Federal Government, the public was much more comfortable giving control over school districts to local school boards. These individuals were elected by the public and held accountable to the demands of their constituents, specifically local parents. But as we entered the 20th century, the power of the local school boards began to diminish (Ravitch, 2010). They were criticized as not having expertise, or not understanding how to run schools efficiently and effectively. Over time there was a general transition from boards to *non-lay* elite experts, who were appointed rather than voted in, to manage districts across the country (Tyack, 2003). The hope was with such experts making decisions in quick ways (i.e., not including public

opinion), the education system's problems could be remedied, and strategies not be bogged down by bureaucracy.

In 2001, through policies such as No Child Left Behind, many families theoretically would be able to take advantage of the *school choice* option (Ravitch, 2010). Policy makers believed that all students had equal access to the same educational choices, and that those students who chose to attend bad schools or who chose non-college level classes regardless of the reason, deserved what they get --- a substandard life. These policy makers held that all students are free to choose all their classes or all their schools. They failed to consider the reality that many students' choices are severely limited by lack of information and lack of resources. If students' choices are implicitly or systemically limited by life circumstances beyond their control, are they really choosing or are we talking about an issue of systemic injustice?

It turns out that most students of color, low-income students, and immigrants (most of whom are oftentimes also potential first-generation college-bound) do not have the same access to information and resources as white middle-class students (Noguera, 2003). To add to the built-in inequality of limited resources and limited access to information, institutional expectations for students of color typically are extremely low, the implicit societal assumption is that they do not have the ability to be as successful as their white counterparts (Noguera, 2003).

Role of Race and Socioeconomic Level in Educational Inequity

College-level education and high SES "often play a proactive role in 'managing' ... children's pathways through secondary school and the college choice process" (Auerbach, 2004, p 126). Families who are part of the lower economic rung of our

society (a disproportionate numbers of which are students of color and immigrants whose parents typically have not attended college) struggle to access private school education, and typically live in areas with under-resourced substandard neighborhood public schools. These schools often cannot afford to provide quality college counseling services due to budget constraints (Corwin, et. al., 2004). At low-SES schools, graduation is more important than college preparation or enrollment and if college resources are offered, they typically focus on community-college pathways (Bryan, et. al., 2009). As a result of this stratification, “[t]oo often those who actually enroll in college are from an elite segment of society; those who are from high-income families, who reside in affluent communities, and whose parents are themselves college graduates” (Collins, 2011, p. 105). So with an inherent lack of resources and information, it is significantly harder for the lower-income, low-SES, first-generation college-bound students and families to plan and prepare for college (Auerbach, 2004).

In the era of school choice, families with limited resources are automatically restricted to schools with limited resources. “In theory, the new differentiated curriculum [gives] rich opportunities for [all] students to choose programs or courses. In practice, it is hard to tell how much students actually chose their programs and how much they were steered into different programs” (Tyack, 2003, p. 118). To validate this theory, there is a disproportionate fraction of minority, low-income and ESL students in remedial or vocational courses (Noguera, 2003). When students of color are tracked they are typically placed in remedial classes, which often do not fulfill high-school graduation requirements, and never fulfill college admissions requirements (Harris, 2006). At times these students are not aware that the courses they are placed in make them ineligible for

college acceptance. Evidence suggests that non-white children and their parents are not usually informed of this fact until it is too late to be corrected (Noguera, 2003). As a result, students who are at the highest disadvantage in college attainment are those that are low-SES, from immigrant families, ESL and undocumented (Auerbach, 2004).

When looking at the demographics of schools, one can clearly see that minority and low-income children are enrolled in some of the worst schools in the country (Kozol, 2005). These schools often do not have any advanced-placement courses or credentialed teachers (Harris, 2006; Noguera, 2003). According to data collected for his book, *The Shame of a Nation* (2005), Kozol stated:

Only 15% of intensely segregated white schools in the nation have student populations in which more than half are poor enough to be receiving free meals or reduced price meals. “By contrast, a staggering 86% of intensely segregated black and Latino schools” have student enrollments in which more than half are poor by the same standards. A segregated inner-city school is “almost six times as likely” to be a school of concentrated poverty as is a school that has an overwhelmingly white population. (p. 20)

The instruction students receive at those substandard schools is typically geared towards the standardized exams, ignoring subjects such as science, art or history (Ravitch, 2010). This is likely to actually reduce quality and challenge of instruction for students because, while tests are challenging, they are not cognitively engaging (Harris, 2006). And when students are placed in remedial classes they automatically become ineligible for college, because remedial classes do not fulfill college admission requirements (Harris, 2006; Noguera, 2003). Such *unintended* consequences of our educational model systematically prevent minority, low-income students of color from being academically prepared for college.

Institutional Racism in the US Educational System

Institutional racism is a product of societal racism paired with subtle and pervasive white supremacist systems, which have oppressed people of color for centuries (Bonilla-Silva, 2003). Chesler (1976) offers a definition of institutional racism as “an ideology of explicit or implicit superiority or advantage of one racial group over another, plus the institutional power to implement that ideology in social operation” (p. 22). The author goes on to explain that “culture and ideology explain racism in ways that are representative of the low end of the victim-system control continuum. They all stress racism’s roots within the total community or the community as controlled by the white majority. (p. 42).

As a result of the dichotomized educational system, students of color historically have fallen behind and are presently struggling in the transition to college-level education. This systemic dichotomy is not an issue that lies solely between white and African American students, but with Latino students as well (Gandára, 2002).

Dialogues surrounding race in education do not focus only on issues such as California’s Proposition 209 (which banned affirmative action in the University of California system), but also address K-12 low academic performance and contributing factors, such as unequal access to resources, lower expectations, and deteriorating schools, as well as microaggressions (Comeaux & Jayakumar, 2007). Contrary to what inclusive education opponents argue, the lack of representation at postsecondary institutions by students of color is not due to an inferior academic ability or potential (King, 1993). Rather it is a result of lack of support and proper preparation for students of color (Kozol, 2005). Historically, we have seen students of color suffer academically

from lack of advancement because appropriate and necessary resources were not provided to them on a timely basis however the needed resources were provided to their white counterparts (Kozol, 2005). The inequality in the availability of resources determines the level of preparedness of the students such that it shapes the rate at which students gain or do not gain access to higher education institutions. Before taking into consideration the roles of the K-12 education system, it is also important to glean understanding of sociological explanations.

Internalized Oppression

A factor that affects students of color as they prepare for and transition to higher education institutions is internalized oppression (Ogbu, 2003). Many students may not be cognizant of subtle racial oppression; however, regardless of the level of awareness, most individuals of color are adversely affected. Racial interactions that people of color experience in a society dominated by (obvious or subtle) white-supremacist thinking and the social systems that arise from such a mindset begin to shape their beliefs and do adversely impact their self-esteem (hooks, 2003). Ladson-Billings (1997) explains the effects that the absence of inclusive curriculum has on the students by stating that people of “color are disenfranchised, alienated, and disengaged primarily due to inadequate critical dialog and teaching around issues of race and culture in educational settings or ...culturally relevant pedagogy” (p. 138). Unfortunately, the reality is that K-12 programming and curriculum that is meant to provide cultural understanding and appreciation of minority communities or that portrays persons of color as leaders is at best limited in most school districts and at worse non-existent (Herr, 1999). The standard curriculum in most schools perpetuates the Eurocentric approach to education instead of

teaching students about other cultures and beginning training of students to be accepting of others. To the detriment of the students of color, the reality is that today students are systematically taught to value the dominant culture and to devalue the minority's culture. As Woodson (2006) points out that "[t]he present system under the control of the whites trains the Negro to be white and at the same time convinces him of the impropriety or impossibility of his becoming white" (p. 23).

People have been and continue to be conditioned to believe that, despite their necessity, racial discussions should be avoided. hooks (2003) has shared observations surrounding such discussions and has stated:

Simply talking about race, white supremacy, and racism can lead one to be typecast, excluded, placed lower on the food chain in the existing white-supremacist system. No wonder then that such talk can become an exercise in powerlessness because of the way it is filtered and mediated by those who hold the power to both control public speech (via editing, censorship, modes of representation, and interpretation). While more individuals in contemporary culture talk about race and racism, the power of that talk has been diminished by racist backlash that trivializes it, more often than not representing it as mere hysteria. (p. 27)

Teachers and administrators have the opportunity to play an active role in a student's development (Noguera, 2003). Once on a college campus, students of color may be faced with navigating the administration with little experience. Being forced to adhere to Eurocentric policies and curriculum creates "a response triggered either internally (i.e., emotional pain, anger, and/or questioning of one's identity and sense of place) if not externally (i.e., defensiveness, withdrawal, debate, explanation" (Lewis, Chesler & Forman, 2000, p. 77). Hence, students of color would greatly benefit from teachers and administrators who understand and have personal solidarity with their issues – appropriate role models and mentors to help them navigate the educational system. The

systemic lack of such persons in their academic lives and the lack of access to emotional outlets constitute internalized stereotypes, ethnic isolation, and perceptions of racism (Good, Halpin & Halpin, 2000). These experiences of subtle oppression make it difficult for people generally, and for students specifically, to address and negotiate the barriers they face every day. Students of color can become discouraged and can lose interest in the pursuit of higher education, as they feel misplaced and isolated – leaving them with the subliminal message that the dream of higher education is for others and not for them.

In short, an Eurocentric curriculum that supports a lack of race discussion coupled with the lack of diverse personnel in both the administration and the teaching staff in the average U.S. school setting fails to provide successful and accessible role models and mentors to students of color contributing a serious detrimental effect to the identity development and validation for students of color (Moore, Ford & Milner, 2005). While some individuals occasionally are fortunate to be self-realized or to have a strong support system at home or in their community, many more or most students of color are required to seek out validation from mentors and peers (Rendon, 1993). This is even more true and relevant within private high schools.

Cultural Competency of High Schools

Sadly, schools struggle and frequently fail to be culturally competent in their curriculum and practices for many minority students. “Schools, colleges, and programs rarely reach out to Latino parents in meaningful, culturally appropriate ways to help narrow the information gap” (Auerbach, 2004, p. 126). As schools and families become more diverse, and the needs of students and families, specifically as they relate to college, continue to emerge, it is very important that schools accommodate all students’ needs.

All schools need to be more culturally appropriate and develop practices within that vein, they need to increase “equitable college-going structures” (Knight, Norton, Bentley & Dixon, 2004, p. 117). “The identities that students construct are forged as they resist, negotiate and/or reconceptualize the categorizations that school systems, as microcosms of larger societies, impose and through which they are viewed” (Herr, 1999, p. 115). Bryan, et. al. (2009) concluded from their study on students’ likelihood to interact with their counselors, that counselors “need to be culturally responsive and inclusive of environmental and social influences on students’ college choices” (p. 289).

To summarize theme one, the U.S. educational system was never structured in an equitable way to ensure all students had access to a quality education. Rather, the racial, class and other biases throughout time have consistently impacted who gets access to what type of education. Historically and currently students of color and low-income students are more likely to not enroll in college after graduation, socially reproducing their economic status.

College Access: Role of the College Counselor and a College-Going-Culture

Since 1970, despite an increase in enrollment of minority students in post-secondary institutions, their representation on 4-year college campuses still significantly lags behind that of comparable white students (Gandára, 2002). College-bound students begin preparing early in their high school career for their transitions to 4-year colleges by selecting coursework that will fulfill admissions criteria for colleges and universities. Some courses include higher levels of math and science, language courses and even advanced-placement classes. Gandára and Bial (2001) state that “underrepresented students are provided less encouragement by teachers who may harbor doubts about their

abilities and thereby contribute to a self-fulfilling prophecy of underachievement” (p. 9). For instance, Comeaux and Jayakumar (2007) state, “counselors did not ‘push’ or ‘encourage’ Black students as much as they pushed or encouraged white students to take those classes” (p. 99). There is a clear gap in the “availability of quality guidance as a means for assessing educational equity” (Corwin, et. al., 2004, p. 443).

In general, high school students face a lack of counseling services they receive from college counselors, because of the presently accepted astonishingly low ratio of students to counselors (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nuñez, 2002). In California the number of students to counselors is 979:1, which is higher than the national average. Due to the fact that college counselors are over-worked and under-supported, public high school students today lack proper college counseling and proper curriculum advising. It seems that within public schools the counselors’ time is often spent addressing issues such as scheduling, discipline, monitoring dropout potential, drugs, pregnancy, suicide prevention, sexuality, and crisis counseling, with college counseling making up only 20% of their responsibilities (McClafferty et. al., 2002). Given the number of children per counselor, unconsciously accepted cultural expectations of students’ abilities will likely automatically operate giving disadvantage or advantage to those students whom the counselors assume will fail or succeed. “Depending on how a guidance counselor interprets the student’s college aspirations, he or she is likely to filter the types of information shared with students” (Corwin, et. al., 2004, pp. 445-446). As with other educational resources, students of color and low-SES students tend to suffer more from lack of college counseling than their wealthier white counterparts due to college counselors being mostly unavailable and overworked, especially in low-funded schools.

The results of the lack of proper college counseling can be seen in the data on degree attainment. The National Center for Educational Statistics collected data on degree attainment, which was disaggregated by race/ethnicity from 1910 – 2010 (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). Close examination of the existing data is important in order to gain the understanding necessary to derive proper remedial action plans. Please note that data is not disaggregated within racial categories (i.e., within Hispanic and Asian nationalities). Evidence suggests that when data is further disaggregated, additional discrepancies are found (Kidder, 2006). In 1990, 77.6% of all persons in the U.S. 25 and older held a high school diploma as their highest degree, this number increased to 87.1% by 2010. In 1990 only 21.3% of all persons in the U.S. 25 and older held a Bachelor's degree, this number increased to 29.9% by 2010. When disaggregated, disparities between groups in their degree attainment become more evident. For instance, in the same data set, the NCES (Snyder & Dillow, 2011) states that in 1990 81.4% of all white persons over 25 held a high school diploma as their highest degree, compared to 66.2% of blacks, 50.8% of Hispanics, and 84.2% of Asians. By 2010 we see a significant increase, 92.1% of all white persons over 25 held a high school diploma as their highest degree, compared to 84.6% of blacks, 62.9% of Hispanics and 89.1% of Asians. In high school degree attainment, (non-disaggregated) Asians and whites have held their lead over the years.

Focusing specifically on Bachelor's degree attainment, all races/ethnicities other than Asian in general have lower attainment levels of Bachelor degrees than high school diplomas (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). In 1990, 23.1% of all white persons over 25 held a bachelor's degree, compared to 11.3% of blacks, 9.2% of Hispanics, and 41.7% of Asians. In 2010, 33.2% of all white persons over 25 had a bachelor's degree, compared to

20% of blacks, 13.9% of Hispanics, and 52.8% of Asians. While it appears that Asians are surpassing whites in college attainment, an important factor to note is that there are in fact significantly more whites with college degrees in the U.S. than any other race/ethnicity. The percentage at a glance seems lower because there are significantly more whites in the U.S. population (75.6% of the population was white in 1990, and 64.6% in 2010) than Asians (2.8% of the population was Asian in 1990, and 4.6% in 2010), meaning a small population of the white population has college degrees, but that raw number is far larger than the raw number of any other race/ethnicity. Data suggests that a greater fraction of non-white students who enroll in post-secondary education do so at the junior college level (Gandára, 2002) than does the white population. Whites and Asians are more likely to complete 4-year degrees than blacks and Hispanics.

Role of the High School in Access to College

Schneider (2007) identified two levels of impact on students' college-going rates and why they differ from high school to high school, as well as within schools. She identified the individual level where students may be unaware of the need for specific courses to demonstrate rigor and complete prerequisites, and may not have access to this information - resulting in students not preparing. The second component is at the school level, not all schools offer a competitive college prep curriculum, and there maybe a lack of a college-going-culture i.e. *social milieu* which "creates high educational expectations among the students, their parents, and teachers" (Schneider, 2007, p. 3). She went on to say that the entire school needs to be onboard with increase college enrollment.

Regardless of the department within the school or staff's role at school, everyone should be pushing towards college for students at all levels. Knight-Diop (2010) explored

institutional structures within schools and interpersonal structures among students and teachers. He found that relationships between students and teachers can influence social, academic and psychological needs of students and can make kids have “positive feelings towards schooling” (Knight-Diop, p. 159). Therefore the amount of time counselors can dedicate to each student makes a tremendous difference (such as advising students to enroll in college prep resources that make them eligible for admissions) (Corwin, et. al., 2004). Specifically, if counselors have low aspirations for their students, this directly impacts students’ ability to access college information (Bryan, et. al., 2009). Furthermore, he stated that “[a] school culture that promotes going to college has dedicated school personnel who are committed to ensuring that all students from under-resourced neighborhoods are aware of, prepared for, and pursuing postsecondary education” (Knight-Diop, p. 162).

College-Going-Culture

When polling the general public in the U.S. regarding public knowledge about higher education institutions, it was found that most people do not know the difference between 2-year and 4-year colleges (St. John, Paulsen & Carter, 2005). Families that have had generations attend college more easily and readily have access to and have developed a strong college-going culture and understand the difference between institutions. College-going-culture is explained by Cabrera and La Nasa (2001) as the “acquisition of college qualifications, graduation from high school, and applying to college [which] is embedded into what is known as the college-choice process” (p. 30). For individuals that come from college-educated lineage, there exists the expectation that they *will* attend and *will* complete 4 years of college. For some, the values, beliefs, and

expectations come naturally (Oakes, 2002). Creating a college-going culture at home is just as important as creating one in K-12 schools. The involvement and encouragement of parents maintains high expectations for their children, but also includes being active at school, creating college plans, and saving money for college tuition and other financial needs (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001). College-going culture has been identified as an element that is necessary and vital to encouraging youth to pursue higher education.

Two of the other major branches of college-going culture are the existence of and access to a college preparatory curriculum and ensuring high academic performance is understood to be fundamental. However, another piece of the college-going culture is providing the student with support to help navigate the daunting college application process. “The application process in itself presents numerous hurdles. Those hurdles include concerns over college costs, uncertainties in the selection of major, completion of college application forms, and filling out extremely complex financial aid forms” (Cabrera and La Nasa, 2001, p. 120). The time that students spend in high school can be capitalized by creating college-going networks and identities by linking up with mentors and peer support groups (Max & Tuttle, 2009). Schools can also encourage students by empowering the students to feel recognized for their work, beginning with the conditioning of achieving goals and setting new challenges for themselves, including the pursuit of a college education.

To create college culture at a school where many students don't go to college it is important to provide opportunity for students to understand all the steps involved in preparing for college and to drill down the details of these steps, and then work with all students through all the steps to ensure success (Schneider, 2007). McClafferty et. al.

(2002) defined nine principles of a college-going-culture through a 4-year study in conjunction with 24 schools from elementary to university level. These nine principles are interconnected and overlap.

1. *College talk* must be pervasive. This is continuous discussion about college with students, expectations and requirements that students will get into college, as well as clarification and tools for how to navigate the system.
2. *Clear Expectations* for students must be explicit. Students need to know and be prepared for and aware of all their options, and know specifically what these options look like.
3. *Information and Resources* must be easily available to all students so that they have access to up-to-date information about college, the how to, the different types of schools, eligibility requirements, etc.
4. The *Comprehensive Counseling model* is critical for the successes of college access work. Schools need to intentionally create a comprehensive counseling model, where every conversation a student has with a staff opens doors to college.
5. *Testing and Curriculum* are the fifth principle of a college culture. Students should have access to test prep (SAT, ACT), awareness of what the tests are for and how they function (i.e., eligibility), understand how to take the tests, have access to fee waivers, have course work that prepares them for the tests (i.e. geometry) and take courses that make them college-eligible.

6. *Staff Involvement* ensures that all staff (i.e., middle school staff, elementary school staff, administrators, etc.) are onboard with the idea that all students are going to college and sending the same message to the students and parents regarding college.
7. Additionally, *family Involvement* is another critical piece. Parents must be included, must have access to up-to-date relevant college information and be informed of their child's options. They must be told that their child can and will succeed in college and most importantly, should attend college.
8. *College Partnerships* add infrastructure and support to staff within schools and college access programs. By establishing partnerships between the high schools and the colleges, the idea of college really comes to life. Such partnerships can come in the form of college tours, guest speakers, info sessions, summer programs, mentors, or pipeline programs.
9. And lastly, *articulation*, similar to college talk, must be pervasive: everyone should be talking about college with students from the very beginning, at home, school and during the after-school hours. Students should be talking to each other and providing positive peer pressure. Starting very young all the way through graduation, this seamless communication makes the idea of college the norm, ensuring that college can become a reality.

“A positive college-going school culture encourages all students to pursue college as a postsecondary option and prepares all students to make informed decisions through systemic services that engage all staff personnel, not just guidance and college

counselors” (Knight-Diop, 2010, p. 165). A college-going culture, while difficult to create, is critical for the success of all students involved. McClafferty et. al. (2002) contend that in order for systemic change to occur where all students within a school are prepared and interested in pursuing college, individualized student-centered work is not enough: a college-going-culture must exist. If the school climate is missing messages from the school to the students then expectations for the future are unclear - both students and teachers struggle to push for the same outcomes (Schneider, 2007). Schools must “[focus] on creating and sustaining school wide college-going culture through institutional and interpersonal structures of care” (Knight-Diop, p. 170). All staff at school, regardless of position, must feel obligated to support all students to go to college (Schneider, 2007). Partnerships between high schools and colleges can prove very useful in creating a college-going-culture for students (Collins, 2011).

College Counseling

The structure of the school impacts the focus of college counseling which in turn influences the type of support students receive, and therefore affects how students act and make decisions about college (McDonough 1997). Access to college-going information is critical for success of all students (Corwin, et. al., 2004). Factors that contribute to successful enrollment in college are: “(A) a rigorous college preparatory curriculum, (B) a college-going culture, and (C) appropriate counseling and resources committed to advising college-bound students” (Corwin, et. al., 2004, p. 444).

The process of thinking about applying to college and how to pay for college needs to begin far before the 12th grade (Max & Tuttle, 2009). Provision of college-counseling information really starts in elementary school where academic decisions at

that time do actually influence a college trajectory long before high school even begins (Corwin, et. al., 2004). Once a child is in middle school, she is presented with the opportunity to select elective classes such as math, languages and sciences and although the grades for classes at this level are not accessible to schools during the application process, they will serve as a foundation for classes in high school. Introductory courses can be used to train students for more rigorous coursework with increased confidence and grade-point averages (Warburton, Bugarin & Nunez, 2001). “Student behavior is often influenced by the information they receive” (Corwin, et. al., 2004, p. 447). As was mentioned above, more often than not, students of color are left at the wayside while white students are afforded the necessary opportunities required to gain admission into a 4-year college.

College-Prep Curriculum

Ivy league schools are the most competitive colleges in the U.S. With an abundance of admissions criteria, academic success is just one of many. Although Ivy League schools may not be of interest to all students or even the best fit, students planning to attend a post-secondary institution still need to be mindful of academic requirements. In California, University of California (UC) and California State Universities (CSU) schools vary slightly in course requirements. “[S]tudents who secure college qualifications while in high school have a higher chance of enrolling in college than those who do not” (Cabrera & La Nasa, 2001, p. 120). The reality is that not every student will attend college, but the decision should be theirs, rather than the effect of an education system that has failed them. With the intention of lessening the educational

deficit between white students and students of color, preparation for college courses needs to be initiated before a student completes high school.

Recognizing that the level of participation in higher education by students of color was so low, a panel was selected by the Institute of Educational Sciences (IES) to research and create a guide to assist students in navigating their way to and through a college education (Max & Tuttle, 2009). The panel notes:

The courses students take in high school have important consequences for their academic preparation and their ability to access college. Yet, low-income and first-generation students are less likely than other students to complete a rigorous high school curriculum that prepares them for college, either because it is not offered by their high school or they are not encouraged to enroll in it. (p. 12)

To attain success academically, students need to realize the importance of the classes they choose to take. The UC and CSU systems share A-G minimum course requirements, though achievement level reached within these classes varies with the UC system expecting higher grades than the CSU system. The requirements by subject for the UC system were designed for two reasons: 1) so that faculty know that students have a general foundation from which new ideas can be built, and 2) students have completed courses that have developed their critical thinking skills

(www.universityofcalifornia.edu).

Financial Support

Financial support for college education has become a growing concern with the instability of the economy in the U.S. as well as the consistent tuition increase seen on all types of college campuses. In order to allocate funding into other government ventures, federal and state gift-aid programs such as PELL and Cal-grant have seen a reduction in support which may have an impact on the pace at which students of color progress through college and could even mean dropping out (Quizon, 2011). The Federal Stafford

student loan program has also suffered with increased interest rates and the elimination of subsidized loans for graduate students. Minority families receive the highest amount of loans and grants and also receive subsidized tuition at some institutions, but still are not able to afford college and are often forced to attend less expensive schools (St. John, et. al., 2005). Time spent with low-SES students is especially important where financial aid information is a huge barrier (Corwin, et. al., 2004). Due to lack of affordability and/or lack of available financial aid information, some students of color who have performed well academically may still not be able to realize their potential due to their selection of college being influenced and restricted by affordability.

For students of color, the problems do not stop with changes in funding programs, but begin with a lack of knowledge about funding options. The increased need for federal and state aid sheds light on greater socio-economic disparities. In a survey conducted by St. John, et al. (2005), it was determined that “71% of the people surveyed believed that college is not affordable for most families; 83% of the African American respondents believed so” (p. 545). Like most information regarding college education, resources are available and accessible to many people, but knowing where to look and the questions to ask is what leaves many families behind in the quest to fund tuition.

Role of the College Counselor

There are conflicting views on the role of the college counselor. “...traditional views of the high school guidance counselor as the sole purveyor of information about college must be disrupted if such students are to benefit from a school wide, culturally relevant college-going culture” (Knight-Diop, 2010, p. 165). Yet, as it stands, college counselors serve as gatekeepers to educational access (Bryan, et. al., 2009). And “at

times, guidance counselors actually served as impediments to college access” (Corwin, et. al., 2004, p. 449). The public school counselor is often responsible for scheduling students for classes, and many times students recognize that they are in classes that made them ineligible for college - but in expressing this to counselors, they are denied access to these classes indicating that the counselors do not care about them (Corwin, et. al.). “The counselor’s lack of support sent a message to the student that college was not an option” (Corwin, et. al., p. 452).

In regards to the college application process, the relationship of the high school counselors and their daily interactions with students are very important (McDonough 1997). “School counselors’ postsecondary aspirations for students ... impacted students’ contact with the school counselor” (Bryan, et. al., 2009, p. 280). The perception the student has of the counselor’s expectations can significantly influence the amount of college information to which students truly have access. “When students have negative perceptions of their counselors and choose not to forge relationships with them, they diminish a possible channel for college-going information and support” (Corwin, et. al., 2004, p. 453). In a study analyzing factors that affect a student’s likelihood to interact with their counselor, Bryan, et. al. found that the student variables that most influenced a student-counselor relationship were the student’s race, gender, and mother’s education level. The school variables with the biggest impact on the student-counselor relationship were the school level and setting, the percentage of students on free or reduced lunch, the size of the school, the number of counselors at the school, school-solicited parental involvement and most notably the counselors’ postsecondary aspirations and expectations for their students. Overall, low-SES students were less likely to seek advice from their

counselors (Bryan, et. al.). “Counselors must be mindful of the covert and overt messages that they send to students about their college readiness and abilities. Particularly for low-income students and students of color, they likely need their counselors’ support and encouragement more than the more affluent white students” (Bryan, et. al., p. 290, p. 290).

“*Educational brokering* refers to a process in which a person or organization helps to bridge cultural or linguistic differences between two parties” (Kirshner, Saldivar, & Tracy, 2011, p. 119). It’s important that educational brokering be done in a culturally appropriate way and “by *culturally responsive*, we mean that programs leverage the expertise and strengths of families, such as First Graduate’s work with the parental advisory board” (Kirshner, et. al., pp. 119-120). This “systems knowledge” is important for young people, and particularly necessary for FGCBS whose families are less familiar with “stratified education systems” (Kirshner, et. al., p. 119), and it is the counselor’s responsibility to provide this knowledge to students. Research suggests that “low-income students and students of color are more likely to be influenced by their high school counselors” (Bryan, et. al., 2009, p. 281). However, the role of brokering educational systems knowledge in the case of minority students is often filled by after-school student-centered programs, rather than counselors within schools.

Minority students are less likely to trust counselors because they think they do not understand their experiences, desires or needs and therefore the advise given is inaccurate - i.e. underselling certain options or reinforcing social inequalities by encouraging them to enroll in vocational programs rather than 4-year colleges (Corwin, et. al., 2004). Therefore, establishing trust between the student and the counselor is incredibly

important. Relational trust results when all stakeholders (students, teachers and parents) hear the same message that college is both an option and expected (Schneider, 2007). When students trust the staff, the relationship is dynamic and students will assist with problem solving for teachers as well (Corwin, et. al.) resulting in multidirectional communication which means reciprocal dialogue and not simply the school disseminating information (Knight, et. al., 2004).

Student aspirations coupled with a school environment aimed at college is very important (Corwin, et. al., 2004) for the students' future success. Counselors' low aspirations for students can become particularly problematic for students who do not have other sources of information such as parents (Bryan, et. al., 2009) because these aspirations end up having a self-fulfilling aspect. "Parents who are knowledgeable about the school's expectations and the way in which the school operates are better advocates for their children than parents who lack such skills" (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994, p. 96). Counselors should have high expectations for all students and provide opportunities for all groups to have the same access to relevant college information, including financial aid information (Bryan, et. al.). Teachers were more attentive to student problems and seek to support students academically and socially when they know the student is college-bound (Knight-Diop, 2010).

Models of College Counseling

In order to establish a college-going -culture to increase college enrollment amongst underrepresented students, there are two models of intervention programs that one can use to address the problem; student-centered and school-centered programs (Gandára, 2002).

Student-Centered College Counseling

The first are external student-centered programs. These “programs focus their resources and activity on individual students ... The intent of the programs is to foster the fortunes of individual students with the hope that they will succeed in high school and go to college” (Gandára, 2002, p. 85). These after-school programs target efforts to help the most promising students with the extra boost they may need to become competitively eligible (Oakes et. al., 2002). Student-centered programs are typically after-school programs with a small-to-midsized cohort of select students. They are more labor-intensive and financially costly, because they are focusing on shifting the lives of individual students rather than shifting the system itself (Jayakumar, Vue, & Allen, 2013). Such programs can provide students with a multitude of benefits, potentially altering their paths and making them eligible for and successful in college. Such programs can provide positive peer pressure from other students similar to them, which has been identified as important for student success (Jayakumar, et. al, 2013). Another benefit of these after-school programs is that they provide appropriate role models and mentors to students of color. These programs provide the students with contact with successful people who look like them --- making the dream of success seem a possibility or even a reality. As students of color are rarely exposed to successful adults of color who have succeeded even within the white-privilege system, having access to role models and mentors through such after-school programs can provide them advice and guidance that is critical for their success (Jayakumar, et. al, 2013).

However, research indicates that while such external student-centered programs maybe successful for the small number of students they work with, schools must target

all students within the school, not just a subset (Schneider, 2007) in order to make systemic change. External student-centered programs are limited in that they do not support the entire school community, rather they target a subset of students (Schneider, 2007) - if this occurs within school time and students are separated, it can have a negative impact on the school environment. Sometimes such programs only include a subset of staff (Schneider, 2007) - this makes it difficult for consistent communication between staff and from staff to students. If not all staff are involved in the initiative, students can get mixed messages about college and their ability to attend (Schneider, 2007). Oftentimes, such programs are not based on sound research and may not fully understand the developmental (physical & social) stages of HS students (Schneider, 2007) - or the diverse needs of different kinds of students. Many programs neglect to address financial literacy to assist students with realistic financial future planning (Schneider, 2007).

School-Centered Programs

School-centered early intervention programs house the program within the school. Such programs are defined as “focus[ing] on changing schools so that the schools are capable of being the primary vehicle of mobility for students.... [S]tudents throughout the school should be benefited, rather than just the select few who are in a program” (Gandára, 2002, p. 85). The unique feature of school-centered programs is that every single student within the school has access to college preparation, as opposed to a select few in a student-centered program. College-going culture becomes infused through all grade levels K-12 (McClafferty, et al., 2002). And most importantly, there must be an expectation from all staff and students that each student will enroll in college.

The difficulty of school-centered programs lies in shifting the framework of the school from one where only a handful of students are expected to go to college, to one where all students are expected to attend college. “Macrolevel constraints on guidance often make the articulation of counseling extremely difficult at a micro level” (Corwin, et. al., 2004, p. 454-455). Such programs seek to improve the quality of college preparation through curriculum development and college counseling (Oaks, et al., 2002). Schneider (2007) recommends specific school system policies to promote college enrollment:

1. Advising periods
2. Entrance exam preparation (SAT, ACT)
3. College researching within class
4. Learning about financial aid, sources and how they work
5. Researching different careers and what type of education is needed for it
6. Mock interviews for college
7. College resource center - location on school property dedicated to college
8. Attend college fairs
9. Visit college campuses
10. Ensure non-college counselors have access to college information
11. Offer incentive programs (like scholarships) to ensure students enroll in college

School-centered counseling hybrid programs have been researched. Auerbach (2004) conducted a study on the Futures & Families program through a research project at UCLA. The “Futures & Families was grounded in the belief that marginalized parents

need opportunities for dialogue with educators and safe spaces in which to learn and engage around educational issues” (Auerbach, p. 129). This program was a partnership between a nonprofit program and a public school targeting Latino families within the school, with the goal of increasing college access for Latino families. Its aim was to provide families with relevant college information. Most notably, they held monthly parent meetings in Spanish for Latino parents (most of which did not attend college themselves). These meetings were aimed at filling informational gaps for parents. Parents appreciated hearing from other parents who went through the college process with their own children. They felt they got the most out of hearing other parents’ stories, and they also liked hearing about loans and financial aid. Parent meetings “enabled the families of first-generation students to imagine themselves feeling that same pride at own children’s graduation” (Auerbach, p. 133). Parents stated that these meetings provided the most information and resources for college - not the schools.

To review theme two, the role of the college counselor is critical in the success of each student. Due to lack of resources many schools are unable to provide students with counselors who are not over-extended with their responsibilities and the number of students they serve. In addition to lack of counselor support, many students are in the wrong classes to be college eligible, and even if they are college eligible they are often unaware of the steps necessary to apply to, enroll in, and pay for college. The students who suffer as a result of these system-wide issues traditionally are low-income students of color whose parents did not attend college themselves. There are different ways to address these inequities, but the most effective is to establish and college-going-culture within a school and provide comprehensive support and resources to all students.

How Public and Private Schools Differ

Public Schools

In a case study conducted by Kimura-Walsh (2009), the experiences of low-SES Latina students who were attending an under-resourced public high school were explored. Results are consistent with previous research, identifying that significant barriers to college access were a result of limited financial and human resources at the school. Additionally, students identified race and class stereotypes serving as barriers to college. The chapter explored the role of aspirations and external barriers to college access and found that most students had strong aspirations as a result of their parents' personal experiences (i.e., students were motivated to pursue college because many of the parents were unable to). The problems arose from a lack of college-going culture at the school. This was particularly noted for those not in the top 10% of the class. These students received less support from teachers and counselors, outside programs and peer groups. Additionally, the reality of tuition costs impacted choices leading to more students enrolling in community college or close to home - if they enrolled in college at all.

Low-SES students have less access to college resources and often go to less resourced schools (Bryan, et. al., 2009). The larger the school, the less likely all students were to go to the counselor (Bryan, et. al.). Poor counselor and poor teacher student ratios typically occur in schools with 50%+ minority enrollment according to the National Center for Education Stats from 2001 (Corwin, et. al., 2004). In these types of schools, low-SES students are less likely to seek college information from counselors (Bryan, et. al.). Additionally, poor communication between counselors and other school staff was evident in the study - with the college counseling department not seen as a priority of

school personnel (Corwin, et. al.). Ultimately, the biggest barrier to college access was student/counselor ratios - they affected the amount of time with students, and both students and counselors expressed frustration with this (Corwin, et. al.). Results from Corwin, et. al. study indicated a huge disconnect between the school-stated structural goals of college counseling and student's experience. In short, school structure and focus ultimately determines how a counselor's time is allocated and if college counseling is a priority; this affects the minority students' access to college attendance.

Public schools that serve a higher SES population are more likely to have a college focus and provide students with college resources and support (Bryan, et. al., 2009). However, within such schools, not all students have equal access to such resources. In a case study conducted to White-Smith (2009), a bussing program was evaluated. This program bussed minority students from over-crowded under-resourced urban schools and enrolls them in white well-resourced suburban schools. Results indicated that without proper accountability and allocation of resources, students' and parents' experiences were similar to those still in the urban schools. Bussed students at this school were traditionally part of a magnet program, physically segregating them from students and school resources. The assumption is that students will get college resources from the staff in the magnet program - but due to lack of accountability, in practice this doesn't actually happen - leaving the minority students without any resources, as they cannot access the resources within the main school. Additionally, the physical distance is a barrier for parents to get involved and have access to valuable information. Hence, the bussed students and their parents are not provided the same experience as the un-bussed students and their parents. Minority students notice disparities and do not like them.

Private Schools

Private schools thrive in the US because we value the notion of school choice. Choice aims to provide students and families with the option to select what they feel is best for them, corresponding to the capitalistic concept of the free market in which consumers are able to choose products that they feel are best for them (Ravitch, 2010). Choice can come in many forms, such as curricular choice (vocational or professional courses) and school choice (large, small, charter, public or private). The benefit of such choice, whether the school a family chooses or the classes within the school, is that the child is not forced into something unhealthy, unsafe or inappropriate. The students aren't forced to attend poor-quality schools in broken buildings, without textbooks and qualified teachers, but rather they can elect to enroll wherever they choose. The intention is not to make children conform to an educational curriculum or environment that is inappropriate for their culture. Students even have the option to select a school based on their future career goals (law, medicine, art), and enroll in a charter school explicitly catering to those desires (Noguera, 2003). However, this concept of choice does not consider the issue of the uninformed, uneducated, overworked and economically challenged parents. It is unrealistic to assume that such parents have the time and resources to educate themselves to make the best choice for their children and to fight for the few spots that would be available to them – for them a true free market education does not exist as a viable option (Noguera, 2003; Ravitch, 2010).

In 2009-2010 there were 33,366 private schools in the US (Broughman, Swain, & Hryczaniuk, 2011). The geographic locations of private schools throughout the country are relatively evenly split, with 22.9% in the Northeast, 25.2% in Midwest, 31.4% in

South, and 20.4% in West. Most private schools are located in either cities (32.4%) or the suburbs (34.8%), with the remaining located in towns (10%) or in rural areas (20.4%). Overall, private high schools have incredibly high graduation rates: 98% in Northeast, 98% in Midwest, 98.5% in South, 97.5% in West, 98.4% in cities, 97.9% in suburbs, 98.2% in towns, and 97.2% in rural areas. But overall, they still do not send 100% of their students off to 4-year colleges right after graduation. The following are the percentage of students who attended 4-year colleges by fall 2009 after graduation: 65.1% in Northeast, 68.6% in Midwest, 63.7% in South, 58.4% in West, 68.9% in cities, 65.2% in suburbs, 59.9% in towns, and 57.7% in rural areas.

Private high schools typically serve affluent students and their families. Private schools “have been seen, in short, as the training ground for the next generation of power brokers in both the public and private spheres of influence in the USA” (Herr, 1999, p. 115). There are many different types of private schools, such as faith-based, specialty interest, special education, or preparatory schools modeled after the British style, to name a few (Boerema, 2006). Private schools are very diverse in their missions, goals and focus, represented through their curriculum and various educational programs. In general public schools attempt to address issues of equity, which is not necessarily the goal of private schools. For private schools, “rather than serving as an instrument of social equalization, the school is seen as a tool for increasing the chances of getting ahead through social connections and the social elite” (Boerema, p. 182). Private schools are more focused on specific values because they are driven by their mission statement. “[T]he school mission raised from a set of values that answer fundamental questions

about the purpose of education and how the educational program should be carried out” (Boerema, p. 182).

It is problematic to compare public schools to private schools - they are not comparable (Boerema, 2006). Private schools differ vastly from each other and have different goals from public schools. Many private schools have a holistic view on education, attempting to develop the whole person. “Private schools are able to choose the aspects of schooling that are linked to their mission, giving them a tighter coupling of curricula, instruction, the socialization experiences, and the school community’s values” (Boerema, p. 182-183). Students enrolled in private schools “tend to be highly motivated, intelligent, and in many cases able to pay the high costs of attending the nation’s colleges and universities” (Hayden, 1988, p. 2).

Private School Culture and Goals

While private schools differ substantially amongst themselves they “tend to lie on a continuum with some schools having concepts in their mission statements that are from other groups” (Boerema, 2006, p. 187-188). “All of the school groups included four goals associated with schools: the development of academic or intellectual ability, personal development, social development and physical development” (Boerema, p. 194-195). Specifically, through the mission statement analysis of 87 private schools, it was evident that community distinctiveness came through, which defines which students are invited to participate in the school culture. Groups of schools differed on parent involvement based on the mission statements, with faith-based schools placing a higher emphasis on its value. But many of the British style schools specifically focused on “academic, intellectual, or mental development” (Boerema, p. 195) along with college enrollment,

athletics and other extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities are a big part of the private school experience (Hayden, 1988), and leadership opportunities and leadership training are often made available. “The ‘promise’ of elite independent schools is that they serve as an equalizer to these transitionally race- and class- base opportunities” through scholarships (Herr, 1999, p. 116).

While 100% of all private school students do not enroll in a 4-year college right after graduation, this is a primary goal for many private schools. In an analysis by Hayden (1988) the role of a college counselor within private high schools was discussed. “Very often independent school students aspire to attend selective colleges, and their presence in [college] freshman classes averages about thirty percent” (Hayden, p. 2).

College counselors within private schools take on many responsibilities to support students in their pursuit of college. They must have a solid understanding of admissions criteria and why schools make the decisions they make. Additionally, they must understand college costs and various ways to fund a student’s education. “From the point of view of students’ families, the increased cost of a college education has engendered an attitude that a college education is something of special value and therefore, measurable by the name of the particular college or university” (Hayden, 1988, p. 3). College counseling becomes “a sort of service for which the parent is paying” (Hayden, p. 3) that will result in students being admitted to selective schools because of their private school experience. A unique role for college counselors within private schools, which differs from counselors in public schools, is that college counselors are the primary advocates to colleges on behalf of students.

To ensure the best quality college counseling within private schools the student counselor ratio is very low to ensure the counselor knows students well and has plenty of one-on-one time with them (Hayden, 1988). Private schools “inevitably [focus] their attention on gaining admission to selective and challenging colleges” (Hayden, p. 2). College counselors work hard to establish strong relationships with all of their students. They use these intimate relationships with students to be explicit with college reps to be the best advocates possible. These relationships “play an influential and educational role in shaping the student’s attitudes toward academic, personal, and moral questions” (Hayden, p. 3). “Private school students were less likely to have student-counselor contact when they perceived the counselor as not caring about what they did after high school” (Bryan, et. al., 2009, p. 288); when students felt their college counselor has neutral opinions of them (“counselor thinks I should do what I want” (p. 289)), students’ relationships with their counselors were negatively impacted, where students visited the counselors less and sought information elsewhere.

Many private-school college counselors try to focus on educating the whole child and want to help find the best-fit university, not just the best name. College counselors are very involved with parents, more so than counselors in public schools (Hayden, 1988). Since most parents pay a great deal and choose to place their child in the private school they tend to act very invested in their child’s success. “The counselor must ensure that parents are made an integral part of the decision-making process” (Hayden, p. 4).

Often times certain private schools develop a history of sending larger numbers of graduates to certain colleges, establishing a long-lasting relationship (Hayden, 1988). Many private school counselors have personal relationships with admissions counselors

and can contact them directly to advocate especially for students on the edge of admission. Oftentimes college counselors invite admissions officers to present to students and parents, helping students make an impression on the admissions officer directly. In this way college counselors are the intermediaries between the high school and the college.

Diversity within Private Schools

“The analysis of the private school mission statements tells the story of schools arising from different historical traditions and that have interesting and broad goals for their children and the role that their children should play in society” (Boerema, 2006, p. 187). Since private schools traditionally originated from all-male schools, much of that historic culture is still present within these schools. “While not reflective of their current status, a number of these elite private’ schools historically were male-only; most had and continue to have populations that are predominately white” (Herr, 1999, p. 115). That being said, private schools are making an active effort to increase diversity, both racial and SES. In recent years the quest for diversity has led to the inclusion of a number of minority and disadvantaged students in independent schools” (Hayden, 1988, p. 2). Studies have focused on the experience of non-privileged students enrolled in privileged schools, and research suggests that private schools may “undermine” the success of non-privileged students in “subtle ways” (Herr, p. 112).

Herr (1999) conducted a longitudinal qualitative case study at an elite private high school where she was a teacher. She followed Black students and chronicled their experiences and reflections on being minorities on scholarship in the school. Students struggled with developing and managing their own identities and balancing them with

how they were perceived by their school and classmates. Students reflected that it takes a lot of strength to be successful as the only Black student in an all-white school. One student specifically felt that most people didn't think she should be there - specifically that something was wrong with her and she didn't have the ability to be successful at such a rigorous school. Furthermore she experienced pressure to be successful since she has a special opportunity that most other Black students didn't have. Since there were so few Black students, they felt very isolated and without community, and this disconnect was exasperated by a lack of cultural competency within the curriculum with know Black history taught anywhere in big school. Black students felt that the only way to survive was to adapt culturally to white values and norms. Themes that emerged from the study:

A sense of alienation from their own cultural and historical roots and identities; a sense that they were not performing as well as they could and blaming themselves; a sense of the burns of 'opportunity' and the pressure to make the most of it; and a sense of not being sure how to 'fight back' (Herr, p. 120)

As a result of such experiences, Black students felt their purpose in a white school was to educate students about being a person of color and this was a huge burden weighing on them and so they created a student group called the "Minority Awareness Committee". This "group offered the [black] boys [opportunity] to make meaning of their experiences" (Herr, 1999, p. 121). Black students approach school administration for support, breaking down racial barriers, but the administration refused to engage in the dialogue and students felt compelled to make their own change within the school. They "began to link their possible 'solutions' to the historical position of blacks in the larger society, framing their problem solving in a broader lens that their own current experiences" (Herr, p. 122). The researcher argued that "[s]tudents are not merely 'socially reproduced' in schools but rather, through their resistance and appropriation of

school structure, they ‘produce’ social identities through reactively occupying the spaces provided by social institutions” (Herr, p. 113).

Reviewing how private schools differ from public schools summarizes theme three. Traditionally low-SES students of color attend under-resourced public schools, experiencing lower graduation rates and lower college enrollment rates. Private schools are viewed as alternatives to public schools in the U.S. Private schools traditionally serve white middle-upper class students due primarily to the cost of attendance. These schools are mission-driven and focus on college attainment. As a result, they typically have dedicated staff to college and prioritize college prep curriculum and experiences for students. However, they lack diversity and consequently it is suggested that minority students enrolled in private schools may struggle with their identity and academic performance despite access to a sundry resources and a college-going culture.

First Generation College Bound Students

As we have seen, support networks are vital to students’ success, and in determining fields of interest and career choices. As previously mentioned, idealistically, high school counselors should be able to lend their expertise in developing a direction of interest for students. Unfortunately, due to their responsibilities within public school they are scattered with minimal staff support, the responsibility of college guidance is shifted to the home. Ogbu (2003) naively states:

[S]tudents had very high academic aspirations but, as was evident in their record of performance, it was not clear that they know how to realize [their college or career] aspirations.... Black students did not understand the connection between their present schooling, higher education, and future adult career or professions. (p. 122)

Minority students have further problem issues in this area. As minority communities and their allies try to even out representation of minority students on 4-year

college campuses, there are additional obstacles they may face, such as being first-generation college students (meaning neither of their parents have graduated from a 4-year university). Gandára (2002) notes, “71% of students whose parents are college graduates enroll in a four-year college or university, compared with only 26% of students whose parents have no more than a high school diploma” (p. 84).

Although families may be in favor of their loved ones pursuing an education, they are oftentimes ill-equipped to help them succeed (Herndon & Hirt, 2004). In most cases, these families lack the knowledge, information and experience to properly guide their students. As with many stages of growth and development throughout one’s childhood and adolescence, familial support is paramount (McClafferty, et al., 2002); this can create an added barrier to students. Cabrera and La Nasa (2001) state that “parental encouragement and involvement [are] a pivotal force in the emergence of occupational and educational aspirations” (p. 123). Navigating academic requirements, application processes, financial aid applications, extra-curricular resources, and institution selection, students of color can and usually do find themselves trying to single-handedly guide themselves (Oakes, 2002). However, even for students that perform well, without the proper guidance it will be difficult for them to actualize and prepare for transitioning to a higher-education institution.

Kirshner, et. al. (2011) identify a framework to explain why FGCBS struggle to go to college: “structure explanations point to inequalities in the kinds of resources available to students in high-poverty schools” (p. 108). They identify three primary systems that these students need to navigate in order to pursue college:

“1) School district enrollment, 2) High school course taking, and 3) College admissions” (p. 108).

It is believed that these are three main critical junctions that FGCBS have the potential to stay/become college-bound or lose their footing and get redirected to an alternative route.

Because many of these [first generation] students have not been seen as college material, they have not been encouraged by school counselors...to take part in the courses and guidance activities that will help them successfully compete for college admission. Thus, students who need information the most as the least likely to get it. Quite often, first generation students do not make the decision to attend college until late in their high school careers. If students are then encouraged to consider college, they may have missed out on many of the academic experiences that build a firm foundation for college studies. (Fallon, 1997, p. 387)

Strengths FGCBS Possess

Much of the literature focuses on the barriers FGCBS face. The lack of parental knowledge is identified as very detrimental to supporting students in their pursuit to college. These students are typically identified as underperforming academically and on college entrance exams like the SAT (Ishitani, 2003). And if they get to college, they are the more likely to drop out. After the first semester of college, the college-termination rate was 9% higher for FGCBS than those with two college-educated parents (Ishitani). FGCBS had the highest attrition rates as compared to students with one college-educated parent and even higher than students with two college-educated parents. This information is alarming because “although going to college maybe viewed as a rite of passage for many students, as a college degree becomes a prerequisite for jobs with higher salaries, first-generation students often face unique challenges in their pursuit of a college degree” (Ishitani, p. 434).

A strengths-based approach allows us to focus on the strengths FGCBS bring with them to the table, rather than simply depicting a doom-and-gloom future for students. Using the framework espoused by Yosso (2006) and González et al. (2005), we can identify these strengths and recommend ways for college counselors to utilize them to support FGCBS in their pursuit of higher education.

Previous analyses had often portrayed first-generation students as succeeding *despite* their family backgrounds. In contrast, the analysis reported here suggests that although they face many material challenges, the families of first-generation students are often a key resource rather than a constraint. (Gofen, 2009, p. 114)

A huge asset that FGCBS possess is their families and the capital that comes along with these relationships (Gofen, 2009). In a study focusing on the experiences of FGCBS' pursuit of college the main *value* that came across for all student participants was "family solidarity" (Gofen, p. 113) with a focus on ensuring that children succeeded, with the second main *value* being "respect for parents" (Gofen, p. 114). While these parents don't have knowledge based on their own college-going experiences to share with their children (Auerbach, 2004), these families are able and do provide advice and encouragement for their children. Emotional support and encouragement is identified as a huge support for FGCBS in their pursuit of higher education. Therefore, it is critical to recognize the role of the families in creating a college-going culture for students (Schneider, 2007).

In a case study conducted by Brown, Brown and Jayakumar (2009), results indicated that the driving force behind student success was in fact the student's family culture, not the school itself. Parents who worked to get their children into a magnet school had high expectations for their children to attend college, and students attributed these expectations to their parents' drive to create their own college-going culture

amongst their peers. Surprisingly, teachers and counselors reportedly did little to drive the student towards college and correspondingly provided little benefit or advantage.

Schools need to be aware of the family's framework about college and education to provide each student with useful college support (Knight, et. al., 2004). However, to be fully culturally competent, Knight et al. note that the term *parent involvement* limits who can be involved in supporting the student; rather schools should think in terms of *family involvement*, because many working-class minority students are raised by several family members and not just parents. When asked about the success of FGCBS in Gofen's (2009) study, it was "consistently affirmed that what enabled [students] to break the intergenerational cycle and pave the way to social mobility lay in family day-to-day life during their upbringing" (p. 109).

Schools hold the responsibility of incorporating families into their college-counseling programming, specifically families of FGCBS. In a study by Auerbach (2004) it was found that by providing families with college specific information, they were able to provide their children with more active support as compared to passive emotional and moral support. These families felt more connected to the school and more connected to their child's college process. Additionally, when families felt they better understood the different pieces of the college process, they were more open to ideas like their children moving away from home – something the Latino families in the study were initially hesitant about for their daughters.

Bryan, et. al. (2009) also found in their study that parents who didn't attend college were better able to support their students with college if they were actively engaged with school staff and in particular counselors. "Parents who have limited

experience with college planning should feel comfortable trusting the school to advise their adolescents appropriately” (Schneider, 2007, p. 10). Parents who didn’t attend college in the US may not understand the difference between schools and levels of school (i.e, 2-year and 4-year colleges), resulting in providing conflicting messages or misunderstanding of options. It is important for parents to have access to information about the US college system to be better informed about their child’s experience. “It is critical for school counselors to develop programming that specifically addresses parents of low-income students and students of color who aspire to go to college” (Bryan, et. al., p. 290).

FGCBS maybe at a disadvantage because their parents didn’t attend college, but the literature suggests that schools need to shift their mindset about FGCBS as they try to prepare them for college. Yes, it is necessary to understand these barriers, but it is also necessary to understand the strengths these students possess. FGCBS enrolled in private high schools likely have strong family ties and support that has aided them in their private school journey thus far. These students have high educational aspirations and a goal of pursuing PSE. College counselors within private schools have the responsibility of aiding all of their students in enrolling in college, and if they are able to understand the experiences FGCBS have they will be more equipped to support them rather than hinder them.

The final theme of Chapter II addresses the focus population of this dissertation, first generation college bound students. These students are at a disadvantage in that their parents have not navigated the waters they are attempting. Many high schools rely on the family assisting the student in figuring out all the steps and requirements for college

enrollment, with this gap in the home, these students are more likely to never make it to college. Race and class only compound this reality, as these same students historically are disadvantaged on multiple fronts. It is important to note that many FGCBS have high aspirations to attend college and their families support them in many ways towards this goal. If schools recognize and harness the strengths within the home to support students in pursuit of college (even if this knowledge is not formal information about college), students can be very successful. Ultimately it is a three-way partnership between the student, school and family.

Summary

The review of the literature has indicated four themes that are brought together to address the research questions of this dissertation. The first theme examines the inequity within education, the second theme focuses on college counseling and the role of the counselor, the third theme looks at the differences between public and private schools, and finally the fourth theme explores the experiences of first-generation college-bound students. Weaving these four bodies of literature together creates the foundation of this dissertation study.

It is clear that our educational system is unequal and does not provide equitable access to quality education. Inequity falls along many lines such as race, income, parental education attainment, and depending on who you are in society, you are systemically more or less likely to have access to a quality education leading to college. Even within schools resources can be unevenly distributed. High-SES white students are more likely to be placed in Advanced Placement and upper tracked classes making access to college much more streamlined. For students who are not initially tracked to college, access to

the information and resources to apply to, pay for and enroll in college can be very challenging. Schools that create a college-going culture are more likely to share those resources with all students regardless of their background. While the creation of such an environment is very challenging and requires all school personnel to be involved, it is considered to be the most effective form of getting underrepresented students on college campuses.

Private schools exist in our society to serve as an alternative to public education, but unfortunately they are traditionally reserved for those that can afford the high tuition rates. While private schools tend to have a strong college-going culture for all students, the ability to attend such an elite school is limited to a small portion of society. As private schools are becoming more mindful of our diverse society, they are taking steps to provide access to their quality curriculum, resources and college preparation to a generation of underrepresented students. Many of these students are low-income, students of color and often times are first-generation college-bound. These students face enormous odds to succeed in their affluent white private school environments and will continue to have to overcome the odds to be successful in college.

According to the National Association for College Admission Counseling (2013), it is the “duty [of college counselors] to serve students responsibly, by safeguarding their rights and their access to and within postsecondary education” (p. 1). The role of the college counselor is particularly critical in ensuring the success of FGCBs. If college counselors understand who FGCBs are, what they experience at home as well as what they experience on a daily basis within their schools, college counselors are much more likely to successfully support them in their goals of attending college. Not having

attended college does not equate to parents not caring about their own children attending college, rather they are more likely to see the value in higher education. Schools have the responsibility of identifying these students and providing both the student and family the resources and information to make the best decision possible.

This chapter attempted to combine these bodies of literature to frame the intent of this study: to understand the impact of college counseling within private high schools on first-generation college-bound students' enrollment in four-year colleges. The next chapter of this dissertation described the research mythology, which is a case study of two private high schools. This mixed methods study addressed the research questions posed in Chapter I.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose

This case study sought to understand the influence of college counselors on college access for first-generation college-bound students (FGCBS) in private high schools. Review of the literature showed that the impact of the environment of private high schools on FGCBS is largely unexplored. In this study, a survey adapted from the CHOICES Project at UCLA (Allen, et. al., 2009) was used to explore FGCBS' experiences navigating the college application process within their schools and the outcomes on their access to college. Specifically, this study provided insights into the perspectives, roles, and approaches of the college counselor at each school, and provided some comparisons between educational outcomes such as enrollment in 4-year universities by FGCBS and non-FGCBS enrolled at each school. These comparisons will hopefully identify best practices that can be promulgated widely to increase the effectiveness of FGCBS access to 4-year colleges.

Research Design

The study is a case study of two high schools. The data collected was primarily qualitative, defined as “methods [that] involve a researcher describing *kinds* of characteristics of people and events without comparing events in terms of measurements or amounts” (Thomas, 2003, p. 1) with some quantitative data collection, defined as “methods... focusing attention on measurements and *amounts*... of the characteristics displayed by the people and events that the researcher studies” (Thomas, 2003, p. 1).

A case-study approach was utilized, focusing on two private high schools in San Francisco. According to Bassey (1999), there are five types of case studies, with some studies addressing the goals of several types simultaneously. The study was a combination of a *Story-Telling and Picture-Drawing Case Study*, defined as “narrative stories and descriptive accounts of educational events, projects, programmes, institutions or systems which deserve to be told to interested audiences, after careful analysis” (p. 58) and an *Evaluative Case Study*, defined as “enquires into educational programmes, systems, projects or events to determine their worthwhileness, as judged by analysis by researchers, and to convey this to interested audiences” (p. 58).

What characterizes case studies are that they are:

- “- conducted with a localized boundary of space and time (i.e. a singularity);
- into *interesting* aspects of an educational activity, or programme, or institution, or system;
- mainly in its natural context and within an ethic of respect for persons;
- in order to inform the judgments and decisions of practitioners or policy-makers” (p. 58)

In this instance, the researchers aim was to understand the college-going culture within two private high schools specifically within the college counseling department.

According to Bassay (2000), there are four stages to conducting a case study. Stage 1 starts by identifying the research as an issue worth exploring. Stage 2 is where the researcher asks the research questions and defines the ethical guidelines of the study. Stage 3 is characterized by collecting and storing the data. Specifically, interview

transcripts and survey results. And Stage 4 consists of generating and testing analytical statements, creating coding for and cross-referencing of data across school sites.

The college-going culture, specifically those aspects influenced most directly by college counselors, was explored and is described in the next chapter, from the perspective of the students and of the college counselors. The reason for a case study approach is to better understand the role of college counselors as gatekeepers or facilitators for FGCBS within private high schools and to provide an empirical basis to enable advocacy for population-specific comprehensive support for FGCBS within private high schools. The research questions addressed in this study are:

1. How does the college-going culture created in part by college counselors within a private high school context impact first generation college-bound students?
Specifically, how does this environment affect their student educational aspirations, student perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators?
2. How does the experience of FGCBS differ from non-FGCBS within the private high school environment? Specifically, to what extent is their experience different as it relates to student educational aspirations, student-perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators?
3. To what extent do college counselors and students have differing perspectives on student educational aspirations, student-perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college? Specifically between college counselors and first-generation college-bound students?

Research Setting

The study took place at two private high schools in the Bay Area. Schools were selected based upon the researcher's relationships with high school administrators, the schools' willingness to participate (including signing an informed consent statement), as well as the racial/ethnic make-up and percentage of students participating in financial aid at the school (as an indicator of the possible number of first-generation college-bound students).

A School Profile is provided for each school site below. Information will include:

- Mission statement of the school
- Demographics of the student body (race/ethnicity, SES, etc.)
- Number of students; student:teacher ratio
- Educational level of teachers (if available)
- Academic curriculum (# AP courses, Honors, etc.)
- Geographic location of school (and SES and racial make-up of the neighborhood)
- Graduation rate, college-enrollment rate
- Average SAT I & II/ACT/AP scores for school
- Basic description of college-counseling program (available on the website)
- The % of first-generation students enrolled in each high school, based on survey data collected

School Sites

The following information about each school is taken from the school's websites, specifically their School Profiles. For the protection of the participants in this study, all names, including the names of the schools have been changed and are pseudonyms.

Stoneholt High School

Stoneholt is located in the San Francisco Pacific Heights neighborhood.

According to the American Community Survey, San Francisco Profiles by Neighborhood Report (2011) based on data from 2005-2009, the Pacific Heights neighborhood is predominantly inhabited by white residents (75%), followed distantly by Asian residents (17%), with other minorities completing the remaining 8% of the population. The majority of residents hold a college degree (44%), followed by those with a graduate/professional degree (32%), with only 8% of residents holding a high school diploma or less (data for residents 25 years of age and older). The majority of the residents rents their units (58%), the remainder own. The median rent per month is \$1369 and the median home value is \$1,963,021. The median household income is \$96,542, and the median family income is \$140,642. Three percent of the residents live in poverty. The unemployment rate is 4%.

“Stoneholt High School welcomes students of demonstrated motivation and ability to engage in an education that fosters responsibility and the spirited pursuit of knowledge. We are a school where adults believe in the promise of every student, and together we work to build and sustain a community of diverse backgrounds, perspectives, and talents. Stoneholt challenges each individual to live a life of integrity, inquiry, and purpose larger than the self.” (taken from the school's website, which cannot be shared

to preserve confidentiality). Stoneholt has a total of 389 students, with a faculty to student ratio of 1:8. The average class size is 14, and 79% of the faculty have advanced degrees. Forty-three percent of the students identify as students of color, and 20% receive some form of tuition assistance. The median GPA of the class of 2014 was 3.52. Also for the class of 2014, the middle 50% of students scored on the SAT critical reading score between a 640-740, a SAT math score between 650-740 and an SAT writing score between 650-760. From the classes of 2009 to 2013, 100% pursued a 4-year college or university after graduation.

Ten students in the class of 2014 “are expected to be National Merit Semi-Finalists” and 97% of students scored a 3 or higher on 495 AP exams (taken from the school’s website). “Stoneholt High School, a college preparatory secondary school, offers an intellectually stimulating, personally enriching and academically challenging program in the liberal arts and sciences to an able and diverse student body. Standards of excellence guide all aspects of our program and the people engaged in it. We seek to instill in students the skills and attitudes of the lifelong learner and the responsible, engaged and, productive citizen” (taken from the school’s website). Similar to the other schools in the case study, Stoneholt’s curriculum graduation requirements exceed the UC eligibility requirements for admission (<http://www.ucop.edu>).

Field notes taken by the researcher at various points during the data collection process demonstrate the college-going culture within each school:

The Stoneholt campus is set up like a small urban university, with 3 separate buildings scattered across several city blocks in the Pac Heights neighborhood. The main 2 buildings are north, and the college counseling office is located in the southern building

about 2 blocks away. Previously this office was located in the main campus, and the college counselor told me in passing that he's hoping the office can move back to the main campus to increase foot traffic. The office is located on the third floor near the ceramics studio. When you first walk in, there's a conference table on the right and a wall of college materials, like books and catalogues on the left. On the wall are college pennants and posters representing the various colleges that students apply to. Tons of Ivy League and selective liberal arts colleges are represented. As you walk towards the office administrator's desk you pass the offices of the two college counselors. Each sits in a spacious welcoming room, where again more college materials can be found all over the shelves. During my visits to the office, students would come in to ask the administrative assistant a quick question about their applications, or a deadline. I never saw students sitting at the conference table.

Woodcrest High School

Woodcrest is located in the San Francisco Outer Mission neighborhood. According to the American Community Survey, San Francisco Profiles by Neighborhood Report (2011) based on data from 2005-2009, the Outer Mission neighborhood is predominantly inhabited by Asian residents (49%), followed closely by white residents (31%), and closely by Latino residents of any race (26%) (*researcher recognizes these numbers equals more than 100%). The majority of residents holds a high school degree or less (42%), followed by those with a college degree (26%), and residents with some college/associates degree at 24% (data for residents 25 years of age and older). The majority of the residents owns their units (66%), the remainder rents. The median rent per month is \$1292 and the median home value is \$674,346. The median household income

is \$79,477, and the median family income is \$88,273. Seven percent of the residents live in poverty. The unemployment rate is 5%.

“A private school with public purpose, Woodcrest High School develops the head, heart and hands of highly motivated students from all walks of life, inspiring them to become life-long learners who contribute to the world with confidence and compassion”
(taken from the school’s website, which cannot be shared to preserve confidentiality)

Woodcrest has a total of 460 students, with a faculty to student ratio of 1:10. The average class size is 15, and 76% of the faculty have advanced degrees. Fifty-five percent of the students identify as students of color, and 39% receive some form of tuition assistance. The median GPA of the class of 2014 was 3.66. For the class of 2013, the mean SAT critical reading score was 677, mean SAT math score was 674 and the mean SAT writing score was 682. From the classes of 2010 to 2013, between 98-100% pursued a 4-year college or university after graduation. “Over the past 4 years, 32 students have earned National Merit commendation; 10 have been named Finalists. There have been 3 Finalists in the National Achievement Scholarship Program and 6 have been selected for the National Hispanic Recognition Program.”

Woodcrest “no longer offer[s] any AP courses; instead, our faculty has designed new high-level and demanding Honors courses”, but despite that “[i]n the spring of 2012 and 2013, 116 students took 156 Advanced Placement exams: 95% of the scores were 3 or higher.” Similar to the other schools in the case study, Woodcrest’s curriculum graduation requirements exceed the UC eligibility requirements for admission (<http://www.ucop.edu>).

Field notes taken by the researcher at various points during the data collection process demonstrate the college-going culture within each school:

Woodcrest is located right across the street from City College of San Francisco, in one of the poorer neighborhoods in San Francisco. There is one main entrance to the campus, near several public transportation stops (MUNI, BART). When a visitor walks in they are asked to sign in at the front desk and then directed down a hallway of lockers towards the college counseling office. It seems to be located in a highly frequented area of the school, near the diversity and leadership office, which appears to be a place for students to hang out on the floor with their laptops and chat.

The office has a waiting room, decorated with old pictures of Woodcrest students and a bookshelf with college resources. Most of the resources are said to be located in the library, but the shelf contains Fisk guides and other large books describing colleges as well as college brochures. Students are invited to sit on the comfy couch and peruse catalogues either before meetings, or during free periods. Walking past the lounge into the office you find the office administrator who also has a small caseload of approximately 15 students. This hybrid position is relatively new. Attached to this main room (which also contains free snacks for the kids) are the offices of each college counselor. During my various visits to the office I would see a student or two hanging out in the front lounge, looking at their computer waiting for a meeting. I also watched as different pairings of parents would come through for meetings – usually without the student. These meetings took place behind closed doors, but the counselors seemed very welcoming.

Instrumentation

The survey and interview for students, and questions for counselors were adapted and modified with consent from Dr. Walter Allen. The book *Towards a Brighter Tomorrow: College Barriers, Hopes and Plans of Black, Latino/a and Asian American Students in California* (Allen, Kimura-Walsh & Griffin, 2009) presents the findings of the CHOICES project. The book presents 10 case studies of public and charter high schools in the Los Angeles Area. Each chapter within this book is a case study of an individual high school. The overarching research goal being addressed throughout the CHOICES project is to understand “college choice and college access among urban Latino/a, Black and Asian American students” (Allen, et. al., 2009, p. 10).

The researchers conducted a mixed-methods study utilizing, case study analyses, survey methodology, observations, document reviews and focus groups. Within each high school a variety of data were collected in order to create a holistic picture of each school in which to understand students’ experiences. Survey items asking about demographics as well as basic questions about experience within college counseling were asked of: students, counselors, parents and teachers. Additionally, focus groups guided by pre-established questions were used within each high school and population (Fowler, 2009). For the purposes of this dissertation, only the instruments intended for students and counselors were used.

Student survey

The student survey was used to collect basic demographic information as well as determine which students are FGCB. The data that students provide came directly from

the students, it is not information that can be found elsewhere in the school's data collection.

The student survey consists of 27 questions (Appendix A). Most of the questions are closed-ended, with one open-ended question at the end of the survey asking students to share anything they want about their college application experience. Additionally, students were asked to provide their email addresses if they were interested in participating in a brief follow-up interview. Questions addressed the following constructs, which were collapsed and represented by quantitative data: student educational aspirations, student-perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators or outcomes (i.e., college acceptances and enrollment). These constructs explore students' experiences within their college counseling program at school, as well as other influences (e.g., peers, family, community, etc.). Demographic information was also requested. A student's FGCB status was determined based on the questions regarding parental education. Students who report that *both* parents (if known) have the following level of education were categorized as FGCBS: grammar school or less; some high school; high school graduate; postsecondary school other than college; some college.

Student Interviews

The questions for the student interviews were taken directly from the CHOICES Project, with the addition of one question specifically about first-generation status (Appendix B). The researcher invited five FGCBS at each high school to participate in an interview in order to get a deeper understanding of their experience. These interviews were conducted after students completed the surveys, so that FGCBS could be identified.

Counselor Interviews

Interviewing college counselors, rather than providing them a survey produced richer information about the college counseling program and counselors' perspectives. The information provided included both the counseling structure (facts which can be found online) as well as the counselor's values and beliefs about the structure and how these connect to FGCBS specifically. Each interview was guided by pre-established questions increasing consistency between case study sites (Fowler, 2009). Since there was a very small number of college counselors in this study (3 per school), the feasibility of individual counselor interviews at each school was manageable, and the benefits outweigh the costs.

Population and Sample

All seniors at each high school were invited to participate in the study (approximately 100 students per school). Since the identities of FGCBS were not known, it was logical to invite all to participate in the survey. All students with informed consent were encouraged to participate in completing the survey. Two groups were identified within each school (FGCBS and non-FGCBS). Descriptive statistics for each group at each high school is presented in table format in Chapter IV.

Each college counselor at each high school was invited to participate in the study. All college counselors provided informed consent and participated in a person-to-person interview. Limited demographic information for the small sample of college counselors is presented in Chapter IV, to protect the identity of the counselors.

Procedure for Data Collection

The student data collected via a survey provided a standardized approach making it easier to assemble and compare data/perspectives. Crews & Curtis (2011) found that online surveys versus paper surveys were easier to implement and the results were easier to interpret. While faculty in the study believed that paper surveys provided a higher response rate, this could be due to the fact that paper surveys are traditionally administered within the classroom. To interview all seniors at both high schools would be immensely difficult, and a paper-pen survey would increase error in data entry. Additionally the technology aspect of an online survey program such as Survey Monkey and the short duration of completing the survey (5-10 min) is demonstrated to increase response rates for students (Anderson, Cain, & Bird, 2005). After students completed the survey, they were free to go.

Students who are categorized as FGCB were asked to participate in a 30 minute interview. College counselors at each school offered to support in this recruitment effort. Student interviews took place on the school site.

This data was collected in April 2014 and May 2014 after students had submitted all of their applications, and the information about their income, family, etc. was still fresh in their minds. National college application deadlines are typically between October and February, and the National Decision Day is May 1st when all students are required to inform their college of enrollment.

Counselor interview times were scheduled with each college counselor. These interviews took place in the counselor's office. These interviews took place in April of 2014. This time period is the least stressful in the academic year for college counselors.

Most questions were open-ended and provided qualitative information that contributes to the overall understanding of the student's experience within the private high school - specifically as it relates to their own college-counseling experience (see Appendix C). College counselors were asked about the program and resources they offer to all students, as well as their understanding of barriers FGCBS face and the assets they bring into the school. Additionally, counselors were asked about which students typically take advantage of resources and their perceptions about why this is the case.

Timeline

Relationships with each high school were forged during September 2013 through January 2014. The researcher initiated contact with one college counselor at each high school. She provided the college counselor with information regarding the study, which was presented to the Principal of each school. After the principal understood the goals and steps of a school site, relationships were formalized and a timeline and protocol were agreed upon. At the end of the study, the researcher provided each school a report of the aggregated data from their school as a "thank you" for participation. Additionally, each college counselor received a \$25 gift card to Starbucks as a "thank you" for participating and facilitating the entire process.

USF's IRB process was completed in December 2013 and *exempt status* approval was granted on December 20, 2013 (see Appendix D for documentation). After dissertation proposal approval was granted in February 2014 the researcher set up a structure for collecting informed consent (see Appendix E for copy of student informed consent) from all student participants and for those under the age of 18, parental consent

and informed assent was collected (Fink, 2013). Counselors signed their informed consent prior to their interview (see Appendix F for copy of counselor informed consent).

- At each school the researcher worked with the college counselors to collect informed consent from all families of students 17 and under (by May 1, 2014). The same documentation described above was sent home, asking for parents to provide informed consent for their child to participate. This was done through electronic means, as that is both school's policy to collect parent consent.
- Additionally, all students were asked to 'click through' an informed assent page on the online survey and for students who are 18 by May 1, 2014, this 'click through' also served as their informed consent.

In May 2014 the researcher visited each high school for a scheduled senior assembly. During the assembly all senior students were asked to either provide consent or ask their parents for consent (if they were under 18 as of May 2014). The researcher introduced herself and explained the purpose of the survey to the students: that we are trying to better understand students' college application experience. Students received an email from the college counselor with the URL for the Survey Monkey survey. Students completed the survey on their smartphones, computers, or tablets. The survey took between 5 and 10 minutes to complete.

In May 2014, students who were categorized as FGCB were invited to participate in a 20-30 minute interview that was recorded and transcribed with consent. The college counselors at each school assisted with recruiting and scheduling five FGCBs for interviews at each school.

College counselors at each school provided 7 semester transcripts for the 10 FGCBS interviewed as well as their college lists (i.e., applications, acceptances/rejections/wait lists, school enrolling in). Students were not anonymous to the researcher, but once data was collected, survey information and transcripts were linked through a code to maintain confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Raw student data was exported from Survey Monkey and imported into SPSS for analysis. Data analysis consists of within-group and between-group comparisons on the three main constructs: student educational aspirations, student perceived access to resources and student barriers to 4-year college. The fourth construct, student educational performance indicators was not collapsed but rather assessed using several measurements (ie. SAT score). Both student and counselor qualitative data was coded for themes and analyzed and presented in Chapter IV.

At Stoneholt, the entire population for FGCBS was interviewed, at Woodcrest a percentage of FGCBS was interviewed, see Chapter IV for details. T-tests were conducted for both within group and between group analyses. All of this data within three constructs was quantitatively combined in SPSS. Correlations between constructs are also presented. Self reported race/ethnicity and income are variables that were explored as well. Descriptive statistics will also be presented for all participants.

College counselor and student interviews were reviewed and coded based on themes. Themes that are evident across all schools are addressed, as well as specific themes that are only present within one school - making it unique, are presented in

Chapter IV. Qualitative remarks are incorporated in analysis to better understand the college-counseling program college-going culture within each high school.

Analyses are addressed by research question:

1. How does the college-going culture created in part by college counselors within a private high school context impact first generation college-bound students?
Specifically, how does this environment affect their student educational aspirations, student perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators?
2. How does the experience of FGCBS differ from non-FGCBS within the private high school environment? Specifically, to what extent is their experience different as it relates to student educational aspirations, student-perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators?
3. To what extent do college counselors and students have differing perspectives on student educational aspirations, student perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college? S Specifically between college counselors and first-generation college-bound students?

Research questions 1 and 2 were addressed using t-tests. To address question 1, the t-tests compared FGCBS at Woodcrest against Stoneholt on each of the three student variables (educational aspirations, access to resources, and barriers to four-year college); performance indicators was not collapsed, but analyses were still conducted. Qualitative data was used from both interviews and observational notes. To address question 2, two different types of t-tests were conducted, comparing FGCBS to non-FGCBS within each high school on each of the three student variables, with separate values within

performance indicators (educational aspirations, access to resources, barriers to four-year college, and performance indicators). To address question 2 specifically, where there are more non-FGCBS than FGCBS the researcher ran several analyses both randomly selecting from non-FGCBS pool to have an equal number in each group as well as compare the entire sample of FGCBS to non-FGCBS; results were the same. Qualitative data from interviews were also used to address question 2.

Since there are only three college counselors at each high school site, formal correlations between student variable and counselor variables could not be conducted since there will not be enough variance. So to answer question 3 the researcher addressed the counselor data qualitatively and compared responses to the students' responses more thematically than statistically. These themes were established and coded once all interviews were conducted.

Ethical Concerns

This study has minimal ethical concerns. Counselors may come into this research with pre-existing biases that they unknowingly have against minority students (including FGCBS). Participating in this study may expose these biases to them, which can be embarrassing and result in anger. However, it is believed that the benefits outweigh these costs. The researcher assumes that college counselors enter this role with the desire to support all students, and if they contain bias they do so unknowingly, and would benefit from recognizing this so that they can find ways to better support underrepresented students. After the interviews all college counselors expressed gratitude for participating in the study and were eager to know the results in order to improve their college counseling programs for FGCBS.

The student survey didn't ask any questions that were too sensitive and outside of the scope of a normal conversation discussing college applications. Most FGCBS are aware that they are first-generation students, however, some may not identify formally as a FGCBS and recognizing this could be a shock, though this outcome did not occur with those interviewed. Additionally, students may not want this information to become public to either their counselor or their peers. Their status will remain confidential to their peers, but it did not to their college counselors, as the college counselors assisted in scheduling the students for interviews. The researcher believed that students may benefit from college counselors developing a better understanding of the barriers and assets FGCBS face and carry. The researcher did not identify the full details about the purpose of the study to students.

Outside of these, no other ethical concerns were identified. All information remained confidential. All participants (as well as parents of students under 18) provided informed consent. Participation was entirely voluntary, and there was no penalty for participants who withdraw from the study.

Protection of Human Subjects

This study was vetted through the University of San Francisco's International Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) and received *exempt status* on December 20, 2013.

Background of the Researcher

My experiences supporting students in the pursuit of college, advocating for them and watching their trajectories has guided me to my dissertation topic. As a graduate of a private grade school, private high school, private college, private graduate school and

enrolled in a private graduate school's doctoral program, I am drawn to private schools and their role in college access. I have worked with students throughout the full spectrum from extremely high risk to extremely privileged and high functioning. Understanding that students and families come to the table with a variety of needs and concerns is critical for successful college counseling. Supporting students and their families in identifying their goals and navigating the complex college application process is a skill that I have developed through experience and training, and enjoy engaging in on a daily basis.

My passion for providing access to college for students is all encompassing. I was hired at Schools Mentoring and Resource Team (SMART) to create a brand-new college access program for our students, building on my previous success at Juma Ventures in a similar capacity. The project at SMART took time, patience and organization. I met with countless stakeholders, and conducted interviews, survey-research and literature-searches to identify the best practices being utilized in college counseling. Additionally, I knew it was important to have a proper assessment of the needs of my students, and to earn buy-in from them. I created curriculum centered on critical thinking, writing and developing the art of discussion, in order to present to my students a path to college. I exploited my eagerness to get to know my students on a personal level to help them recognize why they want to go to college and consequently what their options may be. I partnered with various organizations and key leaders within 21 high schools in the San Francisco area to create a network of support for each student. As a result of this work, I succeeded in creating and launching SMART's first College Access Program in 2012-2013 for 68

students in 9th through 12th grade. For the last two years, 100% of the students in my program graduated from high school and enrolled in 4-year universities.

Through this process, I determined the focus of my dissertation. Approximately 75% percent of the high school students I worked with at SMART (94% of which are FGCB) were in private schools, and they have shared stories about their experiences that have both excited me and frustrated me. Some students receive incredibly high levels of support from their college counselors. These counselors understand the student's experience and provide resources to assist them. Unfortunately, a large number of students have shared with me that they don't feel comfortable asking for help from their counselors, or when they do (e.g., requesting fee waivers) they are denied assistance even though they need those resources. These stories sparked my interest and why I have chosen this topic.

Summary

This dissertation is a case study, showcasing two private high schools in the Bay Area. Within each high school, all seniors were invited to participate in a survey on their experience applying to college and their relationship to their college counselor and especially the college counselor's practices and approaches. Additionally, transcripts, and college application and acceptance data was triangulated for FGCBS specifically. Each college counselor at each high school participated in an interview about the format of their college counseling program, the services and resources offered, their perception of the barriers faced by FGCBS and assets held by FGCBS. Five FGCBS within each high school participated in an interview sharing their experiences with college counseling in more detail. Data was analyzed based on the four constructs: student educational

aspirations, student perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators, all of which will be defined in greater detail in Chapter IV. To answer the research questions, various relationships are explored through statistical analyses, with qualitative statements from the interviews to provide depth to the findings.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

Chapter IV presents the findings and data analysis from this study by the three research questions posed. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected and analyzed to answer the questions. Additionally demographic information was collected for all participants and descriptive bios are presented for the individuals who participated in interviews.

Profile of Participants

All Student Participants

The participants in the study consisted of 156 students in the senior class at two high schools, and six college counseling staff at these two high schools. The seniors in high school were surveyed in this study. At Woodcrest, there were 112 seniors enrolled at the time of the study, all students were invited to participate, 76 students fully completed the survey, yielding a 68% response rate. Of these students 14 were identified as first-generation college-bound students (FGCBS), and 5 were invited to participate in a follow-up, 15-30 minute interview, all students invited to participate agreed. At Woodcrest, 65.8% (n=50) of students self-identified as female, 32.9% (n=25) self-identified as male, and 1.3% (n=1) self-identified as non-binary. Forty-eight percent (n=37) of students reported an annual family income of \$150,000+, 34.2% (n=26) of students reported an annual income of \$70,000-\$149,999, 10.5% (n=8) of students reported an annual income of \$40,000-\$69,999, 3.9% (n=3) of students reported an annual income of \$25,000-\$39,999, and 2.6% (n=2) of students reported an annual income of \$6,000-\$24,999. See Table 1 for breakdown of ethnicity of Woodcrest

students, where approximately 50% of participants self-identified as Caucasian, followed by Chinese at just under 20%.

Table 1

Self-Identified Ethnicity for Woodcrest Students

Ethnicity	Responses		Percent of Cases
	n	Percent	
African American	3	3.4	3.9
Caucasian	45	51.7	59.2
Central American	4	4.6	5.3
Chinese	15	17.2	19.7
East Indian	1	1.1	1.3
Filipino	3	3.4	3.9
Hispanic (Spanish)	1	1.1	1.3
Indian	2	2.3	2.6
Japanese	1	1.1	1.3
Korean	1	1.1	1.3
Malaysian/Malay/French	2	2.3	2.6
Mexican/Chicano	6	6.9	7.9
Persian/Iranian	1	1.1	1.3
Vietnamese	2	2.3	2.6
Total	87*	100.0	114.5

*Note: students were invited to select as many options as they saw fit (n=76)

See Table 2 for breakdown of desired careers for Woodcrest students. The most popular career path was Science – Biological & Physical, defined to the students as “agriculture, bioinformatics, biostatistics, biotechnology, botany, forensic science, genetics, marine biology, science education, etc.” at 17.8%, with the second most popular career path of Health & Medicine, defined to the students as “dentistry, human medicine, optometry, pharmacy, public health, veterinary medicine, health management, etc.” at 12.1%.

Table 2

Future Fields of Interest for Woodcrest Students

Careers	Responses		Percent of Cases
	n	Percent	
Architecture, Planning & Environmental Design	4	3.7	5.3
Arts & Entertainment	9	8.4	11.8
Business	8	7.5	10.5
Communications	4	3.7	5.3
Education	2	1.9	2.6
Engineering & Computer Science	15	14.0	19.7
Environment	3	2.8	3.9
Government	6	5.6	7.9
Health & Medicine	13	12.1	17.1
Law & Public Policy	8	7.5	10.5
Nonprofit	8	7.5	10.5
Sciences – Biological & Physical	19	17.8	25.0
Other	8	7.5	10.5
Total	107*	100.0	140.8

*Note: students were invited to select as many options as they saw fit (n=76)

At Stoneholt, there were 100 seniors enrolled at the time of the study, all students were invited to participate, 80 students fully completed the survey, yielding an 80% response rate. Of these students 5 were identified as FGCS, and all 5 were invited to participate in a follow-up, 15-30 minute interview, all students invited to participate agreed. At Stoneholt, 60% (n=48) of students self-identified as female, and 40% (n=32) self-identified as male. Sixty-five percent (n=52) of students reported an annual income of \$150,000+, 17.5% (n=14) of students reported an annual income of \$70,000-\$149,999, 12.5% (n=10) of students reported an annual income of \$40,000-\$69,999, 3.8% (n=3) of students reported an annual income of \$25,000-\$39,999, and 1.3% (n=1) of students reported an annual income of \$6,000-\$24,999. See Table 3 for breakdown of ethnicity of

Stoneholt students, where approximately 65% of participants self-identified as Caucasian, followed by Chinese at just under 15%.

Table 3

Self-Identified Ethnicity of Stoneholt Students

Ethnicity	Responses		Percent of Cases
	n	Percent	
African American	1	1.1	1.3
Arab American	3	3.3	3.8
Biracial	1	1.1	1.3
Caucasian	59	65.6	74.7
Chinese	12	13.3	15.2
Indian	2	2.2	2.5
Japanese	3	3.3	3.8
Korean	4	4.4	5.1
Mexican/Chicano	1	1.1	1.3
Persian/Iranian	2	2.2	2.5
Vietnamese	2	2.2	2.5
Total	90*	100.0	113.9

*Note: students were invited to select as many options as they saw fit (n=80)

See Table 4 for breakdown of desired careers for Stoneholt students. The most popular career path was Business, defined to the students as “accounting, consulting, HR, insurance, real estate, marketing, etc.” at 17%, with the second most popular career path of Government, defined to the students as “politics, federal, state, local, military, etc.” at 10.6%.

Table 4

Future Fields of Interest for Stoneholt Students

Careers	Responses		Percent of Cases
	n	Percent	
Architecture, Planning & Environmental Design	4	2.8	5.0
Arts & Entertainment	12	8.5	15.0
Business	24	17.0	30.0
Communications	9	6.4	11.3
Education	6	4.3	7.5
Engineering & Computer Science	12	8.5	15.0
Environment	3	2.1	3.8
Government	15	10.6	18.8
Health & Medicine	13	9.2	16.3
Law & Public Policy	12	8.5	15.0
Nonprofit	8	5.7	10.0
Sciences – Biological & Physical	14	9.9	17.5
Other	9	6.4	11.3
Total	141*	100.0	176.3

*Note: students were invited to select as many options as they saw fit (n=80)

First Generation College Bound Student Participants

Combined there were 19 FGCBS at Woodcrest (n=14) and Stoneholt (n=5).

Thirteen students (68.4%) self-identified as female and 6 students (31.6%) self-identified as male. When asked about family income, 10.5% (n=2) reported an annual income of \$150,000+, 31.6% (n=6) of students reported an annual income of \$70,000-\$149,999, 31.6% (n=6) of students reported an annual income of \$40,000-\$69,999, 21.1% (n=4) of students reported an annual income of \$25,000-\$39,999, and 5.3% (n=1) of students reported an annual income of \$6,000-\$24,999. See Table 5 for breakdown of ethnicity of FGCBS students. See Table 6 for breakdown of desired careers for FGCBS students.

Table 5

Self-Identified Ethnicity for FGCBS at both Woodcrest & Stoneholt

Ethnicity	Responses		Percent of Cases
	n	Percent	
African American	2	9.1	10.5
Caucasian	3	13.6	15.8
Central American	1	4.5	5.3
Chinese	8	36.4	42.1
East Indian	1	4.5	5.3
Filipino	1	4.5	5.3
Malaysian/Malay/French	1	4.5	5.3
Mexican/Chicano	3	13.6	15.8
Vietnamese	2	9.1	10.5
Total	22*	100.0	115.8

*Note: students were invited to select as many options as they saw fit (n=19)

Table 6

Future Fields of Interest for FGCBS at both Woodcrest & Stoneholt

Careers	Responses		Percent of Cases
	n	Percent	
Business	2	9.5	10.5
Education	1	4.8	5.3
Engineering & Computer Science	4	19.0	21.1
Environment	1	4.8	5.3
Health & Medicine	3	14.3	15.8
Law & Public Policy	3	14.3	15.8
Sciences – Biological & Physical	4	19.0	21.1
Other	3	14.3	15.8
Total	21*	100.0	110.5

Note: students were invited to select as many options as they saw fit (n=19)

Woodcrest FGCBS who Participated in an Interview

Pseudonyms were not selected by participants, they were assigned after all data collection was complete in order to ensure the connection of survey results to interviews and transcripts.

Alex: Self-identifies as African American and male. His family income is between \$40,000-\$69,999 annually and he lives with his mom. He reported that both parents have completed some college. His cumulative GPA was a 3.10 at the time of the study (7 of 8 semesters completed). He planned to take between 0-3 AP exams while in high school, he did not report his SAT or ACT scores. He applied to 21 colleges, was denied from 11, waitlisted at 1 and accepted to 5, additionally his counselor reported that 4 were “no decision”, meaning he didn’t tell his college counselor if he was accepted or not. He will be attending Whittier College and majoring in marine biology in the fall.

Emilia: Self-identifies as Mexican/Chicana and female. Her family income is between \$40,000-\$69,999 annually and she lives with both parents. She reported that both parents completed grammar school or less. Her cumulative GPA was a 3.05 at the time of the study (7 of 8 semesters completed). She planned to take between 0-3 AP exams while in high school, scored a 1520 on the SAT (out of 2400) and didn’t take the ACT. She applied to 13 colleges, was denied from 6, waitlisted at 0 and accepted to 7. She will be attending the University of San Francisco and plans to be pre-med in the fall.

Fay: Self-identifies as Central American, Vietnamese and female. Her family income is between \$25,000-\$39,999 annually and her parents are divorced but she lives between both houses. She reported that her dad completed high school and her mother attended postsecondary school other than college. Her cumulative GPA was a 3.78 at the time of the study (7 of 8 semesters completed). She planned to take between 0-3 AP exams while in high school, scored an 1880 on the SAT (out of 2400) and a 29 (out of 36) on the ACT. She applied to 14 colleges, was denied from 4, waitlisted at 0 and

accepted to 10. She will be attending Boston University to study molecular biology in the fall.

Lauren: Self-identifies as Mexican/Chicana and female. Her family income is between \$6,000-\$24,999 annually and she lives with both parents. She reported that her dad has completed some college and her mom has a college degree from Mexico but doesn't know anything about US colleges. Her cumulative GPA was a 3.55 at the time of the study (7 of 8 semesters completed). She planned to take between 0-3 AP exams while in high school, did not take the SAT and she scored a 26 (out of 36) on the ACT. She applied to 16 colleges, was denied from 11, waitlisted at 0 and accepted to 5. She will be attending University of California - Santa Cruz to study biochemistry in the fall.

Weston: Self-identifies as African American, Filipino and male. His family income is between \$40,000-\$69,999 annually and he lives with his mom. He reported that his mom has completed some college, and he doesn't know his father's education level because he is not in his life. His cumulative GPA was a 3.67 at the time of the study (7 of 8 semesters completed). He planned to take between 0-3 AP exams while in high school, scored a 2000 on the SAT (out of 2400) and did not take the ACT. He applied to 16 colleges, was denied from 8, waitlisted at 2 and accepted to 6. He will be attending the University of Pennsylvania pre-med in the fall.

Stoneholt FGCBS who Participated in an Interview

Benton: Self-identifies as Chinese and male. His family income is between \$25,000-\$39,999 annually and he lives with his mom, his parents are divorced. He reported that his father has completed some high school and his mother is a high school graduate. His cumulative GPA was a 3.39 at the time of the study (7 of 8 semesters

completed). He planned to take between 4-7 AP exams while in high school, scored a 2140 on the SAT (out of 2400) and a 30 (out of 36) on the ACT. He applied to 17 colleges, was denied from 7, waitlisted at 1 and accepted to 9. He will be attending The University of Southern California with a biology major the fall.

Carlyn: Self-identifies as Caucasian and female. Her family income is between \$40,000-\$69,999 annually and she lives with her mom. She reported that her mom has completed some high school, and her father's education level is unknown; she does not know her father and her mom is divorced from her other mother whom she doesn't see anymore. Her cumulative GPA was a 3.56 at the time of the study (7 of 8 semesters completed). She planned to take between 4-7 AP exams while in high school, scored a 1910 on the SAT (out of 2400) and didn't take the ACT. She applied to 11 colleges, was denied from 4, waitlisted at 1 and accepted to 6. She will be attending Skidmore College to study education in the fall.

Jacky: Self-identifies as Chinese and male. His family income is between \$40,000-\$69,999 annually and he lives with both parents. He reported that both parents are high school graduates. His cumulative GPA was a 3.19 at the time of the study (7 of 8 semesters completed). He planned to take between 0-3 AP exams while in high school, scored a 2030 on the SAT (out of 2400) and a 28 (out of 36) on the ACT. He applied to 20 colleges, was denied from 9, waitlisted at 3 and accepted to 8. He will be attending Willamette University with an undeclared major in the fall.

Kelsie: Self-identifies as Chinese and female. Her family income is between \$25,000-\$39,999 annually and she lives with both parents. She reported that both parents are high school graduates. Her cumulative GPA was a 3.19 at the time of the study (7 of 8

semesters completed). She planned to take between 4-7 AP exams while in high school, scored a 1790 on the SAT (out of 2400) and didn't take the ACT. She applied to 20 colleges, was denied from 12, waitlisted at 0 and accepted to 7. She will be attending Willamette University with an art history major in the fall.

Lee: Self-identifies as Chinese and male. His family income is between \$40,000-\$69,999 annually and he lives with both parents. He reported that both parents have completed grammar school or less. His cumulative GPA was a 3.53 at the time of the study (7 of 8 semesters completed). He planned to take between 4-7 AP exams while in high school, scored a 1940 on the SAT (out of 2400) and a 32 (out of 36) on the ACT. He applied to 14 colleges, was denied from 6, waitlisted at 0 and accepted to 8. He will be attending the University of California – Santa Barbara majoring in computer science in the fall.

College Counseling Staff Participants

At Woodcrest, there were two fulltime college counselors and one staff who split responsibilities between college counseling and administrative duties for the college counseling department. At Stoneholt, there was one fulltime college counselor, one part-time college counselor who was also teaching academic classes, and one fulltime administrative assistant. All six staff were invited to participate in a 1-2 hour interview, all staff completed their interviews. Two staff were male, four were female. Five identified as Caucasian and one identified as Filipino. Four staff had completed a Master's degree as their highest level of education, one had a Bachelors and one had a Ph.D. as their highest level of education. Staff on average had 11.67 years of experience

working in college counseling (range: 4 years to 29 years), and on average had 8.5 years working within their current school (range: 4 years to 14 years).

Woodcrest College Counseling Staff

Brooke: Has been the Co-Director of College Counseling at Woodcrest since 2000. Before coming to Woodcrest she worked at the University of California - San Francisco conducting medical research, and after that she did a year-long internship at the University of San Francisco in the Learning and Writing Center and a year-long internship in the College Counseling Department at Woodcrest, resulting in a full-time position. She completed an Associates degree at Palomar Community College and then transferred to University of California - Davis where she completed her Bachelors; she has a Masters in Counseling from San Francisco State University.

Louisa: Has been the Co-Director of College Counseling at Woodcrest since 2007. Prior to that, she was the first College Counselor at Stuart Hall for Boys, a new school at the time, for 3 years. Prior to that, she started working for an independent college counselor in 1997. She has a Bachelors from Dartmouth and a Masters in Asian Studies from Harvard University.

Olivia: Has been the Associate College Counselor and Assistant at Woodcrest since 2008, but she has only had a caseload of students for the past three years. Prior to that her role was the assistant to the college counselors only. For the past three years she has been 70% administrative assistant and 30% college counseling. Prior to working at Woodcrest she was an Account Coordinator at SHIFT Communications for 8 months. After this study was conducted Olivia completed her final year at Woodcrest before moving onto a new role at another high school. She holds a Bachelors degree from Lewis

& Clark and a Masters in Counseling Career Specialization College Emphasis from San Francisco State University.

Stoneholt College Counseling Staff

Frederich: Has been the Director of College Counseling at Stoneholt since 2000, he came from Stanford University where he worked for 15 years as an Admissions Officer. He also taught in the English department while at Stanford. He holds a Bachelors from Stanford, a Masters from University of Sussex and a Ph.D in History from Stanford.

Jeffrey: Has been the Assistance Director of College Counseling at Stoneholt since 2011. He is one-third college counseling and two-thirds a teacher in the English department. He was the Academic Dean at The Bently School for five years prior to coming to Stoneholt, and after data was collected for this study, he finished the academic year at Stoneholt and is no longer working at Stoneholt. He holds a Bachelors from the University of New Hampshire and a Masters in English Language and Literature from Boston College.

Josephine: Has been the Administrative Assistant in College Counseling at Stoneholt since 2008. She holds a Bachelors from University of California - San Diego. Prior to coming to Stoneholt she was an Admissions Assistant at San Francisco Day School for 6 years, and prior to that worked part time as an assistant to the head of school at The Bently School.

Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS with the quantitative student survey data. Data were collapsed into three constructs: student aspirations (ASPIRATIONS), student perceived access to resources (RESOURCES) and student

perceived barriers (BARRIERS). The fourth construct, student performance indicators (PERFORMANCE) could not be collapsed into one number, so instead SAT composite, GPA, ACT converted to SAT composite and SAT subject test scores were used independently to assess this construct.

“First generation students” (FGCBS) were coded as students who reported that both parents had one of the following levels of education:

- *Grammar school or less*
- *Some high school*
- *High school graduate (or GED equivalent)*
- *Postsecondary school other than college*
- *Some college*
- *College degree outside of the US*

For students who only reported one parent, if their parent had any of these levels of education the student was coded as “first generation”. All other students were reported as “non-first generation” (non-FGCBS). If a student had one parent with one of these levels of education, but the other parent was reported as having:

- *college graduate*
- *some graduate school*
- *graduate degree*

the student was coded as “non-first generation”.

Research Question 1

How does the college-going culture created in part by college counselors within a private high school context impact first generation college-bound students? Specifically, how does this environment affect their student educational aspirations, student perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators?

To quantitatively address research question 1, an independent t-test was conducted comparing the FGCBS at Stoneholt ($n = 5$) to the FGCBS at Woodcrest ($n = 14$). Even though the sample size is small, all variables meet Levene's assumption of equality of variance. Because of the small sample size, an $\alpha \equiv .10$ was used for Type I error risk in order to find statistically significant differences between groups more readily. Results indicated a significant difference in BARRIERS between Stoneholt and Woodcrest FGCBS, where FGCBS at Stoneholt perceived fewer barriers during the college application process than FGCBS at Woodcrest. There was a statistically significant difference in GPA (PERFORMANCE) between Stoneholt and Woodcrest FGCBS, where FGCBS at Stoneholt have lower GPAs than FGCBS at Woodcrest. Lastly, there was a significant difference in SAT Math 2 subject tests scores (PERFORMANCE) between Stoneholt and Woodcrest FGCBS, where FGCBS at Stoneholt have lower SAT Math 2 subject test scores than FGCBS at Woodcrest. See Table 7 for all t-test results.

Table 7
T-Test Results Addressing Research Question 1: Comparing FGCBS at Woodcrest to FGCBS at Stoneholt

	Woodcrest		Stoneholt		t	ES (<i>d</i>)
	M	SD	M	SD		
ASPIRATIONS	2.4	0.18	2.5	0.39	.739	
RESOURCES	2.2	0.35	2.33	0.28	.827	
BARRIERS	2.5	0.18	2.7	0.23	.077*	0.978
PERFORMANCE (SAT score)	1954	177.46	1962	131.42	.089	
PERFORMANCE (ACT 2 SAT)	1309	141.24	1340	80.00	.733	
PERFORMANCE (GPA)	3.6	0.28	3.4	0.16	-1.936*	1.011
PERFORMANCE (Math SAT Subj.)	725	52.24	650	62.45	-1.996*	1.368

* $p < .10$

Note: M = Mean. SD = Standard Deviation. ES = Effect Size. ASPIRATIONS, RESOURCES & BARRIERS scales range from 0 (negative) to 3 (positive). PERFORMANCE SAT score scale ranges from 200 (lowest score) to 2400 (highest score). PERFORMANCE (ACT 2 SAT) score converts ACT scores to the SAT scale, ranges from 200 (lowest score) to 2400 (highest score). PERFORMANCE (GPA) ranges from 0.0 (D+ or lower) to 4.0 (A or A+). PERFORMANCE (Math SAT Subj.) score ranges from 200 (lowest score) to 800 (highest score).

To qualitatively address research question 1, themes were identified from the interviews with both FGCBS and counselors focusing on each of the main contracts: ASPIRATIONS, RESOURCES, BARRIERS and PERFORMANCE (as relevant). To demonstrate each theme, quotes are pulled from the interviews, which serve as representation from other interviews.

Educational Aspirations	
College-Going Culture	Similar Aspirations
Student Independence	School Mission

Figure 1. Research Question 1, construct 1 themes.

Educational Aspirations

Theme 1: College-Going Culture

Students at Stoneholt both recognize the pervasive college-going-culture within the school environment, and the high expectations for all students to be successful and matriculate into college. Carlyn explained,

Like you are sending all your kids to Stoneholt clearly you want like to go somewhere elite and so yes like it is difficult around when people are so wrapped up in things to not want to get wrapped up with them, but I don't know I didn't feel that, so like I love Stoneholt but it is also like the weird culture of like trying to be really smart but like not having to do work but like wanting to get somewhere elite but not like saying it's difficult to get there.

She went on to say,

Especially at this school there is a lot of pressure to pick an elite [college] but seriously it's kind of ridiculous because it should just be where you think you are going to do best or where you feel most comfortable.

Kelsie, another Stoneholt student shared that,

A lot of students decide to go to college especially at Stoneholt. They go to pretty good colleges too. I feel it sort of, it's not really a pressure thing; it's an environment where one wants to learn and to access their educational... like the things that are provided to them. Being able to go on to college is like taking a step further in one's education.

Lee describes the peer culture, stating:

They are kind of like peers who I can talk to because we are on a similar journey... And I think especially in a private school I think the idea is almost an expectation so it doesn't really become a matter of do I want to go to college or not.

At Woodcrest, there were similar sentiments about the college-going culture.

Lauren stated that “definitely coming here to Woodcrest, it’s like all around us, so it’s kind of hard to avoid it”. Alex shared that:

Yea, they [teachers, counselors, peers] expected me to go to college and I think specially being in an environment like Woodcrest where you know it is so competitive not going to college it is just unbelievable like I don’t think anyone here doesn’t go to college unless they are taking a gap year and then they eventually go to college so that is just kind of like the minimum expectation is to go to college which in relation to society outside of the perimeters of Woodcrest that is not really the case not everyone does go to college

Weston stated:

Woodcrest kids, all my friends, their coming into this school and this process like with the idea in mind that they are going to be college bound. And I think, that probably attributes to, or in the large part to why like I’m so set on going to college too, cause everyone around me is so focused on going to college.

Theme 2: Student Independence

The counselors at Stoneholt identified that this culture is very positive for FGCBS, particularly those that are incredibly strong and resilient. The FGCBS who are particularly proactive are the ones that will be most successful within the Stoneholt environment. Furthermore the counselors identified an inverse relationship where the “the more proactive the kid is the less proactive the parents are”, as quoted by Frederich.

Frederich described one of his FGCBS’s application experience:

He’s one of these first generation kids, very much a boots-trapper. Everybody liked this kid, he wasn’t defeated by this school. He survived this school and he’s doing fine at Carlton...Its not just about getting high grades, but showing them energetic curiosity. That’s why we take kids here. Our first generation kids have that.

Theme 3: Similar Aspirations

Counselors at both schools agreed that FGCBS had similar aspirations to non-FGCBS. Louisa shared:

I think that's kind of a Woodcrest cultural thing. You know, once [FGCBS] get here they are part of this independent school world and they hear about these same schools – you know Brown, USC, NYU, Columbia. And you know they end up having those same ideas that a lot of kids have.

Olivia agreed, sharing that

Each [private high] school kind of has a group of [colleges] that a lot of students kind of, you know, like pie in the sky, this is the best fit for our kinds of students, and regardless of generation status, they kind of want those schools.

Frederich at Stoneholt, went further to say that generational status bears little to any factor on student and family expectations during the college application process:

What's interesting to me is some of the entitlement thinking of the wealthier ones, the upper-middle class well educated, some of that is seeped down. It kind of trickles down... it had migrated down the social ladder. Like the Beatles and marijuana. And so this has happened here. Some of the families have this sense of "well we go to Stoneholt high school, so your job is to get my kid into Yale".

Theme 4: School Mission

The fourth and final theme identified for the ASPIRATIONS construct addresses School Mission. It was clear though the language used that the students at Woodcrest had a strong sense of understanding what the focus of their school was all about. As mentioned earlier, Woodcrest is an equity-based school, focusing on issues of social justice and equity within society. Weston shared that:

Everything that I'm learning is like super enticing and my reason for taking the courses like being so focused on diversity... these are discussions that I feel are extremely important and they are discussions I feel... I think as I get older want to serve, if that makes sense. I want to bring what I learned into a larger community, more so in college but I think that's how Woodcrest has influenced me, or at least recently.

Perceived Access to Resources	
College-Going Culture	Management of Expectations
Strong Reputation for Support	Support of FGCBS
Distribution of Caseload & Timeline	

Figure 2. Research Question 1, construct 2 themes.

Perceived Access to Resources

Theme 1: College-Going Culture

As mentioned above, the college-going culture within each school is very strong.

Such culture is seen as a resource for FGCBS and non-FGCBS alike. Frederick at

Stoneholt stated:

Oh ya! I mean it's just accepted that everybody goes to college....The college going culture is assumed. It's just built into the place. If anything we try to temper it and calm it down.

Jeffrey agreed, sharing:

[On] the summer questionnaire [we ask], "what's your experience been like at Stoneholt, and part of that is why did you come to Stoneholt originally?" To a person they answer "the academic rigor and the way it will prepare them for college". A lot of them also mention the matriculation list and they were even aware of that as 8th graders. And, I think it's an academically orientated culture, and to not see school as a big part of your identity, if you were like that it would be tough to come here. And I think the kids do really like school appreciate the fact that it's a school culture that values that. It's cool to be smart here. And so by extension you're going to want to keep going to school. And you will see that here, that they believe that going to college is the key to a happy life and success.

As did Josephine:

Yes. [College-going-culture is] part of the atmosphere...it's very clear that it is a *college prep* school. The idea that, 100% go onto college... And not only are they going onto college but they are going to 4 year universities. That's just what it's been like. Well I think that there's definitely a feel from certain parents that "I've sent my kid here so they can get into a good college". There's a certain idea that

they haven't sent their kid to high school to get a high school education, but to go to a good college.

As part of the atmosphere of the school, the counselors at Stoneholt agree that there is a peer culture that helps to maintain the effects of the already existent college-going-culture. Jeffrey shared that:

Yes, there is a sort of peer culture of getting to these elite competitive colleges. [long pause] and I think that over time the parents promote some of that. But a lot of the time I think it's in the kids, they get somewhere from their parents. But it's pretty common to have after I've met with a family, to leaving feeling like, wow that kid feels like that just because of their own desires. And they are a competitive person. And they've chosen this track that they want to be on.

At Woodcrest the counselors also discussed the college-going-culture. Louisa addressed it by stating:

You could say a "college-going *obsession* culture" here at Woodcrest. I don't think it's as bad as it is... I mean a lot of our kids will say they are thankful and that it's a little bit different than it is at other independent schools. Just because, I think the mission of the school is so infiltrated in these kids. They definitely all know and think that they are going to college. And that's why they're here. And I think because Woodcrest is so competitive to get into in the first place. You know this year we got 840 applications. And they all know that, and so when they are all here they all know "I'm sort of on this track". And choosing to come to Woodcrest you know you're on that track. So it definitely has a college-going-culture that there is an assumption among everyone that whether they're first generation or not, yes I'm going to college, I'm going to a *good* college.

Brooke shared that:

Teachers are very aware that they are preparing students for college, for the academics they will face. So there are high expectations and the students are learning high level material, going into great depth and doing intensive reading and intensive research and giving presentations. Students, while they are working hard, and they feel those pressures of being a Woodcrest student, I do remind them also how well prepared they will be for college.

Weston, a student at Woodcrest validated Brooke's sentiments:

I've taken all the science courses here at Woodcrest and all my teachers have been amazing in these courses and there are people that I respect a lot. So, in terms of that like during my earlier education, and that being fostered and here at Woodcrest was one of my goals in science started becoming more solidified.

Theme 2: Strong Reputation for Support

Students enroll at these (and other) independent schools many times because of the reputation of the schools within the community. Schools with 100% matriculation rates year after year are very appealing to students and families with college as a goal. At Stoneholt, one of the college counselors is incredibly well known for the work he does, Frederich stated "I'm a national person on this conversation... I'm part of the national conversation in this regard and that gives me an authority to speak on things. And a usefulness here". If one were to put his name into a google search, several hundred hits would come up within seconds, indicating his influence on the field of college counseling within the independent school arena.

At both school, hundreds of colleges come to visit in hopes of recruiting some incredibly bright students. Josephine at Stoneholt shared that,

In the last couple of years we've had at least a 100 colleges come and visit and usually happens in the fall. We try to concentrate it in the fall because only seniors are allowed to ask to get out of class for a college visit. Other grades, it seems too early for college visits, and by the time you hit spring juniors are just starting so it seems like an awkward time to come visit.

Louisa at Woodcrest shared that:

At Woodcrest we have 110 visitors or something like that every fall. So we have so many colleges come through here. So for the most part for our kids, most of the private schools on most of the kid's lists, they are going to be able to meet with an admissions officer. They all happen during tutorial or lunch, so they are always when the kids are free and they don't have to get out of class. Anyone can come,

they don't have to sign up ahead of time... And the kids actually host them, which I didn't realize doesn't happen at very many schools. I was just talking to someone who said "Oh I love coming to Woodcrest because the kids show me around"

Along with the strong college counseling reputation, both schools have strong academics as well. Within the school, students in general have very positive experiences with their teachers. Kelsie at Stoneholt stated that:

I think the good thing about the teachers here at Stoneholt is that they're very supportive and they are very understanding. Like for me, there have been times that I struggled in the class or I didn't understand the material well enough; the teachers are willing to take the time and like if I don't completely understand the concept they are willing to help me with the concept or they are able to meet with me to go over like review before a test things I need more practice on or things I don't think I'm good at. They really focus on my needs.

And Fay at Woodcrest had a similar sentiment, "I know there were specific classes as teachers that did, make me decide to go towards the science route...and they have been really helpful in letting me see for myself and affirming what I have decided to do".

Theme 3: Distribution of Caseload and Timeline

While counselors at each school have similar responsibilities in terms of supporting a large caseload of students in the college application process, the schools handle their students in different ways, specifically regarding how they split up caseloads.

At Stoneholt, Jeffrey described the process in this way:

We don't really divide up the class until January of junior year. And we go by GPA. We divide the class into quadrants and Frederick takes 2/3s out of each quadrant and I take a third. And sometimes if it's a student I've taught I try to take them.

Whereas, Woodcrest's process is significantly more complex, as described by Louisa:

Typically we have divided up the students in November or December of junior year and the letter assigning them to a college counselor comes out with their PSAT scores. We just hold onto them and send them out the last day of finals, so the kids aren't getting them during finals. They get their college counselor assignment then, we are thinking of doing it earlier next year – we haven't quite figure out when... So what we do is we have a meeting with the Director of Learning Services, and she just kind of lets us know which kids she works with and she usually knows the kids and the families so well that she will give us a little heads up about or a little information about the kids... We always meet with our Director of Inclusion and she will sort of do the same things. She usually knows, well it's not that she's necessarily pointing out first generation to college students, although she'll tell us that too, but she's just mention which kids she's worked with before, which families she knows. So anything about kids who would need extra support or are going to be tricky or whatever. So we collect that information. And then we meet with our psychological counselors who have also usually worked with a whole bunch of kids. So then, we tend to keep siblings with the same counselor since we already know the family, unless there's been an issue and we know the family doesn't want us again. We divide up the National Merit kids because they always need a letter written very early in the year – like in September. That's only a handful of kids. So we divide those up so we have them evenly... We try to divide up the kids that have big issues, family issues, drama. Sometimes our counselors have a really good sense, "for some reason this kid is going to need someone who is really patient... Brooke, I really think that: Brooke is the really patient one. I'm the strategy one, and with difficult families.

However, both schools follow a similar timeline, formally beginning the college counseling process in the spring of junior year. Jeffrey, at Stoneholt described this process as:

"[Before junior year, it's] really getting them comfortable not yet doing anything towards applying to college yet. And just really being comfortable thinking about where their interests lie, forming connections with their teachers, taking on meaningful leadership. Things like that will enhance their student experience – totally separate from whether or not they apply to college. And then get them trying to stay focused where they are. The difference is in the past we wanted them to focus on where they are and being in the present by ignoring the college piece. And so, but they end up talking about it at home anyway. So we wanted to take the lid off that and give them some basic information, I think with the sophomores I also talked about the different types of schools that exist.

Josephine, the administrative assistant at Stoneholt shared that:

We really don't have much contact with students until second semester of junior year. There are a few pieces of information that get sent out to them, some of the philosophy behind that is let them be high school students, and let them go to class, and do that before you bring in...this process is inevitable but instead of starting super early with it.

Similarly at Woodcrest, Olivia described the timeline, stating:

We actually don't start formally working with students, like one-on-one meetings, this is your counselor, till the spring of their junior year, so we don't talk to freshmen at all. But in the sophomore and junior year, we do invite them to "Finding the Right College Fit," which is a panel of alumni and two admissions officers—one from a public university, one from a private university—just to talk to them generally about finding the right fit. And so that's how that process is introduced to them. Just in general, like this is what you should be thinking about when it comes to college and then we formally have a kickoff meeting in the spring of junior year, which we're thinking of moving a little sooner, so into the fall because we just realized maybe we need to get in front of them a little sooner—not too much sooner, but a little sooner.

Theme 4: Management of Expectations

A major part of the counselor's role is to help manage students expectations during the college process, as well as manage their expectations regarding the types of schools students will likely be admitted into. Students at both schools expressed the value of this, as did counselors. Jacky, a student at Stoneholt shared:

Basically my college counselor, tried to make things as realistic as possible for me and I really appreciated that because it wasn't like sugar coating. So ...I guess I kind of just like appreciated his honesty and getting into lower level colleges.

Alex at Woodcrest shared:

And you know for college counselors specially here they want to be advisors and they want you to do what they think is best for you and sometimes that's not always telling you what you want to hear sometimes they tell you stuff like you may not be able to go to the college that you want you might have to go to a state school or a community school -- not always something you may want to hear.

Here 'cause I had a college counselor here at school and I have one outside of school -- here they always believed that I would be able to go to a college -- they didn't really put much pressure on me -- like saying that I had to go to a university or they didn't like completely steer me away by saying I could only go to a state school like they were completely in the middle for which I appreciated. I actually had a mentor outside of school who was trying to help me in the college process and at the time my dream was to go to Stanford -- like every other student you probably know -- and so he was helping me and then he eventually he told me you know I had zero chance of getting in there and he was like 'cause he had finally found out that my tests scores and grades and stuff and he had told me that I should consider you know a state school or community college and at that point you know I just sort of cut off that connection with him because you know I knew that even though my grades and tests scores weren't super super high I knew that I was more than just you know those stats.

A difference in approach to managing expectations between Stoneholt and Woodcrest involves cost of attendance. All three counselors at Woodcrest expressed that they share the Net Price Calculator tool with parents who ask about cost, whereas the college counselors at Stoneholt do not find those tools helpful to the conversation.

Brooke at Woodcrest stated:

[Cost of attendance] usually comes up during a family conference, and sometimes during a student conference. When students talk about needing...who are on flex tuition here and are thinking about cost as a factor, I do recommend them to Net Price Calculators, it's required that every school has them. And some colleges don't find them that useful, and there are some flaws in it -- and I agree, but I still think it's useful for families to get a sense of what they might expect to pay -- so it's not a big shock when they receive their financial aid awards.

Theme 5: Support of FGCBS

Theme 5 was only evident among Woodcrest students and counselors. At Stoneholt none of the college counselors or administrative assistant actually knew how many FGCBS were enrolled in the senior class (there are a total of 5). During his interview Frederich stated, "I'm almost certain that all the first gen students would be on aid, so if I take 20 kids here, maybe there's 10 first gen kids in the class". Jeffrey stated "I

would guess 3-4 that I counsel. So maybe there's more in the whole class". And Josephine stated "I'm not even positive off the top of my head who is first gen. when students have questions I just answer them... in some respects there's no reason to know".

Counselors at Stoneholt didn't feel comfortable outwardly identifying FGCBS for fear of making them uncomfortable, or putting them into an unnecessary category. Frederich stated, "my feeling is the group is so disparate and everyone is so different, each kid has different issues. Let's deal with them individually. I don't want to put people in categories. Even if they are obviously". Josephine agreed, "I feel like there's a real sensitivity to not singling people out, and to make sure that the kids feel equal here and I want to keep that going". She went on to say,

A couple of schools were like "oh we do this special class for first gen students" and I thought, well that's a great idea, but how do we do that without feeling like we are putting a spotlight on these kids? To be sensitive to these kids, especially in a school like this, towards the families that need extra help without feeling like they are being singled out.

This academic year (2013-2014) Woodcrest launched its first FGCBS Program, specifically aimed to support FGCBS during the college application process. Louisa shared how the program developed:

So, its funny how it morphed into a first gen program, but really it was by looking at MEDA and being inspired by our Director of Inclusion, and thinking about equity at Woodcrest and how we can get everyone to the same place by the end of senior year.

Brooke added:

We have a Director of Equity and Inclusion and she has a lot of kids who hang out in her office or near her office. And she hears them talking, and ya know she actually suggested that too maybe a little bit more could be done. And absolutely I agree.

The program is in its infancy and is in need of evaluation and development. Louisa is hopeful the program will prove successful for this demographic:

I'm curious to see how the new programming we put in will make a difference. I don't think it will make a difference in the outcomes like where they go to college and I don't know what kind of difference it's going to make in their experience. So I'll be curious to see whether or not they appreciate the sort of being singled out – well not singled out but being part of this group of kids that gets some extras and some special treatment. I mean certainly it doesn't seem like so far any of them are offended or why am I being invited to this kind of thing. Certainly I haven't gotten that at all, but it will be interesting to see.

Brooke shared:

Starting a first gen program... this vision is to make sure students know that we are here to support them, to use time that we carve out specifically to participate in extra workshops. And we can't by any means require it, but we want students to know it's available.

At the end of each academic year, the Board of Directors of Woodcrest request a list of the enrollment and financial aid packages of FGCBS specifically, along with other underrepresented groups. Olivia discussed how valuable this upper level support has been for her work as a college counselor at Woodcrest:

The fact that the institution is so committed to, kind of, access is really, it really makes our jobs a lot easier to help serve these students, that it's a priority. The board likes to know where our first-generation college students are going, where our FLEX students are going, so I think that even though it's a college-going culture, there is that culture of support and we want you to succeed. So it makes our jobs a lot easier. You know, to kind of justify why we're doing the things we're doing and why we're able to start that first-gen program without any resistance, really.

As a result, each college counselor knew exactly which students were FGCB within the junior and senior class. Louisa spoke about what she does when she identifies FGCBS:

So that's where I find out if they are first gen to college, in this first meeting if I didn't already know, so that's where I learn it. And I always make sure to celebrate it right there. Think our kids at Woodcrest already get that first generation to college is a really big deal, and we love working with those kids, and we're so proud of them, and we think it's really cool. But I always make sure to let them know that this is a really big deal. I'm so excited to work with you! So we make sure that happens.

Olivia believes that there is a lot of value to establishing the FGCBS program:

Allowing them to know who they are as a cohort, I think, is very powerful and just, I think, knowing we're excited that they're first generation, gets them to be more comfortable talking to us. And so, while there are some kinks in the program that we're trying to roll out, extra workshops, I think, in the years to come, it's definitely going to improve.

She goes on to say,

For me, it's working with them one-on-one to develop their narrative, you know, for their essays, and I think in doing that it helps them as well—kind of build that confidence I was talking about, that they actually have something to bring and they're not just like using the first-gen card—they actually have something to bring to the campus. So, I think that individual attention we're really good at here

Fay, a student at Woodcrest expressed the value she found in these workshops:

I do have a support system, like college counseling is really amazing and we have all these first gen events, I've had extra support...I'm thinking about college 24/7 and I think it's a pretty good thing just because college is such a huge thing to tackle on and knowing I don't have to be alone for it is really good.

Perceived Barriers to 4-year College	
Challenging Academic Environment	Challenging Social Environment

Figure 3. Research Question 1, construct 3 themes.

Perceived Barriers to 4-year College

Theme 1: Challenging Academic Environment

While students at both schools identified many positive experiences during their high school careers, it was clear that all faced either academic or social challenges, and many faced both. At Stoneholt Lee discussed his academic challenges:

So I think taking difficult classes in high school, sort of allowed me to find a way to study most efficiently. And the challenge in that was kind of like accepting that I wasn't gonna breeze by school, because I think it's hard when you are in middle school and you're doing well and you are meeting your expectations and then at Stoneholt you start like C's or like D's will start rolling in that you are not expecting and you are not really prepared for, like I think psychologically so being able to cope with that and be fine with doing well and move on and change just accept it without dwelling on it too much.

Carlyn shared that "I think that like at Stoneholt it can definitely be hard to not have like to know what you are getting yourself into 'cause I definitely didn't". Similarly at

Woodcrest, Alex represents some of the academic sentiments of his peers stating:

It was super hard for me – it was super rigorous and I almost fell through the cracks but you know I just kept at it and then eventually I got better but unfortunately I never really got the grades that I envisioned my self of getting but I think that I am getting closer to that academic level that I think I should be at.

Theme 2: Challenging Social Environment

Social transitions also proved difficult for many of the FGCBS at both schools.

Jacky at Stoneholt shared:

Socially I have had a tough time fitting in because I guess I was just not that impressive of a contender – I don't really know why – but like maybe if I had like

better – if I was like better at something I would like attract more people or I am not sure. I just know that it has been kind of difficult for me to like make friends in this school.

Also at Stoneholt, Lee explored some of the social differences between himself and his classmates:

The social challenges are more obvious, just like growing up in another environment you have a different, like my family does different things. Just like vacation, my family hasn't gone on a real vacation since I was like in kindergarden-ish and even then we never been out of the state for vacation. I personally never been out of California, whereas other kids will talk about during the summer or breaks they'll go to Hawaii or Europe or other places and things like skiing. They can be simple things like driver's license, which might seem a little weird but I feel like there's this expectation where you'll have a car. Like the goal is to get the license for a lot of people but for me I see it as even if I get my license I'm not gonna have a car to drive anyways. And I don't really need one too so I guess in that regard. And also like skiing a lot of kids will sometimes talk about going to some bowl or whatever to go skiing or Lake Tahoe or anything and for me it's just not how I spend my breaks I guess. I guess, there are different activities.

At Woodcrest, Fay shares her challenges coming to Woodcrest as one of the only students from her public middle school and the struggles she faced:

When I started freshman year there were a lot of people who already knew each other from their private schools before or family friends or their related in some way and I'm just like I don't have any of that. It was hard to talk to people who already had the support system cause I don't want to feel like I'm intruding in that, and whatever group they already have there. So my first year, I was trying to figure out who could I be with, I know for my freshman and sophomore year I hang out with other singletons, other people who where the only ones [from our middle schools]. Because we all has the well we are all alone, so lets all be alone together kind of feeling. But then, it's just kind of hard because I have to rely on assumptions that I make of other people, and kind of navigate through that. And that's just me stereotyping other people but there's no other way I could deal with it because I was so young and so little that I really understand the implications of everything. It was hard for me because I was really shy and introverted it was hard for me to reach out to anyone so my personality along with my background just made it seem impossible to escape the whole gap I had, not just educationally, financially but also socially. It went from friends I had since like I was in elementary school to having no friends at all in high school because you expect that you when you move into high school that you'll always have some friend to do it. But because I has basically no one.

Emilia a student at Woodcrest talked about how race impacted her experience socially:

It is predominantly a white school, more diverse. So, I had a hard time transitioning to this school, but I turned out all right...I thought all white people were racist, that they were going to judge me, for what I didn't have, and all these things. But, I didn't really have many friends when I came, I knew only one other person from an afterschool program; so I knew her. Eventually, I started mingling with other people, and found my group.

As did Lauren,

Here at Woodcrest there are I don't know, there are out of a 100 there are 5 Latinos in my grade. So I'm not necessarily friends with all of them or close friends with all of them so when others speak about them going to college. I guess sometimes I feel separated because my experience at home are not the same as their experiences at home, not that its much different either but its not the same.

The college counselors at Stoneholt discuss these challenges through the lens of a wealth a prestige culture. Frederich stated:

Kids here, they don't mean any harm, but sometimes they talk casually about where they are going skiing this weekend, or where we are going on spring break, and you aren't going anywhere. How does that feel when you hear that? They aren't trying to put you down, but they aren't even aware that you're hearing that. She says "I got used to it, it's alright. The school is so good, it's just part of the air here. But it would be stupid to resent it, no point on having a chip on my shoulder" and other kids do! Other kids, they are annoyed by it. The Pacific Heights-ness of the place. And that's something we are trying to sensitize here, with a modest response. I love working with these kids [FGCBS] because they are so eager. I know I can help them. I know they need me, because they aren't going to get it from anywhere.

He goes on to say, "This is not an easy place for a student who identifies ethnically, a student of color, or lower-socioeconomic level. It's not an easy place, and that's ok to say." Jeffrey spoke to the influence of the families over the prestige element of the school:

With some families, the prestige is really really important. I've come across that a few times, when the family has come to recognize certain schools as worth the sacrifice of coming to a school like this. When I talk to the kids it's clear to me

that the concern of prestige of their school is largely coming from other people in their lives. And not to much them.

Performance Indicators	
100% of students are prepared & enroll in college	Value of the matriculation list
Student's college lists	

Figure 4. Research Question 1, construct 4 themes.

Performance Indicators

Theme 1: 100% of students are prepared & enroll in college

At both schools, all three counselors/administrative assistants agreed that 100% of FGCBs are prepared for a 4-year college and 100% enroll in a 4-year college. Counselors at each school noted that occasionally, once every 4-5 years, a student will enroll in community college with the goal of transferring or enlist in the military. These instances are a rarity. See Theme 3 in this section for a complete list of all the schools applied to by each FGCB and their admissions and enrollment information.

Theme 2: Value of the matriculation list

Both schools boast a strong and impressive list of college admissions each year, which can be found on each school's college counseling website. When asked about that in more detail, Frederick at Stoneholt stated:

Very few CSUs, we do have kids applying to SFSU...Some UCs, they will also sometimes apply to out public schools out of state that are less competitive, like Arizona, Colorado, things like that... [but] in all reality, it's important for the health and welfare of this school that the college list look really really good compared to our peer schools. And it does.

Jeffrey explained in more detail the thought behind state schools at Stoneholt, "The vast majority of students coming out of Stoneholt would not feel comfortable attending a

CSU. They would feel like they failed. It wasn't worth it and they should have just gone to public school".

At Woodcrest there are also a smaller percentage of students enrolling in state schools each year, but the focus is slightly different. As mentioned above, Brooke discusses the report provided to the Board each year:

Every year we present to our board a summary of the year. And we do talk about students who are first gen and where they are going, and students on financial aid and where they are going, and just kind of seeing that we have a pretty robust population of these kinds of students and wanting to provide them with more support in case they are not feeling supported enough.

When asked about FGCBS versus non-FGCBS's enrollments, Louisa shared:

Last year, 2014, we had 14 first generation to college students, and the colleges that they went to were: Brown, UCB, Cal Lutheran, Clark (2), Cooper Union, Hofstra, Howard, Lewis and Clark, Macalester, Pitzer, USF, University of Washington, & Yale. So that's kind of just as diverse as our typical kids I would say. It's interesting because only 4 of those are in California. So I would say that's about, about 25-30% of our class stays in California between the private colleges and the UCs and Cal States. So I guess that's about on par with the rest of the class. And I would say that about does represent what our class looks like.

Theme 3: Student's college lists

Below are the complete college lists for the 10 FGCBS who participated in the interviews.

Stoneholt Student's College Lists			
Carlyn	Accepted	Waitlist	Denied
	UC Davis	Colgate University	Carleton College
	UC Santa Cruz		Colorado College
	Lewis & Clark College		Macalester College
	University of Puget Sound		Tulane University
	Skidmore College*		

	Smith College		
Lee	Accepted	Waitlist	Denied
	Boston University		UC Berkeley
	UC Santa Barbara*		UC Davis
	CA Poly State University SLO		UC Irvine
	University of the Pacific		UC Los Angeles
	San Diego State University		UC San Diego
	San Francisco State University		Stanford University
	Santa Clara University		
	Sonoma State University		
Kelsie	Accepted	Waitlist	Denied
	University of Arizona		UC Berkeley
	UC Riverside		UC Davis
	DePaul University		UC Irvine
	Gonzaga University		UC Los Angeles
	Purdue University		UC San Diego
	University of San Francisco		UC Santa Barbara
	Seattle University		UC Santa Cruz
	Willamette University*		CA Poly State University SLO
			Loyola Marymount University
			University of Notre Dame
			University of San Diego
			University of Washington
Jacky	Accepted	Waitlist	Denied
	UC Merced	UC Santa Cruz	UC Berkeley
	UC Riverside	Santa Clara University	UC Davis
	UC Santa Barbara	Whitman College	UC Irvine
	CA Poly State University Pomona		UC Los Angeles
	St. Mary's College		UC San Diego

	San Francisco State University		CA Poly State University SLO
	University of San Francisco		Carleton College
	Willamette University*		Occidental College
			Pitzer College
Benton	Accepted	Waitlist	Denied
	UC Davis	Boston University (guaranteed transfer)	UC Berkeley
	UC Santa Barbara		UC Irvine
	UC Santa Cruz		UC Los Angeles
	CA Poly State University Pomona		UC San Diego
	Northeastern University		CA Poly State University SLO
	San Diego State University		Rice University
	San Francisco State University		Stanford University
	Santa Clara University		
	University of Southern California*		

*enrolled as a freshman for 2014-2015 academic year

Figure 5. College Lists for FGCBS who were interviewed at Stoneholt.

Woodcrest Student's College Lists			
Weston	Accepted	Waitlist	Denied
	Boston College	Johns Hopkins University	UC Berkeley
	Chapman	Princeton University	UC Davis
	University of Oregon		UC Los Angeles
	University of Pennsylvania*		UC San Diego
	University of San Francisco		Harvard
	University of Southern California		Stanford University
			Washington University in St. Louis
			Yale University
Lauren	Accepted	Waitlist	Denied
	UC Santa Cruz*	Pepperdine University (January admit)	UC Berkeley
	CA Poly State		UC Los Angeles

	University SLO		
	Clark University		UC San Diego
	University of San Francisco		Colby University
			Lewis & Clark College
			Pitzer College
			Pomona College
			Reed College
			Tufts University
			Wesleyan University
Alex	Accepted	Waitlist	Denied
	UC Merced	University of Oregon	Bowdoin College
	CSU Monterey Bay		UC Irvine (no decision)
	Eckerd College		UC Riverside (no decision)
	Roger Williams University		UC Santa Barbara (no decision)
	Whittier College*		UC Santa Cruz
			CSU Fullerton
			CSU Northridge
			Carleton College
			Grinnell College
			Howard University
			Occidental College
			Oregon State University (no decision)
			San Jose State University
			Stanford University
			Vassar College
Fay	Accepted	Waitlist	Denied
	Boston University*		Brown University
	UC Berkeley		UC Los Angeles
	UC San Diego		Johns Hopkins University

	UC Santa Cruz		Pomona College
	CA Poly State University Pomona		
	CA Poly State University SLO		
	Lewis & Clark College		
	Occidental College		
	San Francisco State University		
	Sonoma State University		
Emilia	Accepted	Waitlist	Denied
	UC Merced		UC Riverside
	Clark University		UC San Diego
	Goucher College		UC Santa Barbara
	Loyola University New Orleans		UC Santa Cruz
	University of Redlands		CA Poly State University SLO
	San Francisco State University		Santa Clara University
	University of San Francisco*		

*enrolled as a freshman for 2014-2015 academic year

Figure 6. College Lists for FGCBS who were interviewed at Woodcrest.

Research Question 2

How does the experience of FGCBS differ from non-FGCBS within the private high school environment? Specifically, to what extent is their experience different as it relates to student educational aspirations, student-perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators?

To quantitatively address research question 2, an independent t-test was conducted comparing the FGCBS at both Stoneholt and Woodcrest combined (n = 19) to non-FGCBS at both Stoneholt and Woodcrest combined (n = 137). To ensure validity of the analyses, it was redone using a random sample of n = 19 non-FGCBS compared to n

= 19 FGCBS, and the results were the same. All variables reported meet the Levene's assumption of equality of variance.

Results indicated a significant difference in BARRIERS between all-FGCBS and all non-FGCBS, where FGCBS perceive more barriers in the college application process than non-FGCBS in these private high schools. There was a statistically significant difference in SAT composite (PERFORMANCE) between all FGCBS and all non-FGCBS, where FGCBS scored lower on the SAT composite than non-FGCBS in these private high schools. See Table 8 for all t-test results.

Table 8
T-Test Results Addressing Research Question 2: Comparing FGCBS at both Schools to non-FGCBS at both schools

	FGCBS		Non-FGCBS		t-test	EF (<i>d</i>)
	M	SD	M	SD		
ASPIRATIONS	2.4	0.24	2.5	0.20	1.50	
RESOURCES	2.2	0.33	2.2	0.34	-.556	
BARRIERS	2.6	0.21	2.7	0.24	3.276*	.806
PERFORMANCE (SAT score)	1957	158.73	2120	228.20	2.686*	.734
PERFORMANCE (ACT 2 SAT)	1318	122.27	1377	126.58	1.279	
PERFORMANCE (GPA)	3.6	0.28	3.6	0.28	.874	
PERFORMANCE (Math SAT Subj.)	703	63.43	716	64.66	.581	

* $p < .01$

Note: M = Mean. SD = Standard Deviation. EF = Effect Size. ASPIRATIONS, RESOURCES & BARRIERS scales range from 0 (negative) to 3 (positive). PERFORMANCE SAT score scale ranges from 200 (lowest score) to 2400 (highest score). PERFORMANCE (ACT 2 SAT) score converts ACT scores to the SAT scale, ranges from 200 (lowest score) to 2400 (highest score). PERFORMANCE (GPA) ranges from 0.0 (D+ or lower) to 4.0 (A or A+). PERFORMANCE (Math SAT Subj.) score ranges from 200 (lowest score) to 800 (highest score).

To qualitatively address research question 2, themes were identified from the interviews with both FGCBS and counselors focusing on each of the main contracts:

ASPIRATIONS, RESROUCES, BARRIERS and PERFORMANCE (as relevant). To demonstrate each theme, quotes are pulled from the interviews, which serve as representation from other interviews.

Question 2: FGCBS vs. non-FGCBS

Educational Aspirations	
Education as Social Mobility	Academic Expectations

Figure 7. Research Question 2, construct 1 themes.

Educational Aspirations

Theme 1: Education as Social Mobility

Overwhelmingly students and counselors recognized the immense benefits of a college degree for FGCBS, and it was clear through the interviews that each student has aspired to attend college for a very long time. Jacky at Stoneholt shared that

Since I come from a Chinese family it is like they believe that education is the gateway towards like social mobility so they you know coming from you know kind of like a humble background not too wealthy just like moderately well-off you know it is kind of like given me aspirations and a hope that I can like move up the social ladder kind of through an education.

Kelsie from Stoneholt, had a similar story:

I think that my parents immigrated here from China and my mom began attending college, I think she finished the first year but she never really graduated. So, I think from that I think they always wanted us to... They always wanted us to be able to... They want your generation to improve, to always do better than the last one; so they wanted us to be able to attend college and achieve jobs in anything we wanted to do and not be set back by anything.

As did Lee at Stoneholt, but he focused more on the economic benefits of an education:

Well because I come from a low-income family, I feel like I'm able to understand really early on how education can benefit you. I think primarily through financial means but also through just being knowledgeable and I think culture, cause I find that, like my parents were immigrants they are knowledgeable in a lot of common

things in life, just knowing how to get by in life but in terms of academics wasn't their strong point. So I guess seeing that made me again want to desire of higher education just because I feel that it's the pathway and like a stepping stone between like a life where you're not living very comfortably and you have a lot of limitations on you to another lifestyle where you have a lot more freedom. And you just have a happier life in general, which isn't always related to money but I think it is mostly connected.

At Woodcrest, Weston recognized the same benefits:

I just know that having [a] college education under my belt, in regardless of whether I go off to graduate school or even higher education, it really helps in the professional world, like getting jobs. And, I think having college education is a good way to like secure your future, not just financially but also future that you may foster like with someone else, or your future family like I think that is very important.

Emilia at Woodcrest feels an obligation to her family to be successful academically:

I definitely want to go to college, my parents didn't go to college and that is why they're not making a lot of money. And after everything they sacrificed for me to be here I definitely want to go to college. I feel like it's an obligation I have to fill.

Fay at Woodcrest expressed the pressure that is associated with education as a method for social mobility:

Just cause I know there's so many people behind me on that, but there's also the stress that they are putting so much on me, there's so much on my shoulders I'm expected to go to college so that everyone for the rest of generations, all my younger cousins, all my relatives. And even though it's nice, but there is that pressure that's kind of hard to deal with sometimes.

The college counselors recognize these aspirations within the students as well as some of the pressure they are facing to be successful. Louisa eloquently shared:

But there's that group of them where this is all sort of fresh and new, and they're open minded *because* their parents didn't go to college and they're just excited for them to go to college. But then I have kids...[that] feel like they have even more pressure on them *because* they are the hope and dream of their family.

As did Jeffrey at Stoneholt:

The pressure to make it seem worthwhile for that parent to have made all of those sacrifices. With some first gen students, I just see this incredible maturity. They don't resent the pressure they feel. And in fact they just own it in a really big way. And they recognize what their parents have done for them. And even in some cases we've talked about parents seem like unhelpful because their anxieties are so great, and the kids just navigate that too

Theme 2: Academic Expectations

Going hand in hand with aspirations comes expectations, both by students and the people in their lives. Most notably, all counselors stated that FGCBS had the same educational expectations for themselves as non-FGCBS, they were interested in the same types of colleges as their peers with the same academic standing and were applying to and getting acceptances at a similar rate to their non-FGCB peers. Josephine at Stoneholt stated "I wouldn't say that first gen students are just looking at state schools. I think they are looking at similar types of schools. It's more based on either academics and interests, will change what kinds of pools".

Jeffrey agreed, and followed up with more insight into realistic expectations that FGCBS tend to have:

I think they [FGCBS] want to go to the same types of schools ya. I guess that's maybe tempered by the value concern, so maybe if I can't go to the exact school I want to maybe a private school, I'm more willing to consider a public option in state. They are more willing to quickly move to the other option, a pragmatic approach.

While Frederich at Stoneholt agreed, he did identify some boundaries that FGCBS are more likely to impose on their college lists:

There's different kinds ignorance or innocence among the first generation students, their sense of geography is very different. They are usually west coast bound. Nothing wrong with wanting to go to college on the west coast, but to me

it's an artificial limitation. But often they are more reluctant to leave home. Particularly if they are the oldest in the family, they feel a responsibility to younger siblings, often they have more home responsibilities which typically upper and middle class kids do not. They are not aware in some cases that their ethnicity can be a hook or advantage.

At Woodcrest, the counselors shared similar sentiments to those at Stoneholt. Brooke stated "I think they are looking to go to private schools in and out of state, instate CSUs and UCs. They do apply broadly." And Olivia described it as:

There is a small subset of students that wants to stay local for whatever reason. California, for whatever reason, they just want to stay on this coast. But it's hard to say that that's most students, that it's most common, most common would just be CSUs, UCs, all the ones you kind have there, minus out-of-state private schools because they tend to not have a lot of financial aid.

Perceived Access to Resources	
Resource Inequity	Planning for College
Parents' Educational Capital	Counselors as a Resource

Figure 8. Research Question 2, construct 2 themes.

Perceived Access to Resources

Theme 1: Resource Inequity

Overall the FGCBS enrolled at both schools on average have lower family incomes, and all expect one identify as minorities (ie. not white). Therefore, their experiences as FGCBS is compounded by their economic status and racial status within the school. Benton at Stoneholt describes his experience as a low-income student and how this has impacted is access to resources:

I know I have a lot of friends who are of wealthier backgrounds, and you know have all these private tutors and sort of like you know these fancy you know computers and whatever. I mean I have had access to a computer, but there is a visual difference and you can sort of tell that this person have this kind of household that promotes this educational growth and my household it did but in a

different way, and sort of like you need to do this on your own and sort of like we are here to support you but we can't pour all our resources to you. We also have to like survive.

Lee at Stoneholt discusses the dichotomy of living in a low-income community while attending school in a high-income community:

I feel like I've always kind of been part of two different environments where even though I feel comfortable in both of them I've never really felt a part of one of them. Just because I think I live in a low income neighborhood with like drug dealing, prostitution, like violence, and homelessness and I got to school in really like affluent neighborhood with like wealthy kids and families who its just the completely different ends of the spectrums. So and then after I went to like a private middle school and high school, I've gotten sort of a half and half

Alex at Woodcrest also spoke to the differences in access to resources based on income:

Well I think that because I don't really come from a background of a like having a whole lot of money that it is hard to get like extra resources that might be small like extra time for SAT prep or maybe like some super well known college counselor outside of my school and I've noticed that having those extra things really helps a lot, so I don't think they really hampered my decision of where I wanted to go college 'cause I really want to go to Stanford and I didn't get in but you know it was still my dream.

Theme 2: Parents' Educational Capital

Delving further into the experience of the students as *first generation*, Lee at Stoneholt talks about watching his parents struggle fueling his motivation:

I think my dad only finished elementary school, and then he didn't go to middle school just cause they didn't have money. And then my mom, I don't even think she finished elementary school. So they never really, even then in their home countries in Asia, the education wasn't as good as it is here in America. But knowing that and knowing the struggles they went through to just to try to have a decent life, was a life they can survive with like food and basic necessities that was a huge factor in like motivating me because I guess when you see what you don't have, when you don't have money which I think is really closely connected to education you want certain things, and realize oh education is like a pathway to get what you want and help you achieve your goals

Weston at Woodcrest discussed the privilege associated with having parents who attending college and how that impacts what resources he feels he has available to him:

I'm not sure but a lot of my classmates come from families where not only their family but their parents went to very good colleges. Like a lot of my friends come from families where parents have attended Ivy leagues or like top 20 or so universities, you know what I mean so, that definitely helps I think, helps them. Not to say they are not earning where they got into, just that that's helpful and you have parents who have gone through the process so, a lot of these students have more resources as another thing. Not to say I had difficulty but I feel, to a certain extent that play field wasn't exactly leveled. I wasn't exactly the same, there would be times I would have to do twice as much work to end up at the same place. Like I would make myself stand out, so I think probably the biggest disadvantage I've acknowledged being a first gen student and not coming from a family that has like that privilege, if that makes sense.

Fay at Woodcrest, perhaps was the most introspective on the subject, discussed many facets of her identity and how they impacted the resources she had access to, and furthermore how they made her feel and interact with her peers:

And so it is kind of hard to talk about with people "oh my parents went Harvard" and "Oh well mine didn't" and it kind of gets breeched as an awkward topic just like get have someone who is really privileged and you have some who is not privileged in the room, like an elephant, that you try to avoid but it's hard to deal with knowing that you know the other person's background but you are not sure how to address it in a way that's not hurtful or progressive. So a lot of times I try to avoid talking about their education or economic status just because I know other people become uncomfortable, just because other people are phased with knowing that their family is privileged it is kind of hard for them to deal with because it is their first time knowing that they ever seeing it. I'm currently learning in my history class that you are not suppose to avoid it but it is hard to deal with because that's how I've been dealing with it since I was little. Just if it makes someone uncomfortable, don't take about it. It really affects who I talk about college with, so with my friends who are first gen, I talk about it a lot with them, just because I know they are going through similar things that they experience, similar reactions and they react similarly. But my friends who aren't first gen it's a harder topic to start with them because often times parents do come into the whole college process and decision making. And it's really hard for them to decide based on money, where instead where do I really want to go, where will I be happy at? Just because it affects the way I talk to other people it does affect my relationship with those people. So it's like I can really be myself with them and its hard to do so whenever I am, they often don't know what to say or how to

comfort me. Whereas I tell them I don't need comfort it's just the reality of it, and they think I need comfort which is of course an assumption that I don't really like just because well yeah my parents didn't do this and that, and they didn't have this but I'm fine and I'm happy and we are happy as a family so I don't mean to have them feel guilty about it because it is nothing that they can control, its nothing that I expect them to fix but it's just hard. They always make the assumption that they have to do something or give back to me, but it's not something that I want or need.

Theme 3: Planning for College

Keeping these elements in mind, college counselors discussed how income, race, and first generation status impact the college application process. Jeffrey at Stoneholt identified the benefit of being a FGCBS in the applicant pool:

I think their list ends up looking a lot like the other kids that have the same numbers that they have. If anything, there list might be a little more competitive because they carry the edge of having done well in school and being different from their classmates. I think we are all aware that sometimes being first gen can help you in the admissions process.

But Frederich addressed the limitations of college funding on students:

I do is I tell them to have a longer list for you, we don't have a limit on the number of schools a kid can apply to, but it's important to be careful. So if we are going to err, we are going to err on the side of more schools. This will not cost you anything, because we will get you feel waivers, and for the financial aid stuff we will cover the cost. We have to offer them a longer list because they need adequate financial aid.

He went on to say:

A lot of the liberal arts colleges have fly in programs for low-income students, so I do endorse those, because that's the only way a kids gonna see a college. Some kids are very aggressive about using that opportunity, other kids need a bit of kick in the pants

And to assure the low-income students that finances won't be a barrier during the application process itself, he explained:

I have a list of kids who are on aid. I reassure them, I say go ahead and sign up for the test, bring us the receipt, Josephine will process it and you will get reimbursed. Don't be embarrassed, its part of going to school here. Why would we give you \$30,000 in financial aid, and not give you \$200 for testing. Doesn't make any sense.

Similarly, Louisa at Woodcrest shared how the school supports low-income students with the application fees in addition to providing fee waivers to eligible students:

We also have this budget that we started a couple of years ago, it comes from our school, to help pay for UC and CSU app fees, some of the fly-in programs make the kids pay \$50, anything like that. And we decided this year because there's so many kids in this current class that were drawing out of that pool, we would pay up to \$200 per student. And it's being used so that's great.

When addressing race, Frederich at Stoneholt shared:

I must have recommended to a kid to talk about it at least as a possibly for an essay topic. And we had an English teacher who was African American, who very highly regarded and a good guy, and he came in to see me and said to me "don't have the kids play the race card. You shouldn't have them do that that's not good." And I said "Steve, my job is to help them explain themselves and their situation as best they can to maximum advantage. It's a competitive world out there. And if a kid doesn't want to write about it, just like someone doesn't want to write about a learning disability, that's ok. And they do want to know if the kid identifies. Some groups more than others"

And at Woodcrest, Louisa discussed addressing race with the students:

I talk for sure about race and everything in my meetings with students, just as sort of a factor in the college search and about how colleges are looking to compose a class. And how those pieces can become very relevant in the college search, but it also has to do with your fit in the college, and your comfort level. So you know I definitely talk about it very openly.

Theme 4: Counselors as a Resource

At Woodcrest, because of the new FGCBS Programming, special attention is paid to understanding the students' experiences and trying to support them by serving as a

resource to them. When finding out a student is FGCB, Olivia shared that she handles the student slightly differently:

I think we, we tend to approach things the same way with every student, but I think when we find out that they're first-generation to college, we might spend a little more time on, you know, kind of what does that mean for them, how do they feel about that, what are some of the challenges they anticipate, how involved will their parents be, because it just really depends on their families, on how involved they are, and that gives us a sense of how much support then we need to provide them based on that initial conversation, but we structure the meetings the same.

She went on to say:

Just having parents that have gone through the process and that know about it, I think there's a level of—I don't know if it has a direct impact, but I think there's a level of confidence that comes with knowing your parent has done it or has gone...you know. Because sometimes I do think there's a bit of hesitation and it can be from a number of things, but I think some of the barriers might be, just if you don't grow up in a family where college is kind of the norm, I think—and maybe they do want that for you—but it's just if you're not around that, I think it can be hard for some of the students to really be, like, okay this is super important. Even though schools says it's important, I think having that extra support on the parents' side—you know, okay let's do this together—because I think a lot of times parents do want it for their students and they want to push them. And they push them to do it, but it just doesn't work. I don't know, it's kind of hard to describe... I just think that it's not just the college application process, it's having to deal with all the other things that are going on—not that that's a barrier, but I think that's definitely something that you have to address. And that can be hard when you're very used to “let's take you through this process” and suddenly having to switch your perspective a bit.

Louisa talked about the additional level of attention she pays to the FGCBS' college lists:

That first list means so much more for them I think for those first gen kids. Because “oh here are names for me to go research” and they didn't even know where to start before that. I feel a lot more responsible, I was just doing a list for a first gen kid yesterday. I thought, oh my god I can't just dash off this list and send it to him. I have to really... he's going to be researching every one of these schools and he's going to be holding onto these names, and I can't forget one that would be perfect for him. So there was a lot of pressure! I spent 3 days doing it, whereas normally I kind of whip it up in an hour and a half and send it off. I really had to keep thinking about it because I just knew that this is where he's going to get his information. And he may not give me feedback until late summer – this might be the only list he's working with from now until late September. So I

really have to take it seriously. Because there aren't going to be other people shouting out any names.

Louisa identified the need to be an additional resource to these students as the lack of parental experience in college and how this may impact FGCBs' perspective on what college is and means:

And they have so much, it's just part of their lore and history of their family. Not even if its just a prestigious college, but more about the experience itself. You know "oh my mom always talks about her sophomore year college roommate" I think just the unfamiliarity and having the names of the colleges just floating around all the time, around your house, that's probably the hardest thing. I wouldn't say that the parents who went to college aren't really helping those kids apply to college. They aren't doing the applications for them. I'm sure there are some helicopter moms with the crazy boys who are very disorganized who do do it for them. And I do see that. But for the most part all the kids here are doing the work themselves. So I can't say that that part is that different. I think it's more of the just coming in with a place to go and parents who can help you figure that out. But that can also be very freeing, because there are a lot of parents from the generation now who have these horrible ideas about what USC is because what USC was 30 years ago, and it's like that has nothing to do with what USC is today and if it's a good fit for your child. It's nice, because I feel like the first gen kids don't have that. Some of them do obviously because their parents come from cultures where there are only 8 acceptable schools. But for the most part their parents do that those kinds of notions. They can be more open-minded.

Barriers to 4-year College	
Parental Education	Test Prep & Support
Student Independence	Financial Aid
Race/Ethnicity	Lack of Counselor Time

Figure 9. Research Question 2, construct 3 themes.

Barriers to 4-year College

Theme 1: Parental Education

A number of barriers to 4-year college were noted by students and counselors, many of which were the same. The first and most prominent would be the fact that

FGCBS have parents who never graduated from 4-year colleges, leaving a navigational gap within the home. Lee, a student at Stoneholt stated:

They kind of struggle just doing simple things like filling our forms, I sometimes will have to help them or fill it out for them. And I think because I've seen that compared to other students I have to take on all these additional tasks it makes me realize it like [is] not something they want to do like my parents. But its just reality and they can help it just because their educational level is so low.

Carlyn at Stoneholt shared the impact her mom's lack of education had on her:

I think that it motivated me even more to go to college because [my mom] already has kind of somewhat of an inferiority complex of like around other people she just feels like she is not like smart enough to be talking to them but I mean she totally is but she just doesn't think she is when people talk about prestige and whatever it's not her thing and she gets discouraged a lot and also she gets nervous.

Frederich at Stoneholt discussed how this impacts the college counseling process with parents:

They [FGCBS] need more help on certain things because their parents don't have what is called cultural capital. To assist them with things like signing up for the SAT and things like that. They have more questions about financial aid, they aren't the only kids here on financial aid – we have plenty of kids on financial aid who aren't first generation. But that is obviously an essential part of their process. We try to address that.

He continued,

[Parents of FGCBS are] not going to be able to help their kid with their essays, because they can't write in English that way. [They ask me if] I am going to be able to assist them and that the school will be able to support them financially. We are not going to pay for test prep, but I will get them test prep at a discount or almost free because I provide references for fee paying customers. I have a good list of that. We can't pay to fly to some college, but we can make available these fly-ins when appropriate. So it's more general and that we are available and here to help. We want to hear their concerns. And that their kid will go to college and get an education. That's the point of going to this school.

Jeffrey at Stoneholt explained it from the perspective of the importance or value placed on education by parents:

I think the biggest thing is parent support. Well if your parents have never applied to school in the States then you are missing a major resource that you've had for basically everything else in your life that you've done. And then suddenly this person can't help you with this one process and then for some first gen families, they have sacrificed so much and lived their lives in a way to set their kids up for a future that's better than the life they have now. And so there can be a real significant weight on those kids: the pressure to make it seem worthwhile for that parent to have made all of those sacrifices.

As a result of the missing experience, Jeffrey explained that FGCBS' parents ask slightly different types of questions than parents who did go to college:

Their parents tend to be more concerned about logistics... but they [parent's of FGCBS] tend to be really well informed I've found. They don't come in totally naive. So if they are asking questions it's usually for clarification about things that they've already heard or read. Sometimes it's the same – where they are asking the logistics questions and aren't very well informed. But a lot of the time they are focused on prestige of the school.

At Woodcrest, the counselors shared similar experiences working with FGCBS' parents, and the difference between those meetings and meetings with parents who attended college. Louisa shared that:

Some parents want to talk a lot about testing and strategy and courses for next year and stuff like that. Some parents really want to hear about, these are the more savvy parents, things like GPA and what that means. Where does he stand in the class and what does that mean for these colleges? how to use Naviance how do you read the data on Naviance? How do you figure out where my kid fits into all of those schools? I would say that doesn't tend to be first gen families who talk about that.

Alanye, who was a FGCBS herself completely understands why FGCBS' parents ask such specific types of questions:

During family conferences in particular, I think I do notice that the parent or parents will say 'I am completely unfamiliar with the process' so they need

clarification about the steps and what sorts of support I can offer. It's actually... I was a first gen to college myself, so I can absolutely relate, and I do find that my meetings with first gen families and students tend to go longer. Because I'm trying to provide a lot... more comprehensive picture that they're not familiar with as other students maybe familiar with already.

She continued to say:

So they do ask a lot of questions about the timeline of what it means to apply and by when. They ask about, they do talk about visiting schools because they themselves haven't been to a college before, so wondering what kinds of things they should be doing, asking or seeing while visiting. Financial aid questions come up. They do ask about what kinds of support I provide for their student and for them through the process. I am available... I do talk opening about not being an expert for financial aid, but again, I can help them find the answers. And I tell them that I am here to brainstorm for essays and read through applications and talk about the list. All of these steps of the process. And you know some families worry about how much they are contacting me... "I don't mean to bug you". Anytime –really! I mean it! I want to be sure that I'm there. Because I know having gone through this myself, when I was a student I know that if you have a lot of questions you want someone there to be a resource.

Theme 2: Student Independence

This lack of experience on the part of the parent was noted to impact parent's level of involvement with the counselors. While all counselors noted that there is a range of involvement for FGCBS parents, there often is also a language barrier that impacts their ability to participate. As a result of this and other factors, FGCBS take on an added level of independence that their peers may not have to take on. Students expressed that their parents trust them to manage everything and oftentimes take a step back. Fay at

Woodcrest shared:

Even though no one has gone to college, because we are so close they were really supportive of anything I do and they trust that I know what I'm doing and that I know the system more than they do and that I can navigate it. They have always just been giving me supportive words like "Oh, go for you dreams and we'll be here for you and if you every need anything just call us and we'll try to help" and

I think having the whole family connection really helps, especially when I'm really stressed.

Emilia at Woodcrest talked about the frustration she felt when she couldn't go to her parents for help with the college process:

Throughout the whole college process or even when I hit high school, I couldn't turn to my parents to ask for help, at all. I got very frustrated and wish they could've gone to college... So definitely my parents couldn't help me. I had to figure it out all on my own.

And Fay talked about the frustration she felt when everyone assumed she had it all figured out, but really didn't:

So it's be really frustrating knowing that oh my friends are really close to me but I'm also competing against them, and they already have a head start. And I know especially in my freshman year, a lot of what I was doing for classes which was catching up, because there was all this assumed knowledge that I didn't have. It was a really hard transition for me, yeah that was freshman year because I didn't come from a private school background, I came from public school I wasn't really taught a lot thing that my classmates already. I felt so behind, because I felt so behind it felt was a really punch in my self esteem. Oh I was doing really well in public school but now I'm not.

Counselors at both schools expressed a desire to work with FGCBS' parents, but struggled to get them in the door. Jeffrey at Stoneholt expressed that "It's not like that's just an issue that came up with college counseling. It's an issue that we've seen throughout their time here. The [FGCBS'] parents just didn't come to campus much". At Woodcrest, Louisa shared a similar problem:

But what's interesting is I feel that a lot of the first gen families are the families that don't contact us for a meeting, so I would say we contact them and follow through until the end of the year emailing them saying "oh we'd love to have a meeting with you". And I wont force it... But if I know the student is on the ball...then I don't worry about it.

When FGCBS' parents don't come into the school to meet with the counselors, the counselors assume that the student has it all managed and will take care of everything.

Louisa discussed this idea:

So the family meeting, that's an interesting thing for first gen students. Because especially, I've had some first gen kids who have always sort of guided themselves through life, and they are the ones who help their parents do tax forms and that kind of thing. Their families don't want to have a family meeting, so if it seems clear that they don't need to have a family meeting, like this kid does deal with everything, then we don't force them to.

The way this manifested with the student – counselor relationship was in the types of support they expressed needing as compared to their non-FGCBS peers. Olivia at

Woodcrest shared:

They're very basic kinds of questions, so information-type questions like "how do you [do] this", "how do you apply for this," "what forms am I going to need to fill out," so more basic questions compared to students that have had parents go through the process where they're kind of already more familiar with what they're filling out. And I would say too—and this isn't for all first-generation students—but there is a bigger concern with paying for college, so a lot financial aid questions, scholarship questions, things of that nature.

Brooke agreed:

I think that first generation students ask a bit more clarifying questions about the process. They're not aware, for example about the common application is available for so many different colleges, and just understanding what the common app is and how it works.

Theme 3: Race/Ethnicity

As mentioned earlier, race/ethnicity significantly impacts these FGCBS. The students at both schools wanted to discuss this experience, but the students at Woodcrest were more comfortable sharing their thoughts and personal experiences than the students at Stoneholt. At Stoneholt Benton shared:

In terms of applying to college, no. But in terms of applying to certain colleges, yes [I was discouraged] because we have the whole idea that the Asian population is taking over and I felt like, as an Asian majoring in biology that's pretty typical thing you would see in the application. So I was kind of hesitant in applying to the more challenging universities, and I felt like, it was nice to have this background. But in the end, I felt like I didn't have the credentials to go to like really hard colleges.

At Woodcrest, Fay discussed her experience being half Asian and half Latina and how that has impacted her motivation towards college:

I know for my friends who are first gen from public school it was hard for them to go pass what the expectations of them. Because most of them were Latino or Latina and I don't really look Latino or Latina even though I'm half. I know that visual probably aspect is something affected me than them. For me I was probably just because I look Asian so of course I'm gonna be smart and stuff, and they look Latina of course they are gonna be lazy or something so living with those stereotypes, and seeing people's reactions to them was kind of really hurtful and hard for us to come to terms with just because we have such different experiences even though we come from pretty similar backgrounds, that physical appearance wasn't something we couldn't get pass.

Weston, who is also mixed-race shared his thoughts:

I've definitely had a mix of self-doubt and a mix of self-motivation...I mean I'm not fully African American but being an African American male and the importance in that and like getting an education... So that may have always been motivation, I don't if it has or not that's a possibility, that's the first time I've really thought about it. As for self doubt, I know race has made me doubt myself, sometimes within the Woodcrest community also. I know the kind of student I am, I know that I'm just as intelligent as people here. But sometimes I feel kind of hindered because of my race, or I hinder myself because of my race. Like what people expect of me or maybe like what they don't expect of me that I'm not fitting into their norm and that sometimes just as scary because it prevents me from being myself. And that carries going into college, and what is the college experience going to be like, but regardless of my race I'm still as motivated as ever to get into there to have fun, to pursue my goals and that sort of thing

Alex, an African American student at Woodcrest talked about how his race motivated him to succeed:

I think as an African American male it has been more push to go to college because if you look like on TV or anywhere like on the internet, any social media yea you notice that there is a lot of negativity towards people of color and so everyone that I've been around has always advocated going to college and rising above those stereotypes eventually you're going to encounter those and the best way to deal with those is having a very good education and being successful academically.

He continued to share how his race impacted his experience as a student at Woodcrest for the last 4 years:

And then socially, you know being a student of color you're going you are definitely going to face social problems in a private school – like for example I had this sort of problem in my first couple of years of like students calling me “whitewash” because I like talked a certain way, I don't tuck my pants like you may see on TV – so that was tough – it was tough to deal with that and then yea it was just like a combination of stuff like that that you may see with the typical student of color in a private school like it is tough sitting in a classroom and you don't really see anybody that looks like you so there were just times of you feeling inferior because you don't see anyone else that looks like you so like who do you really go to to talk to and stuff.

Theme 4: Test Prep and Support

A significant barrier students identified was lack of resources to things such as test preparation. Kelsie at Stoneholt shared “I think for me, I'm not really a testing person so that SAT took a slight toll on a few schools that I'd applied to”. At Woodcrest, Lauren talked about how her parents unawareness of the college process served as a barrier to this resource:

So some of my friends had been studying for the SATs when they were sophomores and I started the second semester of junior year. I don't know I feel like it a little in a disadvantage because their parents were aware of something that needed to happen and they pushed them to make it happen. I mean I can't say that it wasn't the student too but I feel like the parents have to something to do with it

too. Like if I study SAT at my house they're like "what's that?". Over there it's like "we're gonna take SAT classes", and their like "okay". I don't know, their parents are like okay and they find a tutor. And I would have to find it on my own, more work.

At Stoneholt the counselors stated they do not help with test preparation by providing it on campus or covering costs. They will refer students with a discounted rate to test prep centers, but that is the extent of the support they are able to provide. Woodcrest will also refer low-income students to test prep centers for discounted rates, but will not cover costs. A resource that was mentioned by Olivia was free test prep activities online through Naviance, but none of the FGCBS interviewed expressed any awareness of this resource. FGCBS's lack of access to test prep can impact their competitiveness because Jeffrey at Stoneholt stated "I'd say at least half if not more than half [of the class] get independent test prep".

Theme 5: Financial Aid

A big factor in the college process for many students in the cost of attendance, as mentioned earlier. Student's access to financial aid information and resources proved critical for many of the students interviewed. Carlyn at Stoneholt discussed the impact of financial aid for her:

I am on a lot of financial aid here so I definitely needed a lot for college that was one of the biggest factors it ended up working out with my top choice like were I am going now but for there were a couple of other schools like I got into but I heard from like my top choice the last one and the all other schools that I had gotten into I couldn't actually go to because financial aid just wasn't viable so it was like stressful even if I got in so it was kind of disappointing but yea that was definitely a big part of it especially in trying like apply for scholarships and making sure the school that I'd go to or even had a big endowments so that they could even provide that so which ones I applied to and such.

Fay at Woodcrest discussed how financial aid was a major player in her college decision:

So my parents are not really wealthy, we are pretty low-middle class, I know that whatever school I do get into the economic factor play much more strongly. Cause like “Oh I got into this really good school but we can’t afford it”, that’s already played into part but knowing that, the thing is I need to make sure I don’t end up in debt because if my parents can’t pay for college, after college it is even more to do. It makes me feel better about maybe it’s not my first choice college but at least it is a good school and it’s something we can all afford and it is not going to put me into terrible debt afterwards and lead me into a horrible hole. But usually it’s been really discouraging I don’t have as many resources as other students, and know a lot of my friends they come to private school with me but we probably aren’t on the same level just because they can afford SAT classes and my parent couldn’t. And all I could do was kind of tried my best to prepare on my own and hope for the best and I know it’s just kind of hard saying okay what kind of resources can I supply myself that money can’t offer me but because I don’t have money I have to find other resources or find creative ways to get to them.

She went on to say:

It was definitely the school that gave me to most financial aid, it was my third choice college so it’s not like it was far down my list but I did get into my first choice college, but I couldn’t afford it. We couldn’t afford it, BU was the best option afterwards and then I was like I can deal with that and then they offered me a spot in their honors college and made the deal even sweeter so now I’m really happy cause it’s not that expensive, we can afford it and I’m probably gonna be really challenged in their honors program but it’s good knowing I got a really good deal out of all the mess of my college process.

Unfortunately for FGCBS at both schools, all college counselors expressed having little information regarding financial aid to assist students and their families. Furthermore, several expressed that it was not their responsibility to provide a deep level of support regarding financial aid to families. Brooke at Woodcrest shared:

We don’t go through the FAFSA line by line. I am not an expert on financial aid, I do kind of see that as the family’s responsibility. I can be a resource, and help students find answers to questions they have, but by no means am I an expert. We do bring in a guest speaker for an evening presentation for parents on financial aid that provides more details

Theme 6: Lack of Counselor Time

Likely the biggest resource to FGCBS' would be the college counselor. While most students shared that their counselors were accessible and in general helpful, it was clear that with so many students per caseload the counselors were unable to carve out the amount of time that the students truly needed. Louisa at Woodcrest shared:

And then, in terms of the student and the families, it's a little bit hard because we are such an equity oriented school, which means that not everyone gets treated *the same*, that means everyone gets treated differently so that the outcome can sort of all be the same. And that part is really tricky I feel like because, you know there are going to be all those kids who are typically privileged kids who's parents went to college who are in here all the time and seeking help and are very excited about the process and not in an obnoxious way, but in a very authentic way. And it's so easy to give them a lot of assistance because they are right here in my face and I don't have to do a whole lot to help them. And then the hard part is, you I really feel like I need to be spending more of my time with first generation to college kids, and kids who need more assistance. Or maybe they aren't first generation to college but their personality is such that they're scared of the process, they haven't done well here academically, so they really are kind of dragging their feet. That part is really tricky because I do feel that especially in an equity orientated environment I need to be working with those kids more, but it's much harder. It's a lot of effort to try to even get them into your office and follow through with things. That's hard.

Alanye recognized the time limitation as well:

I know we all make ourselves readily available to all of our students. That does mean though that we rely on the students to come to us, I again, can only speak for myself. I don't as regularly as I would like to, because I have so many other students – I don't as regularly reach out to the students who are 1st gen who I maybe haven't heard from in a while. As you know we have a lot of students to manage. I feel like I could do a better job reaching out to those students. Just to make sure checking in if they aren't checking in with me.

During her interview, Louisa observed that when students falter in the college application process, they tend to be FGCBS:

So he happens to be first gen to college [long pause] but it's not because he's first gen to college. I think we have had other kids. Its funny, when I think in the past, Brooke had a student go to City College 2 years ago and she was 1st gen to

college, so it just happens to be I think that maybe our one student every other year either not getting the aid they need or not getting into for 4-year colleges or whatever, I think that person sometimes does happen to be first gen. and obviously those issues feed into it.

Research Question 3

To what extent do college counselors and students have differing perspectives on student educational aspirations, student perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college? Specifically between college counselors and first-generation college-bound students?

To qualitatively address research question 3, themes were identified from the interviews with both FGCBS and counselors focusing on each of the main constructs: ASPIRATIONS, RESOURCES, BARRIERS and PERFORMANCE (as relevant). To demonstrate each theme, quotes are pulled from the interviews, which serve as representation from other interviews. No quantitative analyses were conducted to address this question.

Educational Aspirations	
College was Always the Plan	College is more than Money

Figure 10. Research Question 3, construct 1 themes.

Educational Aspirations

Theme 1: College was Always the Plan

Overwhelmingly every FGCBS expressed that college has always been the plan for them and their families. While counselors recognized the sacrifices families made to send their children to one of these elite independent schools, no counselor stated that

students and families had college as a goal since the beginning. Kelsie at Stoneholt shared:

I think coming to Stoneholt a lot of students decide to go to college especially at University. They go to pretty good colleges too. I feel it sort of, it's not really a pressure thing; it's an environment where one wants to learn and to access their educational, like the things that are provided to them. Being able to go on to college is like taking a step further in one's education.

Similarly, Benton expressed:

College has always been pretty like standard thing for me, you know, it was something I kind of joked about when I was little with my parents. Like I'm going to Harvard, or I'm going to Yale you know to those schools, and I mean it's always been the idea of college was always in my life very early on from almost when I was born till like now.

And continued to say:

They've influenced me a good amount, I mean, college has always been in my life. It's something that I told myself early on that I wanted to go to college and so I guess they had a lot of influence to start out with, but also again I feel like it was also building off of my desire to go to college already so. In a way, they supported me a lot, rather than saying "you have to go to college" or "you can't go to college" or whatever.

Alex at Woodcrest also talked about his desire to go to college:

I think in my household my parents strongly like advocated for going to college so to me like it was always like a for sure thing that I would be attending a college. My goal is always to attend a university I wasn't really considering like a state school or a community college or anything like that – it was always the top of the mountain, like my parents have high expectations for me so as I became older I had those expectations for myself.

In more detail, it became clear that even though these parents had not attended college themselves, they saw it as a priority and encouraged their children to attend.

Jacky at Stoneholt reflected:

Yea, I think my parents, specially my mom, have always expected me to go to college. I think it's just kind of inherent it is like part of growing up... My parents like always believe that education is like one of the highest priorities and that I remember them saying that well this is the message I feel have been given by

them that your social life isn't that important as your education – education is I think is really valued over other things.

At Woodcrest, Fay agreed with these experiences:

Really early on, because my parents are immigrants, like my dad was an immigrant from Vietnam and my mom is an immigrant from Nicaragua. And I know like, because there was political strife when they were moving over that they never got the education that they wanted. They really value education still and they had kids, my sister and me and my brothers they kind of hammered into your head that how important it was to go to college. Just because it was an opportunity they never got. And really how it's important just to survive in America. The education is one way to rise, and that's what they want for us just because they find success and happiness can come through education.

Theme 2: College is more than Money

All students recognized the economic value of a college education, but to them all, a college education meant so much more, it is seen as an opportunity to grow and develop as a person. Lee at Stoneholt shared:

I guess my primary educational goals is really just to expand my knowledge, and I guess use education as a way of one to just to know more about the world around me. And sort of use it to my benefit, whether that's for my financial situation or whether that's to like bettering of our society. I guess the second thing is just kind of a more realistic idea, it leads to other career, which it provides me with a stable financial situation... I feel like having higher education just it kind of makes you become more intellectual person. And I think that is kind of necessary, or useful to have in the world.

And Kelsie at Stoneholt reiterated:

I think some of my educational goals is just being able to obtain new information every day when I'm learning, to be able to try to apply it to my everyday working experience...a college experience is very important in life.

Alternatively, the college counselors did not identify these same aspirations within

FGCBS. Frederich at Stoneholt shared:

Again because their first generation and by definition their parents haven't gone to college, by definition most of the schools they've heard of are bigger schools, and they are often very vocationally oriented – they know they need a job and they need to earn some money. And so the idea of a liberal arts college where you get a degree that doesn't necessarily have a job attached to it, is something they are not familiar with.

Perceived Access to Resources	
FGCBS Need Extra Help	Counselors Expectation of Independence
Support Available to FGCBS	Financial Resources

Figure 11. Research Question 3, construct 2 themes.

Perceived Access to Resources

Theme 1: FGCBS Need Extra Help

What proved challenging for many of the students was their need for extra support due to their FGCB status coupled with their inability to ask for help. Carlyn at Stoneholt expressed:

My college counselor, he was definitely like offering help a lot but I just didn't want it, like not specifically because him just because I wanted to do it on my own thing and so there are definitely times when I probably could have used some more help but I didn't ask anything that is probably because he has done it for so long that I didn't want to feel stupid asking a question 'cause he like gets a whole lot for like the past 20 years, yea but he is definitely there and was really helpful and respond right away if you really need it

A similar sentiment was expressed by students at Woodcrest. Fay shared:

I was too shy to approach the adults about it cause I see them as teachers and I was trained to see them as people who was really above me, and I shouldn't really talk to unless I really needed to so talking to adult for me during first year was out of the question.

And Emilia expressed:

There've been so many times that I have been challenged, and I'm like one of those who doesn't like to ask for help... I know that there are many times that I should have asked for help, but I didn't - I don't know why... So, I felt I didn't use the college counseling office as much as I should or could have... I felt I didn't use the college counseling office as much as I should or could have and maybe [my counselor] might not have felt as comfortable or maybe wanted me to come to her and that definitely happened. Also I didn't feel too comfortable with [my counselor] I don't know why I didn't feel too comfortable, she's a great person but I guess I don't know what last year when I was applying to college.... Maybe. I couldn't relate to her. ... I was so confused about what I wanted to do... I ended up applying to schools that other people told me to apply to rather than schools I wanted to apply to. Toward the end I felt that I didn't have a good selection of schools. But I am happy with my choice now. Hopefully everything comes out well.

Theme 2: Support Available to FGCBS

There were some differences in opinion between Stoneholt counselors and Woodcrest counselors on how the philosophy behind helping students select their college.

At Stoneholt the counselors did not believe in the concept of *best fit*. Frederich stated:

I don't believe in "fit". Sometimes I take off my shoe, and I say "my shoe fits my foot but not your foot, but my sock will fit both of ours. And colleges are much more like socks, most colleges will fit most kids. And that's true for first generation kids. There's an interesting dispute on the NACAC counselors list serve over the past few days about places that low-income kids would be more comfortable because there aren't all these rich entitled kids, driving there Ferraris. And the rich schools have not served the poor kids well because the culture is not inviting. It's an interesting point.

Whereas at Woodcrest, the concept of *best fit* was very important to all three counselors.

Brooke shared:

I think it's important that the students are mindful about what they are seeking and how each school matches with them, or satisfies what they are looking for. So I feel my responsibility is to help them find those matches, so knowing a lot about the schools is important.

And Olivia echoed:

It's all about finding the right fit, so it's very much an individualized perspective on working with students... We explain that to students at the beginning, that, you know, I'm an advocate and I'm also kind of here to help you through the process, so that they understand that that's kind of the two things we're doing as counselors for them.

When asked, most students expressed that one factor in their decision making for college was visiting the school itself in order to imagine themselves living there. Kelsie at Stoneholt expressed that:

I went to visit in April. I got to visit the campus and I got to know some of the people. It was a very much welcoming environment. I definitely thought that I would be able to fit in and be able to strive and learn and do all that. That was what was sort of the tipping point

However, the counselors at Stoneholt disagree in the value of college visits. Jeffrey shared:

We try to deemphasize the significance of seeing every school that you apply to. I don't think that Frederich or I feel that that's necessary. And we try to get it to seem intriguing, to be a part of the process that's exciting. I say all the time, you don't have to go everywhere, just go to the schools locally... And if you hit those schools you will have a sense of different types of schools and will give you context and background and when you sit down with a rep and they use certain terms in describing their school you will be able to have an association in your mind.

And Frederich agreed:

For first generation kids they have to do most of the research on the computers or from books because they can't afford to travel. I don't think traveling is particularly valuable, I think you get misled by how green the grass is and how cute the tour guide is.

While both schools will nominate students for fly-in programs when applicable, neither school provides college visits to students or assists with the costs associated with a college visit.

The students at Stoneholt identified many differences in their access to resources, described earlier, that were specific to them because of their FGCB status and other factors (race, income, etc.). Josephine at Stoneholt discussed that a student's FGCB status shouldn't be relevant during the college application process. She stated:

In terms of the process, I feel like. In a way it shouldn't be important [if they are FGCBs], like every kid who goes through here should be getting the same kind of help from me... so a lot of it's been driven by asking, students asking me

Taking it a step further, the students at Woodcrest overwhelmingly identified a need for college counseling to begin in freshman year, that while they appreciated the resources they did have access to in junior year, it was not early enough, especially since they were FGCBs. Alex expressed:

College counseling starts much sooner – as soon as kids enter like as opposed starting at the end of Junior year because I think at that point it is you know too late like college when they were growing up is much different from college to what it is now I guess it is much more competitive now.

And Fay stated:

College counseling here was good for junior and senior year, but I really wished they would've reach out the first couple of years cause those were [first generation] college events, and introducing us to other first gen students, but it wasn't necessary because I kind my hardest years. Junior year I've already gotten a hang of things and I figured most of what I should do out. It was nice having those of already knew from my first 2 years who was and wasn't. I don't know, I wish at least first year they would do something, a lot more... Just because being alone sucks and at least, having them reach out in the beginning at least help establish connections. So that I know I have an adult to go to, because I didn't actually know my college counselor until junior year after she sent me an email.

In her interview, Louisa reflected that starting earlier with FGCBs might be a good idea:

I feel like for the most part, most kids here really are better off just being a Woodcrest student doing everything they are doing now and putting off the college process because they totally dive in and it takes over their life once they

do start it. So I like the idea of pushing it off until January. But I can definitely see that for some kids it would be better to start earlier.

Theme 3: Counselors Expectation of Independence

All counselors at both schools expressed a need for the students to be both independent and proactive in order to receive the full benefit of their services.

Unfortunately, as stated above, many of the FGCBS expressed not feeling comfortable reaching out to their counselors for various reasons. Frederick at Stoneholt expressed his expectation for his students:

Kids *have* to get into college. I don't make them go to college. But if they don't get in then they don't have any choices. So another part of my philosophy is the tremendous amount of responsibility the student has to take. I do not do a lot of handholding. I am available... So I really encourage them to use us, but I want them to find out things for themselves. Because that's what its going to be like in college. And if we hold their hand all the way along when they're here and then they get to college, where's my mommy? Its interesting, because the first generation kids are much better at this because they know they aren't going to get that. They talk about how independent they are and they want to be independent. And I respect that.

He followed up by saying "And I tell them "it's your responsibility" because I've got 50 students, right now I have 65. I can't be running around to come get you". Josephine echoed by sharing "we try to get the students to take responsibility for as much of the process as we possibly can get them to take responsibility for", as did Jeffrey, who stated that students at Stoneholt should be "developing skills of independence, self awareness, being able to articulate exactly what they are looking for". Similarly, at Woodcrest

Olivia stated:

I think unfortunately here it's a lot of self-identifying. It's a self-identifying situation. So we give them the chart for the Collegeboard fee waivers and we say, 'Hey, if you qualify, let us know and we'll give you the fee waivers'. So, that's what happens there.

Theme 4: Financial Resources

As previously discussed, the cost of college is an important factor in a FGCBS' decision making process when applying to and choosing a school. The counselors at both schools clearly stated that they have few resources for financial aid, are not experts and see it as the family's responsibility to identify their own needs and seek support. At Stoneholt, Kelsie shared that she did a lot of the research herself, with some support from her counselors:

I did extra research on schools that generally do provide more aid to students, because my sister said don't do the same thing and apply to schools that... The schools were what she wanted --- unfortunately, without enough financial aid, it is like a barrier ...I did a good amount on my own but the counselor helped me find a scholarship program that would help me.

Both schools do provide a one evening workshop on financial aid, presented by a college financial aid officer or consultant. At Stoneholt Jeffrey shared that their presenter

She's a private [financial aid] consultant. It's for the parents, but I've had students come with their parents because parents English might not be great, so they want the kid to hear it too. She talks about both profiles and how you fill them out. And some of the strategy that goes into how schools decide to give out aid. And then she offers her services if anyone wants them. She's not unreasonable in terms of the fees.

Brooke at Woodcrest clearly expressed that "families know what their income levels are and if they qualify for fee waivers, and if they do they will come and let us know".

Barriers to 4-year College	
FGCBS Need extra Help	Counselors Expectation of Independence
Role of the Parent	Financial Resources

Figure 12. Research Question 3, construct 3 themes.

Barriers to 4-year College

Theme 1: FGCBS Need extra Help

A consistent theme throughout has been the extra level of support needed by FGCBS. While FGCBS tend to be more independent and manage family responsibilities beyond their non-FGCBS peers, when it comes to the college process, they expressed a need for additional support, and this lack of support is a barrier to their access to 4-year college. Benton at Stoneholt stated:

I mean I guess, my mom wasn't familiar with the process, at all so it was definitely a step back where I have to realize this is what I have to do, confirm it and my mom had more questions, she'll tell me, then I'll have to ask other people. And sort of a really slow process of to begin with because I didn't know what I was getting into, and my mom didn't know what to do at that point. So yeah, um challenges as first gen student.

Alex at Woodcrest discussed the need for earlier support:

I also don't know why like they don't assign college counseling as soon as students come into Woodcrest because by the time they get to their junior year and senior year and they are coming from a situation where they are already struggling it's sort of hard to just say ok we're going to send you to a university or to the college that you want to go to just off the bat like that so I think they have to start it earlier and start counseling kids earlier and they have more of a chance... [It's] much more critical for first generation students specially if their parents don't know like really who to talk to and what resources they need – having it all just be thrown at them at the last minute makes it super tough... I think the parents should be involved and I think the students should be involved as well.

And Lauren at Woodcrest discussed the how her seeming maturity negatively impacts what resources she actually has access to:

[College counseling] was good if I asked the questions, I felt like they didn't [ask me questions], so if I came in first with questions, they answered them but they didn't realize that I might have holes in my knowledge that other students may have, just be like they can just ask their parents. like when I applied for financial aid, I had a lot of questions, and not a lot of time, or I wasn't able to come here everyday, so I did ask them through email but I felt like I would've liked them to be like okay I understand that you never applied for financial for college, so here's how you do it. Instead of me being like "um, I don't understand what this question means, and I don't know what that means"

Jeffrey at Stoneholt recognized the different level of support students may experience, "some of the [non-FGCBS] parents are pretty involved in making sure applications get completed. I would bet first gen students get the least amount of help". Josephine reflected that FGCBS may not know what kinds of questions to ask as a result:

It may mean that because I'm not doing anything [like reaching out to FGCBS] that the kids might not feel as supported as they could be because they might not know to ask the question...I think that it's something to think about.

Theme 2: Role of the Parent

A barrier the counselors have identified, as previously mentioned, is communication with parents regarding the college process. Frederich at Stoneholt shared:

Well the most obvious [barrier for FGCBS] is lack of parental sophistication. Not of parental support. They want their kids to go to college, they understand the American system. They are willing to do all kinds of scarifies to get their kids to school. A school like this, and of course that's a tremendous value to us. But they don't know what makes a good essay. And they don't know the difference between the SAT and the ACT. They don't know. They don't know about financial aid. So it's just cases that we do what we can do. Some people are very hard to get ahold of.

Jeffrey at Stoneholt, expressed that getting FGCBS' parents into the school is not limited to college counseling, but rather it occurs throughout the student's experience in high school:

I think the more comfortable a parent is speaking English the more comfortable they are in coming in. That and their work schedule. I don't know if it's anymore than others, but I'm brought into it with first gen students. Its not like that's just an issue that came up with college counseling. It's an issue that we've seen throughout their time here. The parents just didn't come to campus much.

Brooke at Woodcrest talked about FGCBS' need to stay local:

Some first gen students' parents might want them to be closer to home, but I've also had the exact opposite where the parents will say, I never had this opportunity so I want the student to go wherever they want. There's may different reasons why the parent might want the student closer, a lot of familiar circumstances.

Lauren, a student at Woodcrest also identified the cultural differences between her parents expectations and those of her peers, and how these cultural differences impact decisions made about college:

Whereas here it's like yeah I'm going to Boston and my dad is kicking me out, it's like got it. And that's only because, that's how their parents grew up like that so they grew up going away for college. Whereas where my parents grew up being able to drive home after college classes, it wasn't that far but it wasn't that close either... And here it's like well you're 18, you can go live, go live, so it's a different perspective.

Theme 3: Counselors Expectation of Independence

Student independence is a consistent theme throughout the interviews with both counselors and students, but from the discussions, there is a difference in the expectations students have for their counselors and vis-a-versa. Jeffrey at Stoneholt shared:

It's this weird thing where they've been waiting for this to start this whole time and then when it starts lot of them just don't do anything. I'm not sure why that is. I feel like we are good about giving them all the tools to set off and do their research, but the fact that many of them don't do it suggest that we could be doing a better job in that in some way

Olivia at Woodcrest discussed the expectation for student independence:

For the most part, we're expecting that students do the research on their own, using Naviance some get to visit, but we really do push the local school visits. You know, we have every kind of college in the Bay Area, minus a true liberal arts school, so we encourage them, but it really is on an independent level. You know, we expect that they're going to do that. Sometimes you have to do a little more handholding; you know, "did you do it?" You know, "show me your confirmation". But, for the most part, it's on an independent level.

Brooke agreed, sharing:

Our time is spread so thin here. So, I do rely a lot on what students or parents tell me they need directly. So that's through phone calls or emails or through impromptu meetings. So, and I try my best to explain that to them, that I try to follow their lead in many ways. And I try to use communication like email reminders on mass to students. So I do still think there must be some responsibility that goes to the student and parents themselves.

While student independence is a realistic expectation, problems arise when the student assumes there is more help available, and that disconnect can result in severe consequences. Speaking to a specific situation, Brooke shared:

And then thinking personally, as I mentioned before, it's always important to reach out to students to check in if I haven't heard from them in a while. But I think it's especially important for the first gen kids because they might not be doing something that needs to get done. Like "around this time you need to be sending your scores to colleges" and actually this year that did happen for one of our first gen students who, he thought he had sent his scores but didn't actually. And there was some confusion with the colleges, so we had to fax them over. So just making sure those little things get done. Because if there not it could really jeopardize a student's application.

Alex was the student whose test scores were messed up, and without prompting he discussed this problem by stating:

Well, the college counseling here to me was ok, I feel like they like they gave me the tools that I needed like they helped me with my essay, they made sure I was

signed up for SAT Prep all that stuff but there ended up being like a mix-up with some of my test scores stuff they said they would send out and they ended up sending out my ACT scores which were significantly lower than my SAT scores and when that got out to schools I ended up getting rejected from most of my schools and it was shocking to me because it was a lot of schools that I felt that I was qualified to get into that I ended up getting rejected from and not even wait-listed so that was tough and I am not really sure how all that got mixed-up but you know it is the past – but for the most part like if I was if someone had asked me would you tell me about the college counseling I would recommend that you use the resources that they give you here and you try as hard as you can and to get someone outside of school to help you.

Theme 4: Financial Resources

The final and reoccurring theme is regarding finances and FGCBS' need for financial information, resources and direct support in order to apply to and enroll in 4-year colleges. This is a very real barrier every since FGCBS interviewed discussed.

Carlyn at Stoneholt discussed:

I think it was difficult knowing like keeping on top of my deadlines because my parents are really bad at that like the FAFSA forms and stuff because my mom really hates technology so that it was really difficult trying to fill it out because especially it like deleted twice and so I ended up having to do it that too because she was like done with the computer so keeping on top of all of it was really difficult and finding what to write about because it is like very really because one is not really asked often to like talk about yourself and you are like ok....

This limitation is not lost on the college counselors. Frederich at Stoneholt stated:

That's a real weakness, I would like to have more. we do bring in an outside financial aid consultant. Elisabeth is very smart about how to apply to FAFSA and all that. But we don't have the software, and I haven't had the time. I have to be convinced that it would be helpful. Like I don't have a list of stuff of scholarships.

Josephine at Stoneholt shared similar sentiments:

I feel like the financial aid process is one that we aren't as strong in, and I think there are many ways that we can improve support for our families as they go through this process. I think that there's a lot of information out there. I mean we know the basics, and we do have someone come in. we have a financial aid evening once a year, someone who knows a lot more about the process that we do (we meaning the 3 of us). We know certain basics. I mean there's the FAFSA that you fill out... went to a college assistance convention that was several days and I

was surrounded by a lot of people who do the same thing I do. And it was a lot of information sharing about things. And it really had me thinking. And I don't know exactly what the next steps are, but how do we serve the families as they are going through the financial aid process.

At Woodcrest, Brooke reiterated her view that it is the family's responsibility to manage their own finances. She discussed the resources available to the students:

Our presenter will talk about the expectations that schools have. Colleges think families should have saved a third of what it will cost for the student to go to college, borrow a third and the student would also work and have some responsibility for paying for college too.

And she went on to say:

Sometimes we do get questions but, I mean you can call the FAFSA and Profile folks directly and ask questions, or call each college directly and ask questions. So that's typically where we refer, because that's where again, I feel it's the family's responsibility.

But Louisa, did feel that she wanted to provide more to the students, but she doesn't have the time:

But I do wish I could spend more time doing that [scholarship support] for them....I feel sort of guilty about that but my time ends of going....I don't know where the time would come from. But in a perfect world, I would be doing that AND helping those kids who don't have the motivation to do the legwork on their own to find the scholarships.

Additional Analysis

To better understand the relationships between variables Spearman's rho correlations were computed. Results indicated several weak to moderate relationships. There was a moderate negative correlation between high school attended and ASPIRATIONS, $r(156) = -.486, p = .0001$, meaning Stoneholt students have higher aspirations than Woodcrest students. There was a moderate negative correlation between

family income and FGCB-status, $r(156) = -.412, p = .0001$, meaning FGCBS reported lower family incomes than non-FGCBS. There was a weak positive correlation between ASPIRATIONS and BARRIERS for all students, $r(156) = .334, p = .0001$, where students with high aspirations identified fewer barriers. A weak positive correlation between ASPIRATIONS and SAT (PERFORMANCE) was found, $r(140) = .328, p = .0001$, where students with high aspirations had high SAT scores. A weak positive correlation between BARRIERS and SAT (PERFORMANCE) was found, $r(140) = .266, p = .001$, where students who identified fewer barriers had higher SAT scores.

There was a weak negative correlation between gender and GPA (PERFORMANCE), $r(140) = -.202, p = .011$, meaning self-identified females ($n=98$) have higher GPAs than self-identified males ($n=57$) and non-binary students ($n=1$). A moderate positive correlation was found between GPA and SAT scores (both PERFORMANCE), $r(140) = .407, p = .0001$, meaning students with higher GPAs had higher SAT scores. A strong positive correlation between GPA and ACT converted to SAT (both PERFORMANCE) was found, $r(39) = .716, p = .0001$, meaning students with higher GPAs had higher ACT converted to SAT scores.

To compare students at Stoneholt to Woodcrest, t-tests were conducted with both FGCBS and non-FGCBS combined. All variables reported meet the Levene's assumption of equality of variance. Results indicated a significant difference in ASPIRATIONS between all Stoneholt students ($M = 2.58, SD = 0.207$) and all Woodcrest students ($M = 2.40, SD = 0.161$); $t(154) = 5.998, p = .0001, d = 0.968$, meaning that Stoneholt students had higher aspirations than Woodcrest students. There was also a significant difference in BARRIERS between all Stoneholt students ($M = 2.758, SD = 0.241$) and all Woodcrest

students ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 0.231$); $t(154) = 2.579$, $p = .011$, $d = 0.415$, meaning that Stoneholt students identified fewer barriers during the college process than Woodcrest students.

Summary of Findings

The results of this study indicate that FGCBS have very high aspirations regarding their college success. They struggle to access resources both within their homes and at their schools through their college counselors. They face many barriers, most of which were addressed in the literature review by other researchers. These barriers include not having a parent who has been through the application process and therefore understands the logistics, timing, and nuances of the application, the expectation to be independent and proactive even when they don't know what questions they should be asking, and lack of financial resources both in their homes and access to financial aid resources through their schools. Fortunately, all students successfully enrolled in 4-year universities and have plans to be academically successful, grow as individuals and use their college experiences to both develop their own careers but also develop their own characters.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Chapter V provides both a succinct summary of the findings presented in Chapter IV and conclusions. The significant quantitative and qualitative results that were found are addressed by research question. The overall themes presented in Chapter IV are discussed with resulting implications and recommendations for private high school college counselors. These recommendations are categorized by type of private school and current formal supports for FGCBS already in place (i.e., schools similar to Stoneholt and Woodcrest). Suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The intent of this case study was to understand factors influencing college access for first-generation college-bound students (FGCBS) in private high schools, specifically the influence of the college counselors. A survey and interviews were adapted from the CHOICES Project at UCLA (Allen, Dano & Brauer, 2009) to explore FGCBS' experiences navigating the college application process within their schools. College counselors and FGCBS from two high schools were interviewed in order to dive deeper into their experiences. Each research question will be discussed individually.

Discussion

Research Question 1

How does the college-going culture created in part by college counselors within a private high school context impact first generation college-bound students? Specifically, how does this environment affect their student educational aspirations, student perceived

access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators?

No difference in educational aspirations was found between FGCBS at Woodcrest and those at Stoneholt High Schools. Both sets of students reported high levels of educational aspirations. Additionally, counselors at both schools discussed that FGCBS have high educational aspirations, aiming to attend 4-year colleges just like their non-FGCB peers. Students and counselors at both schools discussed extensively the pervasive college-going culture within their school. “High level of coordinated activity that promote[s] [sic] college readiness and foster[s] [sic] an environment in which all students see themselves as competitive college applicants” (Schneider, 2007, p. 8) could be found within both schools. Students felt comfortable discussing college with their classmates, and felt like it was part of the air of their school. While there is inherent pressure to be academically successful and competitive, many FGCBS talked about this type of pressure as a positive thing, one that helped them stay on track and focus on the goal of college. Focus on explicit peer groups intentionally aimed at aiding students with academic success is very important for students because they reflect one’s own values, in this case college (Knight-Diop, 2010; Schneider, 2007).

The pervasiveness of a college-going culture within each school speaks to the hegemony of those traditionally enrolled in private schools – the elite. The literature discusses the importance of a college-going culture, but the question begs “who is it geared towards?” College-going culture contributes to social reproduction, passing the cultural capital of the privileged to the next generation of privileged. Based on interviews with FGCBS, it seems that they are caught between two worlds, experiencing a dual

identity. In these private schools, perhaps FGCBS are shifting their habitus, changing their lens on the world from the lens of their SES upbringing to that of their private school peers. McDonough's theory, addressed in Chapter I, claims that a student's habitus impacts their ultimate college choice, and the descriptions of the student's struggle in choosing a school reflects that. Their aspirations match their non-FGCB peers, but their bounded rationality including many other factors such as their finances, does limit their options.

The causal relationship between the college-going culture and the FGCBS within these two schools is unclear. Did these students enroll in their school because they were likely already college-bound? Or did attending these school motivate them to be college bound? Students shared that college had always been a part of their goals, even when they were little, and that the school's environment truly supported that aim. Setting college as an expectation is especially important for minority students (Schneider, 2007). Whether the students came to the school with a college-bound attitude or the school motivated them to college, it is clear that the academic culture at both schools benefits all students regardless of first-generation status. Students choose to attend these schools because of the known academic rigor and college-going culture that pushes towards the goal of college and beyond.

Students within both schools valued the resource of their college counselor, recognizing that this coupled with the strong college-going culture was a resource from which they benefited significantly. Several students, particularly those at Woodcrest, discussed their experiences as compared to their friends in low-resourced public high

schools. They could readily identify resources they had access to within their private school that their public school friends did not.

The mission of each school and its focus was clearly demonstrated through the distribution of student caseloads at each school. “The school mission provides the context for governance decision-making and the way the school is managed” (Boerema, 2006, p. 182). Stoneholt’s mission is centered around strong academics and supporting students to be successful. Consequently they use GPA to distribute students to college counselors. Both counselors at Stoneholt said the most challenging students to work with are the ones from the 2nd quartile because they are strong students and they expect to be accepted into very selective schools, but they aren’t quite competitive enough for these schools. They are strong, but not strong enough. The students at the top are easy to work with, and the students at the bottom, they said, had less expectations for themselves so the counselors could be encouraging rather than have to temper expectations.

Alternatively, Woodcrest uses a more complicated system to distribute students across caseloads, and their focus falls in line with their mission, which emphasizes equity. They access various staff within the school who have an understanding of the students experiences and their backgrounds and try to place them with the college counselor who can support them the best. In line with research conducted by Bryan et. al., (2009), the counselors are attempting to be mindful of how they are supporting their students and the messages they may send based on their backgrounds.

A distinction was made between Woodcrest and Stoneholt in the type of programming and formal resources they have available for FGCBS. At Woodcrest, they launched a new program specifically supporting FGCBS. The year of the study was also

the first year for the program, so results from this study will be used by the school to improve and address their program. Counselors at Woodcrest attempted to provide additional resources and to support specifically because they recognize that FGCBs have different experiences applying to college. They acknowledge the racial/ethnic and class structures that serve as barriers to college and went about supporting students in a different way (Knight, Norton, Bentley & Dixon, 2004).

At both schools, college counseling formally begins the second semester of junior year, though this is considered too late for FGCBs, according to their interviews. FGCBs felt that this was too late for them given the additional barriers they faced.

When asked, counselors appreciated the more proactive FGCBs; they viewed them as more resilient and stronger, but this heightened independence often coincided with less active FGCB parents. Furthermore, FGCBs appreciated the level of realistic expectations counselors provided them. At Woodcrest specifically, the counselors all noted that within this boundary of expectation they addressed cost of attendance with families to ensure those expectations are grounded in reality as well.

Results indicated that the college culture created in part by the college counselors within each school did impact FGCBs' experiences, particularly regarding the barriers they faced. FGCBs at Woodcrest identified more barriers than the FGCBs at Stoneholt. This was an interesting finding, because when interviewed the FGCBs at Woodcrest could very easily articulate the barriers they were experiencing. They used equity-based, racially-based and social justice-based language to discuss what they saw and felt. FGCBs interviewed at Stoneholt struggled to address the questions focusing on barriers faced. Only when probed did they identify certain barriers. The researcher found this

interesting because Woodcrest is an equity-based school; courses include “The Immigrant Experience: Multicultural Education”, “Gender and Sexuality” and “Race, Class and Gender”. Perhaps students at Woodcrest identified more barriers because they are more in tune with educational inequity, and they are fighting against internalized oppression. Maybe they have the language to identify these gaps and therefore they were more eager to discuss them and recognize them. Based on the interviews, it would appear that Woodcrest students are simply more aware of social injustice and are more comfortable discussing it. Perhaps Woodcrest students have developed critical capital, which is defined as “the development of a critical understanding of educational inequity and social reproduction that leads to social action to rectify these conditions” (Auerbach, 2004, p. 128).

The effect behind an equity-based mission is evident in Woodcrest. While these students identified more barriers, they also exuded more confidence. They had the language to articulate their barriers and as a result were more empowered because they understood the social systems at play and were trying not to allow these systems to control them. They learned about these systems through their various classes, which is in line with Freire’s crucial pedagogy, educating the oppressed about their own oppression in order to break free from it. These students were aware of the barriers they faced, but they were also quick to share their own strengths and how they have adapted and adjusted to be resilient and achieve their goals.

Students at both schools discussed barriers within the academic setting as well as the social setting. Academically, many of the FGCBS expressed a struggle in managing the expectations placed on them and their peers. It was challenging for them to keep up

academically, which undoubtedly impacted their overall academic performance and college acceptances. More interesting perhaps, was student's experiences socially and how their income level, and family culture as well as race impacted their social relationships and their views of who they were among their peers. Herr (1999) stated "students are not merely 'socially reproduced' in schools but rather, through their resistance and appropriation of school structure, they 'produce' social identities through reactively occupying the spaces provided by social institutions" (p. 113). Students within both schools were struggling to balance between the two worlds they lived in, low-income minority households and neighborhoods, and a wealthy, predominately white school.

Students who have different backgrounds than their classmates balance between assimilation and resistance to assimilation. If one assimilates and adopts the values and ideology of the dominant culture, one will likely experience fewer obstacles. While the FGCBS at Stoneholt identified fewer obstacles than FGCBS at Woodcrest, it is possible this was the case because they were trying to assimilate more. They still identified more barriers than non-FGCBS at Stoneholt. This finding questions the success rate of assimilation and absorption of the hegemonic systems at play. Students at Woodcrest expressed frustration with the lack of cultural competency of their school (not just their counselors) and several sought out peers with similar backgrounds, or a faculty member who could relate.

Academically, FGCBS discussed the notion of *assumed knowledge* where a gap existed between the knowledge they possessed walking in the door as compared to their non-FGCB counterparts. Students felt as though they were playing catch-up

academically, particularly during freshman year. Depending on how the FGCBS handled their stress and actions towards remedying their academic dissonance, it was easier for them to fall within the cracks at the school. Many of them were the top of their class at their lower performing middle schools and truly struggled with the transition into one of these two elite private high schools. Specifically students expressed difficulty in seeking help, feeling that they simply had to figure it out for themselves. They felt very alone, which connects to the other major barrier they felt.

Socially, FGCBS struggled to make friends within these schools. They were challenged to fit in through assimilation, whether it was the racial or economic divide (or both) they felt most readily; these divides served as barriers to the social aspect of their school experience. These results are similar to those found by Herr (1999) when exploring the experiences of Black students enrolled in elite predominately White private schools. When these students arrived in the college counseling program as juniors, they came to the table with very different experiences within the school already, impacting how they would perceive their college counseling process. While the counselors hold some responsibility for barrier FGCBS face during the college process, it is important to look at the student's experiences prior to applying to college, and how the climate of the school has impacted them academically and socially. These academic and social experiences impact student's preparedness for the college process and for college itself.

At both schools 100% of students enroll in 4-year colleges, and all counselors stated that 100% of FGCBS are not only prepared but do enroll in 4-year schools each year. Results indicated that FGCBS at Woodcrest had higher GPAs than FGCBS at

Stoneholt as well as higher Math SAT subject test scores. While FGCBS at Woodcrest discussed having more barriers, it appears that their outcome is actually better.

The schools in which FGCBS are enrolling in Fall 2014 were ranked by US News and World Report (<http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges>) and are presented below. Due to the variety of schools students enrolled in (i.e., liberal arts, state schools) two different ranking systems are reported below. Woodcrest students have more of a spread, but hold the highest ranked school.

Stoneholt students:

School Enrolled in	Ranking	Rankings system
University of Southern California	#25	National University Rankings system
Skidmore	#37	National Liberal Arts School Ranking system
Willamette (x2)	#37	National Liberal Arts School Ranking system
UC Santa Barbara	#40	National University Rankings system

Figure 13. US News & World Report Rankings for Stoneholt College Enrollment

Woodcrest students:

School Enrolled in	Ranking	Rankings system
University of Pennsylvania	#8	National University Rankings system
Boston University	#42	National University Rankings system
University of Santa Cruz	#85	National University Rankings system
University of San Francisco	#106	National University Rankings system
Whittier	#133	National Liberal Arts School Ranking system

Figure 14. US News & World Report Rankings for Woodcrest College Enrollment

In summary of research question 1, it is evident that a strong college-going culture exists within both Woodcrest and Stoneholt. This culture is pervasive, creating high

expectations for all students to be successful and matriculate into 4-year colleges. Students feel the positive peer pressure to study, learn, perform, advance and succeed. Focusing on school is *cool* and expected. As a result of this level of expectation, students at both schools have a strong reputation among colleges, and therefore college representatives seek out students from both schools.

Research Question 2:

How does the experience of FGCBS differ from non-FGCBS within the private high school environment? Specifically, to what extent is their experience different as it relates to student educational aspirations, student-perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college, and student educational performance indicators?

An exciting finding was the lack of statistical differences between FGCBS and non-FGCBS at these two high schools regarding their educational aspirations. FGCBS had the same aspirations as non-FGCBS, suggesting that the college-going culture within the school was positively influencing college aspirations across all students. Through the interviews it became clear quickly that FGCBS' families had a strong impact on their aspirations. Family counterstories can help students combat existing oppressive structures and provide alternative avenues for success (Knight, et. al, 2004). Students spent a lot of time discussing the value of understanding their parents' experiences and learning from them. Students were clearly empowered by hearing about the immigration struggles of their parents, and connecting parents education level to their daily struggle for survival. "Their [family] counterstories serve as entry points to fight interlocking systems of race, class, gender, and spiritual oppressions to maintain college-going futures" (Knight, et. al., 2004, p. 100).

Students across the board discussed their view of education as the key to their social mobility. Consistent with research, there was a strong emphasis on the families' investment in their children with hope of future benefits (Gofen, 2009). "The baccalaureate degree is a means toward upward social mobility, representing the single most important rung in the educational-attainment ladder in terms of economic benefit" (Coffman, 2011, p. 87). Every single student interviewed stated that college was an expectation for themselves, and their parents had supported them with this goal through a variety of ways. Consistent with findings by Auerbach (2004), who studied low-income Latino families, these students identified that their families embodied the strength to support their children in pursuit of college.

FGCBS' aspirations to go to college existed within them long before they enrolled at these private schools. These aspirations grew out of their lived experiences of the lack of educational opportunities their parents had, as opposed to non-FGCBS who's aspirations likely stemmed for their parents experience in college and the outcomes as a result of that education.

Since FGCBS are aware of the immense sacrifice their parents have made to ensure they have access to a quality education that they themselves did not have, they feel that there is great obligation on the student, adding extra pressure, for them to succeed. Students are clearly grateful for what their parents have done for them, and they want to actively take advantage of the opportunity, but consequently this stress can compound the college process with anxiety, a form of stress non-FGCBS don't experience.

A difference between FGCBS and non-FGCBS noted by college counselors was the approach used when engaging in the college application journey. FGCBS were noted

as being more pragmatic in their college selection, factoring in cost as a major concern. Additionally, both students and counselors identified that many final college decisions hinged heavily on the amount of debt accrued over the course of the degree or the out of pocket expenses to enroll at the school. While best fit was something FGCBs considered, it ultimately was not the deciding factor for them.

While there is evidence indicating that there is not a lack of parental support for college, FGCBs clearly lack parental educational capital that non-FGCBs possess since their parents attended college. As a result, these students are forced to serve as adults in this college process. They must be responsible not only for completing the applications like their non-FGCB peers, but also educating their parents on the process. Students have to deal with parents who often feel intimidated and inferior when relating to non-FGCB parents or the college counselors, making it challenging to actively participate in the process. Consequently, while parents who attended college know which questions to ask the counselors, neither the FGCBs nor their parents are aware that they should be asking certain questions.

While research has shown that parental encouragement and support is the most important indicator of a child developing college aspirations, parents who have not attended college often lack critical information that enable them to be preemptive in helping their children prepare for and become eligible for college. (Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2009, p. 280)

This gap proves incredibly problematic when counselors take the stance of providing additional information to only the *proactive* student who comes to ask questions. While the intention of serving as a resource is there, the counselors cannot actually be much of a resource to FGCBs because the students don't know what they don't know.

These nuanced issues of equity are critical for both the counselors and the school to understand. While FGCBS present similarly to non-FGCBS in many ways, their experiences are clearly unique. Counselors cannot simplify FGCBS' application journey, the words from the students demonstrate the complexity of their experience. Private schools in particular are functioning under assumptions that these students' first generation – status only impacts them during the college counseling process, and their other school experiences aren't impacted by it. Clearly, this is not the case, as student interviews have indicated that being FGCB impacted multiple aspects of their high school careers. Private schools should not put the responsibility solely on the college counselors to support FGCBS, just as college counselors shouldn't put the responsibility solely on the students themselves. The type of support these students need to be successful in the college journey is varied and must be sustained throughout the entire high school experience.

The barriers identified for FGCBS during this study were many and consistent with the literature. The paramount and most obvious was the lack of parental education capital available for FGCBS. Having one's parents attend college is very valuable to a student in the throws of the college application process. Students whose parents experienced college not only understand what the college experience is, but understand the application experience. These parents typically know what to do, know when to do it, and how to go about these various steps. They know what questions to ask, and understand the differences between types of schools. They serve as a natural backup support system for the student.

For families where college is not a part of the tradition, the lack of knowledge about the process can inhibit student's ability to navigate (Auerbach, 2004). This support system includes a level of comfort and ease that parents who didn't attend college simply don't possess. Students who grew up in a family or community where college was not the norm experience increased hesitation, anxiety and lack of comfort with the process. They have a more awkward and disconnected approach towards college applications, and a lot of their process includes an additional level of introspection that other students aren't necessarily forced to face during this journey. Consequently, FGCBS are forced into a more independent space if they are to be successful.

Logistically, FGCBS face barriers concerning filling out forms, understanding financial aid and their own family's financial status and making their college decision around how it impacts their family and not simply on how it impacts their own life. They expressed that their parents trust them with this process, many times taking a step back and not stepping in, including staying out of counselor meetings. "Counselors' discussions with parents play a decisive role in disseminating college admissions information and thus preparing students for the college application and admission processes" (Bryan, et. al, 2009, p. 288). The college counselors expressed that FGCB parents are less likely to attend meetings and to be present in the school at all. This dynamic results in leaving the FGCBS alone in making serious life decisions by him or herself. And while the college counselors identified FGCBS as more mature than many of the non-FGCBS, that doesn't necessarily mean they are mature enough to handle this process, the stress, and the psychological and practical implications alone.

Another very real barrier identified by many of the FGCBS was their ethnic minority status and their increased likelihood of being low-income as compared to their classmates. As the literature has shown, being a minority and low-income, regardless of first-generation status, serves as a significant barrier to college access. These students need to deal with stereotypes experienced through microaggressions, often resulting in feelings of inferiority or the questioning of belonging in this elite space. The minority student enrolled in private school in Herr's study (1999) expressed a disconnect with her external image and how she was perceived externally. She struggled with living in both spaces and rationalizing her views and the views of her peers in terms of her performance. These students struggle to find mentors when no one in their classroom looks like them, and once they pursue this educational path they struggle to remain a part of their neighborhood communities because they no longer share experiences with their childhood friends.

Income plays a factor when non-FGCBS have access to resources such as test preparation and they do not. They can't afford private tutors, independent counselors or extremely expensive one-on-one test preparation. They must compete against their classmates in the college game without these resources. Many non-FGCBS not only have easy access to these resources, but they start the process (such as test prep) years earlier than FGCBS. When minority students, low-income students and FGCBS are already more likely to underperform on standardized tests as compared to peers, this additional barrier only exasperates this gap. None of the FGCBS interviewed in this study were aware of free test prep options, available through Naviance or their local libraries. This begs the question - if counselors know these students have increased barriers (which they

all addressed in their interviews), why were these additional resources not provided or at least made known to these students? A lot of assumptions are made for FGCBS to figure out that they need test prep and that they should start early, all on their own.

Financial aid was a demonstrated barrier for all students interviewed. If they didn't have enough aid to enroll at a school, they couldn't attend. Interestingly enough, each college counselor identified this as a real barrier but also honestly shared that they provide students little support in this area. They saw understanding and navigating the financial aid process as the responsibility of the parents, and only provided minimal information and little guidance on the subject. Without guidance, students can miss valuable financial opportunities making certain schools a real option as opposed to a dream. Since these students cannot afford to be saddled with too much debt, they can easily be discouraged when it comes to applying to and selecting their college.

Given all of these barriers, the college counselor is the biggest and most crucial resource for FGCBS. Consistent contact with counselors is critical for FGCBS' success, however the counselors in this study were clear that if students are not proactive and reach out to the counselors, those students will receive less support. Additionally, all counselors were hesitant to treat FGCBS differently than non-FGCBS, particularly the counselors at Stoneholt. The counselors at Woodcrest were more aware of the need for different strategies, but with the exception of the First Generation Program, the approach and treatment of students was similar independent of first-generation status.

Intentional or not, the counselors are functioning within the privileged culture of the private school, and thus use a privileged lens when viewing FGCBS experiences and needs. Consequently, both counselors and seemingly the school itself views FGCBS from

a deficit perspective, not recognizing and validating the many strengths they do bring to the table. It is important to recognize the barriers these students are facing, the results of this study indicate they are many and they are significant, but to recognize those alone and not work towards understanding them or seeing beyond the barriers creates a disservice to FGCBS.

Where FGCBS enroll is a direct result of the types of schools they apply to in the first place. The college counselors discussed at length how they adjust the types of lists provided to FGCBS as compared to their peers. At Woodcrest they discussed how they spend more time on creating the college list for FGCBS because they know these students won't get a complete list from home. Counselors noted that many parents of FGCBS focus on either very prestigious schools or vocationally oriented schools. At Stoneholt, the counselors talked a lot about the length of the list, being mindful of the need for financial aid for FGCBS.

Counselors at both schools addressed FGCBS' sense of geography when it comes to applying to colleges. Many of them naturally restrict themselves geographically, either due to cultural expectations or family obligations, and counselors discussed the importance of casting a wide net to increase options at the end of the day. FGCBS are often reluctant to leave home, which can limit which schools they can attend.

In these discussions there was seemingly little understanding of why there was such a geographic trend for FGCBS, in fact, counselors looked down upon the decision and saw little validation in the reasoning. This response to students' bounded rationality demonstrates again a lens of privilege. While there is validity to going away from home for college, counselors need to be mindful of the many factors involved in a FGCBS'

choice. Family obligation is a very important factor for students, and continuing to provide support for their family is not only a leadership skill, but could serve as a support structure for the student, ensuring the success in college.

In summary of research question 2, it is evident that there are many similarities as well as differences between FGCBS and non-FGCBS. Both sets of students have high expectations for college, and both sets of students are achieving the goal of enrolling in 4-year schools right after graduation. The differences lie in the experience of applying to college. Since FGCBS don't have parents who attended college at home, they must be much more independent and manage the entire process without specific parental support. Fortunately, all FGCBS interviewed expressed that their parents were very supportive of the goal of college and provided various ways to demonstrate that support. Students and counselors recognized the sacrifice their parents made to ensure they had access to a quality education. Significant barriers were identified by both counselors and students, with finances often hindering students' college choices.

Research Question 3

To what extent do college counselors and students have differing perspectives on student educational aspirations, student perceived access to resources, student barriers to 4-year college? Specifically between college counselors and first-generation college-bound students?

FGCBS and their parents, it would seem, have always had a plan for 4-year colleges, and this goal has been supported by the schools' college-going culture. While a FGCBS' home college culture is not the same as that of their non-FGCB peers, the support and desire for students to go to college at home was demonstrated through

student interviews. FGCBS and their families highly value education as both an economic and a social value. They see education as a pathway not only for social mobility but as a way to grow as a person, to learn about the world and for success and happiness. Students shared that they see college as a place to expand their knowledge about how to make the world a better place as well as to pursue their careers.

A disconnect was found in that most college counselors identified that FGCBS were solely focused on college as a means to achieving financial stability. Additionally, it wasn't clear through interviews that counselors recognized the Funds of Knowledge (González, et. Al., 2005) available within the home that supported college success. Rather they felt that FGCB parents only focused on *named-brand* schools for vocational purposes, in order to ensure their children could have jobs after graduation, and were completely unaware of the value of a liberal arts education.

These students are incredibly hard working, intelligent and resilient. They identified many strengths and supports within their families that have served them well in getting to this point. It appears that these assets go unrecognized throughout their high school experience. While FGCBS talked extensively about what has helped them succeed, it was very easy for them to talk about the barriers they faced. Perhaps the deficit perspective of the counselors has permeated into the student's own view of themselves and it simply becomes easier to focus on the negative rather than the positive. Fortunately for these students, even with a negative emphasis, they were still able to discuss the many funds of knowledge within their lives.

Almost all FGCBS interviewed expressed the need for extra help and guidance but they all seemed unable to ask for help from the college counselors. Students

discussed a feeling that they had to be responsible for doing everything themselves, but they felt stupid asking such obvious questions of their counselor, or they were too shy. Several students shared that they felt that their culture expected them not to approach adults but rather wait for the adults to approach them. Some students didn't feel comfortable with their counselor, having trouble relating to them and feeling that the counselor didn't understand their experience – which proved accurate given the findings. As a result many FGCBs expressed that they were confused about what they were supposed to do when, resulting in problems in the application process that ranged from small to very significant. Counselors need to be aware of students' perceptions of their expectations, and they need to have different types of activities targeting different groups of students because the “stigmatizing consequences of student perceptions of bias relative to educational performance” are very prevalent (Bryan, et. al, 2009, p. 289).

At the heart of these issues are feelings of trust and comfort as well as the result of the psychological and social issue that FGCBs experience, facing this process seemingly alone. “One resource that should be consistent across all schools is relational trust - strong social ties among all members of the school community that support and place the academic and social well-being of the students as their highest priority” (Schneider, 2007, p. 3). It is possible that, since FGCBs have had to be responsible for so much in their lives for so long, they have become overly independent, rarely relying on their parents for academic-type support, and they struggle to know when and how to ask for help. Asking for help shows weakness, and then people begin to question if you are truly capable; rather than being vulnerable to their college counselors and risking being under-matched to a college, they avoid their counselors and hope they can figure things

out for themselves. They have become accustomed to making decisions on their own with limited information and experience; the college application process seems to be no different.

Unfortunately, this guise of self-sufficiency masks a significant knowledge gap that counselors are not aware they need to fill. Furthermore, at Stoneholt the concept of *best fit*, was not part of the counseling structure, which comes across as lack of care for the individual student and their individual needs. In a study conducted by Bryan, et. al, (2009) it was found that “lower-middle and upper-middle SES students were less likely to have student-counselor contact for college info when they perceived the counselor as not caring or neutral about what students should do after high school” (p. 288). How students read their counselors’ expectations significantly impacts their willingness to engage with the counselor.

Counselors on the other hand felt that they had merely offered their services and resources to all students, including FGCBS. They were waiting for FGCBS to approach the counselors to identify what they needed; if there were no questions, they deduced that there was no need. Additionally, if parents of FGCBS didn’t come in, it was assumed that they didn’t care, didn’t understand or trusted their child had everything under control. These types of assumptions are very dangerous. To assume that parents don’t care given many sacrifices they have made to enroll their child at such a prestigious high school, does them an injustice. To assume that parents don’t understand or trust their child, without providing additional support, is very problematic. If counselors deduce that parents are confused, it would seem logical that their primary goal should be to engage

them and support them through this process, just as they engage and support parents who have many questions about the college process.

A barrier often faced by FGCBS is the inability to visit college campuses. For the students who were able to visit schools, it was clear through their interviews that these visits served as tipping points for them, helping to make the dream of college a reality. These students, just like non-FGCBS, need to visit schools in order to imagine themselves living on a college campus. At Stoneholt specifically, they de-emphasized the need for college visits completely, claiming that students could have the same experience talking with a representative of a school and looking the campus up on-line. These counselors went as far to say that the tours could actually be misleading to FGCBS since they could be distracted by a cute tour guide. It is worth noting though, that neither school provided financial assistance for college visits but they would recommend students for fly-in programs when they felt it was appropriate.

FGCBS identified barriers previously mentioned regarding the college application process. These barriers (such as lack of parental knowledge) are specific to students who are the first in their family to apply to and enroll in college. It was very interesting to hear from the college counselors at Stoneholt regarding the fear of singling FGCBS out. They felt that these students should be treated the same as all other students, despite the fact that they had significantly different experiences, backgrounds and needs. Counselors empathized the need to provide the same level of support and hold all students to the same expectations regarding asking for help.

In general, counselors at both schools were adamant that students need to be both independent and proactive in order to receive all the benefits of a college counselor.

Since most counselors identified FGCBS as more independent than non-FGCBS, it was presumed this wouldn't cause any barriers for FGCBS. Yet almost all FGCBS stated that they needed extra support, even though they were very independent since they managed a lot of their family responsibilities (such as finances or translation). Since FGCBS didn't ask for this extra help, and it wasn't offered, a barrier resulted. Non-FGCBS can rely on their parents' expertise to address these concerns, but the lack of parental help in regard to specifics puts FGCBS at a disadvantage. As a result the application process can become slower, harder and more confusing.

The family plays a critical role in the success of students, including marginalized students (Gofen, 2009). "Parents' attitude toward education is strongly attached to their interest in the children's education. They want their children to have a better future, and they are aware of the fact that education, which is a long-term investment, is the key to that future" (Gofen, 2009, p. 115). Since the role of the parent is so critical, the disconnect between the parents and the college counselors, as stated by the counselors, is problematic for FGCBS. Counselors also expect the parents to be proactive, but this can be a problem for parents who haven't attended college, don't speak English or are working several jobs. In a study conducted by Knight, et al., (2004) they found that school staff did not "[attribute] this minimal attendance to the complex and challenging lives of working-class black and Latinos/as, most school staff yielded to prevailing views that families are uninvolved and disinterested" (p. 106). Counselors in the current study stated that non-FGCB parents were very involved and sought out the counselors to ensure a successful college application. They supported their children with meeting deadlines, signing up for the SATs and taking them on college visits. One counselor assumed that

FGCBS were actually getting the least amount of support and attention, yet it wasn't evident that the practice of counseling shifted dramatically to address that.

It was clear that parents of FGCBS were absent from school in other matters beyond college counseling, so it shouldn't be surprising to counselors that these parents were seemingly uninvolved during the college process. The connection should be made that if parents are uninvolved the entire high school career, then there is something the private school is or is not doing that is keeping FGCB parents at bay. Perhaps they don't feel welcomed at the school, perhaps no translators are provided, or perhaps the information is geared towards parents who are more familiar with private school climates and college, excluding FGCB parents and not addressing their concerns. If meetings take place in the middle of the day, so that only non-working parents can attend, that sends a strong message to working parents that they are not as valued. This is a bigger problem than just college counseling.

Financial resources, as have been discussed significantly, impact a FGCBS' ability to enroll in a 4-year school. All of the college counselors stated that they were not experts in financial aid. They were able to provide one or two workshops a year for students and could direct them to the websites discussing or applying to aid. Beyond this, the counselors felt that it is the responsibility of the family and student to navigate the financial aid system. Due to limited time, counselors were not able to provide any additional support in this area. The disconnect exists where families need the information and help, but either the families don't know what to ask or the counselor is unable to help them. FGCBS stated that they needed more information and access to financial aid resources, and they felt it was their counselors' responsibility to assist with that. Since

parents cannot provide the monetary support or information needed to handle financial aid, FGCBS students are at a disadvantage.

In summary of research question 3, it is evident that there are several disconnects between what the college counselors experience and what FGCBS experience. Counselors express a desire to support these students, but even with the FGCB program at Woodcrest, there is very little difference in expectations and resources available to FGCBS at both schools and their non-FGCB peers. The program illustrated by all counselors is consistent, meaning regardless of first-generation status, counselors meet with students the same amount, share the same basic information and expect students and parents to manage most of their responsibilities on their own. There is a clear desire to help them, but since counselors are hesitant to isolate or spotlight FGCBS, many barriers go unaddressed.

Conclusion

Major findings from this study both validated previous research as well as contributed to the body of literature addressing the experiences of FGCBS. Findings indicated that FGCBS enrolled in private high schools had very high aspirations. They always held the goal of attending college, and participating in a strong college-going culture within their school reinforced those aspirations. Students had support and encouragement from their families, who had sacrificed a lot in order to provide them with educational opportunities to which they did not have access.

Within each high school, students recognized a variety of resources available to them, primarily the high quality teachers as well as the college counselors. Unfortunately, not all FGCBS within each high school felt they had full access to the resources they

needed in order to be successful in the college process. Students at Woodcrest discussed very eloquently that they felt the college counseling program needed to start earlier in order for them to have complete access to important information. Students at both schools were expected by their college counselors to be proactive and independent, seeking out counselors for help when necessary, and both sets of FGCBS identified this as a struggle. Since many of these students have been taking on adult responsibilities within their homes, they present as though they are very independent and on top of their workload; this is deceiving because these students have no idea how to navigate the college application process. They do not know that they need to ask for help, and college counselors make the assumption that they don't need any help. Consequently FGCBS face significantly more barriers than their non-FGCB peers within private high schools.

Stoneholt college counselors do not believe that FGCBS should be treated any differently than non-FGCBS, believing that all questions should be responded to in the same way, and all information should be provided equally to all students. Woodcrest has a larger population of FGCBS and they have developed a First Generation Program, specifically to provide an additional level of support for them. While statistically Stoneholt students identified fewer barriers than Woodcrest students, Woodcrest students seemed more aware of their circumstance, having an intellectual as well as personal understanding of what it means to be low-income, a person of color, and a first generation college-bound student. The FGCBS at Stoneholt indicated that they just focused on surviving within the school environment in order to achieve their goal of college.

Based on the discrepancies between what FGCBS are saying about their experience and what college counselors are saying about their experience, neither approach in its current form is working to fully support FGCBS within private high schools. FGCBS at Stoneholt have blinders up, internalize their seeming inefficiencies and are doing everything possible to keep up with their peers. They don't feel comfortable asking for help, and they feel as though they are straddling two worlds, the one at home and the one at school. The FGCBS at Woodcrest have this extra level of support through the new program, but students still express an inability to relate to their college counselors resulting in not feeling comfortable asking for help. Students at both schools lack certain information and recourses regarding college within their home, and neither school is fully addressing those barriers.

To generalize the results of this study to other private schools, college counselors need to review their college counseling program and determine if they are more like Stoneholt, focusing on equal access to information, or Woodcrest, focusing on equitable access to information. From there, counselors can review the recommendations presented to determine how to adjust their college counseling program in order to better support FGCBS within their schools. Recommendations for private schools as well as implications of these findings follow this section.

Implications

This study has contributed to the four literature themes discussed in Chapter II on equity within schools, college counseling, private high schools and FGCBS. By addressing each of these four themes, this study has triangulated data and found connections where they hadn't been researched before. To the knowledge of the

researcher, no study had been conducted looking at the experiences of FGCBS within private high schools with the aim of understating their experience with college counseling. With this first study, future studies in the same vein can be conducted to determine the generality and applicability of the results.

This study validates previous research identifying inequitable access to a quality education within the US school system. Results suggested that even within two well-resourced elite private high schools, FGCBS experienced different college journeys than their non-FGCB peers. These differences were based on race, income level, access to resources in the home and community, parent educational level and immigration status. Regardless of how a FGCBS identified, they experienced differences in the process directly correlated to at least one of those factors. Furthermore, while not the focus of the study, results indicated that their experiences differed from their peers in more than just the college application process, but within their entire high school career.

Results of this study confirmed the notion that the college counselor serves as the gatekeeper to college. Without the support of the college counselor, FGCBS are at a disadvantage when it comes to navigating the process. While counselors were not as stretched as those in large public schools, all did share that they felt limited in the time they can offer FGCBS, particularly when it comes to financial aid support, because of the number of students they work with.

Only private high schools were invited to participate in this study, focusing all results and implications on the private school structure as opposed to the public school system. Private schools are known for their college-preparation support, boasting high matriculation rates and a competitive college list. These two schools were no different.

Both were incredibly mission-focused, and their college counseling models reflected their missions. Students and counselors all discussed the strong positive college-going culture that was pervasive within each school, and attributed much of their success to this culture. Results were consistent with studies looking at minority students within private high schools. Students expressed anxiety in social contexts as well as stereotypes and expectations of performance based on their ethnic backgrounds. Students discussed feeling disconnected from their wealthier peers since they could not afford as many luxuries. This study contributed significantly to this body of literature by documenting the experiences of FGCBS specifically within this environment.

Private schools function under certain expectations of how education should function. The hegemony of their culture excludes students and families who do not live within those expected boundaries. Consequently, students who are not on the dominant society experience a different type of education than those in the dominant society, in order for FGCBS to survive and succeed within this space, they must adopt these same assumptions, at least to a certain extent. If they chose not to, their struggle is greater. These students have developed identities as a result of living within the private school culture, and these identities began development long before they start applying to college. The college counselors, while still within this context, carry the responsibility of supporting these students in the final stage of high school and transition into college. They need to understand the nuanced and complex experiences these students have during high school in order to fully support them through the college application process. The onus is not solely on them however; the school has a responsibility to also

understand these nuanced experiences to support FGCBS with their academic and social progress.

Finally, this study adds to the literature on FGCBS by showing that even within a high resourced school with a pervasive college-going culture and college counselors who are eager to support all students with the college process, FGCBS still struggle. These students are strong, hard-working, focused and resilient. They are motivated to succeed and a strong loving family that cares about education is standing behind them, guiding them towards that success. These students understand the value of a quality education; they recognize what having a college degree means in a very tangible way. They are independent and have been managing adult responsibilities for a long time. They are tough and have survived at least 4 years of high school in a sometimes hostile environment, all for the goal of college. All this being said, they still need extra support. They still need someone to show them the ropes and how to navigate this particular system. They need guidance in order to find financial resources, and they need support early on in order to not fall behind. None of this information is new, except it had not been documented within this particular environment. This research shows that even within this newly explored space, FGCBS still need all of the additional support they would need within a low-resourced public school.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study specific recommendations for private schools are presented below. Recommendations for private schools in general will depend on the school's population of students as well as where in the process they are with supporting FGCBS.

Recommendations for Stoneholt (and similar private schools)

1. *FGCBSs should be so-recognized by the college counselors to enable the counselor to give them the services that they need.*

FGCBS are aware of who they are and that their college application process is different from that of their non-FGCB peers, it will not be problematic to name this and address the specific barriers mentioned when working with these students. Identifying students as FGCB and providing them additional support will not put a spotlight on them making them feel bad about their situation. Rather, it will be an opportunity for college counselors and students to have an open conversation about the college process, allowing for additional supports to become available to students. There are different ways for how this can be addressed, and it is important to do so in a supportive and respectful way. Finding ways to support FGCBS throughout all of high school should be discussed within the private school, rather than to silo it to college counseling.

2. *Counselors need to have more training on financial aid resources available to students.*

Such training would include information about the FAFSA, CSS Profile as well as scholarships. With this training, counselors will be able to work individually or in groups with students who need access to aid, walking them through the process.

3. *While challenging, it is imperative to get parents of FGCBS in the school early.*

There are many ways to do this, but always making translators available, providing meeting times not only during the school day, and reminding the student to ask their parent to come in, will all assist with this. Parents should be

invited in early, rather than waiting until spring of junior year. If parents have many opportunities to visit with the college counselor (perhaps during back to school nights or parent/teacher conferences) they will feel more comfortable coming in during the entire process.

4. College counselors need to recognize that at least for FGCBS visiting college campuses is critical for them to be able to visualize their futures.

Simply researching schools online and talking with representatives won't be enough to help the student understand their options. For students who don't have the ability to travel far to visit schools, counselors can create a list of local schools and recommend the student and their parents visit the local schools. Counselors can provide students and parents with questions to ask, things to look for, where to find information in advance about schools to prepare for the visit. Counselors will find that with this added support, students will be able to be significantly more proactive and independent in their college process.

5. Test preparation needs to be more available to FGCBS, either in the form of referrals to low or no-cost programs, or needs to be provided through the school to students who qualify for aid.

Since FGCBS are among the demographic of students less likely to perform well on standardized tests and don't have the resources to pay for test prep, the school needs to provide that as a resource.

6. Most significantly, counselors need to recognize that as independent as FGCBS are, there is a knowledge gap that the college counselors have a responsibility to fill.

Non-FGCBS are having their hands held during this process, while the counselor isn't walking them step by step through each deadline and form, their parents are. Since FGCBS don't have this resource at home, counselors need to step in and be for FGCBS what the parents of non-FGCBS are able to be. This will also help with the problem of when and how to ask for help. Counselors need to recognize the nuances of FGCBS' experiences and approach them from an asset based perspective.

Recommendations for Woodcrest (and similar private schools)

It is very valuable that a First Generation Program already exists within the school. These recommendations are for ways to improve and enhance the program to support this relatively (as compared to Stoneholt) large portion of the population.

1. College counseling for FGCBS needs to begin freshman year.

Students should be identified early, and monthly or quarterly meetings should begin with FGCBS early freshman year. This will develop a strong cohort of students, and will address many social anxieties. The staff who support these students need to be trained on cultural competency and must be versed in the unique barriers FGCBS face. These staff will serve as allies to the students throughout their 4-years of high school. No later than second semester of freshman year, FGCBS should be introduced to their college counselor. The counselor does not need to meet with the students regularly, but should make themselves available.

2. Programming through 9th-11th grade should address the entire college application and financial aid processes, such that by the second semester of junior year, all FGCBs have a working knowledge of the college application process as well as the financial aid process.

These workshops can be activity-based. Students can do mock admissions with fake applications, they can map out their schedules for all 4 years of college, and they can research different types of schools.

3. Parents need to be brought into the equation early and often.

Parents of each cohort should meet each other, so they too have their own cohort and people they can go to for advice. Parents can support each other (i.e., parent of a senior can talk with parents of younger students), alleviating many anxieties and demystifying the process. Having several large group events over the course of 9th-11th grades will make the parent/counselor meetings more likely to occur. Parents will feel safe and will trust the college counselors. They also will be empowered to take a more active role in the process (like non-FGCB parents), which ultimately supports FGCBs. The students won't be solely responsible to managing their parents during the process. This is very complex, and how it is done is very critical. Finding ways to involve FGCB parents in all aspects of the school (unrelated to college counseling) will also significantly support this effort.

4. Financial aid training needs to be provided for college counselors.

This is a key aspect of the student's decision making, and counselors need to take a more active role in this.

5. Since there is a critical mass of FGCBS enrolled at Woodcrest, funding could be found to provide college tours (local or father away) to these students.

A great deal of learning can happen on these trips, particularly if they are facilitated by the counselors. Students will have not only the ability to envision their futures, but also ongoing conversations that can occur between students and counselors, aiding in the process.

6. Test preparation is important for FGCBS.

Since a program exists for this population of students, test preparation can be built into the workshops. At minimum the free prep that is available in Naviance should be advertised, since none of the students were aware of it.

7. For a school with so many FGCBS, caseloads need to be redistributed and shrunk.

The school should consider hiring additional counselors, or there should be a counselor responsible for only serving the 15 FGCBS. S/he can support just FGCBS, making it an expertise. Since this person will have higher-need students, the other counselors can focus on the lower-need students while s/he provides all the addition support stated above.

Overall, these recommendations can only be made if the administration backs them and translates them into decisions that are implemented. They require additional work on the part of the counselors, as well as additional training. These recommendations can be rolled out over time or could take on different forms depending on the expertise of staff and the number of FGCBS enrolled in each class. Ultimately, if these and other private schools truly want their FGCBS to be successful and less stressed during the

college application process possibly resulting in enrollment in more selective schools, this researcher recommends counselors take seriously these strategies and finds ways to build them into the current college counseling structure. Ultimately, if private schools are truly interested in diversifying their student bodies, they need to commit to learning more from their students in order to first understand their experiences to then, support them in the mission of the school.

Recommendations for Future Research

In order for this research to be generalizable to private schools, it needs to be replicated at different types of private schools to determine if there are similar experiences of FGCBS. It would also be valuable to include the voice of non-FGCBS to serve as a comparison. It is recommended that this same study be conducted at other private schools in San Francisco; there are many in the area, all with different missions, slightly different college counseling structures and a very diverse population as compared to other cities in the country. If results are consistent with the current study, then methods should be replicated in other cities that serve different populations and have different cultural norms.

To have a stronger understanding of FGCBS' experiences, the other instruments from the CHOICES Project (Allen, et. al, 2009) can also be used. In addition to the student and counselor instruments, teacher and parent instruments can be implemented. It would be interesting to hear from the parents of FGCBS who placed their child in these private schools. What are they feeling during the college application process? What are they feeling the entire time their child is enrolled at this school? Why don't they feel comfortable coming into the schools more often? What is the perception of the college

counselor or of their own child? What are their expectations? Hearing from the parents would be very enlightening and would provide a great deal of information for future recommendations for school programs and policies.

Concluding Remarks

I truly enjoyed this dissertation process. I learned a great deal about college counseling from the expertise of the college counselors interviewed as well as validated the experiences of the students I worked with at the SMART Program. Most of what I anticipated finding was indeed found through interviews and the survey results.

FGCBS are still facing a variety of barriers even within these high resources college preparatory private schools. Probably the most salient finding was the students inability to ask for help even when they needed it. Counselors held expectations that if FGCBS needed help they would ask for it. This coupled with the fact that the FGCBS could not get the guidance and support that non-FGCBS get at home from their parents proved problematic. While high school is intended to prepare students for college, they are not in college yet. Developmentally they are not prepared to take on so many adult responsibilities and make such huge life-altering decisions without adult guidance and support. FGCBS already are forced into a more independent lifestyle, often due to financial constraints, English translation responsibilities, or taking care of younger siblings, ideally with the many resources available within a private high school, they are able to be less independent and more supported through this complex process.

As a result of already being outside of their element, living in two worlds simultaneously, having inexperienced parents, this independence may result in a lack of trust of adults, since they can't be supported in every way by the adults in their lives. If

college counselors are aware of this trust issue, they can more intentionally reach out to these students, this is why beginning college counseling for FGCBS earlier in their high school career will directly impact their ability to ask for help.

Furthermore, college counselors need to be able to provide more financial aid support to students. It is worth noting the insecurity the counselors expressed concerning their lack of knowledge in the financial aid realm, suggesting that additional training would be immensely beneficial for both the students and the counselors. As more and more individuals find themselves on financial aid for high school, developing this knowledge base will undoubtedly help more than just FGCBS enrolled in private schools.

The anxiety college counselors expressed about singling out FGCBS is not productive. These students are already aware of who they are and who their peers are, by recognizing and celebrating their accomplishments, as one counselor shared, FGCBS will be empowered by their counselors. Singling them out in order to provide better services is not discriminating, but rather helping them to self-actualize to become the best version of themselves. They will feel more comfortable trusting their counselors because they know their counselors understand and will advocate for the support and resources they need. One could claim that *treating them like everyone else* is a form of true subtle discrimination because it actually deprives them of the tools they need to truly succeed. This is an issue of equality versus equity. Added sensitivity and financial aid training for counselors actually empowers the counselors to better serve all of their students.

Knowing that parents didn't complete college can aid in counselor interactions with parents. They should be aware of the emotional support and encouragement (funds of knowledge) that FGCBS receive at home and find ways to bring these parents into the

school to better support them throughout this process. In doing so, counselors will be able to better recognize which supports students need because they will not have to assume what knowledge is available or lacking within the home. Parents will feel more connected and consequently FGCBS won't be responsible for managing all aspects of this process.

With the proposed added supports from their counselors, these motivated resilient young people can really change the course of their lives and the lives of their families, and inspire many others who don't have similar experiences. All FGCBS participating in this study are enrolled in 4-year colleges after high school graduation, they are incredibly capable, and were able to achieve this goal despite the barriers they faced, largely due to the aspirations they have. With just a bit more support from the college counselors, they could be accepted into even more selective colleges. But most importantly, their experience preparing for and applying to college could be much smoother and less stressful. Rather than potentially sacrifice their self-esteem or self-confidence for their education, they can walk out of their elite private school with both, pride and success. The potential for extreme greatness is here.

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Appendix A

Student Survey

With proposed analysis (this is not how it will be presented to a student...this is for the researcher)

Student Aspirations

Item 1 not collapsed into construct score. Items 2-7 will produce one score between 1-3. These scores will be averaged to produce a mean score of 3. Higher score means higher aspirations.

1. What career field are you planning/hoping to go into?*(nominal scale. Frequencies. Not collapsed into *student aspirations* score)
 - Architecture, Planning & Environmental design (architecture, interior design, landscape architecture, urban and regional planning, etc)
 - Arts and Entertainment (arts education/therapy, broadcasting, fashion, films, museums, performing arts, etc)
 - Business (accounting, consulting, HR, insurance, real estate, marketing, etc)
 - Communications (journalism, public relations, publishing, etc)
 - Education (teaching, counseling, school social work, speech pathology, etc)
 - Engineering & Computer Science (aerospace, Civil, environmental, mechanical, nuclear, etc)
 - Environment (forestry, environmental engineering, restoration, etc)
 - Government (politics, federal, state, local, military, etc)
 - Health & Medicine (density, human medicine, optometry, pharmacy, public health, veterinary medicine, health management, etc)
 - Law and Public Policy (law, law enforcement, lobbying, public advocacy, etc)
 - Nonprofit (consumer rights, civil and human rights, lobbying, research, social work, etc)
 - Sciences – Biological and Physical (agriculture, bioinformatics, biostatistics, biotechnology, botany, forensic science, genetics, marine biology, science education, etc)
 - Other (please specify) _____
2. What is the highest level of education you plan to complete? (ordinal scale. 1 = less than bachelors, 2 = bachelors, 3 = more than bachelors/grad school)
 - High school
 - Vocational certificate
 - Associate (A.A. or equivalent)
 - Bachelor's degree (B.A., B.S., etc.)
 - Master's degree (M.A., M.S., etc.)

- B.D. or M.DIV (Divinity)
 - LL.B. or J.D. (law)
 - Ph.D. or Ed.D.
 - M.D., D.O., D.D.S., or D.V.M. Degree (medicine)
 - Other (specify): _____
3. Have you taken the following standardized exams? If the answer is “yes” to any of these items, please list your highest score (that you remember) (yes/no for each exam -> *student aspiration*. Interval scale (highest level 3, indicating taken at least each exam once). Actual scores -> *performance indicators*. Convert ACT to SAT scale)
- SAT: yes/no. composite score: _____
 - ACT: yes/no. composite score: _____
 - SAT subject test: yes/no. composite score 1: _____. Composite score 2: _____. Composite score 3: _____
4. Please indicate how many College Advanced Placement (A.P.) courses you expect to have taken by the end of your senior year of high school? (ordinal scale)
- 0 to 3
 - 4 to 7
 - 8 more
5. How strongly do you want to go to a 4-year college next year? (ordinal scale)
- I don't want to go to a 4-year college
 - I think I would like to go to a 4-year college
 - I very strongly want to go to a 4-year college
6. How confident are you that you will go to a 4-year college next year? (ordinal scale)
- Not confident at all
 - Somewhat confident
 - Extremely confident
7. How well do you feel your high school has prepared you academically for college? (ordinal scale)
- Not so well
 - Fairly well
 - Extremely well

Student Access to Resources

Item 11 not collapsed into construct score. Items 8-10 will produce scores between 1-3 for each sub-item. These scores will be averaged to produce a mean score of 3. Higher score means access to resources.

8. How satisfied are you with: (ordinal scale)

	Not Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Very Satisfied
The quality of college counseling in my			

school			
The availability of college-related information at my school			
The availability of financial aid-related information at my school			

9. I go to the following people to get my college information: (ordinal scale)

	Never	Sometimes	All the Time	N/A (person(s) not in my life)
Parents				
Friends at school				
Friends in my neighborhood				
Internet				
Older Siblings				
Teacher(s)				
Other family members (aunts, uncles, grandparents, etc)				
College Counselor				
After School College Program (such as: Upward Bound, College Track, etc)				

10. How helpful were the following in understanding my options after high school: (ordinal scale)

	Not helpful	Helpful	Very helpful
The college <i>advice</i> provided by my school college counselor: (e.g., School recommendations, how to write my personal statement, how to complete my app)			
The college <i>materials</i> provided by my school college counselor:			

(e.g., Pamphlets, websites, meetings with reps)			
The financial aid information provided by my school college counselor: (e.g., How to fill out the FAFSA, scholarships)			
The one-on-one meetings I had with my school college counselor			

11. The following person(s) suggested more than half of the schools I am applying to: (select only one) (nominal scale, report frequencies)

- My college counselor
- My friend(s)
- My parent(s)
- My teacher(s)
- I did my own research and selected more than half of the schools myself

Student Barriers to College

Items 12-13, 15-16 will produce scores between 1-3 for each sub-item. Item 14 will produce 3 scores between 1-3, which are sub-items collapsed into: Home, Community, & School. These scores will be averaged to produce a mean score of 3. Higher score means fewer barriers.

12. Of your closest friends, how many of them plan to go to a 4-year college? (ordinal scale)

- None or very few
- About half
- All or almost all

13. How did the following people influence your decision to go to a 4-year college? (ordinal scale)

	Discouraged me	Offered no advice	Encouraged me	N/A (this person(s) is not in my life)
Parents				
Siblings				
Other family members (i.e. aunts, uncles, grandparents)				
Friends at school				
Friends in my				

neighborhood				
Teachers				
College Counselors				
Adult mentors (In afterschool program)				

14. How did the following circumstances influence me to go to a 4-year college?
(ordinal scale, collapse into 3 scores – home/community/school)

		Discouraged me	No influence	Encouraged me	N/A (this person/circumstance is not in my life)
home	My parent(s)' income level				
	My parent(s)' education level				
	My parent(s)' current occupation(s)				
	My parent(s)' values about education and work				
	My parent(s)' advice about school				
	My parent(s)' expectations for my future				
Community	The neighborhood I live in				
	My neighborhood friends' college plans				
	My religious leader (pastor, rabbi, youth minister, etc) <i>advice</i> about college				
	My religious leader (pastor, rabbi, youth minister, etc) <i>expectations</i> for my future				
	My afterschool program mentor/advisor/counselor				

	lor(s)' <i>advice</i> about college				
	My afterschool program mentor/advisor/counselor(s)' <i>expectations</i> for my future				
School	My school friends' college plans				
	My college counselor's advice about college				
	My college counselor's expectations for my future				
	My teacher(s)' advice about college				
	My teacher(s)' expectations for my future				
	The environment at this school				

15. How did the following characteristics influence *other people's* expectations of me? (Specifically: if I should go to college or not) (ordinal scale)

	Didn't think I should go to 4-year college	No influence	Thought I should go to a 4-year college	N/A (this person(s) is not in my life)
My racial/ethnic background				
My parent(s) educational level				
My sibling(s) education level				
My family's income				
My parent(s) occupation(s)				
My neighborhood				

16. How did the following characteristics influence *my own* educational goals? (Specifically: if I should go to college or not) (ordinal scale)

	Discouraged me	No influence	Encouraged me	N/A (this person(s) is not in my life)
My racial/ethnic background				
My parent(s) educational level				
My sibling(s) education level				
My family's income				
My parent(s) occupation(s)				
My neighborhood				

Student Performance Indicators

Not sure exactly how to collapse data into one score for this construct.

- A. See item # 3 to use score from SAT/ACT/ SAT Subject tests. ACT scores converted into SAT score scale.
17. Mark the answer that best describes your overall high school grade point average? (validity comparison to GPA on transcript)
- A or A+
 - A-
 - B+
 - B
 - B-
 - C+
 - C
 - C-
 - D+ or lower
- B. Cumulative GPA according to Transcript (student doesn't answer this question, get consent to acquire transcript from parent in advance)
- GPA = _____
18. What schools are you already applied to? (interval scale, use US News Rankings to score, & descriptive data)
- {blank space for answer}
19. Please use the space provided to address anything additional that you would like to share - related to your educational goals, influential sources/people, and your college counseling experience at this school: (descriptive data)
- {blank space for answer}
20. Please provide your email address below if you are interested in have a brief follow-up interview to share your college application experience.
- a. {blank space for answer}

- C. What school did you enroll in for next year? (To be answered after the survey is completed. interval scale, use US News Rankings to score, & descriptive data)
- {blank space for answer}
- D. Why? (To be answered after the survey is completed. Descriptive data)
- {blank space for answer}

Demographics

Report frequencies for items 21-27.

21. What is your gender? (nominal scale, frequency)
- Female
 - Male
22. Are you: (Please check all that apply) (nominal scale, frequency)
- African American
 - American Indian
 - Arab American
 - Caucasian
 - Chinese
 - Filipino
 - Japanese
 - Korean
 - Vietnamese
 - Other Asian (please specify) _____
 - Mexican/Chicano
 - Puerto Rican
 - Central American
 - Cuban
 - South American
 - Other Hispanic/Latino (please specify) _____
 - Other _____
23. What is your best estimate of your parents' or total household income last year (2013)? Please consider income from all sources before taxes (Mark one only) (ordinal scale, frequency)
- Less than \$6,000
 - \$6,000 to \$24,999
 - \$25,000 to \$43,999
 - \$40,000 to \$69,999
 - \$70,000 to \$149,999
 - \$150,000 or more
24. Were you born in the US? (nominal scale, frequency)
- Yes
 - No
25. Are your parents: (nominal scale, frequency)
- Both alive and living with each other
 - Both alive, divorced or living apart

- One or both deceased
26. What is your father's highest level of education? (ordinal scale, use to determine population for sample, if select italic options for both #26 & 27, students are included in population)
- *Grammar school or less*
 - *Some high school*
 - *High school graduate (or GED equivalent)*
 - *Postsecondary school other than college*
 - *Some college*
 - College graduate
 - Some graduate school
 - Graduate degree
 - Unknown
27. What is your mother's highest level of education? (ordinal scale, use to determine population for sample, if select italic options for both #26 & 27, students are included in population)
- *Grammar school or less*
 - *Some high school*
 - *High school graduate (or GED equivalent)*
 - *Postsecondary school other than college*
 - *Some college*
 - College graduate
 - Some graduate school
 - Graduate degree
 - Unknown

Appendix B
Student Interview Questions

- What are some of your educational goals?
- When did you come to the realization that you wanted to or did not want to go to college? (probe for sources of influence, either positively or negatively)
- Do you think others have always expected you to go or not go to college? (i.e. parents, teachers, counselors, peers)
- In what ways have your parents or other family members influenced your decision to pursue or not pursue a college education?
- How have your friends influenced your decision to pursue or not pursue a college education?
- In what ways has this school and the types of schools you've attended prior to coming here, influenced your educational aspirations? (provide for types of college related resources available at schools; college centers, number of college counselors, college culture of school, etc)
- How have teachers, counselors, or other people who work in your school influenced your educational aspirations and goals? (probe for stellar teachers, important counselors, etc)
- Are there resources or individuals available in your community that have helped you think either positively or negatively, about your college opportunities? (probe; role of church; non-profit agencies; community leaders)
- Have you ever been encouraged or discouraged by others because of your racial/ethnic background? If so, how have these racial incidents influenced, either positively or negatively, your decision to attend or not attend college?
- In what ways has your social economic background influenced your decision to attend or not attend college? (probe for effects of SES of neighborhood, family income, etc)
- In what ways has your parents education level influenced your decision to attend or not attend college? (probe for effects of SES of neighborhood, family income, etc)

Appendix C Counselor Interview Questions

Interviews are expected to last approximately 1 hour. Since most questions are open ended, they will have to be coded based upon themes. Codes may be ordinal or nominal, depending on the item. Ordinal scales will be converted into a single score for each construct so that statistical analyses maybe conducted.

Please note questions are not in the order in which they will be asked, they are currently separated into constructs to ensure these constructs will be addressed through the correct questions – once final questions and wording are determined, they will be reordered to flow better for the college counselor.

Student Aspirations (from Counselor Perspective)

1. Approximately what percentage of first generation students at your school will likely apply to college?
 - Less than 10%
 - 10% -24%
 - 25% - 49%
 - 50% -74%
 - 75% -100%
2. Approximately what percentage of the first generation students do you think are prepared to attend a four-year university/college?
 - Less than 10%
 - 10% -24%
 - 25% - 49%
 - 50% -74%
 - 75% -100%
3. Do you see a pattern in the types of questions that first generation students ask compared to your non-first generation students?
4. Do first generation student meetings discussing college tend to look different than non-first generation student appointments? For example, do they need different types of support from you, discuss different topics, indicate different goals, etc. (If so how?)
5. Do you think the first generation students you work with want to go to the same types of colleges as non-first generation students? Why?
6. Do you think the first generation students you work with will go to the same types of colleges as non-first generation students? Why?

Student Access to Resources (from Counselor Perspective)

7. How many years of experience have you had in college counseling? _____
8. How many years have you been counseling students at this school? _____
9. How would you define your philosophy on college counseling?
10. What are your primary responsibilities as a college counselor?
 - Approximately what percentage of time do you dedicate to each of these responsibilities per year?

11. What is the approximate student-counselor ratio at your school for *general* counseling?
12. How many students do you college counsel each year? _____
13. How is counseling organized at your school? E.g., assigned to specific class levels (freshman, sophomores, etc.), or follow an entering cohort through to graduation?
 - What is the rationale behind this organization?
 - What are the pros and cons to this type of organization?
14. What and in what ways is college counseling introduced to students?
 - Are announcements made in classes to encourage junior/senior students to make appointments?
15. What is the format of the initial counseling session? Can you describe what the first and subsequent sessions look like?
 - How often do these meetings occur?
 - How much time is spent during each meeting?
16. What kind of college counseling resources does your school have? And how are they used? Such as:
 - College guidebooks
 - College Search software (i.e. Naviance)
 - Standardized test tutorials
 - University admissions officer visits
 - School sponsored college tours
 - Catalogues (college)
 - Financial aid software
 - College prep tutorials
 - Other (Please specify) _____

How often are these materials accessible? Can students walk in whenever they want, or do you distribute them based on interest? For online materials, do students learn about them in a college counseling class? In your meetings? Or only if they ask about them?
17. Do you have college counseling resources targeted specifically towards the first generation students?
 - Yes/ no
 - If yes...what types? & how do students learn about them?
18. Do you feel that there is a college-going culture at your school?
 - Yes
 - No

If yes, then is it based on any of the following? Why?

 - Students and staff expect that all students will go to college
 - The school provides a rigorous curriculum that is accessible to and utilized by students
 - High quality teaching
 - Academic Support (tutoring, mentoring, etc.)
19. Which are the most common schools first generation students are applying to?
 - CSUs
 - UCs
 - Local private colleges

- Far away California (SoCal) private colleges
 - Out of state private colleges
 - Out of state public universities
 - Community Colleges
20. Do you ask students to prepare or bring any materials to your counseling sessions (if so, what) or do you have student's work on or complete any materials after counseling sessions (if so, what?)
 21. What types of financial aid/merit scholarship information do you give students? To parents? When?
 22. Does your school disseminate any information specific to racial/ethnic group, gender, socio-economic group, or first generation status, e.g. race-specific scholarships, talent search listings, fee waivers?
 23. What types of information do you provide students about standardized testing (scheduling, tutorials)?
 24. What do you say about the SAT I, SAT subject tests, and ACT and UC requirements?
 25. What criteria do you use to help students narrow down their college choices?
 - If a student asks for advice about what school(s) to apply to, what kind of information do you assess about the students before suggesting possible choices?
 26. At what point do you meet with parents? How often? What information do you typically provide them about the college choice/preparation process?
 - E.g., resources/guidelines, costs, financial aid, merit scholarships
 27. What kinds of questions do parents ask?
 - Do these questions differ depending on parent's educational level?

Student Barriers to College (from Counselor Perspective)

28. Approximately how many first generation students do you college counsel? ____
29. Do you know which students are first generation before you begin working with them? If at all, meaning do you think there are first generation students in your cohort that never identify themselves as first generation to you?
30. How would you rate the level of involvement of *first generation* parents in the college planning process?
 - Very active
 - Somewhat active
 - Uninvolved
31. Do you feel that the college counseling program at your school is successful for first generation students? How would you improve it?
32. To what level do you expect students to visit and research schools independently (i.e. at home, with families) in order to create their college list?
33. To what level do you expect students to complete their applications (including personal statements) independently (i.e. at home, with families)?
34. Do you identify any specific barriers that first generation students face that non-first generation students don't face?
 - If so, do you address these barriers? How so?

Demographics

Fill out on paper at the end of the interview.

35. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

36. Are you: (Please check all that apply)

- African American
- American Indian
- Arab American
- Asian American
 - Chinese
 - Filipino
 - Japanese
 - Korean
 - Vietnamese
 - Asian Indian
 - Other Asian: _____
- Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino
 - Mexican/Chicano
 - Puerto Rican
 - Central American
 - Cuban
 - South American
 - Other Hispanic/Latino (please specify) _____
- Other _____

37. Highest level of education completed:

- B.A./B.S. degree
- M.A./M.S. degree
- M.S.W., M.P.H., or M.B.A. degree
- Ph.D. or Ed.D. degree
- Other (Please Specify): _____
- What kind of professional credentials/training in counseling have you received? (Check all that apply)
 - Certificate
 - Professional development courses
 - Degree (Specify): _____

Appendix D

IRB Protocol Exemption Notification



Ana Maria Soler <soleranamaria@gmail.com>

Exemption Notification - IRB ID: 220

Christy Lusareta <noreply@axiommentor.com>
Reply-To: Christy Lusareta <calusareta@usfca.edu>
To: asauthoff@usfca.edu

Fri, Dec 20, 2013 at 1:05 PM

*Protocol Exemption Notification*

To: Ana Maria Sauthoff Soler
From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair
Subject: Protocol #220
Date: 12/20/2013

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco (USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study.

Your project (IRB Protocol #220) with the title **Student Survey & Counselor Focus Group** has been approved by the University of San Francisco IRBPHS as **Exempt** according to 45CFR46.101(b). Your application for exemption has been verified because your project involves minimal risk to subjects as reviewed by the IRB on 12/20/2013.

Please note that changes to your protocol may affect its exempt status. Please submit a modification application within ten working days, indicating any changes to your research. Please include the Protocol number assigned to your application in your correspondence.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your endeavors.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson,
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

Appendix E

Student Informed Consent

Dear Senior Parent,

My name is Ana Maria Soler and I am a doctoral student at the University of San Francisco. I am studying education and my focus is on the college application process. Stoneholt High School has agreed to participate in my dissertation study about understanding the student's college application process this spring. Frederich and Jeffrey really want the students to participate because they are very eager to hear from them about their college application experience.

In order to participate in the study I would like to ask your child to complete a survey about their college counseling experience. The survey shouldn't take more than 5-10 minutes of their time and they will complete it during advisory or a class assembly during the school day in May. The questions are very typical of what a high school senior talks about when discussing college, mostly about their experience applying to college and where they went for resources etc. If your child participates in the study, I will ask the college counselors for their college application list and using a code I will connect their list to their survey – eliminating their name. At the end of the survey they are welcome to participate in a brief interview if they would like – this is not a requirement.

The information will be compiled and your child won't be identified by their responses. The Stoneholt college counseling department hopes to use this information to review the college counseling program and continue to improve the services they offer to students.

Please find the attached *Informed Consent Document* for your review in this packet. If your child will be under 18 years of age by May 1, 2014 we request a parent/guardian signature consenting for the student to complete the survey and participating in the interview (*Informed Consent Document page 2*). If the student will be 18 years old by May 1, 2014 they can sign for themselves.

Additionally, I am also asking for permission to see your child's transcript in order to better understand students' college application experience. The transcript will also be connected to student responses with a code and their names will be removed. When Stoneholt reviews the results of the study, they will receive aggregate data and not your child's individual responses.

Please sign the bottom section of the *Informed Consent Document* if you consent to a transcript release.

This study has been approved by the Internal Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at the University of San Francisco, and there is no expected risk for your child to participate. If you have questions about this please see below for whom to contact.

The main researcher conducting this study is Ana Maria Sauthoff Soler a graduate student at the University of San Francisco. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Ana Maria Sauthoff Soler at asauthoff@dons.usfca.edu or at 609-468-9300. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at 415-422-6091 or email them at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

Please complete the *Informed Consent Document* by April 1st, 2014. Thank you so much.



Ana Maria Soler

Informed Consent Document

Student

Student Survey Participation

Your school has agreed to participate in a study to learn more about your experience applying to college. By signing this document you agree to participate in this 5 -10 minute study that you can complete on your smartphone, computer or tablet and your college counselor will provide the researcher with your college application list. Since you will be asked to describe your experiences with college counseling, something that is a very common topic of conversation for high school seniors there is no anticipated risks or discomforts expected for participation in this study.

Privacy/Confidentiality

For students participating in the survey, you will be asked to provide your name in the survey so that the researcher can connect your survey responses to your transcript. Once the connection has occurred your survey responses and transcript will be assigned a code (1A, 2B, etc.) and your name will be eliminated from all documentation. This way you can be completely honest with your responses and not worry that the researcher, your parents, friends or school will know which responses are yours.

Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through e-mail could be read by a third party.

Taking part is voluntary

Please understand that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable, with no penalty to you, and no effect on or your standing at your high school.

Please sign below if you are willing to complete the survey and allow your college counselor to provide your college application list.

- I do not want to participate.
 I am willing to participate:

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

If under 18 years old on or after May 1, 2014, parental consent is required:

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please sign below if you are willing to release your transcript to the researcher (again, your name will be removed from your transcript). You may still complete the survey if you are not willing to release your transcript.

- I do not want to release my transcript.
 I am willing to release my transcript:

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

If under 18 years old on or after May 1, 2014, parental consent is required:

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

Informed Consent Document
Student Interview Participation

If you provide your email address in the survey, the researcher will email you asking to spend 10-15 minutes talking with you in more detail about your college application experience. If you agree to participate in a brief interview we would like to record the conversation to ensure we don't miss anything you share.

Please sign below if you are willing to have this interview audio recorded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

- I do not want to have this interview recorded.
 I am willing to have this interview recorded:

Name: _____

Email: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

If under 18 years old on or after May 1, 2014, parental consent is required:

Parent Signature: _____

Date: _____

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent


I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

Parent Signature (if under 18) _____ Date _____

Parent Name (printed) _____

Researcher  _____ Date May 5, 2014

Researcher Ana Maria Sauthoff Soler

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study.

Appendix F

Counselor Interview

Please sign below if you are willing to have this focus group/interview audio recorded. You may still participate in this study if you are not willing to have the interview recorded.

- I do not want to have this interview recorded.
 I am willing to have this interview recorded:

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Privacy/Confidentiality

For the college counselor participating in the focus group/interview, your name will not be written on the focus group/interview notes, audio file or transcript of the audio file.

Please note that email communication is neither private nor secure. Though I am taking precautions to protect your privacy, you should be aware that information sent through e-mail could be read by a third party.

Taking part is voluntary

Please understand that your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate before the study begins, discontinue at any time, or skip any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable, with no penalty to you, and no effect on the compensation earned before withdrawing, or your standing at your high school.

Risks and discomforts

Since you are being asked to describe your experiences with college counseling and your school's college counseling program, something that is a very common topic of conversation for college counselors, we do not anticipate any risks or discomforts for participation in this study.

Benefits

The information from this study may benefit your college counseling program, by providing better insight into the experience of first generation student's college counseling experience. Such information will aid your college counseling program in achieving your goal of ensuring all students enroll in 4-year universities, and have the support they need to overcome any barriers to success.

If you have questions

The main researcher conducting this study is Ana Maria Sauthoff Soler a graduate student at the University of San Francisco. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Ana Maria Sauthoff Soler at asauthoff@dons.usfca.edu or at 609-468-9300. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants at 415-422-6091 or email them at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent

I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

Researcher _____ Date _____

Researcher Ana Maria Sauthoff Soler

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least five years beyond the end of the study.