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EXPLORING ECOLOGICAL-SYSTEMS BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING A  
RECOGNIZED AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR  
ASSOCIATION MODEL PROGRAM (RAMP)

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Education

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Kristi D. Kratsa

May 2019

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Kristi D. Kratsa

2019

**DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
Department of Counseling, Psychology and Special Education**

*Dissertation*

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

**Executive Counselor Education and Supervision Program**

*Presented by:*

Kristi Kratsa, M.S. Ed, Counseling (Duquesne University)  
B.S., Sociology (Saint Vincent College)

March 13, 2019

**EXPLORING ECOLOGICAL-SYSTEMS BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING A  
RECOGNIZED AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION MODEL  
PROGRAM (RAMP)**

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## ABSTRACT

# EXPLORING ECOLOGICAL-SYSTEMS BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING A RECOGNIZED AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION MODEL PROGRAM (RAMP)

By

Kristi D. Kratsa

May 2019

Dissertation supervised by Dr. Jered B. Kolbert

The American School Counselor Association National Model was developed to unify the profession and to ensure that students receive equitable access to comprehensive, developmental, and preventive school counseling programming through the delivery of school counseling curriculum and services (ASCA: 2003, 2005, 2012). Designed to promote the well-being of all students and to close the achievement gap, the ASCA National Model mirrored the standards-based models adopted in public education. To encourage implementation, the ASCA established the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) designation to reward school counseling programs for following the Model (ASCA: 2003). Evidence supports the effectiveness of comprehensive school counseling programs, yet, as of February 2019, there are less than 500 RAMP schools nationwide. Using the McMahon and colleagues, Ecological School Counseling Model

(2014) as the framework, I used archival data to explore micro-level (school) and macro-level (cultural/environmental) barriers to RAMP attainment. Participants included a subset ( $N = 349$ ) of the original study's national sample ( $N = 1,729$ ) of practicing school counselors. Logistic regression analyses were conducted to explore what ecological-systems variables predicted the likelihood of achieving RAMP status. Regression results suggested that five variables related to the community setting (urban, suburban, rural), lack of other stakeholder support, and administrative support were reasonably accurate in predicting the RAMP status of a school. The results have implications for future research, advocacy, and professional development in school counseling.

#### Keywords

ASCA National Model, Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP), ecological-systems, school counseling, school counselor role

## DEDICATION

To my first born, Adeline Lucille, go forth and change the world. You have demonstrated insight and empathy beyond your years.

To my Elliot Edward, my artist, my detail guy, the young man who challenges me every day to take perspective.

To my little girls, Mary Ekaterina and Nina Stamatia, who were babies when I began this journey. I could not be prouder of how you have grown.

To my husband, Joshua Kratsa, who provided unwavering support and love throughout this process.

To my father, Edward Swink, who is the most brilliant person I have ever known.

Although you never had the opportunity to be educated, you made certain that your children were. Despite limited financial resources, you supported every hair-brained idea that I had. I wish you were here to read this. I carry you in my heart.

To my mother, Barbara Swink, who sparked my interest in the helping professions and taught me all there is to know about resilience. Thank you for loving and caring for my children and for teaching me about social justice before I even knew the term.

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When one pursues an advanced degree after practicing for many years, it seems likely that there are more people to acknowledge than there is space in a document.

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Thank you to my parents, Barbara and Edward. Neither of you had it easy growing up, but you managed to impart the most valuable life lessons. Barbara, thank you for teaching me to consider context, to advocate for equity, and to listen to everyone. Edward, you taught me to value education. You never had the opportunity to go to college, yet you dedicated your life to loving, supporting, and educating your children. Three months after I started this program, you were diagnosed, and four months after that, you left us. I will always remember sitting at your bedside—stats textbook in tow—and how you proudly told everyone that I was getting my Ph D. I know you were with me all the way. Thank you to my sisters, Amy and Rachel, and my nephew, Braden, for giving my children extra love and fun while I wrote. Thank you to my mother-in-law, Angela Evans, for cheering me on and reminding me to be gentle with myself as I struggled to balance being a mom and a student. The girls loved spending time with you while I wrote.



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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Responding to the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, and the subsequent accountability movement in education (Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Weiss, 2003), comprehensive school counseling programs emerged as a vehicle to meet the needs of all students (ASCA, 2003a; Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010; Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Paisley & Borders, 1995). During this time, the field of education was transforming in response to a growing urgency to develop standards using evidence-based practices and data to drive decision-making (Weiss, 2003). In 1988, Gysbers and Henderson published *Developing and Managing Your School Guidance Program*, which detailed program components, including definitions, rationale, and delivery systems (Gysbers, 2010). School counseling shifted from a vocational or humanistic emphasis via the student services model—often left to the discretion of individual school counselors—to a systemic, holistic, and comprehensive approach that emphasized national standards of practice (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2010; Kolbert, Williams, Morgan, Crothers, & Hughes, 2016; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The student services model focused on providing services to exceptional and at-risk students (ASCA, 2012; Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010). Comprehensive programming offered a broader school-wide approach focused less on individual interventions (ASCA, 2012; Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010; Kolbert et al., 2016). Leaders in the school counseling profession sought to promote professional consistency and recognition as well-trained professionals with expertise in providing developmentally-appropriate, preventive, and comprehensive services (Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008). School counselors were urged to advance

programs to address the developmental needs of all students (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2010; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). In the decades that followed, Gysbers and Henderson's (1988) publication, efforts to standardize school counseling programs continued (Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Dahir, 2001), and implementation gaps remained (Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Lapan, Gysbers, Stanley, & Pierce, 2012).

Ongoing efforts to standardize school counseling programs were influenced by the next wave of federal involvement in public education. Widening achievement gaps in the broader educational arena prompted the most stringent federal regulations in history. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB, 2002), which was one of the most significant pieces of legislation to impact education in the past half-century, did not acknowledge the school counseling profession (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006; Kolbert et al., 2016; USDOE, 2015). The school counseling profession's lack of involvement in NCLB (2002) became an impetus for school counseling reform. Attempting to unify the profession, the ASCA (2003) issued the first edition of *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*. The Model details clear and descriptive domains of programming, including foundation, delivery, management, and accountability (ASCA, 2003). The most recent edition of the ASCA National Model (2012) elaborated on themes of advocacy, collaboration, leadership, and systemic change. The Model serves as a framework to guide professional school counseling practice systematically with role-appropriate, results-based programming (Kolbert et al., 2016). Not long after the Model was published, the ASCA (2003) launched a campaign promoting not only the implementation of comprehensive programming but also the



attainment of the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) status. RAMP represents the most rigorous standards designed to promote equitable access to resources for students (ASCA, 2012).

As the role of the school counselor is historically linked to broader movements in education reform (ASCA, 2012; Cinotti, 2014; Dahir, 2004; Gysbers, 2010; Kolbert et al., 2016), it is notable that the 2015 Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA: US Department of Education [USDOE], n.d.) enacted yet another change in the accountability movement. Unlike NCLB (2002), ESSA acknowledged school counseling with a focus on academic and career counseling and emphasized a more holistic approach to education (ASCA, 2015; Kolbert et al., 2016, USDOE, 2015). Like its predecessor, NCLB (2002), ESSA (2015) is grounded in the belief that schools must promote equitable access to education for all students. In contrast to NCLB (2002), ESSA provided local and state officials with the authority to design multiple measures of student success (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016; USDOE, 2015). The use of multiple measures of success represents a more contextual approach to accountability (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016; USDOE, 2015).

The full impact that ESSA (2015) will have on school counseling practice remains to be seen. The underlying beliefs that shaped this reform bear similarities to the ASCA National Model (2012) themes (e.g., leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change). As Kolbert et al. (2016) stated, "systems-ecological theory is either implicitly or explicitly referenced in the various educational reforms" (p. 24). Although systems-ecological theory is not explicitly named in ESSA (2015), the reform's contextual nature implies a systemic foundation. ESSA (2015) explicitly calls for a more balanced approach to accountability. Despite being published prior to ESSA (2015), the most

recent edition of the ASCA National Model (2012) highlighted the role of school counselors and comprehensive programming in helping remove systemic barriers to learning. The ASCA Model (2012), like ESSA (2015), enables practitioners to use a systems-ecological lens when designing, implementing, and evaluating educational efforts.

With a well-established Model in place, and inclusion in ESSA (2015), school counselors are positioned to promote student achievement through advocacy. Despite the documented efficacy of comprehensive programming on student outcomes (Burkard, Gillen, Martinez, & Skytte, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Lapan, 2012; Lapan & Harrington, 2009; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Sink, Akos, Turnbull, & Mvududu, 2008; Ward, 2009; Whiston, Tai, Rahardja, & Eder, 2011; Wilkerson, Pérusse, & Hughes, 2013) and on school counselor job satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Moyer, 2011; Pyne, 2011), the implementation of RAMP is infrequent with fewer than 500 RAMP schools nationwide (ASCA, 2019).

Cinotti (2014) stated, "practicing school counselors are faced with the challenge of identifying and maintaining a professional identity while receiving conflicting messages from counselor educators, administrators, and other stakeholders" (p. 423). School counseling researchers have consistently reported that the following factors impact school counseling practice: (a) incongruence between school counselor training and actual job responsibilities (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waak, 2011; Cinotti, 2014; Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005; DeKruyf, Auger, & Trice-Black, 2013; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Moyer, 2011; Oberman & Studer, 2008; Scarborough, 2005;

Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008); (b) role ambiguity (Brott & Meyers, 1999; Cervoni & DeLucia-Waak, 2011; Cinotti, 2014; Culbreth et al., 2005; DeKruyf et al., 2013; Herlihy, Gray, & McCollum, 2002; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Lieberman, 2004; Murray, 1995); and (c) perceptions of other school professionals (Amatea & Clark, 2005; ATICI, 2014; Bain, 2012; Bemak, 2000; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Cinotti, 2014; Clark & Amatea, 2004; DeKruyf et al., 2013; Lieberman, 2004).

Moreover, school counselor self-efficacy (Bodenhorn, Wolfe, & Airen, 2010; Ernst, Bardoshi, & Lanthier, 2017; Holcomb-McCoy, Gonzalez, & Johnston, 2009; Mullen & Lambie, 2016) and level of administrative support (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Cinotti, 2014; Clemens, Milsom, & Cashwell, 2009; Dahir, Burnham, Stone, & Cobb, 2010; Dodson, 2009; Fye, Guillot-Miller, & Rainey, 2017; Giorgio-Camelford & Ebrahim, 2017; Leuwerke, Walker, & Shi, 2009; Moyer, 2011; Pyne, 2011) are other factors that impact practice. Administrators, often tasked with supervising school counselors, lack training or understanding about the goals of a comprehensive counseling program or the role of the school counselor (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dahir et al., 2010; Dodson, 2009; Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; Fye et al., 2017; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Pérusse, Goodenough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004).

Despite the role clarity provided in the ASCA National Model (2012) and the positive outcomes reported by professionals implementing the Model, professional school counselors continue to face challenges to engaging in best practice. Giorgio-Camelford and colleagues (2017) published a literature review describing obstacles to secondary school counselors' implementation of comprehensive programs and concluded that assignment of non-counseling duties, large caseloads, and administrative support affect

implementation. The extant literature revealed common themes related to school counselors' perceptions of comprehensive programs and obstacles to school counseling best practice (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008). Fye and colleagues (2018) specifically explored school counseling supports and obstacles to ASCA National Model implementation and found that school counselors perceived engagement in non-counseling responsibilities, principals' support, and principals' understanding of the school counseling role as variables affecting ASCA Model delivery. However, there is a dearth of research regarding school counselors' perceptions of factors specifically impeding the achievement of RAMP status. Furthermore, no existing study has examined relevant obstacles through the lens of the Ecological School Counseling Model (McMahon et al., 2014). Considering the recent changes in the broader educational climate (ESSA, 2015) as well as school counselors' obligation to adopt a systemic approach to program design, implementation, and evaluation (ASCA, 2012), I employed an ecological-systems framework to conceptualize potential barriers to RAMP attainment. The current study was designed to broadly explore obstacles to RAMP implementation to understand better how various micro-level and macro-level systemic issues predict the likelihood of attaining RAMP status.

There is no shortage of information connecting the broader context (e.g., political, societal, educational) and school counseling practice (ASCA, 2012; Bain, 2012; Gysbers, 2010; Kolbert et al., 2016). In that regard, researchers conducted statewide studies to understand better the efficacy of comprehensive programs and factors impeding or enhancing best practice. When examining the results of six statewide studies, Lapan (2012) stated that implementation gaps are depriving students of the positive effects of

comprehensive programs. Other statewide studies and policy statements have indicated that school counseling mandates, programs, and student-to-school counselor ratios vary widely by state (ASCA, 2018; Carrell & Carrell, 2006; Civic Enterprises, 2011; Martin & Carey, 2012; NOSCA, 2011; Parzych, Donohue, Gaesser, & Chiu, 2019). Martin and Carey (2012) investigated inconsistencies in statewide evaluation systems of comprehensive school counseling programs and posited that, “differing state contexts greatly influence the approaches and strategies leaders take to build evaluation capacity” (p. 142). Given school counseling staffing, program, and evaluation inconsistencies at the state and local levels, I explored if regional or macro-level factors are more important in predicting RAMP attainment than school-level or micro-level concerns including administrative and other school system supports. More specifically, I examined potential macro-systems-level barriers to RAMP implementation including school counselors’ perceptions of funding, geographic region of the United States, and community setting (urban, suburban, rural) in addition to the more frequently explored micro-level school system concerns.

In this chapter, I briefly reviewed the history of school counseling, introduced the ASCA National Model (2012), identified the statement of the research problem, described the study's purpose, research questions and significance, detailed the theoretical framework, provided a summary of the methodology, and considered the potential limitations.

### **ASCA National Model**

*The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (2012) remains the prevailing comprehensive school counseling program. The Model

represents a culmination of the historically dynamic identity of the school counselor. The evolving identity, changing roles, increased specialization, and eventual emphasis on accountability/programs is inextricably linked to the societal and political history of our nation (ASCA, 2012; Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010). School counseling, also known as vocational guidance, reflected the zeitgeist of the Industrial Revolution. Over the years, school counseling practice incorporated educational guidance and eventually adopted a more humanistic personal/social approach (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2010). Each iteration of school counseling retained elements of the previous phases that continue to inform contemporary research and practice (Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010).

The ASCA National Model (2003a) standardized practice by acknowledging that school counseling is multifaceted and that school counselors serve students on career, academic, and personal/social levels. The Model is structured to provide comprehensive, developmental, and preventive programs. In addition to clarifying the school counselor's role, the ASCA National Model (2003) provided a framework for the following components: foundation, management, delivery, and accountability. The ASCA National Model (2003a, 2005, 2012) has undergone three revisions updating the Model to reflect societal trends. The most recent edition of the Model (2012) reinforced themes of advocacy, collaboration, leadership, and systemic change. It serves as a framework to guide professional school counseling practice consistently with rigorous and role-appropriate components. The Model is considered professional best practice in school counseling (ASCA, 2012; Bain, 2012; Dimmit, 2009; Gysbers, 2010; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Lapan, 2001; Lapan, 2012; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Sink, 2009; Sink et al., 2008). The ASCA National Model is rooted in the belief that students are better

served when receiving developmentally-appropriate and preventive services (ASCA, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Kolbert et al., 2016; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Walsh et al., 2007).

**Foundation.** The Model focuses on school counselors' beliefs and vision for students, with a specific emphasis on competencies (ASCA, 2012; Dahir, 2004). The knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of school counselors are delineated as professional competencies (ASCA, 2012). The ASCA National Model (2012) also provides program development standards addressing three domains: academic, career, and personal/social development. Comprehensive program standards are student-centered, thus addressing competencies that students should obtain. The Model represents a cognitive conversion, from what school counselors do to how students are different because of school counseling programs (ASCA, 2012).

**Management.** The ASCA National Model (2012) provides school counselors with a detailed system for program management, including competency standards and use-of-time assessments, as well as prescribed annual agreements and advisory councils. Moreover, school counselors are expected to manage programs using data, curriculum, and annual/weekly calendars (ASCA, 2012). Data are used to assess needs, make decisions, and ensure effectiveness. The management system uses assessments and tools designed to keep all stakeholders informed and engaged in comprehensive programming (ASCA, 2012).

**Delivery.** School counseling programs are delivered via direct student services and indirect student services (ASCA, 2012). Direct student services involve direct contact with students, including the delivery of developmentally appropriate classroom

lessons aimed at furthering students' competencies (ASCA, 2012). Direct services also include individual student planning or working directly with students to develop academic and career plans. Finally, school counselors deliver direct services responsively by meeting students' urgent needs through individual, small group, and crisis counseling (ASCA, 2012). According to the ASCA National Model (2012), indirect services occur "on behalf of students" and result from collaboration and consultation with other stakeholders in the education system, including parents, administrators, teachers, and community members (p. xiv).

**Accountability.** School counselors must consistently evaluate student outcomes and program effectiveness. Evaluation is one of the core components of the ASCA National Model (2012) and for achieving RAMP status. As previously mentioned, school counselors are not only asked what they do but how students are different because of their efforts. Program data are used to show an impact on student achievement, closing the achievement gap, attendance, and student behavior (ASCA, 2012). School counselors are called upon to use standards, set goals and objectives, write and execute plans, and then use data to determine effectiveness (ASCA, 2012; Kolbert et al., 2016).

### **Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program (RAMP)**

Not long after publishing the first edition of the ASCA National Model (2003), the ASCA introduced the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) to reward exemplary programs (ASCA, 2003). To become RAMP designated, school counselors engage in a detailed application process ensuring that all components of the ASCA National Model (2012) are implemented with fidelity. RAMP applications are evaluated by the ASCA using a rubric. The RAMP rubric applies rigorous standards of evaluation



to each aspect of the Model. RAMP applicants must demonstrate exemplary development and application of the following Model components: a vision statement, a mission statement, school counseling program goals, ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success, the annual administrator/counselor agreement, an advisory council, annual and weekly calendars, the School Counseling Core Curriculum Action Plan and Lesson Plan, the School Counseling Core Curriculum Results Report, small-group and individual responsive services, the Closing-the-Gap Results Report, and overall program evaluation. Each component reflects an emphasis on developing standards to inform practice and using data to drive decision-making and evaluation.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite evidence supporting the effectiveness of comprehensive counseling programs (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Burkard et al., 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Lapan, 2012; Pyne, 2011; Ward, 2009; Whiston et al., 2011; Wilkerson et al., 2013), specifically the ASCA National Model (2012), the movement toward implementing a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) has been slow (Wilkerson et al., 2013). As of March 2019, fewer than 500 schools nationwide have achieved RAMP status (ASCA, 2019). Therefore, ASCA's current campaign involves promoting the ASCA National Model (2012) as well as the attainment of RAMP status.

School counseling researchers have continuously identified the student-to-school counselor ratio (Carrell & Carrell, 2006; Cronin, 2016; Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016; Lapan, Gysbers, & Kayson, 2006; Lapan, Gysbers, et al., 2012; Lapan, Wells, Petersen & McCann, 2014; Moyer, 2011) and perceptions of other stakeholders in the school system

(Amatea & Clark, 2005; Bain, 2012; Bemak, 2000; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Borders, 2002; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Cinotti, 2014; Clark & Amatea, 2004; DeKruyf et al., 2013; Dodson, 2009; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Lieberman, 2004; Pérusse et al., 2004; Pyne, 2011) as factors impacting school counseling roles and practice. However, these factors do not exist in isolation. To what degree the various themes identified in school counseling research predict RAMP status has not been explored. Moreover, the potential interconnectedness of various micro-level (subsystem) and macro-level (suprasystem) dimensions have not yet been explicitly identified when studying comprehensive program delivery.

Employing the McMahon, Mason, Daluga-Guenther, and Ruiz (2014) Ecological School Counseling Model (ESCM; 2014) requires a shift in thinking from linear to cyclical. The ESCM suggested that the interconnectedness of various systems and the unique feedback patterns of those systems can affect programming (McMahon et al., 2014). ASCA (2012) implored school counselors to view program development systemically, thus considering each unique school culture and context when developing programs. Given the recent authorization of the ESSA (2015) and the shift to adopting a more holistic approach to assessing student needs and measuring outcomes, I examined practicing school counselors' perceptions of relevant obstacles to implementing a RAMP from an ecological-systems perspective. Considering whether macro-level and/or micro-level factors predict RAMP attainment could have significant implications for training and practice.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this secondary study is to examine to what degree RAMP status is predicted by micro-level (school) factors such as (a) student-to-school counselor ratio, (b) school counselors' perceptions of administrative support, (c) other school staff support, (d) institution type, and macro-level (cultural/environmental) factors such as (a) funding for programs, (b) community setting, (c) geographic location in the United States. In this study, I expanded upon the existing literature on the ASCA National Model (2012) and demonstrated how the McMahon et al. (2014) ESCM provides a framework for conceptualizing aspects of the ASCA National Model (2012) through the following research questions:

Research Question #1: To what degree is the Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program status (RAMP versus non-RAMP) of a school predicted by micro-level (school) factors, including student-to-school counselor ratio, school counselors' perceptions of administrative support, school counselors' perceptions of other school staff support, and institution type (public, charter, online charter, private-religious, private-non-religious)?

Research Question #2: To what degree is the Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program status (RAMP versus non-RAMP) of a school predicted by macro-level (cultural/environmental) factors, including school counselors' perceptions regarding funding for programs, community setting (urban, suburban, rural), and geographic location in the United States (Midwest, Northeast, South, West)?

Research Question #3: Is the Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program status of a school better predicted by micro-level or macro-level factors?

In summary, the purpose of this quantitative study is to explore if the following independent variables (a) community setting (urban, suburban, rural); (b) institution type (public, charter, online charter, private-religious, private-non-religious); (c) geographic location in the United States (Midwest, Northeast, South, West); (d) school counselors' perceptions regarding funding for programs; (e) student-to-school counselor ratio; (f) school counselors' perceptions of administrative support; and (g) other school staff support predict membership in one of two categories of the dependent variable (RAMP versus non-RAMP). The study is relational and designed to explore school counselor perceptions of essential challenges to attaining RAMP status through the theoretical framework of the ESCM (McMahon et al., 2014). Through homogeneous purposive sampling, approximately 31,000 email surveys were sent to members of the ASCA seeking participation from only practicing school counselors. Identifying relevant obstacles to achieving RAMP status will (a) address gaps in research, (b) expand the school counseling research base, (c) target areas for school counselor training, professional development, and supervision, and (d) provide insight regarding how to adequately support school counselors to increase ASCA National Model (2012) implementation.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

While the ASCA National Model does not describe a specific theoretical foundation, it is rooted thematically in the idea of the school counselor as a systemic change agent (ASCA, 2012; McMahon et al., 2014). In response to the atheoretical nature of the ASCA National Model, McMahon et al. (2014) posited that the ESCM provides a theoretical framework that aligns with the

core components and themes of the ASCA National Model (2012). McMahon et al. (2014) developed the ESCM using various existing ecological models, including environmental ecology (Ives & Carpenter, 2007), deep ecology (Capra, 1996), general systems theory (Bertalanffy, 1968), ecological psychology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lewin, 1951), and ecological counseling (Conye & Cook, 2004).

The ESCM operates from the notion of the school as an ecosystem (McMahon et al., 2014). Within this ecosystem are interconnected macro-level systems or suprasystems and micro-level systems or subsystems (McMahon et al., 2014). Larger systems, including school districts and communities, are examples of suprasystems (McMahon et al., 2014). According to McMahon et al. (2014), schools are composed of many subsystems, including "classrooms, grade levels, sports teams, clubs, and cliques" (p. 462). Ecological school counselors conceptualize student needs holistically within the unique context of the school/community. Healthy school systems are a result of a balance achieved through clear roles and purpose, openness to change, exposure to diversity, and the practical use of feedback to understand and respond to system imbalances (McMahon et al., 2014). Conceptualizing school counselors' perceptions of obstacles to RAMP implementation from an ecological-systems perspective can support school counselors' garnering of support from other key stakeholders (subsystems) within schools. School counselors' perceptions do not occur in a vacuum, and an ecological theorist might argue that these perceptions represent feedback loops and are inextricably linked to the larger system and various subsystems (McMahon et al., 2014).

## **ASCA National Model Themes**

While mostly atheoretical, the ASCA National Model (2012) provides a structural and thematic method of program development. This approach is tied to theories of leadership but does not explicitly connect to any one theory or approach (McMahon et al., 2014). School counseling has roots in systems, behavioral, and humanistic theories (ASCA, 2012; Campbell et al., 1971; Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010); however, the Model and much of the research in school counseling emphasizes approach and structure.

**Leadership contexts.** The ASCA National Model framework (2012) states that school counseling leadership: "supports academic achievement and student development; advances the effective delivery of the comprehensive school counseling program; promotes professional identity; overcomes challenges of role inconsistency" (p. 1). School counselors are expected to provide leadership on behalf of students and the whole system (ASCA, 2012; Bemak, 2000; Hatch, 2008). ASCA's four leadership contexts are based on Bolman and Deal's (2008) work and promote structural, human resource, political, and symbolic leadership contexts along with specific leadership activities as defined by Dollarhide (2003). School counselors develop and communicate their beliefs, act as critical stakeholders in the education system and community, and model effective leadership using the framework (ASCA, 2012; Dollarhide, 2003). Trends in research and school counseling literature reinforce the importance of leadership and advocacy skills in the profession (Bemak, 2000; Bemak & Chung, 2008; Burkard et al., 2012; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Sink, 2009). The ASCA National Model (2012) is written with the overarching themes of leadership and advocacy, urging professional school counselors to be the harbingers of change and the staunch advocates of programming that endeavors to

meet the needs of all students (Bemak, 2000; Cinotti, 2014; Dollarhide, 2003; Young, Dollarhide, & Baughman, 2015).

**Advocacy competencies.** The ASCA National Model (2012) provides school counselors with clear advocacy competencies that connect to the ASCA National Model Advocacy Components. Through direct and indirect services, school counselors act with and on behalf of students (ASCA, 2012). They are expected to engage in student empowerment activities, student advocacy activities, school/community collaboration, and systems advocacy (ASCA, 2012; Kolbert et al., 2016). The role of the school counselor is multifaceted. The Model details both micro and macro-level advocacy competencies along with corresponding components (ASCA, 2012). School counselors act with and on behalf of students through curriculum, programming, collaboration, and consultation, in both the school and the community (ASCA, 2012). The advocacy competencies reflect the data-driven nature of the framework. School counselors use data to design and execute programs tailored to meet the needs of students in each unique community context (ASCA, 2012).

**Collaborative components.** The ASCA National Model (2012) includes components that foster collaborative relationships between the school counselor and other stakeholders in education (ASCA, 2012). School counselors are called upon to join committees, act as leaders in the school system, and partner with the community and parents. Based on the work of Lawson (2003), the ASCA Model (2012) recommended that school counselors engage in the following types of collaboration: "interprofessional, youth-centered, parent-centered, family-centered, intra-organizational, inter-organizational, and community" (p. 7).

**Systemic change agents.** Leadership, advocacy, and collaboration are the vehicles for systemic change in the ASCA National Model (2012). School counselors must strive to close the achievement gap and ensure equitable access to education for all students (ASCA, 2012). The ASCA National Model (2012) implores school counselors to embrace the themes and to use data to promote outcomes reflective of their leadership, advocacy, and collaboration. As systemic change agents, school counselors deliver the ASCA National Model (2012), which addressed an imperative to use data to make decisions.

### **Summary of Methodology**

In the present study, I analyzed archival data regarding school counselors' perceptions of relevant obstacles to implementing a Recognized ASCA Model Program. For the original relational/exploratory quantitative study using these archival data, the researchers used homogeneous purposive sampling to survey practicing school counselors. The School Counselor Perception Survey was specifically designed for that study. After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, the research team recruited participants using the ASCA Membership Directory and ASCA SCENE webpage.

Employing an ecological-systems approach, I proposed a systemic framework for conceptualizing the obstacles to RAMP implementation. Utilizing logistic and hierarchical logistic regression analyses, I explored the degree to which the RAMP status of a school (binary dependent variable) is predicted by micro-level (school) and macro-level (cultural/environmental) factors (independent variables). I also examined which



model (micro-level variables or macro-level variables) were better predictors of RAMP attainment.

As one of the primary research team members, I already had access to the data. In the secondary study, I explored different research questions. A request to use the data was submitted to the IRB. Once IRB approval was received, I screened the data for outliers and multicollinearity. While logistic regression does not require adherence to any assumptions regarding distribution, the results are impacted by high correlations among predictor variables; therefore, data were screened for multicollinearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Data were screened for outliers, and extreme cases were eliminated.

### **Limitations**

Several potential limitations are present in this study. The first limitation involved instrumentation. While the School Counselors' Perception Questionnaire was both informed by relevant literature and evaluated by the research team which included two former practicing school counselors, it did not undergo rigorous development (e.g., obtaining focus group input, piloting the instrument, examining reliability). Conducting an exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis will help the research team to identify overlapping and essential variables, thus reducing the number of items needed to measure important constructs. Moreover, the study is based on self-report data. King and Bruner (2000) stated that social desirability bias is, “the pervasive tendency of individuals to present themselves in the most favorable manner relative to prevailing social norms and mores” (p. 80). To promote valid responses, participants were

informed that participation was anonymous, and that all information was securely stored. (Appendix C). Furthermore, the questionnaire did not address socially sensitive issues.

Another potential limitation is the sample population. While the sample included exclusively practicing school counselors, the questionnaire was sent only to current ASCA members. Surveying only ASCA members could fail to capture the perspectives of practicing school counselors who are not ASCA members. According to the Bureau of Labor statistics (2017), there are 133,780 elementary and secondary school counselors employed in the US. The ASCA (2018) reported a membership of approximately 33,000 school counselors, which represents 25% of school counselors nationally. Underlying factors that influence school counselors' decisions to join the ASCA could have an unforeseen impact on their perceptions. For example, is the decision to join ASCA a matter of school funding or school counselor salary? The decision to join ASCA could also potentially be related to master's level training, exposure to professional identity and knowledge of the ASCA National Model. These potential and unexamined explanations could impact the results.

In addition to sampling limitations, the correlational nature of the study presents another limitation. As Lapan (2012) suggested, the existing school counseling research consists primarily of correlational studies. I acknowledge the limitations of this correlational study. The research, by design, is exploratory and constructed to identify prevalent themes and variables for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I discussed scholarly literature relevant to comprehensive school counseling programs and an ecological-systems approach to school counseling. As there is no other research specifically addressing school counselors' perceptions of obstacles to implementing a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP), I focused on the evolution of professional identity, school counselor role, programming, and accountability in school counseling as related to the development of comprehensive programming and utilization of the ASCA National Model (2003, 2005, 2012). This chapter is composed of six sections. In the first section, I described the topic and purpose of the research. Next, I detailed the methods used to acquire the literature. In this section, I addressed trends in school counseling publications and the documented need for more rigorous research. In section three, I reiterated the research problem and significance. In section four, I described and critiqued the scholarly literature. This section broadly summarized resources that address (a) the evolution of school counseling, including its multifaceted history and ongoing issues with role ambiguity; (b) the Ecological School Counseling Model (2014) and the ASCA Model (2012); (c) the ASCA Model, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction; (d) the ASCA Model and student outcomes; (e) student access to school counselors; (f) evaluation practices; and (g) administrative and other stakeholder barriers to best practice. In this review, I described the impact of the ASCA National Model (2012) on professional identity, job satisfaction, school counselor self-efficacy, and student outcomes and explored professional barriers to best practice. I concluded the

literature review by summarizing a recent study conducted by Fye and colleagues (2018) which examined barriers to ASCA National Model (2012) implementation.

The *ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (2003, 2005, 2012) is considered professional best practice. Published in 2003 to unify the school counseling profession by providing clear and descriptive program domains including foundation, management, delivery, and accountability, the Model remains the most widely-recognized comprehensive model in school counseling. The most recent edition of the ASCA National Model (2012) elaborated on themes of advocacy, collaboration, leadership, and systemic change. The Model serves as a framework to consistently guide professional school counseling practice with role-appropriate, student-centered programming (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2010; Kolbert et al., 2016).

According to Lapan (2012), "when highly-trained, professional school counselors deliver ASCA National Model comprehensive school counseling program services, students receive measurable benefits" (p. 88). Burkard et al. (2012) found that students with access to school counseling programs had increased academic success and positive behavior. In other studies, researchers observed connections between comprehensive programs and positive outcomes for students regarding career/college readiness (Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2009; Lapan, Whitcomb, & Aleman, 2012), positive behavioral outcomes (Whiston et al., 2011), and academic development (Carey & Dimmitt, 2012; Dimmitt & Wilkerson, 2012). Numerous policy and statewide studies validated the efficacy of comprehensive programs on student achievement, improved attendance, and a reduction in disciplinary problems (Civic Enterprises, 2011).

The Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) is considered the gold standard in comprehensive program delivery (ASCA, 2012). Not long after publishing the first edition of The ASCA National Model (2003), the ASCA initiated the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) designation to recognize schools that were exemplifying fidelity to the Model. The ASCA National Model (2012) stated that achieving the RAMP designation:

gives confidence that your program aligns with a nationally-accepted and recognized model, helps you evaluate your program and identify areas for improvement, increases your skills and knowledge of school counseling, enhances your program's efforts toward academic achievement and student success, and identifies your school as an exemplary educational environment (p. 147).

## **Methods**

The literature that informed this review was obtained using Academic Search Elite, Pro Quest, Google Scholar, and various seminal books on school counseling. Critical terms including comprehensive school counseling programs, Recognized ASCA Model Program, ASCA National Model, school counselor leadership, education reform, and school counselor professional identity were used to search for journal articles. The ASCA National Model (2012) and Gyber's (2010) book entitled *Remembering the Past, Shaping the Future: A history of school counseling* also served to highlight important research in the field. Kolbert et al.'s (2016) textbook *Introduction to Professional School Counseling: advocacy, leadership, and intervention* served as a comprehensive resource. All scholarly articles cited derived from peer-reviewed journals. Many of the publications cited were published within the past 10 years. However, since

comprehensive school counseling programs gained popularity in the 1980s, some of the articles cited are more than 30 years old (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). When necessary, online articles were cited from resources including the American Counselor Association (ACA) Vistas publication.

It is important to note that many of the articles in this literature review are from *Professional School Counseling* journal. With such a discipline-specific topic, it was a challenge to find relevant articles from other scholarly journals. After conducting an analysis of trends in school counseling journals over the past 50 years, Bauman et al. (2002) reported that theoretical publications were not historically well-represented in the school counseling field. As of the early 2000's theoretical publications only accounted for 6.6 percent of published articles, while practical and professional issue publications dominated the field (Bauman et al., 2002). Erford, Giguere, Glenn, and Ciarlone (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of patterns in *Professional School Counseling* journal articles. Results indicated an increase in publications related to career and academic planning, leadership, and accountability over the past 15 years. The authors also noted an increase in research article publications in recent years. Accessing articles related to the ASCA National Model (2003, 2005, 2012) including a theoretical framework proved to be a challenge. Furthermore, Sabella (2006), when reviewing the history and agenda of school counseling research stated that more rigorous research is needed in the field. Lapan (2012), when summarizing findings on comprehensive school counseling programs from six different states, pointed out that many of the existing studies examining comprehensive programs are mainly correlational and reported statistics could be related to unmeasured factors.

## **Research problem and significance**

Despite research connecting comprehensive programs to job satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Pyne, 2011, Moyer, 2011), clarity in professional identity (Brott & Myers, 1999; Cinotti, 2014; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Walsh et al., 2007) and positive student outcomes (Burkard et al., 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Lapan, 2012; Lapan et al., 2009; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Sink et al., 2008; Ward, 2009; Whiston et al, 2011; Wilkerson et al., 2013), program implementation gaps remain (Lapan, 2012; Lapan, et al., 2009; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Wilkerson et al., 2013). As early as 2003, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that 50% of public high schools had no written standards for their school counseling program. Oberman and Studer (2008) found that 51% of school counselors had not yet delivered comprehensive programs. As recently as 2017, the ASCA acknowledged the need for additional research on Recognized ASCA Model Programs by offering several competitive research grants noting a preference for studies measuring student outcomes between RAMP and non-RAMP schools (ASCA, 2017). With increasing emphasis on achieving the RAMP designation (ASCA, 2017; Wilkerson et al., 2013) and lingering concerns over implementation gaps (Cinotti, 2014; Lapan, 2012; Lapan et al., 2009), exploring what school counselors perceive as obstacles to RAMP may serve to illuminate practical implications for systems-level support. In the current study, I examined to what extent micro-level (school) and macro-level (cultural/ecological) variables accurately predicted RAMP status.

Researchers in school counseling identified the importance of establishing a clear professional identity (Bain, 2012; Brott & Myers, 1999; Cinotti, 2014; DeKruyf et al., 2013; Gysbers, 2010) through the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs including the ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2010). Over the past two decades, the professional focus has explicitly shifted to embracing the ASCA National Model and RAMP designation as exemplifying best practice (ASCA, 2012). With a unifying structural model in place, school counseling leaders are calling for rigorous, longitudinal studies demonstrating how students benefit from the ASCA National Model and RAMP attainment (ASCA, 2017; Carey & Dimmit, 2012; Lapan, 2012; Sabella, 2006; Wilkerson et al., 2013). Wilkerson et al. (2013) suggested that the RAMP application process is time-consuming and that efforts to promote RAMP attainment should focus on demonstrating to school counselors how RAMPs benefit students. While there is merit in showing the effectiveness of obtaining the RAMP designation, there is no existing study examining relevant ecological obstacles to achieving RAMP status.

There is literature suggesting that time spent on non-counselor responsibilities (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waak, 2011; Culbreth et al., 2005; Fye et al., 2017; Moyer, 2011, Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008) and a lack of administrative support and other stakeholder support (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dahir et al., 2010; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Fye et al., 2017; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Pérusse et al., 2004; Reiner et al., 2009) affects school counselors' engagement in activities consistent with best practice (e.g., the ASCA Model), yet there is no other research, to date, that explicitly examined the relevancy of obstacles to RAMP attainment. Exploring school counselors' perceptions of barriers to



RAMP implementation via an ecological-systems framework offers a promising pathway for future research, training, and professional development. Understanding potential predictors of RAMP attainment could also provide counselor associations with a structure for coordinating advocacy efforts.

### **History of School Counseling**

Bain (2012) stated that "the role of today's school counselor has become a moving target at best" (p. 2). To fully understand the significance of the ASCA National Model (2012), it is necessary to examine the dynamic history of the profession. School counseling has a long history of adapting to ever-changing political, societal, and educational environments (ASCA, 2012; Bain, 2012; Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010; Kolbert et al., 2016; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Lapan, 2012; Paisley & Borders, 1995). For decades, the broader societal context has shaped school counseling practice (Bain, 2012; Borders, 2002; Cinotti, 2014; DeKruyf et al., 2013; Gysbers, 2010; Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Kolbert et al., 2016; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Paisley & Borders, 1995). The fluidity of the school counseling role has protected the profession, forced program evaluation (Sink, 2009), and resulted in ongoing discussions about role ambiguity and training needs (Bain, 2012; Cervani & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Cinotti, 2014; Gibson, Dooley, Moss, & Vacchio, 2012). In that vein, school counseling services have changed dramatically over the past 100 plus years (Bain, 2012; Borders, 2002; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Cinotti, 2014; DeKruyf et al., 2013; Gysbers, 2010; Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Kolbert et al., 2016; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Lapan, 2012).

School counseling is rooted in vocational guidance, which began during the Industrial Revolution to support students during this significant shift in the American

economy and culture (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2010; Paisley & Borders, 1995). The professional school counselor, then known as "vocational counselor," was a player in what leading educational reformers, DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2008) described as public education's "sort and select" culture. Tracking and guiding students according to perceived strengths, abilities, and deficits and assisting in vocational decision-making drove education (DuFour et al., 2008) and, thus, counseling practice (ASCA, 2012; Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Paisley & Borders, 1995). In fact, vocational guidance counselors were often teachers or administrators with no specialized training in counseling (Cinotti, 2014; Gysbers, 2010). The lack of specialized training or clear requirements for guidance counselors often resulted in the assignment of administrative duties unrelated to the vocational and guidance roles (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2010; Kolbert et al., 2016).

Vocational guidance counselors did not necessarily belong to any department in public education (ASCA, 2012). Therefore, the services provided varied from school to school (ASCA, 2012; Cinotti, 2014). In the 1930s, counseling fell under the umbrella of pupil personnel services; this inspired the move toward the professionalization and specialization of guidance counseling. Practice was informed by the counselor's role in the overall structure of pupil services (ASCA, 2012). Influenced by the popularity of client-centered counseling and by E.G. Williamson's (1939) *How to counsel students: A manual of techniques for clinical counselors*, "guidance counselors" became more clinical (ASCA, 2012; DeKruyf et al., 2013; Gysbers, 2010). However, inconsistency in roles and practices remained (Bain, 2012; Cinotti, 2014). As early as 1946, federal legislation would have an impact on school counseling. The Vocational

Education Act of 1946 offered financial support for guidance and counseling (Gysbers, 2010). The goal of the legislation was aimed at clarifying and strengthening counseling role and practice. The 1950s was another critical period in school counseling history as the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) was founded in 1952. Counselors now had a professional organization to advocate for role clarity and to lobby for some consistency in approach. The National Education Defense Act of 1958 provided federal funding for counselor education. The social climate of the 1960s and 1970s sparked discussion about balancing counseling interventions by adopting a more psychological or humanistic emphasis (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2010; Kolbert et al., 2016). School counseling shifted toward a comprehensive approach, adding personal and educational guidance to the mix. Responding to the 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, and the accountability movement in education, the 1980s saw the emergence of comprehensive programming (ASCA, 2012; Gysbers, 2010; Paisley & Borders, 1995). In 1988, Gysbers and Henderson published *Developing and Managing your School Guidance Program*. This decade marked the beginning of an ongoing emphasis on comprehensive school counseling programs. Not long after the enactment of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 and in response to a need for consistent identity and roles/responsibilities, The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2003) published the first edition of *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*. The Model is continuously updated with position statements that reflect the current social and educational landscapes (ASCA, 2003, 2005, 2012).

The ASCA National Model (2003, 2005, 2012) is a compilation of decades of work in the field. While the Model acknowledged the influence of scholarly work, the

framework is mostly focused on method and structure. According to McMahon et al. (2014), "the ASCA National Model is largely an atheoretical structural model" (p. 464). The Model provided practitioners with a framework and the necessary tools to deliver comprehensive programming but does not provide a clear conceptual framework.

### **The Ecological School Counseling Model**

McMahon et al. (2014) constructed a theoretical framework that aligns with the ASCA National Model (2012) and offers a conceptual framework for researchers and practitioners. The Ecological School Counseling Model (ESCM; 2014) is grounded in the assumption that schools are part of a broader ecosystem. It challenges the ways in which school counseling programs engage in the conceptualization of student issues and the evaluation of program outcomes. McMahon et al. (2014) postulated that embracing an ecological approach will result in a more thorough and systemic approach that does not rely solely on traditional interpretations of evaluation data. The ESCM promotes a cyclical process rather than the conventional linear process associated with the accountability movement. The next core assumption of the McMahon et al. (2014) ESCM is that "healthy, well-functioning school systems are dynamic, balanced, and flexible" (p. 462). School systems function best when there is a distinction between school groups (e.g., teachers and students) but also enough flexibility to develop a connection between those groups. McMahon et al. (2014) described the importance of "semipermeable boundaries" between the various groups within the system (p. 462). The dynamic and balanced system results from clear expectations, values, and goals. Each member of the school system experiences a sense of connection and contributes to the larger system's functioning. The school system is balanced and ready to face change

because of the established boundaries. In addition to being flexible and dynamic, a well-functioning school is diverse (McMahon et al., 2014). The ESCM (2014) drew from the work of Crosnoe, Johnson, and Elder (2004), which stated that students develop bonds with teachers who are ethnically and racially similar. In the school system, diversity is also essential to broaden perspectives and experiences. A diverse school system is more representative of the broader societal context (McMahon et al., 2014).

The ESCM is grounded in the assumption that schools, like any ecosystem, use feedback to identify and respond to potential imbalances in the system (McMahon et al., 2014). McMahon et al. (2014) used the term *feedback loops* to describe information obtained from various subsystems. If the system becomes unbalanced, new behavioral patterns may emerge. In the school, feedback loops can result from intentional efforts like collecting data to inform programming or planning. Feedback loops can also occur naturally. The authors stated that an example of a natural disruption might be a change in school leadership practices that impact the interconnected subsystems (McMahon et al., 2014). Because each of the suprasystems and subsystems is interrelated, many possible variables can influence the school system (McMahon et al., 2014). Understanding the function of feedback enables school counselors to view student concerns more holistically and within the unique ecological context (McMahon et al., 2014). Feedback loops result in meaning-making within what the theorists described as the *school-as-system* (McMahon et al., 2014). Another underlying assumption of the model is that humans strive to make meaning from experiences (McMahon et al., 2014). What it means to be a member of a school-as-system is constructed and understood within the interrelated subsystems and suprasystems (McMahon et al., 2014). The

meaning-making is built within the specific context of a particular school and does not necessarily represent broader assumptions about schools (McMahon et al., 2014). According to the model, meaning-making is critical because specific school systems define identity and purpose within their unique systems. Furthermore, meaning-making results from the feedback loops within the system. Feedback (both informal and formal) is interpreted through the lens of that school at that particular time (McMahon et al., 2014). How school counselors use data to inform decision-making should be considered in the wider context of that ecosystem (McMahon et al., 2014).

Finally, the authors suggested that healthy schools, like ecosystems, are sustainable (McMahon et al., 2014). Each part of the system contributes to creating a sustainable environment for future generations. A well-functioning and healthy school system exhibits a collaborative relationship with the larger community (suprasystem). Students will graduate and fill roles that support and sustain the larger community system. This sustainability represents a healthy and functioning school system that produces students who are equipped to use their skills and abilities in a variety of capacities within the larger community system (McMahon et al., 2014).

### **The ESCM and the ASCA National Model**

Viewing the ASCA National Model (2012) components through an ecological lens provides school counselors with a theoretical framework for understanding and addressing systemic behavior patterns within the system, thus supporting a balanced and healthy system (McMahon et al., 2014). As the school counseling field continues to evolve in response to societal and political changes, new conceptualizations of professional identity emerge. McMahon et al. (2014) cited The Education Trust's

(2009b) definition of school counseling as a "profession that focuses on the relations and interactions between students and their school environment to reduce the effects of environmental and institutional barriers that impede student academic success" (p. 460).

McMahon and colleagues (2014) posited that conceptualizing the ASCA National Model (2012) through an ecological framework promotes healthy school systems that are ever-evolving to meet the needs of students. Ecological theory can be integrated into the ASCA National Model's (2012) structural components. The ASCA National Model (2012) noted that schools should be viewed as a system much like the family system. School counselors promote systemic change through leadership and advocacy practices, which are carefully structured to help students overcome barriers to learning (ASCA, 2012). The ASCA National Model (2012) introduction explicitly stated that while it serves to standardize school counseling practice, the Model also offers flexibility. School counselors are encouraged to tailor programming to meet the individual needs of students.

McMahon et al. (2014) recommended alignment of the ESCM and the ASCA National Model (2012) at the following ecological levels: "individual, interpersonal/group, institutional, and community" (p. 464). The ecological levels correspond to the ASCA National Model (2012) across all four components: foundation, management, delivery, and accountability (McMahon et al., 2014). School counselors use leadership, advocacy, and collaboration to promote positive outcomes for students through individual, group, classroom, school-wide, and community interventions (ASCA, 2012; Bemak, 2000; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007).

The ESCM offers a framework which demonstrates how school counseling assessment and intervention strategies can be understood on an ecological level. For example, the institutional ecological level is addressed through vision statements, mission statements, and program goals written to reflect each school's unique system (McMahon et al., 2014). Management components are reflecting in the institutional ecological level via school improvement planning, program evaluation, and the use of process data (McMahon et al., 2014). The ASCA's delivery components occur at the individual and interpersonal ecological levels and can include interventions such as individual counseling, student planning, responsive services, and student advocacy (McMahon et al., 2014). According to the ESCM, the accountability component of the ASCA National Model (2012) can be conceptualized at all four ecological levels (e.g., individual, interpersonal/group, institutional, and community). The authors suggested that using feedback loops through both intentional data collection and spontaneous information gathering enables school counselors to work collaboratively with all stakeholders. School counselors can use multilevel feedback to advocate for comprehensive programming to address the needs of the various subsystems within the larger school system (ASCA, 2012).

While the ESCM (2014), provides a conceptual framework for program development and evaluation, it is a relatively new model citing no empirical research, to date, which has examined core principles. Further examination of the fundamental constructs of the model could have significant implications for counselor educators and practicing school counselors alike. The model supports overarching themes in school counseling literature but has not been widely adopted in school counseling-specific



literature or empirical research. The theory was originally published in the *Journal of Counseling & Development*, which offers a balance to this literature review as most of the publications cited are from the *Professional School Counseling* journal. When searching for resources that cited McMahon et al.'s (2014) theory, one notable theme emerged. The ESCM (2014) has appeared conceptually in recent literature as researchers are exploring themes of multicultural counseling, social justice, and advocacy. For example, the *Professional School Counseling* journal recently published an article applying the ESCM as a framework for supporting students in gentrified neighborhoods (Bell & Van Velsor, 2017). However, the ecological theory is incorporated in a conceptual context (Bell & Van Velsor, 2017).

#### **ASCA National Model, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction**

Researchers evaluating school counselor self-efficacy and program delivery found relationships between use of data, program delivery, and perceived self-efficacy (Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Ernst et al., 2017; Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2009; Mullen & Lambie, 2016; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Also, school counselors who implement aspects of the ASCA National Model reported higher levels of job satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Pyne, 2011) and lower levels of burnout (Moyer, 2011). Researchers examining school counselors' self-efficacy found that higher self-efficacy contributed to more frequent programmatic delivery (Mullen & Lambie, 2016), higher awareness of equity and closing the achievement gap data (Bodenhorn et al., 2010), and engagement in work that is related to best practice (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Walsh et al., 2007). Young

and Kaffenberger (2011) found that achieving RAMP status had a positive impact on data-driven practices.

Bodenhorn et al. (2010) defined self-efficacy based on Bandura's (1986) definition and described it as "beliefs about one's own ability to successfully perform a given behavior" (p. 167). Bandura (1986) stated that self-efficacy includes "a generative capability in which component cognitive, social, and behavioral skills must be organized into integrated courses of action to serve innumerable purposes" (p. 122). Bodenhorn et al. (2010) studied the relationship between school counselor program choice and self-efficacy as related to equity and closing the achievement gap. The researchers used Bodenhorn and Skaggs's (2005) School Counselor Self-Efficacy Scale (SCSE) to measure school counselors' self-efficacy in task performance. Also, the researchers examined program approach if there was any (e.g., the ASCA National Model, ASCA standards, comprehensive guidance and counseling (CGC), developmental counseling, Education Trust's Transforming School Counseling Initiative, statewide developed standards, or another approach as specified by the respondent). School counselors had the option to report the use of more than one approach or no approach. Lastly, the investigators explored participants' awareness of achievement gap data and perceptions of closing the achievement gap in their school. The results of this study indicated that school counselors with higher levels of self-efficacy were more likely to demonstrate an awareness of achievement gap data and equity. School counselor reports of narrowing the achievement gap and knowledge of data regarding the achievement gap did not vary significantly by program, nor did they favor the ASCA National Model as hypothesized by the researchers (Bodenhorn et al., 2010). Overall, Bodenhorn et al. (2010) found that

school counselors who did not identify with a programmatic approach had lower self-efficacy scores and were least likely to respond to questions about the achievement gap or to report closing the achievement gap. The results supported the notion that engaging in accountability practices enhances counselor self-efficacy.

In a similar vein, Mullen and Lambie (2016) examined school counselors' perceptions of self-efficacy and frequency of programmatic delivery. For this study, the authors surveyed school counselors using the School Counselor Efficacy Scale (SCSE) and the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS). The researchers used a structural equation model to determine the extent to which practicing school counselors' self-efficacy contributed to the frequency of program service delivery activities (p. 308). The structural model was designed using a review of school counseling literature. The authors found that school counselors who reported higher levels of self-efficacy also indicated higher frequency of programmatic delivery (Mullen & Lambie, 2016).

Studies on school counselors' job satisfaction found connections between job satisfaction and comprehensive program delivery. Baggerly and Osborn (2006) found that school counselors who more frequently implemented the ASCA National Model job responsibilities were more likely to be satisfied and committed to their career than those who performed those duties less regularly. Pyne (2011) examined the level of school counselor job satisfaction and implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs. Pyne (2011) used the Job in General (JIG) scale to measure job satisfaction and the Comprehensive School Counseling Implementation Measure (CSCIM) to measure the level of comprehensive school counseling program implementation. The CSCIM was designed by Pyne (2011) based on components of the ASCA National

Model. While the study sample was limited to secondary schools in Michigan, the results indicated that a moderate-to-strong relationship existed between the variables in question. Pyne (2011) noted that administrative support is closely connected to school counselor job satisfaction. The investigator also found that school counselors who implemented a comprehensive program had higher levels of job satisfaction.

Young and Kaffenberger (2011) examined the beliefs and practices of school counselors who achieved RAMP designation. The results suggested that RAMP school counselors are more likely to use data, understand data methods, and believe in the importance of using data (Young & Kaffenberger, 2011). School counselors who used data to achieve essential outcomes, including closing the achievement gap and ensuring equitable access to education, reported higher levels of job satisfaction and feelings of self-efficacy (Mullen & Lambie, 2016; Young & Kaffenberger, 2011). In conclusion, researchers have found relationships between comprehensive school counseling programming implementation and professional school counselors' perceptions of higher levels of self-efficacy, increased job satisfaction, and positive beliefs about data-driven decision-making.

### **ASCA National Model and student outcomes**

As the accountability movement in education continues to evolve, so does the nature of accountability in school counseling (Gysbers, 2010). Accountability is not necessarily a new concept in the field (Gysbers, 2010; Sink, 2009); however, the methods for measuring effectiveness have progressed with the educational reform movement of the last few decades. Kolbert et al. (2016) pointed to the likelihood that stakeholders will evaluate the effectiveness of a school counseling program based on outcome data. The

call for results data is documented in school counseling literature regarding the efficacy of the ASCA National Model (2012) and RAMP. Young and Kaffenberger (2011) surveyed school counselors who achieved RAMP status and found that RAMP school counselors understood the importance of data. The researchers also found that those counselors continued to use data even after achieving RAMP.

The ASCA National Model (2003a) offered a unifying structure by clarifying the role, mission, delivery, and evaluation of school counseling programs. The comprehensive, developmental model is recognized as the premier school counseling program; therefore, school counseling research has evolved in recent years from examining comprehensive programs, in general, to specifically exploring ASCA National Model outcomes. Implementing the ASCA National Model (2012) is linked to the use of data and positive student outcomes. Numerous vital studies have evaluated the impact of comprehensive programs on student outcomes. Lapan (2012) reviewed six studies that explored the effect of the ASCA National Model on student outcomes. According to Lapan (2012), "When highly trained, professional school counselors deliver ASCA National Model comprehensive school counseling program services, students receive measurable benefits" (p. 88). Lapan (2012) reported that existing research on comprehensive programs shared two consistent but distinct findings. The body of research suggested that dosage affects success. In other words, the more fully implemented the comprehensive program, the greater the measured benefit to students (Lapan, 2012; Lapan et al., 2006). Studies on Model implementation also suggested that implementation gaps exist (Burkard et al., 2012; Fye et al., 2017; Lapan, 2012; Lapan et al., 2009; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Wilkerson et al., 2013).

Lapan (2012) referenced the Public Agenda (2010) study, *Can I get a little advice here?*, which examined college completion by surveying young Americans regarding the related services that they received from high school counselors. Lapan (2012) stated that researchers found that approximately half of the sample indicated that the school counselor treated them as "just another face in the crowd" (p. 85). Lapan (2012) reported that while the study reflected poorly on school counselors, the researchers presented other significant implications. Lapan (2012) stated that 47% of students who reported receiving personalized counseling services were more likely to attend college, receive financial aid or scholarships, exhibit satisfaction in choice of college, and anticipate job opportunities post-graduation (p. 85). Lapan (2012) indicated that the results should come as no surprise; the past two decades of research suggested that comprehensive program implementation gaps remain. Students are not receiving equitable access to comprehensive school counseling programs (Burkard et al., 2012; Lapan, 2012; Lapan et al., 2009; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Wilkerson et al., 2013).

More recently, Wilkerson et al. (2013) addressed the need for ongoing research examining how school counseling affects student outcomes. Wilkerson and colleagues (2013) acknowledged that use of outcome data is a critical step in promoting the attainment of RAMP status. More than a decade after the inception of the ASCA National Model (2003a), research specifically targeting the impact of RAMP status on counselor perceptions (Young & Kaffenberger, 2010) and student outcomes is burgeoning (Ward, 2009; Wilkerson et al., 2013). In this section, I synthesized the overarching themes and findings from several studies examining the impact of comprehensive programs on student outcomes. Beginning in 2003 with the Sink and

Stroh study and concluding with the 2013, Wilkerson et al. study, I highlighted an evolution in school counseling research from examining general comprehensive program models, to an increased emphasis on the ASCA National Model (2003a), to a recent focus on RAMP programs.

As early as 2003 in Washington state, Sink and Stroh studied the impact of comprehensive program delivery on student outcomes and found that achievement test scores at the elementary level improved over time with comprehensive program implementation. Studying a comparable sample of students enrolled in schools with comprehensive programs with students enrolled in schools without comprehensive programs, the researchers found that, over time, the achievement gap closed (irrespective of socioeconomic status). Sink and Stroh (2003) reported that the study contributed to the existing literature by providing causal comparative evidence linking comprehensive school counseling programs to student achievement. Similar to the (2003) study, Sink et al. (2008) examined comprehensive program implementation and student achievement at the middle school level in Washington State. The results indicated that the subgroup of highly implementing schools performed better than non-implementing schools on various achievement measures.

Burkard et al. (2012) found, when studying comprehensive programs in Wisconsin schools, that school counseling programs implemented with fidelity resulted in an increase in academic success and a decrease in suspension and truancy rates. While significant relationships between comprehensive programs and student outcomes were found in this study, the researchers cited challenges to data collection in response to statewide changes in procedures for data distribution (Burkard et al., 2012). The

researchers intended to use raw student achievement data but had to access the data from a statewide website and only had access to percentages of students passing standardized tests. Other studies found similar connections between comprehensive programs and positive outcomes for students regarding career/college readiness (Lapan, Whitcomb, et al., 2012), connectedness to school (Lapan et al., 2014), and academic development (Bryan et al., 2009; Carey & Dimmitt, 2012; Cronin, 2016; Dimmitt & Wilkerson, 2012).

Seven years after completing a series of statewide commissioned studies evaluating Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP) in Utah, Nelson, Fox, Haslam, and Gardner (2007) examined the impact of CSCPs and found that students with access received more attention with course selection and took higher-level English, science, math, and technology courses (as cited in Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012). The (2007) study also found that higher implementation of CSCPs was connected to higher academic achievement and decisions regarding education and career planning as compared to schools indicating lower-level CSCP utilization. In addition to using outcome data, the researchers also surveyed counselors, administrators, teachers, students, and parents (as cited in Whiston et al., 2011). Findings suggested high levels of satisfaction with school counseling interventions across participant groups (as cited in Whiston et al., 2011).

Whiston, et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of school counseling efforts. The researchers explored the effects of school counseling interventions on student outcomes. Results suggested highest effect sizes for guidance curriculum activities and responsive services. The researchers found that school counseling interventions were most effective for student behavioral outcomes such as increasing problem-solving and



decreasing discipline incidents. The authors recommended further rigorous research on comprehensive programming.

Collaborating with the Center for School Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation (CSCORE), Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Stevenson (2012) conducted a statewide evaluation examining the ASCA National Model implementation in Utah high schools. The authors used outcome data directly from the Utah State Department of Education and surveyed school counselors using the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS). The researchers used data based on 17 school-level measures including "suspension rate, discipline incidence rate, attendance rate, graduation/dropout rate, average ACT score, percentage of students taking the ACT, percentage of students scoring proficient in math on state standardized test, and percentage of students taking Advanced Placement courses" (p. 94). Using a hierarchical linear regression analysis to determine the impact of the school counseling program on the 17 school-level measures, the authors concluded that, after controlling for demographic differences, program delivery that was consistent with the ASCA National Model was related to higher average ACT scores and a higher number of students taking the ACT. Similar to Sink and Stroh's (2003) findings, Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Stevenson (2012) found comprehensive programs delivered for a greater length of time showed increased student attendance and lower suspension rates (p. 97). In contrast to the Washington State studies, the authors pointed out that length of program implementation was not related to student achievement. The authors also pointed out that the Utah study was conducted only at the high school level. The authors noted the use of self-report data and correlational design as primary limitations.

Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Hoffman (2012) conducted a statewide evaluation, in collaboration with the CSCORE, the Nebraska Department of Education, and the Nebraska School Counselor Association. The authors examined the relationship between aspects of the ASCA National Model and relevant student educational outcomes. Similar to the Utah statewide studies, the results of this study found that “ the degree to which a program evidenced school counselors’ ability to deliver a comprehensive set of services focused on student development was found to be related to a decrease in suspension rate, decreased discipline rate, increased attendance rate, and increased percentage of students proficient in math and reading on the state standardized test” (p. 103). However, the authors reported that there were no significant relationships between student educational outcomes and program orientation or data use. The authors indicated that the results are consistent with other statewide studies but distinct in highlighting varying program characteristics. Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Hoffman (2012) stated that, “different aspects of program organization may be more salient than other aspects” (p. 105). This study supported a growing body of evidence demonstrating the efficacy of ASCA National Model implementation as well as the need for researchers to design rigorous studies aimed at informing educational policy.

Dimmit and Wilkerson (2012) studied comprehensive program delivery in Rhode Island schools. When employing a correlational research design, the investigators found a relationship between school counselors' use of data and a decrease in student suspensions. The results added to the existing correlational research on comprehensive counseling program delivery and positive educational outcomes. The researchers also highlighted program inequities based on socioeconomic status, with high-poverty schools

less likely to receive comprehensive school counseling programming. Given the ethical obligation for school counselors to provide students with equitable access to educational resources (ASCA, 2016), this finding underscores the need for additional research on obstacles to program delivery.

### **Student access to school counselors**

Moyer (2011) studied the contribution of non-guidance activities, supervision, and student-to-school counselor ratio to school counselor burnout. The author stated that, despite limited research examining the effect of student-to-school counselor ratio, there is “some evidence that high ratios negatively affect school counselor performance” (p. 6). Moyer (2011) referenced two earlier studies evidencing high caseloads as barriers to meeting student needs and contributing to reported increases in school counselors’ feelings of being overwhelmed, ineffective, and unable to engage in professional development (Downs et al., 2002; McCarthy et al., 2010). Moyer’s (2011) study was conducted prior to the following publications.

In recent publications regarding equitable access to school counseling services, researchers explored nationwide inconsistencies in school counseling staffing. In conjunction with the University of New Hampshire’s Carsey School of Public Policy, Gagnon and Mattingly (2016) published a research brief revealing that a mere 17.8 percent of school districts, nationally, met the ASCA recommendations (250:1) for student-to-school counselor ratio. Furthermore, the authors highlighted the wide variation in access to school counselors across the nation. The brief included descriptions of school counselor access based on urbanicity and socioeconomic status. The authors found that poor, diverse, and city school districts had higher student-to-school counselor

ratios. Gagnon and Mattingly (2016) observed that rural school districts were less likely to employ school counselors, than districts located in the suburbs, cities, or towns. They also pointed out that rural districts were smaller in size overall, so the presence of even one counselor resulted in a lower median student-to-school counselor ratio. In this research brief, the authors reported demographics, underscored inequities in school counselor access, and substantiated the need for school counselors based on the extant literature (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016).

A student-to-school counselor ratio report published by the ASCA in conjunction with the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC; 2015) reported that student-to-school counselor ratios are inconsistent from state-to-state. This publication represented a call to action for federal policy makers to increase equitable access to resources for all students, irrespective of their state of residence (ASCA, 2015). In addition, the ASCA website includes a list of state school counseling mandates and legislation (ASCA, 2018). The list clearly shows the nationwide inconsistencies in school counseling mandates. For example, Arizona does not mandate school counseling at any level. School counseling positions in Arizona are funded from a district's local budget and the number of counselors hired is left to the discretion of the local school board. Other states like Rhode Island and Oklahoma mandate school counseling for grades K-12. In these cases, the mandate is funded at the state level. In Missouri, one of two states acknowledged for exemplary practices in mandating and evaluating school counseling programs according to Martin and Carey (2012), school counseling and specific student-to-school counselor ratios are mandated K-12.

Researchers examining the impact of student-to-school counselor ratio on student outcomes found that access to school counselors resulted in reduced disciplinary problems (Carrell & Carrell, 2006; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012) and an increase in student achievement (Carrell & Carrell, 2006; Cronin, 2016; Dimmit & Wilkerson, 2012; Lapan et al., 2006; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012). In a Missouri statewide study, Lapan, Gysbers et al. (2012) specifically addressed the impact of student-to-school counselor ratios on student success. Lapan, Whitmore et al. (2012) also found that ratios mattered when delivering college and career services. Other researchers found that students attending high-poverty schools benefit the most from lower student-to-school counselor ratios (Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012). In a Minnesota statewide study, Cronin (2016) examined standardized test scores and found that students who had access to a licensed school counselor scored higher on standardized assessments. The Utah and Nebraska statewide studies (Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012) both supported the notion that lower student-to-school counselor ratios improved student attendance. Lapan and colleagues (2014) found that student access to a school counselor resulted in a deeper connectedness to school thus promoting overall success.

In February 2019, the ASCA published a research report on the impact of student-to-school counselor ratio on student outcomes (Parzych et al., 2019). The preliminary results of this ongoing investigation supported the notion that disparities in school counseling services are related to socioeconomic status and community resources. The report indicated that additional research examining specific school contexts could have

important implications for state and local school district decision-making (Parzych et al., 2019).

### **Discrepancies in evaluation practices**

A study conducted by Martin and Carey (2012) examined differences in school counseling evaluation mandates across the nation. In this study, the researchers examined state-level school counseling evaluation practices in Missouri and Utah, both considered to have exemplary evaluation policies, and concluded that state education departments should be involved in school counseling evaluation processes. Martin and Carey (2012) pointed to differences in state education system contexts (e.g., local control versus central control) and encouraged collaboration between departments of education and local policy-makers to either work together or mandate the appropriate evaluative practices. The authors addressed an urgency to understand better the larger context (e.g., state and federal policies) and the impact that policy has on program delivery. However, more studies are needed at the federal and state level to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of evaluation policies (Martin & Carey, 2012). ASCA's recommended student-to-school counselor ratio (250:1) and school counseling evaluation practices are not mandated consistently across the nation.

### **Studying RAMP outcomes**

Two recent studies regarding comprehensive programming narrowed the focus from studying comprehensive programs and ASCA Model outcomes to exploring RAMP outcomes. Ward (2009) studied the impact of 31 elementary school RAMP programs in Indiana, Georgia, and North Carolina and found that students in those schools had significantly higher overall achievement and attendance rates when compared to state

averages, particularly at the elementary level. However, the researcher study did not examine the sustained impact of implementation beyond the first year (Ward, 2009). In another study, Wilkerson et al. (2013) compared RAMP and non-RAMP schools in Indiana using school-wide annual yearly progress results. The researchers compared school-wide ELA annual proficiency rates and math achievement scores, between RAMP and non-RAMP schools, and found statistically significant differences in elementary school-wide ELA proficiency rates as well as math achievement scores. Wilkerson and colleagues (2013) reported similarities between the findings and those from the Sink and Stroh (2003) study. Over time, students accessing comprehensive school counseling programs (in this case RAMP) received measurable benefits. Wilkerson et al. (2013) noted the importance of continuing to research RAMP student outcomes at the secondary level.

### **Limitations in school counseling outcome-based research**

While significant relationships between the ASCA Model implementation and positive academic, career, and personal/social outcomes for students are highlighted in the aforementioned studies, it is important to consider limitations and future directions. As early as 2005, Brown and Trusty challenged school counseling researchers to seriously consider controlling for and acknowledging underlying factors, beyond comprehensive programs, that accounted for improved student achievement. The authors implored other researchers to use experimental and quasi experimental design to study targeted school counseling interventions (e.g., study skills groups) using proximal measures of student success (Brown & Trusty, 2005). Brown and Trusty (2005) posited that examining the impact of strategic interventions on student achievement could

enhance comprehensive program development. The authors cautioned school counseling researchers that more evidence is needed to support the assertion that comprehensive programs increase academic achievement.

On the heels of numerous policy agenda and statewide studies, Lapan (2012) pointed out that the studies shared several limitations. First, the existing studies are correlational and exploratory. Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Stevenson (2012) pointed to similar limitations with regard to self-report information. The extent to which comprehensive program components are delivered relied on school counselors' self-reports. Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Stevenson (2012) also stated that, while costly to execute, actual observations and more stringent data collection would add credibility to the existing body of research. Lapan (2012) suggested that future directions for evaluating the impact of school counseling programs on student outcomes should consider that correlation does not imply causation. Positive student outcomes can only be inferred or implied based on the existing body of research. Lapan (2012) also suggested that additional studies should further explore factors not explicitly measured in the current research, which might impact results. However, Lapan (2012) maintained that the Utah, Nebraska, Missouri, and Rhode Island studies were not misleading and further stated that the use of school-level student behavior measurements like discipline, attendance, and graduation rates added a layer of confidence in the results because it was not easy to create any legitimate correlations to those variables beyond the larger societal and cultural forces (e.g., poverty level). Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Hoffman (2012) also suggested the presence of similar limitations to the existing body of statewide evaluations of comprehensive school counseling programs and student outcomes. While



efforts were made to control for demographic differences among schools, it remains plausible that unmeasured variables impacted the results.

Achieving RAMP status and implementing comprehensive programs is beneficial to students yet school counseling programs continue to vary from state to state and community to community (ASCA, 2018; Civic Enterprises, 2011; Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016; Martin & Carey, 2012). In 2011, Civic Enterprises published a review of more than 300 articles in the fields of school counseling and education. The authors examined the role and function of school counselors and concluded that lack of clarity and consistency in school counseling training, program delivery, and evaluation remained, and that programs varied from state to state. Overall, researchers have found significant relationships between comprehensive program delivery and positive student outcomes (Burkard et al., 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Dimmit & Wilkerson, 2012; Lapan et al., 2006; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Ward, 2009; Whiston et al., 2011; Wilkerson et al., 2013).

The ASCA National Model's emphasis on the school counselor as advocate and leader of systemic change is supported by research demonstrating how students are better because of comprehensive school counseling programs (ASCA, 2012). Therefore, research in school counseling is becoming increasingly focused on the ASCA National Model and RAMP as evidenced by the evolution of the outcome-based research studies. School counseling outcome-based research initially focused on general Comprehensive School Counseling Program implementation (Sink & Stroh, 2003) and eventually narrowed the focus to ASCA National Model specific evaluations like Carey, Harrington,

Martin, and Hoffman's and Carey, Harrington, Martin, and Stevenson's (2012) statewide studies. Wilkerson and colleague's (2013) comparison of RAMP and non-RAMP schools suggested a new direction in school counseling research with a focus on the efficacy of Recognized ASCA Model Programs.

### **Administrative and other stakeholder barriers to best practice**

There is no shortage of literature suggesting that administrative (principal) support has an effect on school counseling practice (Amatea & Clark, 2005; ATICI, 2014; Dahir et al., 2010; Dodson, 2009; Fye et al., 2017; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Pérusse et al., 2004; Pyne 2011). Pyne (2011) found that administrative support is one of the most important factors in school counselor job satisfaction. Pérusse et al. (2004) observed discrepancies between school counseling best practice and activities supported by principals.

Dahir et al. (2010) stated that school counselors must, “gain the support and involvement of the principal in implementing the ASCA National Model” (p. 287). School counselors are encouraged to collaborate with administrators and engage in advocacy efforts promoting the ASCA Model implementation (ASCA, 2012; Dahir et al, 2010), yet school counseling literature has consistently indicated that administrators lack an understanding of school counseling role and best practices (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dahir et al., 2010; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Fye et al., 2017; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Pérusse et al., 2004). Amatea and Clark (2005) studied administrators perceptions of school counseling role and concluded that school counselors must have administrative support to be effective in their role. The researchers found variations in administrative understanding of school counseling role suggesting that administrators would benefit

from education on school counselor role and comprehensive programs (Amatea & Clark, 2005). Fye et al. (2017) found that perceived principal support and principal knowledge of school counseling role based on the ASCA National Model had an impact on school counselors' ability to implement the model (p. 9). Leuwerke et al. (2009) found that even a brief exposure to the ASCA National Model impacted principals' views on how counselors should allocate their time.

In addition to the findings suggesting administrative challenges, other researchers have emphasized the importance of collaboration and communication between teachers and school counselors. Researchers have suggested that school counseling practice is affected by the perceptions of other stakeholders in the school system (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Clark & Amatea, 2004; Pyne, 2011; Reiner et al., 2009). The existing literature exploring teachers' role in contributing to or impeding school counseling practice is either largely theoretical or focused specifically on teacher perceptions of school counselor role. An article by Bemak and Chung (2008) outlined obstacles to multicultural and social justice advocacy and proposed strategies for overcoming Nice Counselor Syndrome (NCS). Bemak and Chung (2008) stated that school counselors are often in the role of problem solver and mediator and, thus, seek harmony between stakeholders. The authors indicated that NCS perpetuates the status quo and minimizes best practice. According to Bemak and Chung (2008), NCS is a barrier to engaging in advocacy practices. Bemak and Chung (2008) stated that, "traditionally, many school administrators and teachers have viewed the school counselor's role as primarily being supportive of and supplemental to the work done by administrators and teachers" (p. 377). The authors offered strategies for practitioners to overcome NCS. Although

Bemak and Chung (2008) did not reference the ASCA National Model (2012), the suggested strategies for overcoming NCS were drawn from the American Counseling Association advocacy competencies and related to ASCA Model themes.

The ASCA National Model (2012) highlighted the importance of recognizing that a school is a system and all members of that system are interrelated. The authors of the Model emphasized systemic change and acknowledged that helping students overcome barriers to learning involves all stakeholders in the school system (ASCA, 2012).

However, the Model does not clarify teacher role in comprehensive program delivery. In the extant school counseling literature, there are limited studies directly examining the interrelationships between teachers and school counselors. Clark and Amatea (2004) studied teacher expectations for school counselors and found that teachers recognized the importance of collaborative teamwork. However, teachers did not demonstrate a clear understanding of the school counseling role or best practice (Clark & Amatea, 2004).

The researchers suggested that teachers are integral to school counseling program implementation because teachers influence other important stakeholders in the system (e.g., students, parents, and administrators). Pyne's (2011) study of school counselor job satisfaction and comprehensive program delivery also supported the notion that collaboration and communication between teachers and school counselors is important. Pyne (2011) found that school counselors reported higher levels of job satisfaction when delivering school counseling programs that "facilitate communication between faculty and staff members" (p. 94).

In a national study, Reiner et al. (2009) expanded on the existing literature by directly examining high school teachers' beliefs about the types of activities school

counselors should be engaged in and the activities they believe school counselors are actually performing. The researchers included appropriate and inappropriate activities (ASCA, 2005) in the questionnaire and found that teachers are supportive of many appropriate school counseling roles and activities. The researchers reported that “there appears to be a relationship between teacher endorsement of tasks and perceptions of school counselor engagement in those tasks” (p. 330). Reiner and colleagues (2009) recommended that school counselors gain an awareness of other stakeholders’ perceptions of school counselor role.

### **Conclusion**

Much of current research in school counseling focused on comprehensive program development, specifically promoting the ASCA National Model (2012) framework. In this literature review, I addressed several prevalent themes and one significant gap in current research. Comprehensive school counseling programs are linked to clear professional identity and lack of role ambiguity (Cinotti, 2014; Lieberman, 2004; Murray, 1995; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Walsh et al., 2007), perceived school counselor self-efficacy (Ernst, et al., 2017; Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2009; Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Mullen & Lambie, 2016; Young & Kaffenberger, 2011), and positive student outcomes (Burkard et al., 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Lapan et al., 2006; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Sink et al., 2008; Ward, 2009; Whiston et al., 2011; Wilkerson et al., 2013). School counseling practice is impacted by student-to-school counselor ratio (Carrell & Carrell, 2006; Cronin, 2016; Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Moyer, 2011), administrative support (Amatea & Clark,

2005; Cinotti, 2014; Dodson, 2009; Fye et al., 2017; Herlihy et al., 2002; Pérusse et al., 2004), and other stakeholder (teacher) support (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Clark & Amatea, 2004; Pyne, 2011; Reiner et al., 2009).

Moreover, school counseling leaders have clearly addressed the need for leadership and accountability within the school counseling field (ASCA, 2012; Dahir & Stone, 2007; Gysbers, 2010; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Sink, 2009; Young, Dollarhide, & Baughman, 2018) to promote comprehensive program implementation. However, there is a lack of research regarding what school counselors perceive as specific ecological (micro-level and macro-level) systems barriers to achieving RAMP status. While studying how students benefit from comprehensive programs makes a case for implementing the ASCA National Model (2012) and achieving RAMP status (Wilkerson et al., 2013), pinpointing the systemic obstacles that are preventing school counselors from applying for RAMP designation has important implications for future research and practice. Moreover, counselor educators and supervisors can potentially use the results to support school counselors in developing targeted systemic advocacy and leadership practices.

To address the gap in research, I examined to what degree micro-level (school) and macro-level (cultural/environmental) factors predicted RAMP attainment using the Ecological School Counseling Model (McMahon et al., 2014) to conceptualize the interconnectedness of the various systems. Gaining a holistic understanding of barriers to RAMP attainment could offer new insights for practitioners, scholars, local, state, and national associations, and counselor educators.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

Despite the documented efficacy of comprehensive school counseling programs (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Burkard et al., 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Lapan, 2012; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Pyne, 2011; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Sink et al., 2008; Ward, 2009; Whiston et al., 2011; Wilkerson et al., 2013), specifically the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model (2012), researchers continue to find that implementation gaps exist (Civic Enterprises, 2011; Lapan, 2012; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012). School counseling researchers have identified several issues impacting school counseling practice, including a lack of administrative understanding or support (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Cinotti, 2014; Dodson, 2009; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Fye et al., 2017; Herlihy et al., 2002; Pérusse et al., 2004) and role ambiguity (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Cinotti, 2014; DeKruyf et al., 2013; Fye et al., 2017; Gysbers, 2010; Walsh et al., 2007). More recently, Mullen and Lambie (2016) found that school counselors' self-efficacy impacted programmatic delivery. Fye et al. (2018) studied challenges to ASCA Model implementation and found lack of principal support and role ambiguity are critical factors impacting practice. However, there are no existing studies that explore specific obstacles to Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) attainment from an ecological-systems perspective. Therefore, the primary purpose of the study was to determine to what degree RAMP status is predicted by micro-level (school) factors and macro-level (cultural/environmental) factors. The secondary purpose of the study was to examine if micro-level or macro-level dimensions were better predictors of RAMP attainment. The

data used in this study are secondary and were collected for an earlier study examining school counselors' perceptions of relevant obstacles to RAMP implementation. As a researcher in the primary study, I sought IRB approval to further analyze the data. A homogeneous purposive sample of the ASCA members was originally surveyed using an instrument designed for the primary study, titled, School Counselors' Perceptions Questionnaires (Appendix A and Appendix B). All data were obtained via self-report measures and collected using an online survey. In this chapter, I detailed the quantitative research methods used to conduct this secondary study. This chapter included the research questions for this study, the research design, the sampling procedures, the measures used in this investigation, and the data analysis plan.

### **Research Questions**

Research Question #1: To what degree is the Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program status (RAMP versus non-RAMP) of a school predicted by micro-level (school) factors, including student-to-school counselor ratio, school counselors' perceptions of administrative support, school counselors' perceptions of other school staff support, and institution type (public, charter, online charter, private-religious, private-non-religious)?

Research Question #2: To what degree is the Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program status (RAMP versus non-RAMP) of a school predicted by macro-level (cultural/environmental) factors, including funding for programs, community setting (urban, suburban, rural, and geographic location in the United States (Midwest, Northeast, South, West)?



Research Question #3: Is the Recognized American School Counselor Association Model Program status (RAMP versus non-RAMP) of a school better predicted by micro-level or macro-level factors?

Given the exploratory nature of this study, I did not include hypotheses for the research questions.

### **Research Design**

For this relational and exploratory study, I used a quantitative design to examine school counselors' perceptions of relevant obstacles to implementing a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) using archival data. As a principal investigator of the original research, I obtained permission to use the data for this secondary study from the Duquesne University (DU) Institutional Review Board.

After randomly dividing the data set in half in SPSS, I conducted descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. Using logistic and hierarchical logistic regression analyses, I examined to what degree specific variables from the archival data predicted the likelihood of attaining RAMP status using the Ecological School Counseling Model (ESCM) as the theoretical framework (McMahon et al., 2014). Considering the ESCM (McMahon et al., 2014) framework, the independent variables, including micro-level dimensions (subsystems) and macro-level dimensions (suprasystems), were examined as potential predictors of the binary and categorical dependent variable RAMP status (RAMP versus non-RAMP).

### **Participants**

The primary study sample ( $N= 1,729$ ) consisted of ASCA members. Using the ASCA membership directory, the research team requested participation in a survey

examining school counselors' perceptions of relevant obstacles to implementing a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) and asked that only practicing school counselors participate. Homogeneous purposive sampling was used to recruit participants. Participants were recruited through one of three ways according to the following procedures:

(1) School counselors whose school counseling programs received RAMP status received an email offering them the opportunity to participate in the study.

(2) Through utilization of the ASCA Membership Database, the research email/flyer (Appendix C) was posted on ASCA SCENE's Open Forum. This is a social network for school counselors, counselor educators, and school counseling students. Interested individuals selected the link that directed them to the School Counselors' Perceptions Questionnaire (SCPQ).

(3) Through utilization of ASCA's Member Directory, all ASCA members received an email message (Appendix C) stating that a research opportunity was available. Interested individuals selected the link that directed them to the School Counselors' Perceptions Questionnaire (SCPQ).

Recruitment emails were sent to the approximately 31,000 participants, and 2,203 surveys were returned over the course of several months (resulting in an approximately 8% return rate). The total number of failed recipients (e.g., emails returned as undeliverable) was 3,314. Of the 2,203 surveys received, 474 incomplete surveys were removed from the data set.

Efforts were made to reduce sample bias by sending emails to all ASCA members listed in the membership directory. Researchers requested that only practicing school

counselors complete the survey. The sample included practicing school counselors from across the US; however, the questionnaire was sent to only current ASCA members. Surveying only ASCA members could fail to capture the perspectives of practicing school counselors who are not ASCA members. Underlying factors that influence school counselors' decisions to join ASCA could have an unforeseen impact on their perceptions. For example, is the decision to join ASCA a matter of school funding or school counselor salary? Furthermore, the choice to join ASCA could be impacted by exposure to the ASCA National Model (2012) and RAMP which may vary depending on participants' counselor education program goals and emphasis on the Model. These potential and unexamined explanations may impact the results. Cases with missing data were eliminated from analysis using listwise deletion in SPSS. Therefore, the analysis was only conducted on cases that had complete data.

Participants from the full data set ( $N= 1,729$ ) represented school districts from across the US. The participant demographics were 88% female, 12% male, 80.5% white, 7.7% black or African American, 4.7% Hispanic or Latino, 1.3% Asian, 3.4% multiracial, and 1.6% other. The school levels represented were 30% of counselors from elementary schools, 21.2% from middle/junior schools, 35.4% from high schools, and 5.5% from combined K-12 schools. The school counselors surveyed worked in the following regions of the country: 24.6% Midwest, 16.6% Northeast, 37% South, and 21.8% West. The sample was derived from the following settings: 25% urban, 43.8% suburban, and 31% rural. School institutions represented by this sample include 90.4% public, 3.8% charter, .6% online charter, 3.8% private-religious, and 1.5% private-non-religious. For

the secondary study, I analyzed a smaller sample. The reduced sample's demographic information are similar to the larger primary sample and included in the Results section.

Participants were treated in accordance with the ethical guidelines for conducting research (ACA, 2014). Subjects received voluntary informed consent information and interaction with subjects was limited to collecting data through electronic survey completion. Because of the limited interaction and carefully designed survey items, this study posed minimal risks to the participant. Participants' responses were secured in Survey Monkey, which employs rigorous security standards (see Data Collection).

### **Measures**

Designed specifically for the primary study, the original, 98-item survey instrument, entitled, School Counselors' Perception Questionnaires (Appendix A or B), was used. There are two versions of the questionnaire. The difference between the two questionnaires is in the directions. If the counselor indicated having implemented a Recognized ASCA Model Program, the statement read, "When implementing a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) at the school or schools in which you work, to what degree did you experience the following variables as a relevant obstacle?" For school counselors who have not obtained RAMP, the statement read, "If you were to implement a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) at the school or schools in which you work, to what degree do you perceive the following variables as a relevant obstacle?"

The School Counselors' Perception Questionnaire (SCPC) did not undergo a thorough evaluation of reliability and validity before administration. The survey was designed to address a gap in research as no other studies, to date, have evaluated school

counselors' perceptions of obstacles to achieving RAMP status. The research team consisting of five individuals (two of whom practiced as school counselors) examined the survey items to ensure alignment with the ASCA National Model (2012) components and to guard against examiner bias. Each member of the research team brought a unique professional perspective. The survey includes 17 items structured to acquire the following: demographic information (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, gender, region of the country, school setting, institution type), experience level/education (e.g., highest degree earned, credits accrued, Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Program (CACREP) status of master's program, years of experience, and student-to-school counselor ratio. The remaining 81 items included five-point Likert rating scale statements assessing the relevance of obstacles within the following broad categories: lack of resources/understanding/involvement, lack of support, lack of supervision, lack of willingness from stakeholders, time spent on non-counseling tasks, lack of funding for needed supports, lack of confidence in ability to implement RAMP components, lack of opportunity to perform various aspects of RAMP, and lack of communication with stakeholders in schools. The instrument also included an open-ended response box for "other concerns."

### **Data Collection**

Once IRB approval was obtained, I used the archival data to conduct the secondary quantitative analyses. The data for the primary study were collected and stored through Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey's informational systems and infrastructure are hosted in data centers that include physical security measures (e.g., 24/7 monitoring, cameras, visitor logs, entry requirements). Survey Monkey has dedicated

cages to separate equipment from other tenants, and Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) technology to protect user information using data encryption. Furthermore, the Survey Monkey data centers are SOC 2 accredited, which refers to System and Organization Controls (SOC 2 certification is an IT industry certification managed by the American Association of Certified Public Accountants). Organizations with SOC 2 certification have undergone an audit by an independent CPA demonstrating that the needed security systems are in place to protect informational assets (SL Powers, 2017). In addition to SOC 2 certification, Survey Monkey utilizes password protection to ensure that only authorized researchers will have access to the online database of survey responses.

Once collected, the data were transferred numerically from Survey Monkey to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and then manually to an IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS version 25) dataset. Respondents were identified by the case numbers assigned in Survey Monkey. Members of the research team reviewed the new dataset for accuracy to avoid human error in transferring data from Survey Monkey to SPSS. I screened the data and conducted logistic regression analyses in SPSS. I selected logistic and hierarchical logistic regression analytical methods because of the presence of a categorical dependent variable (RAMP versus non-RAMP). Logistic regression is a flexible approach because it requires no adherence to assumptions of normality or linearity (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Logistic regression is commonly used in the health science fields to explore environmental or other predictors of illness (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

## Data Analysis

In order to address the first two research questions, I conducted logistic regression analysis using IBM Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software (SPSS 25) to determine the degree to which school counselors' perceptions of relevant micro-level and macro-level obstacles correctly predicted the likelihood of RAMP attainment. The dichotomous categorical dependent variable (RAMP versus non-RAMP) was examined to classify participants using the following micro-level independent variables: student-to-school counselor ratio, school counselors' perceptions of administrative support, school counselors' perceptions of other staff support, and institution type. Macro-level independent variables including community setting, school counselors' perceptions regarding relevance of funding, and geographical region were also examined as potential predictors of RAMP status. Logistic regression was appropriate for this study due to the presence of a binary categorical dependent variable.

Prior to conducting the logistic regression analyses, I analyzed the data in a variety of ways. First, I randomly divided the data set in half using the command, *Data, Select Cases* in SPSS. In logistic regression analysis, significance will increase with a larger data set; therefore, I reduced the data set to ensure a more accurate model fit (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample and data, including measures of central tendency across participants. Since the proposed analytic procedures do not require adherence to assumptions regarding distribution, normality tests were not necessary for this study. However, the data were screened for multicollinearity, missing data, and outliers. According to Mertler and Vannatta (2013), "logistic regression is sensitive to high correlations among predictor variables" (p. 297).

For data screening purposes, an initial regression analysis was conducted calculating Mahalanobis distance (to identify outliers) and using collinearity statistics (to identify high correlations between variables). Collinearity statistics in SPSS provided tolerance scores for all of the variables in question. All variables with tolerance statistics that exceeded .1 were included in subsequent analyses. In SPSS, the *Explore* procedure was used to identify outliers using the chi-square criterion. Cases that exceeded the chi-square critical value were deleted. Incomplete surveys were excluded from the study, using the listwise option in SPSS.

Through logistic regression, I assessed the likelihood of membership in one of the two groups (RAMP versus non-RAMP) using predictor variable values. Due to the exploratory nature of this study, I performed direct, sequential, and forward logistic regression analyses to ensure that only significant predictors of RAMP status were included in each model (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013). In addition, a hierarchical logistic regression analysis (sequential) was completed in SPSS to determine whether micro-level (school) or macro-level (environmental/cultural) factors more accurately predicted the RAMP status of a school. The next section details the steps used to identify the strongest predictors of RAMP attainment.

The specific analytical steps for addressing Research Question #3 were as follows. First, I analyzed a model as a baseline by simultaneously testing all independent variables (e.g., all micro-level and macro-level predictors) using the *Enter Method* in SPSS. The preliminary analysis provided a baseline for comparison. This analysis essentially tested all the predictors against no predictors (e.g., the null hypothesis). Moreover, this direct method added all of the variables simultaneously to test individual



variables for significance. The first model tested included all significant predictors (micro-level and macro-level combined). Next, I conducted forward logistic regression to determine if micro-level (school) factors including student-to-school counselor ratio, school counselors' perceptions of administrative support, school counselors' perceptions of other staff support correctly predicted RAMP status. In the third step, I examined the macro-level (cultural/environmental) independent variables assessing the degree to which the factors including school counselors' perceptions regarding program funding and school community improved the model fit. Finally, I cross-validated the results by conducting sequential logistic regression by entering the macro-level predictors at the first step and the micro-level predictors at the second step. The decision to add specific variables at each step was informed by prevalent themes in school counseling literature (e.g., administrative and other staff support, student-to-school counselor ratio) and by the Ecological School Counseling Model's ecosystems (subsystems and suprasystems or micro/macro levels).

Data were examined using statistics for overall model fit, a classification table with the percentage of cases correctly classified by the model, and a summary of model variables using both individual and model goodness-of-fit statistics. I used hierarchical logistic regression to assess which model system, micro-level or macro-level, is better at predicting RAMP status and provided the best model for predicting RAMP attainment. The study expanded upon the existing literature on the ASCA National Model (2012) and demonstrated how the McMahon et al. (2014) ESCM provides a framework for conceptualizing aspects of the ASCA National Model (2012) as related to achieving RAMP status.

## **Conclusion**

This secondary study was conducted to explore relevant barriers to implementing a Recognized ASCA Model Program. I examined specific potential predictors that represented common themes in the extant school counseling literature. I designed the study to examine predictors of RAMP membership from an ecological perspective; specifically, to what degree various ecological-systems dimensions, including micro-level (school) and macro-level (environmental/cultural), correctly predicted RAMP status. The results were interpreted using the ESCM as the theoretical framework (McMahon et al., 2014).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

This chapter includes the descriptive statistics and results from a series of logistic regression analyses performed using the IBM SPSS (version 25) software. The data were analyzed using direct and forward (stepwise) logistic regression to cross-validate the results.

#### **Descriptive Statistics**

Participants from the original study consisted of 2,203 practicing professional school counselors listed in the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) directory as of October 2016. Of the 2,203 surveys received, 474 incomplete surveys were removed from the data set resulting in the sample  $N=1,729$ .

According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), when a high number of cases are analyzed using logistic regression, the model may be significant, but not necessarily a good fit. Seeking a more accurate model fit, I reduced the large number of cases. The first step in reducing the sample was to randomly divide the cases in half using the SPSS commands, *Data, Select Cases, Random sample*. The data set was divided seeking approximately 50% of the cases ( $N= 897$ ). The first round of logistic regression analyses resulted in classification tables that consistently reported correctly classifying 90% of the cases (same as the null model). The percentage of non-RAMP cases was 90%. Cases were consistently overclassified into the same percentage as the larger group (non-RAMP); therefore, I decided to further reduce the cases to provide a more evenly distributed amount of RAMP and non-RAMP cases.

I sorted the data set by RAMP status using *Data, Sort Cases* in SPSS. The first 163 cases represented school counselors who identified as having RAMP status. I

transferred all RAMP cases to a new data set using the command, *Copy selected cases to a new dataset*. Next, I randomly selected approximately 11% of the non-RAMP cases using SPSS *Data, Select Cases, Random sample*. I merged the RAMP data set and the randomized non-RAMP data set in SPSS using *Data, Merge* resulting in a total of 349 cases for analysis. The following descriptive statistics derived from the small data set reflecting approximately 20% of the larger data set ( $N=349$ ).

The participants' gender identity was 88.0% female, 11.7% male, and .3% another gender identity. Participant ages ranged from 23 to 66 years with an average of approximately 40 years of age. Participants identified race and ethnicity as 1.2% Asian, 7.8% Black or African American, 6.7% Hispanic or Latino, 0% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 78.8% White, 1.7% preferred not to answer, .3 % other, and 3.5% multi-racial/ethnicity. The participants represented the following regions of the United States: (a) 24.5% Midwest; (b) 12.4% Northeast; (c) 43.8% South; (d) 19.3% West. Participants worked at the following school levels: (a) 29.5% elementary/primary; (b) 24.4%, middle/junior high; (c) 33.5 %, high/secondary; (d) 5.4% combined; (e) 7.2 % other. School settings represented are 24.4% urban, 49.7% suburban, and 25.9% rural. Respondents described the institution type as 94.0% public, 2.0% charter, 0.6% charter-online, 2.3% private-religious, and 1.1% private-nonreligious. The majority of the respondents reported between less than one to five years of experience (45.0%), with an additional 23.2 % of participants reporting six to 10 years of experience. Finally, the majority of participants had student caseloads between 201-300 (16.4%), 301-400 (21.6%), and 401-500 (25.6%) students.

Table 1.1

*Descriptive Analysis- Gender Identification*

	Frequency	Percent
Female	307	88.0
Male	41	11.7
Another identity	1	.3
Total	349	100

Table 1.2

*Descriptive Analysis- Race or Ethnic Identification*

	Frequency	Percent
Asian	4	1.2
Black or African American	18	7.8
Hispanic or Latino	40	6.7
White	224	78.8
Prefer not to answer	3	1.7
Other	1	.3
Multi-racial/ethnicity	11	3.5
Missing	4	1.1
Total	345	100

Table 1.3

*Descriptive Analysis- School Level*

	Frequency	Percent
Elementary/Primary	103	29.5
Middle/Junior	85	24.4
High/Secondary	117	33.5
Combined	19	5.4
Other	25	7.2
Total	349	100

Table 1.4

*Descriptive Analysis-Regional Location in the U.S.*

	Frequency	Percent
Midwest	85	24.5
Northeast	43	12.4
South	152	43.8
West	67	19.3
Missing	2	*
Total	349	100

\*SPSS did not calculate the small percentage of missing cases in the total valid percentage

Table 1.5

*Descriptive Analysis- Community Setting*

	Frequency	Percent
Urban	84	25.2
Suburban	171	50.0
Rural	89	24.8
Missing	5	1.4
Total	344	100

Table 1.6

*Descriptive Analysis- Institution Type*

	Frequency	Percent
Public	328	94
Charter	7	2.0
Charter-online	2	.6
Private-religious	8	2.3
Private- nonreligious	4	1.1
Total	349	100

Table 1.7

*Descriptive Analysis- RAMP and Non-RAMP*

	Frequency	Percent
RAMP	163	47.7
Non-RAMP	179	52.3
Missing	7	2.0
Total	342	100

## Missing Data and Assumptions

Missing values were deleted from the analyses using the listwise deletion option in SPSS. According to the UCLA Statistical Consulting Group (2010), listwise deletion analyzes cases for completion and removes all data for cases that have one or more missing values. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) stated that while logistic regression does not require adherence to any assumptions regarding normality, linearity, or equal variance, the analyses are sensitive to multicollinearity or high correlations of predictor variables. Data were screened for multicollinearity using multiple regression analysis in SPSS. All variables included in the analysis had tolerance statistics greater than .1; therefore, multicollinearity was not present. Data were screened for univariate outliers by examining frequency distributions. In addition, data were screened for multivariate outliers (unusual combinations of scores) in SPSS, *Descriptives*, *Explore* to calculate goodness-of-fit using Mahalanobis Distance (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013). According to Mertler and Vannatta (2013), “Mahalanobis distance is the distance of a case from the centroid of the remaining cases” (p.31). The centroid refers to the mean of all the variables (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013). Outliers were eliminated using the command *Data, Select Cases, If*, Mahalanobis Distance is less than or equal to the specific chi-squared critical. The chi-squared critical value was determined using the Chi-Squared Distribution table based on the number of variables being analyzed (e.g., degrees of freedom) with a significance value set at  $p < .001$  (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013).

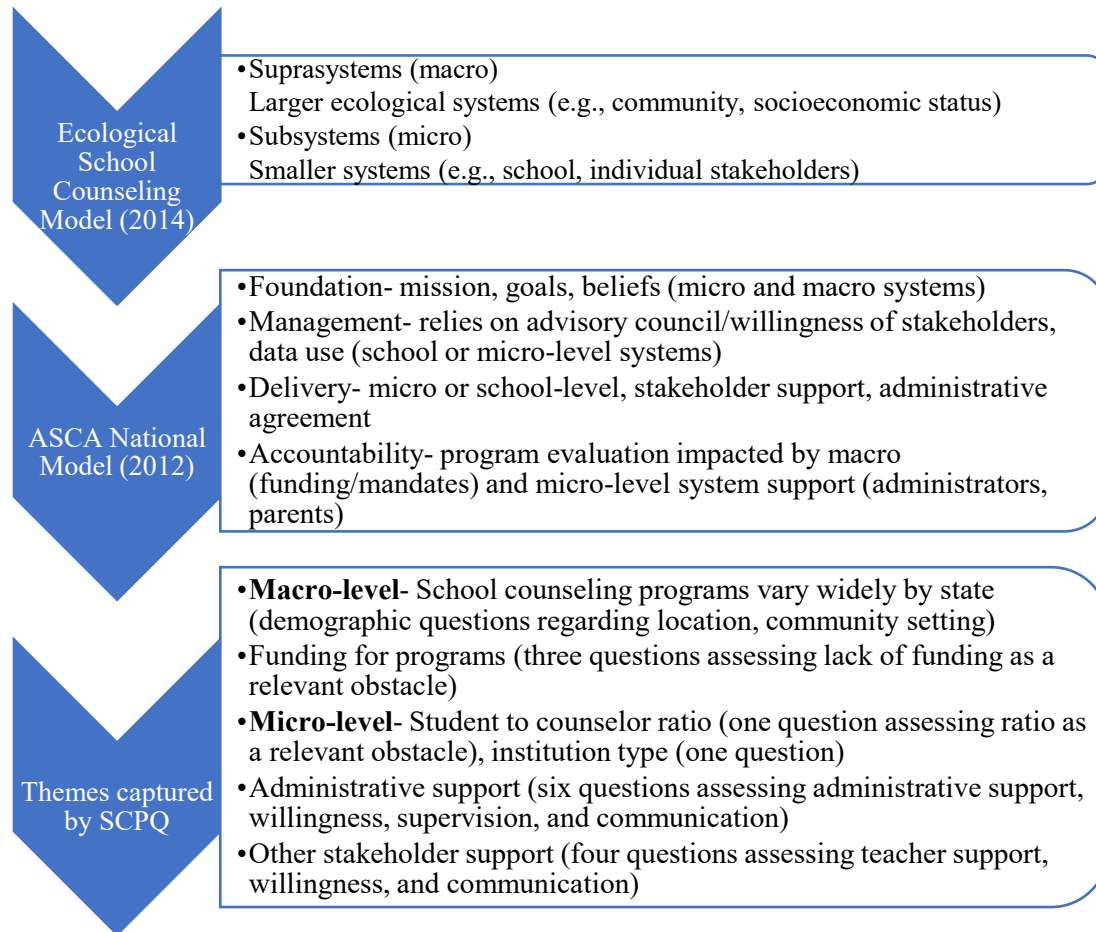


## Variable Selection

I selected variables for analysis based on prevalent themes in the school counseling literature. Figure 1. outlines the variable selection process based on the broader systems from the ESCM (McMahon et al., 2014), the ASCA National Model (2012) structural components, and relevant themes in school counseling. I selected independent variables to represent the ESCM (McMahon et al., 2014) framework and to explore micro-level and macro-level dimensions that may affect RAMP attainment. Of the original 98 variables (81 Likert-scale and 17 demographic), 17 items were chosen to examine the following research questions: (a) To what degree is the Recognized American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Model Program status (RAMP versus non-RAMP) of a school predicted by micro-level (school) factors, including student-to-school counselor ratio, school counselors' perceptions of administrative support, school counselors' perceptions of other school staff support, and institution type (public, charter, online charter, private-religious, private-non-religious)?; (b) To what degree is the Recognized American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Model Program status (RAMP versus non-RAMP) of a school predicted by macro-level (cultural/environmental) factors, including school counselors' perceptions regarding funding for programs, community setting (urban, suburban, rural), and geographic location in the United States (Midwest, Northeast, South, West?; (c) Is the Recognized American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Model Program status of a school better predicted by micro-level or macro-level factors?

Figure 1.

*Conceptual Model for Variable Selection using the School Counselor Perception Questionnaire (SCPQ) and Prevalent Themes in School Counseling Literature*



I selected 12 micro-level variables examining student-to-school counselor ratio, other stakeholder (teacher) support, administrative support, and institution type (public, charter, charter-online, private-religious, private non-religious) and five macro-level variables measuring perceived relevance of funding (e.g., funding for technology, curriculum, and college/career programs), community setting, and regional location.

I conducted direct logistic regression on the 17 selected variables to determine whether they were significant predictors of RAMP status using *Regression, Binary*

*Logistic, Enter* method in SPSS. Given the exploratory nature of this research, I used direct logistic regression to simultaneously test the contribution of selected individual predictors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The Wald statistic (goodness-of-fit) was analyzed to ensure that all chosen variables were significant. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2013), predictor significance using the Wald statistic should be carefully examined using a significance value of less than .15 or .20 instead of  $p < .05$ . Of the 17 variables originally selected, the following 10 items had significance scores less than or equal to .20:

- lack of recommended student-to-school counselor ratio
- lack of support amongst teachers
- lack of willingness of teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum
- lack of willingness of teachers to serve on the advisory council
- lack of relevant training/professional development
- lack of willingness from administration to create an annual agreement
- lack of administration's understanding of best practices in the school counseling profession
- community setting (urban, suburban, rural)
- lack of funding for curriculum materials
- lack of funding for technology

### **Logistic Regression Analysis**

Logistic regression analysis tests both models and individual predictors using the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients and the Wald statistic (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Preliminary logistic regression analyses included the Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients to determine if the three models (micro-level variables, macro-level variables, and micro/macro-level combined) were appropriate. The Omnibus Test of Model Coefficients indicated that each new model (a) micro and macro level combined [ $\chi^2(6) = 82.74, p < .001$ ]; (b) micro-level only variables [ $\chi^2(4) = 75.71, p < .001$ ]; (c) macro-level only variables ( $\chi^2(1) = 23.36, p < .001$ ) was significantly improved and explained more of the variance than the null model (the assumption that all regression coefficients equal zero). Overall model fit was evaluated using significance scores, percentage of correct classification, and odds ratios (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The significance level for the goodness-of-fit indices was set at  $p < .001$ .

I performed forward logistic regression to determine variables that predict the RAMP status of a school. I used forward logistic regression to test each model (micro/macro combined, micro-level, and macro-level). The use of forward logistic regression in SPSS relies on the program to determine which model variables are included based on the likelihood ratios (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013). The results tables are based on the final three forward (stepwise) logistic regression analyses. I cross-validated the results using sequential logistic regression and direct logistic regression analyses. In the following sections, I described the iterative analysis process.

### **Forward Logistic Regression Micro-Level and Macro-Level Predictors**

I conducted forward logistic regression in SPSS to examine potential predictors of RAMP status (RAMP versus non-RAMP), on the basis of seven micro-level variables and three macro-level variables. The micro-level variables included (1) lack of

recommended student-to-school counselor ratio; (2) lack of support amongst teachers; (3) lack of willingness of teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum; (4) lack of willingness of teachers to serve on the advisory council; (5) lack of relevant training/professional development; (6) lack of willingness from administration to create an annual agreement; and (7) lack of administration's understanding of best practices in the school counseling profession. The macro-level predictors were (8) community setting (urban, suburban, rural); (9) lack of funding for curriculum materials; and (10) lack of funding for technology.

After removing outliers and missing cases, 314 cases were included in the analysis. I entered the micro-level and macro-level variables in SPSS using the command, *Regression Analysis, Binary Logistic Regression*. In SPSS, forward logistic regression enters each of the independent variables individually and uses likelihood ratios to select the model variables (Mertler & Vannatta, 2013). The variable with the highest likelihood is entered first by program design. The dependent variable, RAMP status, is a dichotomous categorical variable (1 = Yes, 2 = No). By default, SPSS predicts likelihood for the group with the highest frequency. In this case, the majority of school counselors identified their schools as non-RAMP.

Regression results produced a five-variable model including (a) community setting; (b) lack of support amongst teachers; (c) lack of willingness from teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum; (d) lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement; and (e) lack of willingness from teachers to serve on the advisory council. Community setting is a categorical independent variable. According to the UCLA Statistical Consulting Group (2010), IBM SPSS creates a dummy variable or

reference category representing the coefficient difference between the levels of a categorical variable (e.g., community setting = three levels). In this analysis, the only categorical predictor included in the model was community setting. Community setting was analyzed using the *Indicator* contrast method, which simply indicates presence or absence of category membership (IBM.com).

Regression results suggested that the overall model fit of the five predictors was questionable (-2 Log likelihood = 350.716) but was statistically reliable in predicting the RAMP status of a school [ $\chi^2(6) = 82.74, p < .001$ ]. The combined micro-level and macro-level model was fairly accurate in predicting RAMP status (70% correct classification). The model with predictors showed an improvement over the null model, which accurately predicted 52% of the cases. Table 2. includes regression coefficients, Wald statistics, odds ratios, and 95% confidence intervals for the odds ratios of the five predictors. The Wald statistics were significant for all perception variables indicating that the individual predictors were a good fit to the model. The Wald statistic measures the importance of the explanatory variables while controlling for the other explanatory variables. The Wald statistic for the categorical variable, community setting, was not significant when comparing rural and urban schools.

The odds ratios are based on percentage of likelihood per one-unit change in response. The odds ratios indicated that lack of willingness from teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum showed the strongest increase in likelihood (91%) of reporting non-RAMP status. Lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement demonstrated a 37% increase in the likelihood of school counselors reporting

non-RAMP status. Lack of willingness from teachers to serve on the advisory council showed a 38% increase in likelihood of reporting non-RAMP status.

Odds ratios suggested that school counselors who reported working in a suburban setting were less 48% less likely to report non-RAMP status as compared to the reference category (urban). Rural school counselors were 38% more likely to indicate non-RAMP status as compared to urban school counselors. Changing the reference category from urban to rural confirmed a non-significant difference between suburban and rural schools. I evaluated the relationship between RAMP status and community setting and the adequacy of expected frequencies using SPSS, *Descriptives*, *Crosstabs*. In this sample, suburban school counselors were more likely to report RAMP status (59%) than urban school counselors (21%) or rural school counselors (20%). All expected frequencies were acceptable for the goodness-of-fit tests.

Odds ratios were small for the predictor, lack of support amongst teachers, indicating a 41% decrease in likelihood of reporting non-RAMP status per one-unit change. School counselors who perceived lack of willingness from teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum, lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement, and lack of willingness from teachers to serve on the advisory council as relevant barriers were more likely to report non-RAMP status.

Table 2.

*Forward Logistic Regression Analysis of Micro-Level and Macro-Level Combined Predictors of RAMP versus non-RAMP Status*

	<i>B</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds Ratio	95% C.I.	
						Lower	Upper
Setting							
Urban*		10.21	2	.006			
Suburban	-.658	4.02	1	.045	.518	.272	.985
Rural	.319	.704	1	.401	1.376	.653	2.902
Lack of support amongst teachers	-.522	10.56	1	.001	.593	.433	.813
Lack of willingness from teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum	.650	16.82	1	$p < .0001$	1.915	1.404	2.612
Lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement	.290	5.487	1	.019	1.336	1.048	1.703
Lack of willingness from teachers to serve on the advisory council	.317	5.23	1	.022	1.373	1.046	1.802

\* Community setting reference category/baseline

**Forward Logistic Regression Micro-Level Predictors**

I performed forward logistic regression to examine which of the seven micro-level independent variables predicted the RAMP status of a school. The removal of outliers and missing cases resulted in the inclusion of 326 cases. Regression results



indicated that the overall model fit of four predictors including (a) lack of recommended student-to-school counselor ratio; (b) lack of support amongst teachers; (c) lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement; and (d) lack of willingness from teachers to serve on the advisory council was questionable (-2 Log likelihood = 374.998) but was statistically significant in predicting RAMP attainment [ $\chi^2(4) = 75.71, p < .0001$ ]. The model correctly classified 69% of the cases which was improved from the null model's 52% correct classification. Regression coefficients are reported in Table 3. using Wald statistics. Wald statistics indicated that school counselors' perceived relevance of the following barriers to RAMP implementation (a) lack of recommended student-to-school counselor ratio (250:1); (b) lack of support amongst teachers; (c) lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement; (d) lack of teacher willingness to serve on the advisory council significantly predicted RAMP status. The odds ratios for lack of recommended student-to-school counselor ratio (250:1), lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement, and lack of willingness of teachers to serve on the advisory council were above 1, and lack of support amongst teachers was below 1. The odds ratio showed a 90% increase in the likelihood of a school counselor indicating non-RAMP status based on a one-unit change in perceived relevance of the barrier, lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement. Lack of willingness from teachers to serve on the advisory council showed a 59% increase in likelihood per one-unit change. The odds ratio for the variable, lack of recommended student-to-school counselor ratio demonstrated little change (20%) in the likelihood of a school counselor reporting non-RAMP status based on a one-unit change in perceived relevance. Lack of support

amongst teachers showed a small decrease (35%) in likelihood of reporting non-RAMP status per one-unit change in perceived relevance. In other words, school counselors were more likely to report RAMP status based on the perceived relevance of this barrier.

Table 3.

*Forward Logistic Regression Analysis of Micro-Level Predictors of RAMP versus non-RAMP Status*

	<i>B</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>	Odds Ratio	95% C.I.	
						Lower	Upper
Lack of recommended counselor/student ratio (1:250)	.184	4.10	1	.044	1.203	1.005	1.439
Lack of support amongst teachers	-.438	9.18	1	.002	.645	.486	.857
Lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement	.642	19.49	1	$p < .0001$	1.901	1.429	2.527
Lack of willingness of teachers to serve on the advisory council	.466	14.76	1	$p < .0001$	1.593	1.256	2.020

**Forward Logistic Regression Macro-Level Predictors**

I performed forward logistic regression analysis to examine which macro-level independent variables (a) community setting; (b) lack of funding for curriculum; and (c) lack of funding for technology predicted the RAMP status of a school. After removing outliers and missing cases, 331 cases were included in the analysis. The regression analysis yielded a one-variable model including, lack of funding for curriculum materials.

Regression results suggested that the overall model fit of the predictor was questionable (-2 Log likelihood = 434.414) but was statistically reliable in predicting RAMP status [ $\chi^2 (1) = 23.358, p < .0001$ ]. The percentage of cases correctly classified by the model (61%) represented a small improvement over the null model's 52% classification. Regression coefficients are reported in Table 4. using the Wald statistics. The macro-level variable, lack of funding for curriculum materials, significantly predicted the RAMP status of a school. The odds ratio for the predictor was small and suggested that for each one-unit increase in the perceived relevance of lack of funding, there is likely to be 50% increase in the likelihood of a school identifying as non-RAMP, which implied a one-to-one ratio.

Table 4.

*Forward Logistic Regression Analysis of Macro-Level Predictors of RAMP versus non-RAMP Status*

	<i>B</i>	<i>Wald</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Odds ratio	95% C.I.	
						Lower	Upper
Lack of funding for curriculum materials	.382	21.98	1	$p < .0001$	1.465	1.249	1.719

### **Cross Validation and Hierarchical Logistic Regression**

Since forward logistic regression uses likelihood statistics to determine what variables are included and excluded from the model, additional logistic regression analyses were conducted to cross-validate the results. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013)

recommended the use of cross-validation to avoid misinterpreting the exclusion of a predictor when a statistical method (e.g., forward logistic regression) is used.

To cross-validate and compare models hierarchically, I used sequential logistic regression and entered the macro-level and micro-level models separately at each step in SPSS, *Regression, Binary Logistic, Enter*. After removing outliers and missing cases, 314 cases were analyzed. I entered the macro-level variables first due to the increased significance of the micro-level variables in the other analyses. The sequential logistic regression indicated an improved model fit when micro-level predictors were added (-2 Log likelihood = 340.090) and correctly classified 72% of the cases, a 7% improvement over the macro-level model (65%). Both forward logistic regression and sequential/direct logistic regression suggested an improvement in model fit and significance when the micro-level variables were included.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I performed direct, forward, and sequential logistic regression analyses to address the research questions. Logistic regression results indicated that the combined micro-and macro-level model fit better than the macro-level or micro-level individual model analyses. The micro/macro combined model demonstrated a small increase over the micro-level only model in correctly classifying cases.

The micro-level predictors student-to-school counselor ratio, lack of support amongst teachers, lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement, and lack of willingness from teachers to serve on the advisory council significantly predicted the RAMP status of a school. The results suggested that school counselors'

perceived relevance of other stakeholder support is an important predictor of RAMP status.

There was a significant model fit for the exclusively macro-level model. Forward logistic regression selected the variable, perceived relevance of lack of funding for curriculum materials, and eliminated the remaining macro predictors (e.g., community setting, lack of funding for technology). However, controlling for community setting improved the combined model with a higher percentage of cases accurately predicted and a lower -2 log likelihood (model fit).

The hierarchical analysis of the two models (micro and macro) indicated that the micro-level model is a slightly better predictor of the RAMP status of a school based on the lower -2 Log-likelihood and the higher percentage of cases correctly classified. Moreover, the micro-level predictor, lack of willingness of teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum, was the strongest overall predictor. Based on the forward logistic regression analyses, the combined model had the lowest -2 Log-likelihood and correctly classified 70% of cases, an improvement over the separate micro-level and macro-level models.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

#### Summary

School counseling practice is inextricably linked to ever-changing societal, political, and educational landscapes. Influenced by the 1980's accountability movement in public education, school counseling leaders developed standards-based comprehensive school counseling programs (Gysbers & Henderson, 1988). School counselors support student development within three primary domains: career and college, academic, and social/emotional. Responding to the federal mandate, No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002), the ASCA (2003) standardized practice further via the ASCA National Model framework. Shortly thereafter, the ASCA introduced the Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) designation to reward schools exemplifying best practice (ASCA, 2003).

As educational leaders and student advocates, school counselors are most efficacious when providing comprehensive programming within the recommended scope of practice (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Ernst et al., 2017; Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2009; Mullen & Lambie, 2016; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). For decades, school counseling leaders have urged practitioners to implement comprehensive programs to clarify roles and systematically provide students with equitable access to resources (ASCA, 2012; Education Trust, 2010; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Civic Enterprises, 2011; Dahir & Stone, 2007; Gysbers, 2010; Gysbers & Henderson, 2006; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Kolbert et al., 2016; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Sink, 2009). Since its original publication in 2003, the ASCA National Model has

been revised twice (ASCA, 2005, 2012) and numerous research and policy studies have been conducted to assess the Model's effectiveness. More than 30 years after Gysbers and Henderson's (1988) publication, the need for comprehensive programming still dominates school counseling literature.

School counseling researchers have found evidence of Model effectiveness and have identified myriad issues affecting practice. The path to comprehensive program delivery is beset with well-documented professional barriers. Common obstacles inhibiting best practice are related to role ambiguity (Bain, 2012; Bemak, 2000; Brott & Myers, 1999; Cinotti, 2014; Herlihy et al., 2002), role conflict (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Cinotti, 2014; Moyer, 2011; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008; Walsh et al., 2007), and administrative support (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dahir et al., 2010; Dodson, 2009; Dollarhide et al., 2007; Fye et al., 2017; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Pérusse et al., 2004). Despite the robust body of evidence correlating ASCA Model delivery to (a) positive student outcomes (Burkard et al, 2012; Carey & Dimmit, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Cronin, 2016; Dimmit & Wilkerson, 2012; Gysbers, 2010; Lapan, 2012; Lapan et al., 2006; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Lapan et al., 2014; Sink & Stroh, 2003; Sink et al., 2008; Ward, 2009; Whiston et al., 2011; Wilkerson et al, 2013); (b) increased school counselor self-efficacy (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Bodenhorn et al., 2010; Ernst et al., 2017; Mullen & Lambie, 2016); and (c) job satisfaction (Pyne, 2011), researchers continue to report widespread implementation gaps (Civic Enterprises, 2011; Fye et al., 2017; Lapan, 2012; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012). These gaps deprive students of equitable access to beneficial resources (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Education Trust,

2010; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012). Researchers studying RAMP outcomes found increases in student achievement at the elementary level (Wilkerson et al., 2013) and improved data-driven practices (Young & Kaffenberger, 2011), yet, as of April 2018, less than 500 schools nationwide have obtained the RAMP designation. Exploring school counselors' perceptions of relevant ecological-systems obstacles to achieving RAMP status, the current findings identified and offered comparative information regarding micro-level (school) and macro-level (cultural/environmental) predictors of the RAMP status of a school. In a recent study, Fye et al. (2018) studied barriers to ASCA Model implementation. To date, there is no other research disambiguating the ASCA National Model and RAMP or directly examining ecological-systems barriers to RAMP.

In the Ecological School Counseling Model (ESCM; 2014), micro-level factors are referred to as subsystems and may include staff members or a specific classroom, group, or club (McMahon et al. 2014). Macro-level factors are suprasystems (ESCM; 2014) and represent the larger ecological context (cultural/environmental). Employing the ESCM (2014) framework requires school counselors to adopt a new mindset for interpreting data and designing interventions. To explore potential ecological-systems predictors of RAMP, I performed logistic regression analysis, a method commonly used in the health science field to classify participants into one of two categories (e.g., disease or no disease) based on environmental predictors (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Drawing from prevailing themes in the extant literature, the 10 variables examined captured well-documented systemic barriers including: (a) administrative and other stakeholder involvement/support; (b) student-to-school counselor ratio; and (c) broader



environmental factors such as community setting, and perceived relevance of funding. To identify important ecological-systems predictors, I analyzed and compared three models including (a) a combined micro- and macro-level model, (b) a micro-level only model, and (c) a macro-level only model.

The current findings suggested that a combined micro-level and macro-level model was the most accurate in predicting the RAMP status of a school. Participation was classified into the larger group (non-RAMP). The five-variable combined model included one demographic variable, community setting (urban, suburban, and rural) and four additional predictors related to the perceived relevance of aspects of administrative and teacher involvement (support) in ASCA Model implementation. I conducted additional analyses to assess whether micro-level (school system) or macro-level (cultural/environmental) barriers better predicted RAMP status. It is important to note that all models (micro, macro, and combined) showed significance and were fairly accurate in predicting RAMP status, but the combined model showed an overall improvement in fit and in percentage of cases correctly classified over the isolated model analyses. Furthermore, the results demonstrated that micro-level predictors were better than macro-level predictors in determining the RAMP status of a school.

To varying degrees, each model examination strengthened the position that administrative and other stakeholder support (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Fye et al., 2017; Pérusse et al., 2004; Reiner et al., 2009), student-to-school counselor ratio (Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Cronin, 2016; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Moyer, 2011), and larger factors such as community setting and funding influence best practice (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016;

Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012). In the following sections, I discussed the findings, explored study limitations, and provided recommendations for future practice and research.

### **Ecological-Systems Barriers to RAMP**

Despite accountability standards aimed at protecting students (ASCA, 2012), researchers continue to find that students are not receiving equitable access to school counseling programs (Civic Enterprises, 2011; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012). The Ecological School Counseling Model (ESCM; 2014) offers a novel approach for (a) gathering and understanding data, and (b) designing and delivering the ASCA National Model. Conceptualizing school system and student needs cyclically is a departure from the traditional linear methods of evaluation. Just as the ESCM (2014) demonstrated how school counselors “seek to understand their students’ multiple contexts in order to better their students,” I applied the model to understand better how multiple contexts affect RAMP implementation (p. 464).

Ecological school counselors consider multiple systems when acquiring and evaluating data. Viewing outcome data and needs assessments ecologically enables school counselors to pinpoint systemic barriers to student success. In that regard, the current findings suggested that a multilevel examination of RAMP predictors offered more insight than isolating micro-level and macro-level predictors.

A preliminary analysis of the 17 variables originally selected indicated that only 10 were significant. Therefore, the combined model analysis examined the following 10 variables:

- lack of recommended student-to-school counselor ratio
- lack of support amongst teachers

- lack of willingness of teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum
- lack of willingness of teachers to serve on the advisory council
- lack of relevant training/professional development
- lack of willingness from administration to create an annual agreement
- lack of administration's understanding of best practices in the school counseling profession
- community setting (urban, suburban, rural)
- perceived relevance of lack of funding for curriculum materials
- perceived relevance of lack of funding for technology

The seven variables were selected to capture micro or school-level dimensions including: (a) lack of administrative support, (b) lack of other stakeholder support (teachers), and (c) lack of recommended student-to-school counselor ratio as relevant RAMP barriers. Figure 2. illustrates the specific variables chosen to measure other stakeholder (teacher) support through involvement, willingness, and general support. Figure 3. highlights the variables selected to measure administrative support. Three variables were selected to explore relevant macro-level or cultural/environmental barriers to RAMP attainment including community setting, and perceived relevance of lack of funding for technology, and curriculum.

Figure 2.

*Variables Capturing Other Stakeholder (teacher) Support*

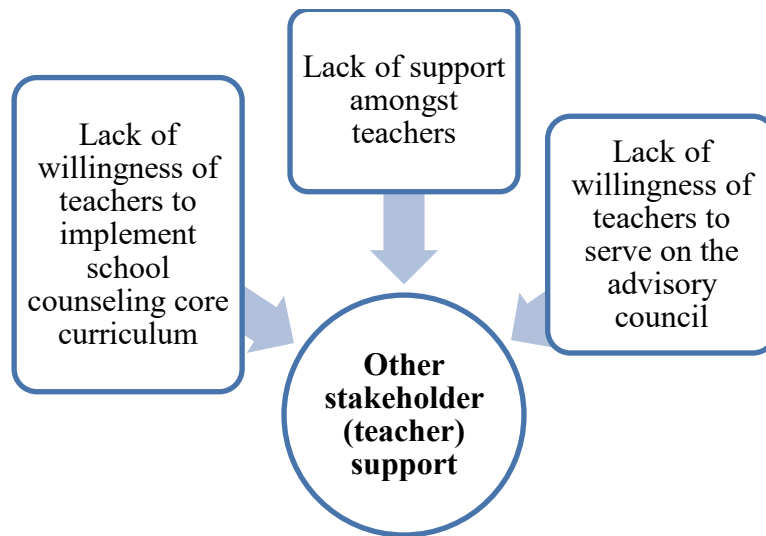
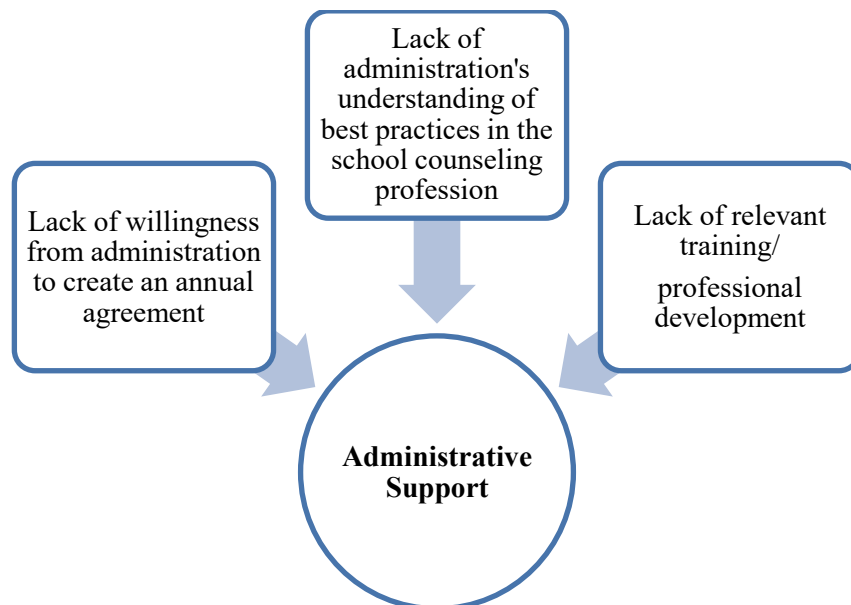


Figure 3.

*Variables Capturing Administrative Support*



Of the 10 variables analyzed, a five-variable model was generated including

- community setting (urban, suburban, rural)

- lack of support amongst teachers
- lack of willingness of teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum
- lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement
- lack of willingness from teachers to serve on the advisory council

Lack of willingness of teachers to implement the school counseling core curriculum was the most important predictor of non-RAMP status. School counselors who reported higher relevance of this barrier were more likely to report non-RAMP status. Similarly, lack of willingness from teachers to serve on the advisory council was also significant in predicting non-RAMP status. School counselors who perceived greater relevance of the barrier, teacher willingness to serve on the advisory council were more likely to identify as non-RAMP. The findings are somewhat surprising considering the prevalence of administrative impediments found in the extant literature and an apparent dearth of research examining the degree to which teacher support affects school counseling practice. The current findings can be related to Reiner and colleagues (2009) study of teacher perceptions of school counselors' responsibilities, which suggested that teachers are not clear on school counseling role and best practices. The current findings imply that school counselors perceive a lack of teacher involvement in aspects of the ASCA Model delivery and the RAMP evaluation process as inhibiting best practice.

The variable, lack of support amongst teachers, was also a significant predictor of RAMP status. Unlike the other teacher dimensions, which measured support through willingness or involvement in delivering aspects of the Model, this particular predictor measured teacher support, in general. This predictor was also distinct because an

increase in perceived relevance of teacher support indicated that the school counselor was more likely to report having achieved RAMP status. The perceived relevance of a lack of teacher support appears to be a critical contributor to obtaining RAMP status. This finding expands upon existing research related to perceptions of other stakeholders in the school system (Amatea & Clark, 2005; ATICI, 2014; Clark & Amatea, 2004; Reiner et al., 2009). Moreover, the findings are similar to Pyne's (2011) results connecting school counselor job satisfaction to comprehensive program implementation found that higher levels of job satisfaction were related not only to adequate administrative support but also to productive communication between faculty and staff members.

Based on the extant literature, it is not surprising that lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement was a significant predictor. The more relevant a school counselor perceived this obstacle, the more likely they were to report non-RAMP status. This finding supported existing research connecting administrative support to preferred job responsibilities and role and, thus, ASCA Model implementation (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Fye et al., 2017; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008). Administrators are often charged with supervising school counselors and determining job responsibilities yet lack training in best practices such as the ASCA Model (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dahir et al., 2010; Fye et al., 2017; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Pérusse et al., 2004) and school counseling ethics (Herlihy et al., 2002). The predictor lack of administrator willingness to create an annual agreement is directly related to role clarity and job responsibilities. The agreement is structured to support best practice and to define school counseling role (ASCA, 2012). It is a key component of the ASCA Model (2012) and the RAMP application process.

At the macro or (suprasystem) level, the larger community context was significant in predicting the RAMP status of a school. The findings indicated that suburban school counselors were more likely to attain the RAMP designation as compared to urban and rural school counselors. The interaction between urban and rural schools was not significant. Gagnon and Mattingly (2016) reiterated that there is widespread support for the efficacy of school counseling services but stated that, “we know little about what types of school districts provide adequate access to school counselors” (p. 1). However, Gagnon and Mattingly (2016) found that level of urbanicity had an impact on student-to-school counselor ratio and that rural schools, in particular, employed less school counselors. Mirroring inequities in the larger educational landscape (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Reardon, 2011), socioeconomic disparities deprive students of comprehensive programs (Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Parzych et al., 2019). There is limited information in the school counseling literature directly exploring community setting.

### **Exploring Micro-Level Predictors**

When examining a model including only micro-level or school level predictors, the results varied slightly from the combined model. The same seven micro-level variables were analyzed and produced a four-variable model for predicting the RAMP status of a school. The micro-level analysis generated a model including the following predictors: lack of support amongst teachers, lack of willingness of teachers to serve on the advisory council, lack of willingness from administrators to create an annual agreement, and lack of recommended student-to-school counselor ratio. The micro-level analysis statistically eliminated the variable lack of willingness of teachers to implement

school counseling core curriculum (the strongest predictor in the combined model) and included the variable lack of student-to-school counselor ratio. The overall micro-level model fit was questionable, but statistically significant in predicting RAMP status. The model was fairly accurate in classifying RAMP and non-RAMP schools.

The current findings indicate that the higher the perceived relevance of lack of student-to-school counselor ratio, the more likely a school counselor is to identify as working in a non-RAMP school. This finding supports the implication that higher caseloads prevent counselors from engaging in best practice (Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012; Moyer, 2011). Student-to-school counselor ratio is an ecological-systems barrier that could be a result of funding, socioeconomic status, and statewide mandates (larger suprasystem factors). Numerous studies including the Nebraska, Utah, and Missouri statewide examinations corroborated the need for lower student-to-school counselor ratios to improve practice (Carrell & Carrell, 2006; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012; Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012).

The micro-level model and combined model analyses confirmed that school counselors' perceived relevance of teacher and administrative support variables accurately predict the RAMP status of a school. Beyond adding the variable lack of recommended student-to-school counselor ratio and eliminating the variable lack of willingness of teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum, the analysis produced no notable differences in the significance or likelihood of the individual predictors.



## **Exploring Macro-level Barriers to RAMP**

When examining potential macro-level or suprasystem predictors including community setting and perceived relevance of lack of funding for curriculum, and technology, the generated model included one significant macro-level predictor, perceived relevance of lack of funding for curriculum. Without assessing the contribution of micro-level predictors, the predictor perceive relevance of lack of funding for curriculum alone most accurately predicted the RAMP status of a school. The inclusion of community setting in the combined model and perceived relevance of lack of funding for curriculum in the macro-level model could possibly be related to ongoing concerns about socioeconomic equity and educational services (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Gagnon & Mattingly, 2016).

## **Comparing Micro-Level and Macro-Level Predictors**

A comparison of micro- and macro-level variables demonstrated that micro-level dimensions were slightly better in predicting the RAMP status of a school. The micro-level predictors correctly classified a slightly larger percentage of cases and showed a better overall model fit.

## **Limitations**

The current study relied on subjective, self-report data. Given the anonymity of the subjects, there is no way to verify self-reported RAMP status. Since the sample derived from the ASCA Membership Directory, the results may fall short in capturing the perspectives of school counselors who are not ASCA members. Relying solely on ASCA members' perceptions raises concerns about underlying factors that affect the decision to join the ASCA. Is the decision to join the ASCA a result of salary, school funding, or

exposure to the Model in graduate work? In the absence of demographic information on ASCA members and RAMP schools (beyond location), one cannot claim with certainty that the findings accurately captured the perspective of the general population of school counselors. In addition, it is important to note that the study was designed to identify what school counselors perceive as relevant barriers to RAMP attainment. Therefore, the predictors do not actually measure the level of teacher support or administrative support. Furthermore, the perceived relevance of any variable could be based on the positive or negative experiences of the school counselor. In other words, it is possible that a school counselor who received a high level of administrative support might rate a lack of administrative support as a relevant barrier to RAMP attainment.

Another possible limitation is in instrumentation. While the School Counselor Perception Questionnaire was developed by an experienced research team including two formerly practicing school counselors, the questionnaire was not subjected to rigorous scale development including obtaining focus group input, piloting the instrument, and tests of reliability prior to administration. Readers are encouraged to use caution when generalizing the study's findings to all practicing school counselors.

### **Recommendations**

Current educational reform (ESSA; 2015) and school counseling reform efforts (Education Trust, 2010) have become increasingly ecological and systemic in nature. The ASCA Model (2012) explicitly stated that, "schools are a system, just like a family is a system" (p. 8). The goal of systemic change is clearly referenced throughout the Model. Supporting students in overcoming barriers to learning requires a culturally-responsive and comprehensive approach. Bemak and Chung (2008) challenged school

counselors to redefine their role as advocate by engaging in strategic interventions targeting both individual and systemic inequities. Holcomb-McCoy (2007) provided a framework for using the ASCA National Model to close the achievement gap. Navigating the complicated educational system requires a dynamic approach incorporating structure and theory to (a) identify needs, (b) develop programs, and (c) evaluate effectiveness. McMahon and colleagues (2014) implored school counselors to act as Ecological School Counselors (ESCs). McMahon et al. (2014) stated that, “identifying emerging challenges and recognizing them as feedback that there are systemic issues can help ESCs quickly develop interventions that are targeted at the level or levels that will result in the biggest impact” (p. 464).

In the current study, I examined school counselors’ perceptions of barriers to RAMP attainment using an ecological-systems schema. The logistic regression analyses identified relevant systemic barriers that predicted the RAMP status of a school. The results of the current study provided feedback that a combined model (including micro-level and macro-level variables) was the most accurate in predicting RAMP status. The findings reinforce the notion that factors affecting RAMP attainment occur at multiple ecological levels and provide a rationale for using the Ecological School Counseling Model (2014) to inform research and practice.

The ASCA National Model (2012) is well-established, has some empirical support, and is inconsistently utilized (Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012). According to the ASCA (2012), becoming a RAMP represents the highest standards in school counseling practice. Recent discussions regarding RAMP outcomes reveal a new direction in school counseling research and practice. In the following sections, I incorporated structure (the

ASCA Model) and theory (the ESCM) to identify possible interventions at various ecological-systems levels based on the feedback obtained from the current study.

### **Practical Implications**

Lapan (2012) reviewed various policy agenda and statewide studies and concluded that the school counseling profession can utilize existing knowledge to improve practice and, thus, close the ASCA National Model implementation gap. Prior research has substantiated the presence of persistent obstacles to best practice including role ambiguity, role conflict, and administrative support. Targeting a research agenda that reinforces the need for school counselors (Cronin, 2016), and demonstrates the efficacy of RAMPs (Wilkerson et al., 2013; Young & Kaffenberger, 2011), requires ongoing collaboration between various stakeholders to overcome barriers to best practice.

The current findings underscore the assertion that successful ASCA Model implementation occurs with support from all stakeholders. Consistent with the ASCA Model (2012) themes and the ESCM framework (2014), school counselors must collaborate, advocate, and lead efforts that promote systemic change. School counselors can use the available research to structure advocacy efforts. Moreover, school counselors, counselor educators, researchers, administrators, and local school counseling associations can partner to devise a long-term plan to systematically break down the well-documented barriers and close the gap.

**Counselor educators as capacity builders.** Dahir and Stone (2007) urged the school counseling profession and individual school counselors to develop capacity for action. The message is inherently ecological. Dahir and Stone (2007) recognized that developing this capacity requires intervention not only from individual practitioners but

also from the larger school counseling professional context. In that vein, counselor educators can lay the groundwork for ongoing evaluation by emphasizing school counselors' ethical obligation to improve practice. It is critical for future school counselors to understand that simply delivering the components of the ASCA Model is not enough. School counselors must use a variety of data to demonstrate how students are better because of school counseling programs (ASCA, 2012). Employing an ecological-systems framework relies on continuous data collection to identify and address systemic issues. Counselor educators can build capacity for a more comprehensive and systemic approach to school counseling by providing targeted training in the Ecological School Counseling Model (2014) as a theoretical framework.

School counselors-in-training could also benefit from an emphasis on how to conduct data-driven practices. Hatch and Chen-Hayes (2008) and Sink (2009) noted the need for school counselors to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to act as data-driven practitioners. To address discrepancies between professional school counselor training and actual role, counselor educators can make concerted efforts to prepare school counselors-in-training for the inconsistencies that they are likely to observe during fieldwork experiences. It may not be adequate to merely teach prospective school counselors about the role of school counselors and the Model components. Counselor educators might consider weaving opportunities to develop school specific leadership and advocacy skills into the fabric of the entire program. Infusing lessons about and strategies for remaining intentional upon entering the field could also benefit prospective school counselors.

Counselor educators can also reinforce the school counselors' role as systemic change agent by collaborating with graduate level administrative programs and teacher education programs to design opportunities for preservice school counselors, principals, and teachers to engage in interdisciplinary projects. Renowned education reformers, DuFour et al. (2008) developed the professional learning community (PLC) framework as a vehicle for ongoing, rigorous professional development. One of the core principles of the PLC framework is that teachers are taken out of isolation through structured collaboration and use of data. Counselor educators can share this and similar educational frameworks with school counselors-in-training to reinforce the importance of working collaboratively with all stakeholders. Counselor educators and other university level educators can prepare future educators to enter the field with a collaborative and ecological-systems mindset by creating ongoing opportunities for interdisciplinary work.

**Educating principals and teachers.** Leuwerke et al. (2009) found that merely providing principals with information about the ASCA National Model influenced their perceptions regarding how school counselors should allocate their time. Coordinated efforts to educate other stakeholders about school counseling role and the empirical support for the ASCA National Model (2012) can change perspectives and promote best practice. Despite large scale efforts by the ASCA, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, and the College Board's National Office for School Counselor Advocacy to conduct research and offer resources to enhance the school counselor-principal relationship, there is no structure in place to systematically educate principals about school counseling role and best practice. It is up to state and local school counseling associations, principal associations, teacher associations, and practicing

school counselors to develop a systematic process to educate administrators and teachers about the ASCA National Model (2012) and school counseling role.

**Outreach efforts.** The current study sample consisted of ASCA members. One can speculate that the decision to join ASCA is related to a desire to stay informed and improve practice. Once prospective school counselors enter the field, they will most likely have to seek out current research and professional development opportunities. Relevant professional development is not a guarantee. Practicing school counselors belonging to the ASCA and local school counseling association members could collaborate to send email blasts and research briefs to non-members. Bridging the gap between research and practice can also help school counselors to overcome barriers to best practice.

**Practicing school counselors.** School counselors can use the current findings to support and inform day-to-day advocacy efforts. Using current research to facilitate productive conversations with administrators and other stakeholders could lead to strategic, intentional, and solution-focused efforts. School counselors can share the current study findings to educate teachers. Teachers may not realize the extent to which they can contribute to or impede ASCA Model implementation.

### **Future Research**

The current study supported the existing body of research examining barriers to best practice and the ASCA National Model implementation. Since the current study was exploratory, further investigation into relevant barriers to RAMP attainment is warranted. To gain a deeper understanding of the challenges that school counselors face requires

more information about the role of administrators and teachers in supporting RAMP attainment.

The findings of the current study are limited to merely classifying participants in one of two categories based on predictors and offer little in the way of understanding why teacher involvement and support were predictors of RAMP status. Further studies are needed to sufficiently understand the underlying mechanisms affecting teachers and school counselors as related to the RAMP process. Bemak and Chung (2008) posited that school counseling practice is hindered by school counselor tendencies (e.g. Nice Counselor Syndrome) and other stakeholder (teachers and principals) confusion about school counseling role and best practices. The authors asserted that teachers and administrators are likely to view school counseling services as supplemental and supportive to the teacher/administrative agenda. Bemak and Chung (2008) also suggested that school counselors' penchant for maintaining harmony through relationship-building strategies (NCS; 2008) is an obstacle to strategic collaboration and advocacy designed to promote systemic change. Additional research examining characteristics of NCS as related to garnering teacher support and involvement in the RAMP process could help to structure school counselor training and advocacy efforts. In general, there is a dearth of research examining teacher role in supporting or impeding ASCA Model implementation and RAMP attainment.

The current study explored if school counselors' perceived relevance of barriers related to other stakeholder support (subsystem) and community setting and funding (suprasystem) predicted the RAMP status of a school. Further research examining school counselor characteristics that predict the RAMP status of a school could offer additional



insight. Research regarding school counselor leadership characteristics and self-efficacy could unveil critical barriers to RAMP attainment.

Much of the existing research has focused on administrative barriers to best practice. Therefore, it was not surprising that administrative dimensions were predictors of the RAMP status of a school. Researchers have suggested that principals need more information about school counselor role, responsibilities, and the ASCA Model. Targeted research examining what factors, if any, distinguish RAMP school principals from non-RAMP school principals could contribute to the existing body of literature on administrative support. Furthermore, researchers can use qualitative inquiry to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of RAMP school counselors.

Without consistent federal or statewide school counseling mandates, there is wide variation in the ASCA National Model delivery (Lapan, Gysbers et al., 2012). Numerous studies have demonstrated the efficacy of the Model; however, researchers have relied on school counselor self-reports to assess the level of ASCA Model implementation (Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012). Studying RAMP schools provides researchers with empirical evidence of high levels of Model implementation and adds rigor to the current research agenda. Schools achieving the RAMP designation exemplify best practice and the highest levels of ASCA Model implementation. The profession's research agenda appears to be moving toward studying RAMP outcomes and programs.



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## Appendix A

1. What is your gender identity?
  - Male
  - Female
  - Another gender identity, please specify
  - Prefer not to answer
  
2. What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Select all that apply.)
  - American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Other
  - Prefer not to answer
  
3. What is your age in years?
  
4. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed? If you are currently enrolled, please mark the highest degree received.
  - Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Doctorate degree
  - Other
  
5. What year did you attain the degree that you listed above?
  
6. Approximately how many credits was your most advanced degree?
  
6. Was the program in which you graduated from CACREP accredited?
  
7. What school level do you work in?
  - Elementary/Primary
  - Middle/Junior
  - High/Secondary
  - Combined K-12
  - Other
  
8. What region of the country do you currently serve as a school counselor?
  - Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota)

Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New England, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont)

South (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington D.C., and West Virginia).

West (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming)

9. How would you best describe the school setting within which you work?

Urban

Suburban

Rural

10. How would you best describe the institution within which you work?

Public

Charter school

Charter school-online

Private-religious

Private-non-religious

11. How many students are on your caseload?

0-100

101-200

201-300

301-400

401-500

501-600

601-700

701+

12. How many years have you served as a school counselor at your current school?

13. What is the total number of years of experience you have as a school counselor?

14. On what basis are you currently employed?

Permanent (full-time)

Permanent (part-time)

Temporary (full-time)

Temporary (part-time)

15. Is your school counseling program a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP)?

16. Is your RAMP designation current?

Yes

[ ] No

16. If your Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) designation is current, what year did your program receive the RAMP designation? If you do not know, please proceed to the next question.

17. If your school counseling program was a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP), but the RAMP designation is no longer current, what year did your program last receive the RAMP designation? If you do not know, please proceed to the next question.

If you were to implement a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) at the school or schools in which you work, what is the degree to which you perceive the following variables as a relevant obstacle:

**18. Lack of:**

Relevant training/professional development.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Administration's understanding of best practices in the school counseling profession.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Time to implement a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Involvement, cooperation, and support among parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Referral resources to utilize with students, staff, and/or families.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Physical space for school meetings.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Teachers' effectiveness in implementing school counseling core curriculum.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Recommended school counselor/student ratio (1:250)

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Time to assess the impact of services/programs.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Appropriate location for school counseling office.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

## **18. Lack of support:**

Amongst teachers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Among school counseling colleagues within school.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

From School Counseling Director.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

From administration.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Staff to assist with administrative duties (e.g., student registration services, technical support).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

From school nurse.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                                      2                                      3                                      4                                      5

**19. Lack of supervision from:**

Administration.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Peers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

School Counseling Director.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**20. Lack of willingness from:**

Teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Administrators to create an annual agreement.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Teachers to serve on the advisory council.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Parents to serve on the advisory council.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**21. Time spent on:**

Inappropriate duties.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Clerical tasks.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Coordinating testing.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Administering make-up tests.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Administering individual, cognitive, aptitude or achievement tests.



*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**Monitoring duties (e.g., bus duty, cafeteria duty).**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**Scheduling.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**Registering new students.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**Performing disciplinary actions.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**Covering classes when teachers are absent.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**Maintaining students' academic records.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**Preparation of individual education plans or 504s.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**Monitoring attendance.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Data entry.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Coordinating non-school counseling related events/activities.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Processing college applications.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Processing scholarship applications.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Participating in various school committees.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Providing long-term therapy.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

## **22. Lack of funding for:**

Technology.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Curriculum materials.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

College and career readiness programs (e.g., Naviance, Discover).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

### **23. Lack of confidence in:**

Using technology for data collection and analysis.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Conducting classroom lessons (e.g., academic, personal/social, career).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Conducting classroom management.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Leading committees.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Advocating for typically disadvantaged student groups.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Individual student planning (e.g., academic, personal/social, career).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Conducting individual counseling (e.g., academic, personal/social, career).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Conducting group counseling (e.g., academic, personal/social, career).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Conducting in-service training or workshops for teachers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Conducting workshops for parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Implementing school counseling core curriculum.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Identifying and demonstrating benefits of advocacy with school and community stakeholders.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Developing a mission statement that aligns with the school, district and state mission.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Using current and emerging technologies.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Using student data.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Resolving ethical dilemmas.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Facilitating parent/teacher conferences.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Using data to establish goals and activities to close the achievement, opportunity, and/or information gap.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Consulting with teachers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Consulting with parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**24. Lack of opportunity to:**

Access classroom time to conduct school counseling lessons.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Excuse children from instructional time for group counseling sessions.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Conduct individual counseling (e.g., academic, personal/social, career).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Conduct in-service training or workshops for teachers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Conduct workshops for parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Implement school counseling core curriculum.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Facilitate group meetings with teachers and parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Use data to establish goals and activities to close the achievement, opportunity, and/or information gap.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Collaborate and network with community agencies.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Develop calendars.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Consult with teachers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Consult with parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Facilitating parent/teacher conferences.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

## **18. Lack of communication from:**

**Administration.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1            2            3            4            5

**School counseling colleagues.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1            2            3            4            5

**Teachers.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1            2            3            4            5

**Parents.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1            2            3            4            5

**School nurse.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1            2            3            4            5

**School Counseling Director.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1            2            3            4            5

19. What additional variables do you perceive as relevant obstacles when implementing a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) at the school or schools in which you work?



## Appendix B

What is your gender identity?

- Male
  - Female
  - Another gender identity, please specify
  - Prefer not to answer
2. What is your racial or ethnic identification? (Select all that apply.)
- American Indian or Alaska Native
  - Asian
  - Black or African American
  - Hispanic or Latino
  - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Other
  - Prefer not to answer

3. What is your age in years?

4. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed? If you are currently enrolled, please mark the highest degree received.

- Bachelor's degree
  - Master's degree
  - Doctorate degree
  - Other
5. What year did you attain the degree that you listed above?
6. Approximately how many credits was your most advanced degree?
6. Was the program in which you graduated from CACREP accredited?

7. What school level do you work in?

- Elementary/Primary
  - Middle/Junior
  - High/Secondary
  - Combined K-12
  - Other
8. What region of the country do you currently serve as a school counselor?
- Midwest (Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota)

- Northeast (Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New England, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont)
- South (Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington D.C., and West Virginia).
- West (Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming)

9. How would you best describe the school setting within which you work?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

10. How would you best describe the institution within which you work?

- Public
- Charter school
- Charter school-online
- Private-religious
- Private-non-religious

11. How many students are on your caseload?

- 0-100
- 101-200
- 201-300
- 301-400
- 401-500
- 501-600
- 601-700
- 701+

12. How many years have you served as a school counselor at your current school?

13. What is the total number of years of experience you have as a school counselor?

14. On what basis are you currently employed?

- Permanent (full-time)
- Permanent (part-time)
- Temporary (full-time)
- Temporary (part-time)

15. Is your school counseling program a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP)? If yes, is your RAMP designation current?

- Yes
- No

16. If your Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) designation is current, what year did your program receive the RAMP designation?

17. If your school counseling program was a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP), but the RAMP designation is no longer current, what year did your program last receive the RAMP designation?

When implementing a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) at the school or schools in which you work, what is the degree to which you experienced the following variables as a relevant obstacle:

**20. Lack of:**

Relevant training/professional development.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Administration's understanding of best practices in the school counseling profession.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Time to implement a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Involvement, cooperation, and support among parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Referral resources to utilize with students, staff, and/or families.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Physical space for school meetings.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Teachers' effectiveness in implementing school counseling core curriculum.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Recommended school counselor/student ratio (1:250)**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Time to assess the impact of services/programs.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Appropriate location for school counseling office.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

## **21. Lack of support:**

**Amongst teachers.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**Among school counseling colleagues within school.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**From School Counseling Director.**

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

From administration.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Staff to assist with administrative duties (e.g., student registration services, technical support).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

From school nurse.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

2                                      2                                      3                                      4                                      5

**22. Lack of supervision from:**

Administration.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Peers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

School counseling director.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

**23. Lack of willingness from:**

Teachers to implement school counseling core curriculum.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Administrators to create an annual agreement.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Teachers to serve on the advisory council.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Parents to serve on the advisory council.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**24. Time spent on:**

Inappropriate duties.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Clerical tasks.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Coordinating testing.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Administering make-up tests.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Administering individual, cognitive, aptitude or achievement tests.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Monitoring duties (e.g., bus duty, cafeteria duty).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Scheduling.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Registering new students.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Performing disciplinary actions.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Covering classes when teachers are absent.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Maintaining students' academic records.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Preparation of individual education plans or 504s.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Monitoring attendance.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Data entry.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Coordinating non-school counseling related events/activities.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Processing college applications.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Processing scholarship applications.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Participating in various school committees.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Providing long-term therapy.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

## **25. Lack of funding for:**

Technology.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Curriculum materials.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

College and career readiness programs (e.g., Naviance, Discover).



*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

## **26. Lack of confidence in:**

Using technology for data collection and analysis.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Conducting classroom lessons (e.g., academic, personal/social, career).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Conducting classroom management.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Leading committees.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Advocating for typically disadvantaged student groups.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Individual student planning (e.g., academic, personal/social, career).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Conducting individual counseling (e.g., academic, personal/social, career).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                      2                      3                      4                      5

Conducting group counseling (e.g., academic, personal/social, career).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Conducting in-service training or workshops for teachers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Conducting workshops for parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Implementing school counseling core curriculum.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Identifying and demonstrating benefits of advocacy with school and community stakeholders.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Developing a mission statement that aligns with the school, district and state mission.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Using current and emerging technologies.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1            2            3            4            5

Using student data.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Resolving ethical dilemmas.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Facilitating parent/teacher conferences.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Using data to establish goals and activities to close the achievement, opportunity, and/or information gap.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Consulting with teachers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Consulting with parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**27. Lack of opportunity to:**

Access classroom time to conduct school counseling lessons.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Excuse children from instructional time for group counseling sessions.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Conduct individual counseling (e.g., academic, personal/social, career).

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Conduct in-service training or workshops for teachers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Conduct workshops for parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Implement school counseling core curriculum.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Facilitate group meetings with teachers and parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Use data to establish goals and activities to close the achievement, opportunity, and/or information gap.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Collaborate and network with community agencies.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Develop calendars.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Consult with teachers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Consult with parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Facilitating parent/teacher conferences.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

**28. Lack of communication from:**

Administration.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

School counseling colleagues.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Teachers.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

Parents.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

School nurse.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

School Counseling Director.

*(1=not at all relevant, 2=somewhat relevant, 3=moderately relevant, 4=very relevant, 5= extremely relevant, N/A)*

1                    2                    3                    4                    5

29. What additional variables do you perceive as relevant obstacles when implementing a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) at the school or schools in which you work?

## Appendix C

Dear Professional School Counselor,

I am a master's student in the Department of Counselor Education at Duquesne University and a prospective professional school counselor. We would like to invite you to participate in a research study that will investigate school counselors' perceptions of relevant obstacles to implement a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP).

You are only asked to participate if you are *currently employed as a school counselor*.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a School Counselors' Perceptions Questionnaire (SCPQ). You will also be asked to complete some basic demographic information (e.g., how many years you have served as a school counselor, gender identity). The questionnaire's estimated time of completion is approximately 10-15 minutes. The completion of this instrument will be the only request made of you. Duquesne University's Institutional Review Board has approved this research study (IRB # [redacted]).

Prior to the beginning of the questionnaire, you will be asked to read the Informed Consent Document. Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide to participate after reading this invitation, you can access the survey from the following link:

We value your input and hope that you will consider participating in this study. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,  
Derron Hilts, B.S.  
Counselor Education Student  
Duquesne University, School of Education

Jered Kolbert, Ph.D., LPC, NCC  
Duquesne University  
Department of Counseling, Psychology & Special Education

Kristi Kratsa, M.S. Ed., NCC  
Counselor Education Student  
Duquesne University, School of Education