ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: AN INVESTIGATION OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS'
                                   ROLE IN PROMOTING COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE
                                   IN HIGH SCHOOLS

                                   Marte Erin Ostvik-de Wilde, Doctor Philosophy, 2012

Dissertation directed by: Dr. Courtland C. Lee, Department of Counseling, Higher
                                   Education, and Special Education

High school students face numerous challenges on the path to college, including

aspirational barriers, and obstacles related to application and enrollment. College-going

culture, which is essential for all students' success, is conceptualized in this study as

consisting of the following components: beliefs and expectations of key stakeholders,

specific activities and programs that exist in the schools, and measurable outcomes that

exist across and amongst student populations. This study utilizes data from the High

School Longitudinal Study (2009) to examine the relationship between school

counselors' beliefs and behaviors, and how they relate to certain elements of college-

going culture in high schools. Results from conducting Logistic Regression Analyses and

Multiple Regression Analyses suggest that as school counselors' perceptions of

principals' expectations of students increases, the likelihood is that counselors'

expectations of students will increase. Results also indicated that school counselors' high

expectations for students were a significant predictor of a college access program in schools. Furthermore, school counselors who placed top priority on assisting students with postsecondary schooling preparation were more likely to spend a greater percentage of time engaged in college readiness activities.

AN INVESTIGATION OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS' ROLE IN PROMOTING
COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE IN HIGH SCHOOLS

By

Marte Erin Ostvik-de Wilde

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland, College Park, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
2012

Advisory Committee:

Dr. Courtland Lee, Chair
Dr. Julia Bryan
Dr. Ellen Fabian
Dr. Margaretha Lucas
Dr. Donna L. Wiseman

Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking my advisor, Dr. Courtland Lee, for his incredible mentorship. His guidance and support, from Day 1 of my doctoral program through the end of this dissertation process, allowed me to see the light at the end of the tunnel and to keep moving. It was a great privilege to be able to work with him, both as my advisor, and the chair of this dissertation.

I would also like to thank Dr. Julia Bryan for her research expertise, encouragement, and help. She truly went above and beyond the committee member duties, and I will always be grateful. Thank you very much to Dr. Margaretha Lucas, Dr. Ellen Fabian, and Dean Donna Wiseman, for serving on my committee during an incredibly hectic time, and providing me with their feedback and support. I would also like to thank my fellow Counselor Education PhD students: we have been through a lot and I appreciate all of your advice, encouragement, and friendship.

Thank you to my family. Pappa, thank you for exemplifying the benefits of hard work and achievement. Mamma, thank you for teaching me the importance of having compassion for others in the pursuit of personal achievement. I would like to thank my wonderful siblings, Elin and Bjørnulf. I am so appreciative of the friendship we now have as adults, and the fact that I will always have people in my life who know the ins and outs of my personal history.

And, of course, I need to thank my husband, Ari, who has been with me from the start. He saw something in me that I could not and pushed me to consider pursing a PhD, and then provided unwavering support throughout the whole process. I am

convinced that I would not have finished this without his incredible belief in my abilities and his willingness to keep pushing me forward toward the end goal.

Thank you to all of the amazing children and adolescents I have met in the schools I have worked in: you give my research names, faces, and real-life story connections. I hope I will always research and teach with all of you in mind.

And finally, my last, overarching thank you is to the wonderful counselors in my life. Your work inspires me. My passion for our profession exists because I believe what you are doing out there matters.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The number of students who enrolled and completed two-year or four-year college degrees in the United States, among younger age groups (25-34 years old), has fallen across all student groups, as compared to 29 countries throughout the world. In fact, the United States college completion worldwide ranking for younger adults has dropped substantially in the past two decades to 7th place, from its coveted 2nd place position in the mid 1990's (OECD, 2011). Furthermore, while the achievement gap and dropout gap demonstrates the severity of disparity across socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity within the K-12 educational systems, postsecondary enrollment and completion statistics are also equally dismal. In terms of race/ethnicity, college enrollment rates vary greatly: as compared to their White, wealthier counterparts, African-American and Latino(a) students, as well as students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, are significantly underrepresented in the postsecondary educational arena (Synder & Dillow, 2011).

Postsecondary education is critically important for youth in the United States because it can open up a variety of job opportunities and increases salaries over a lifetime, as opposed to only earning a high school degree (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Weinstein & Savitz-Romer, 2009). However, numerous college access barriers exist for students, including those related to socioeconomic status, first-generation status, or general lack of knowledge associated with the college application process (Farmer-Hinton & McCullough, 2008; Knight-Diop, 2010; McDonough, 2005). The extensive number of potential barriers, the large college enrollment gap and

1

completion gap, and the declining state of US college-going rates among the young adult population indicate the ever-growing importance of promoting and increasing college-going culture in high schools. The creation, implementation, and maintenance of college-going culture in schools is based on educators' high expectations for all students, as well as the underlying assumption that the purpose for college-going culture is to close the postsecondary attainment gap and increase overall college-going rates.

Though educational reform efforts, such as *Race to the Top*, argue that the success of the entire P-20 educational system pipeline is on all stakeholders collaborating and partnering with one another in order to best prepare students for postsecondary success, secondary school educators, in particular, often hold the greatest responsibility (Lapan & Harrington, 2008; U.S. Dept. of Ed, 2009; Weinstein & Savitz-Romer, 2009). It is during this critical time that secondary school educators, including high school counselors, have an important opportunity to shape the school environment to reflect the principles and expectations of a college-going culture. Professional school counselors, in particular, are ideally equipped to impact college-going culture due to their unique training, policies and standards for practice (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; McDonough, 2005).

The appropriateness of the role of a school counselor in building college-going culture is evident throughout school counseling literature and standards for practice. The Education Trust developed the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI) in the 1990's, which represented a shift in the manner by which school counselors were trained in the United States. TSCI charged counselor education

programs to prepare school counselors with skills in leadership, advocacy and

collaboration. In 1997 The DeWitt Wallace Fund backed grants aimed at changing

counselor training programs through a variety of means: competitive selection and

recruitment of candidates; reforming curriculum, field experiences, and instruction;

and building partnerships with school systems and state departments of education

(EdTrust, 2009a). According to The Education Trust, transformed school counselors

should work for social justice and issues of equity, while promoting systemic change,

in order for all students to have "access to a high-quality education" that opens doors

for future success (EdTrust, 2009b, p. 2). Ideally, TSCI supports the notion that

transformed school counselors have high expectations for all students, approach

programming from a systems perspective, and work to close unjust achievement gaps

that exist across racial/ethnic and socioeconomic lines. Well-trained school

counselors also focus on outcomes and the changes that are occurring as a result of

the school counseling program, as opposed to solely tracking and reporting activities

they are performing (House, Martin, & Ward, 2002). Transformed school counselors

can play an important role in schools by promoting students' access to college by

advocating for rigorous academic curriculum, encouraging high expectations for

college enrollment and completion, and communicating essential college information

and resources to all students and families.

Furthermore, The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related

Educational Programs (CACREP)'s 2009 standards indicates that school counseling

students should be able to "implement strategies and activities" so that K-12 students

are ready for "postsecondary…opportunities" (CACREP, 2008, p. 44). CACREP also

maintains that school counseling graduate programs should provide evidence that students are able to develop and conduct programs related to college counseling (CACREP, 2008). While CACREP does not necessarily emphasize building college access for students, The National Office for School Counselor Advocacy does do so by maintaining that the "leadership value of school counselors" is to promote student achievement and college readiness through systemic efforts (2008).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between school counselors' top priority, use of time in college readiness activities, expectations of students and the presence of certain elements of college-going culture. Using the High School Longitudinal Study (2009), this study will help develop an understanding of the relationship between school counselors' beliefs and behaviors, and the presence of a college-going culture. It will discuss the manner by which school counselors as social change agents, with training in teaming and collaboration, are uniquely suited for developing and supporting programming aimed at increasing college-going culture.

Therefore, this research study examines the following research questions:

Research Question 1: Do school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities differ depending on the urbanicity of the school where they are employed?

Research Question 2: Do school counselors' expectations of students differ depending on school counselors' top priority, use of time in

4

college readiness activities, and perceptions of principal's expectations of students?

Research Question 3: Do school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities differ based on school counselors' top priority and expectations of students?

Research Question 4: Does the presence of a formal college access program in high school differ depending on school counselors' top priority and use of time/activities in college readiness activities, and school counselors' and principals' expectations of students?

Based on previous research, the hypotheses of this study is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Urbanicity of the school locale will have a significant relationship to school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Thomas, Anderson & Li, 2008).

Hypothesis 2: School counselors who spend the greatest percentage of time in a school year assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications, who place greatest priority on helping students plan for and prepare for postsecondary schooling, and who perceive their principal has higher expectations for students will have higher expectations for students than those who do not (Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2009; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002; Weinstein & Savitz-Romer, 2009).

Hypothesis 3: School counselors who spent the greatest percentage of

5

time in a school year assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications will place top priority on assisting students with college readiness, and have higher expectations for students than those who do not (Lapan & Harrington, 2008; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002; Perkins, Oescher, & Ballard, 2008).

Hypothesis 4: Formal programs that encourage students not considering college to do so are significantly more likely to be present where school counselors spend a greater percentage of time assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications, prioritize assisting students with college readiness, and have higher expectations for students. Furthermore, formal programs that encourage students not considering college to do so are significantly more likely to be present where school counselors perceive that their principal has higher expectations for students (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; McDonough, 2004, 2005, 2008).

Hypothesis one, which stipulates that the urbanicity of the school locale where school counselors are employed will have a significant relationship to school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities, is posited because previous studies have indicated that school counselors who work in low-resource, urban schools may not prioritize college readiness or spend time in college readiness activities due to the need to emphasize standardized testing and other issues related to the urban context (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Thomas, Anderson & Li, 2008).

Hypothesis two, which indicate that school counselors who place the greatest priority and spent the greatest percentage of time on college readiness, and perceive their principal has higher expectations for students will relate to school counselors' higher expectations of students, is hypothesized because previous studies have indicated that expectations and priorities of educators impacts environments and activities of schools (Bryan et al., 2009; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002; Weinstein & Savitz-Romer, 2009).

Hypothesis three, which stipulates that school counselors who place the greatest priority on college readiness and have higher expectations for students will spend the greatest percentage of time on college readiness, is posited because previous studies have indicated that beliefs and attitudes influence school counselors' use of time and behaviors (Lapan & Harrington, 2008; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002; Perkins, Oescher, & Ballard, 2008).

Hypothesis four, which indicates that formal programs that encourage students not considering college to do so are significantly more likely to be present where school counselors spend a greater percentage of time assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications, prioritize assisting students with college readiness, have higher expectations for students and perceive that their principal has higher expectations for students, is hypothesized because the literature states that school counselors' activities influence the environments of schools. The presence of college-going culture is especially important for students who have determined that they are not worthy of college attendance (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; McDonough, 2004, 2008).

Significance of the Study

The link between the presence of college going-culture, and the activities, expectations, and priorities of schools counselors, is intriguing from a school counseling perspective because it taps into the strengths of the profession. As previously mentioned, school counselors are equipped with the skills to build partnerships amongst teachers, parents and families, administration, and staff in order to promote a positive climate. Transformed school counselors are trained to work utilizing a multiculturally competent, equity-driven framework, which bolsters their ability to engage key stakeholders, and to facilitate academic achievement and postsecondary success for all students (Arredondo, Brown, Jones, Locke, Sanchez, & Stadler, 1996; Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). Furthermore, transformed school counselors are trained to operate systemically at all levels: classroom, grade, family, school, community, district, state, national, and global. This understanding of and adherence to systemic counseling translates to an ability to build college-going culture at the school level, as well as multiple other layers (NOSCA, 2010).

Due to the development of stringent educational policy and school reform efforts such as No Child Left Behind, school counselors are held increasingly more accountable for their students' success. This is particularly true in urban school systems where the achievement gap between white, middle class students and diverse, low-income students is pervasive. School counselors must be proactive leaders, advocates for students, and confront inequities that exist within the educational system (House, Martin, & Ward, 2002).

Given this context and increased accountability, the Council for the

Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) maintain strict ethical, clinical, and curricular guidelines for School Counseling programs (ASCA, 2004). Due to the creation of strong supervisory models and strict guidelines on coursework, school counselors' training equips them with a strong set of skills aimed at increasing college-going culture through the consideration of students from a holistic and systemic perspective. It is therefore imperative that counselors seek opportunities to increase the college application, enrollment, and completion rates of youth from culturally diverse backgrounds through innovative means.

Definition of Terms

This study aims to investigate the role that school counselors play in elements of college-going culture. Therefore, for this study, the following terms need to be defined:

College-Going Culture: For the purposes of this study, this term refers to McDonough's (2008, p. 2), definition: "All students are prepared for a full range of postsecondary options through structural, motivational, and experiential college preparatory opportunities." It consists of the following components: beliefs and expectations of key stakeholders, specific activities and programs that exist in the schools, and measurable outcomes that exist across and amongst student populations. College-going culture is further defined by using some of the nine core principles associated with the creation, implementation, and maintenance college-going culture in K-12 schools: "college talk, clear expectations, information and resources, comprehensive counseling mode, testing and curriculum, faculty involvement, family

involvement, college partnerships, and articulation" (McDonough, 2005). These principles will be further defined and outlined in Chapter 2.

School counselors' use of time in college readiness activities: The High School Longitudinal Study (2009) incorporated nine service areas school counselors could work in during the academic school year. The area relevant to this study is college readiness: the item in the HSLS (2009) asks school counselors to indicate the percentage of time they spend assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications.

School counselors' top priority: The ASCA National Model recommends school counselors' operate within three domains: academic, career/college, and personal/social. Accordingly, the High School Longitudinal Study (2009) incorporated four priority areas for school counselors. These four areas included helping students: 1) plan and prepare for their work roles after high school, 2) with personal growth and development, 3) plan and prepare for postsecondary schooling, 4) improve their achievement in high school (ASCA, 2004; HSLS, 2009). For the purposes of this study, school counselors' priorities will be limited to an investigation of the differences between school counselors who identify their top priority as planning and preparing for postsecondary school (i.e. college readiness) versus those who choose one of the other three priorities.

Urbanicity: The High School Longitudinal Study (2009) defines the urbanicity of the school locale as falling into the following four categories: urban, suburban, town, and rural. For the purposes of this study, urbanicity refers to a school that is defined as "urban" versus a school that is defined as "suburban, town, or rural."

Urban refers to a larger or midsize central city based on two qualifiers: territory is within an urbanized area and inside a principal city. An urban school can be in a large, midsize, or small city based on the corresponding populations: 250,000 or more, less than 250,00 and greater than or equal to 100,000 or less than 100,000. Suburban schools are in territories outside of the principal city, while towns and rural schools are outside the urbanized area completely. These categories are derived from the Census tabulations (Ingels, Pratt, Herget, Burns, Dever, Ottem,…LoGerfo, 2011).

School Counselors' and Principals' expectations of students: School counselors' expectations of students and school counselors' perceptions of principals' expectations of students will be discussed and analyzed in this study. The High School Longitudinal Study (2009) incorporated the following six items when determining school counselor and principal expectations: (1) set high standards for students' learning, (2) believe all students can do well, (3) have given up on some students, (4) care only about smart students, (5) expect very little from students, (6) work hard to make sure all students learn. Expectations are defined as a composite scale of those six items.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the existing research on college access for students in the United States, highlighting the need for educators, particularly school counselors, to increase the presence of college-going culture in high schools. It also outlined the purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses, and the key terms that will be used in the study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of known frameworks and specific factors that contribute to college-going culture. It reviews gaps in college-going, as well as multiple college access barriers that exist in US educational systems. Subsequently, the chapter focuses on the role of transformed school counselors in enhancing opportunities for students' postsecondary education. It outlines the role of school counselors in creating, implementing, and maintaining college-going culture as it relates to counselors' priorities and use of time in college readiness activities.

Overview of College-Going Culture

This section will describe college-going culture by briefly defining culture, generally, and giving an overview of school culture, climate and school norms. It will synthesize the literature on college-going culture and the factors associated with it, while placing special emphasis on McDonough's college-going culture model (2004, 2008), which is the conceptual framework for the variables in this study.

School Culture and School Climate

Generally, *culture* can be defined as a set of beliefs and assumptions that explain why people operate the way they do; an "unofficial pattern," of sorts, that "seems to permeate everything" (Deal & Peterson, 2009, p. 6). Moreover, culture can also be explained as groups who "identify or associate" with each other based on similar backgrounds, or shared "purposes or needs" (Lee, 2006). Schools, specifically, often operate as microcosms to the "real world" and have separate and

complex cultures that can range from healthy to toxic. A healthy culture and positive school climate develops and thrives based on a strong vision shared by all school members, as well as contributing factors such as school connectedness, social relationships, and academic outcomes (Zullig, Huebner, & Patton, 2011). Certain key cultural elements can also shape school climate, including school norms, beliefs of school members, relationships and communication, and shared values and purposes (Borman & Overman, 2004; Deal & Peterson, 2009; Leithwood, 2010).

School norms are unwritten rules, ranging from positive to dysfunctional, that comprise the culture and climate of a school building. These norms are based on assumptions, values, and beliefs of a school. Using "cultural organizational strategies", such as rituals and traditions, schools develop and maintain positive school norms, which in turn, builds trust. The process of telling stories, setting high expectations for students, and reinforcing the unwritten norms of a school, and then knowing the positive traditions will continue to occur, are essential to building trust in schools. Building and maintaining positive culture based on communication and relationships are characteristics of high-achieving schools and districts (Deal & Peterson, 2009). Focusing only on the successes of those students deemed "high-achieving" and ignoring the needs and successes of other students can perpetuate the negative mission or purpose in schools. Subsequently, a culture begins in which schools and districts that are high-performing create a cycle of success based on shared beliefs, values, and purposes. Conversely, poor-performing schools do the opposite and create a cycle of failure (Leithwood, 2010).

One particular model, known as the school community model, built positive

culture by promoting resiliency of students (Borman & Overman, 2004). The school

community model outcomes included improving students' engagement in academics,

sense of efficaciousness in math, and self-esteem. This resilience-promoting model

also helped students develop much stronger and supportive relationships with

teachers. It emphasized educators attending to the psychosocial needs of students,

promoting school engagement, and creating school-based initiatives that protected

students from challenging circumstances in homes, schools, and communities

(Borman & Overman, 2004). The role of trust, commitment to a shared vision, and a

collaborative mentality among educators can play an essential role in the differences

between this type of positive culture, and other schools with toxic climates.

Educators can significantly impact the personal, academic, and social lives of

students by contributing to the culture of a school. However, most relevant to this

study is the impact school culture can have on the college-going behaviors of

students.

College-Going Culture in Schools

The college-going identity of a single student is defined as that student being

ready for college: the student demonstrate educational resilience and is prepared in

such a way that he or she will not require remediation upon postsecondary school

enrollment (Liou, Antrop-Gonzalez, & Cooper, 2009). From a school-wide

perspective, college-going culture is defined as the elements of a school environment

that aid students in the process of preparing, applying, and enrolling in a

postsecondary institution. Furthermore, it is based on educators' foundational belief

that all students have the right to engage in college aspirations and deserve the information to fulfill these aspirations (Corwin & Tierney, 2007). K-12 educators are uniquely placed in a position to not only prepare students for the college application process, but to give them the information and skills necessary to enroll in and complete college.

There are a variety of college-going culture models and frameworks for explaining the role of schools in creating equity in the college access process. The following section will explore factors contributing to college-going culture, as well as other college-going frameworks in counseling, education, and sociology literature. For the purposes of this study, Patricia McDonough (2005)'s model, utilizing nine principles associated with college-going culture, is most applicable due to its strong relationship with components of the HSLS (2009) and the model's framework based on easily accessible, but intricately designed items.

College-Going Frameworks and Factors

Generally, Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) defined college-going culture in K-12 institutions as the following:

> College culture reflects the environments that are accessible to all students and saturated with ever-present information and resources and ongoing formal and informal conversations that help students to understand the various facets of preparing for, enrolling in, and graduating from postsecondary academic institutions as those experiences specifically pertain to the students' current and future lives. (p. 26)

The literature describes college-going culture on multiple levels including: foundational *beliefs and expectations* of key stakeholders, educators' ongoing *behaviors and activities* targeted towards college-going, and *outcomes* that exist as a result of the college-going culture (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; McDonough, 2004, 2008).

Beliefs and Expectations in College-Going Culture. At its foundation, a college-going culture is contingent upon educators' high expectations for all students and their potential to enroll in and complete a postsecondary education. A true college culture in a K-12 schools means that students do not need to seek out the information or help because all students are receiving these opportunities. This is particularly important for those students who have determined they are not worthy of college attendance or have not been identified by others as someone who is likely to go to college (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009).

Sciarra and Ambrosino (2011) used the Educational Longitudinal Study (2002-2006) to analyze the relationship between teachers, students, and parents' expectations and students' postsecondary educational enrollment and retention. The study results showed that the expectations of all three (teachers, students, and parents) predicted college enrollment and retention. Teachers' expectations had the strongest impact across all educational status groups (enrollment and retention at 4 year college, enrollment and retention at 2 year college, enrollment and dropout of 2 year college, and high school-only completion). This is a significant study, as it relates to this current study, because it supports the idea that educators have a strong impact on the college-going behaviors of students. Moreover, this indicates school counselors

should take an opportunity to further collaborate with teachers and express the importance of educators' high expectations as a predictor of college enrollment and retention (Sciarra & Ambrosino, 2011).

Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) described a "social support model" for developing and maintaining a college culture in K-12 schools based on an "ethic of knowledge and care," a social capital mentality, and smaller learning communities. The presence of these small learning communities often lead to a team of educators who make decisions jointly, which leads to cohesion, and educators' more thorough understanding of students' background and experiences. When paired with educators' high expectations for students, a closer-knit community stemming from these smaller learning communities may lead to increased social capital (Weinstein & Savitz-Romer, 2009). Social capital, or a set of networks that can generate individual or collective action, helps students receive the information needed to succeed in the college planning and preparation process. In other words, the majority of information and resources are shared through social interactions and relationships; those students who are privy to this information and resources have a greater chance of success (Coleman, 1988).

Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) assert that social exchange should take place based on an "ethic of knowledge and care" (p. 28). When students feel as though they are cared for and that educators are invested in their future, they are more likely to graduate and pursue post-secondary opportunities (Schussler & Collins, 2006). Educators who create an environment based on an ethic of caring, directed toward a commitment to a college-going culture, denotes a desire to see social and

academic success of students. Additionally, when implementing an ethic of caring framework with diverse student populations in schools, educators are not only expressing care for the students, but also respect and care of the entire community. A successfully implemented ethic of care within predominately African-American schools, for example, implies to families and the community a care that extends beyond the specific students in the school (Farmer-Hinton & Adams, 2006; Knight-Diop, 2010).

An environment based on an ethic of caring targets college preparation through multiple means: parent and family partnerships, written documents such as mission statements, procedures, contracts, and materials, and unwritten norms. Academically rigorous coursework, high expectations for all students, individualized attention and peer support, and school engagement (such as participation in extracurricular activities) are among the essential components of a college-going culture for diverse student populations (Knight-Diop, 2010). Other motivators for diverse students' college-going aspirations and preparation, (for example with Latino(a) students), include: family and parental support, peer support from other students who are Latino(a) and from peers in other racial/ethnic groups, educators' encouragement and caring, mentorship and presence of role-models (Liou, Antrop-Gonzalez, & Cooper, 2009).

Educators' expectations can influence the college aspirations of students, which, in turn, may impact students' college application and enrollment behaviors. Specifically, with regard to school counselors' expectations, students who perceived that their school counselors had high expectations for their postsecondary outlook

18

were more likely to make contact with them for college planning. Inversely, of course, if students' perceived low expectations on behalf of their school counselor then they were less likely to seek them out for college information and planning purposes (Bryan et al., 2009).

Overall, though, a belief structure must be in place in order for college-going culture to be successful: for example, a social capital framework asserts that students will be successful when they receive vital information through relationships, whereas an ethic of caring framework contends that students who are cared for will succeed. Ultimately, though, the beliefs and expectations are carried out through the actual behaviors and activities of school members.

Activities of College-Going Culture. In order to build college-going culture, the literature indicates the importance of educators and schools participating in certain ongoing activities. Foundationally, the presence of academically rigorous curriculum, combined with educators' high expectations for students is crucial. Emphasis on core subjects such as reading and math, multiple opportunities for AP and IB classes, and joint-programs with colleges and universities are essential elements for college-going culture. In terms of college access, an academically rigorous curriculum is vital for students for two equally important reasons: first, students must meet minimal standards for college acceptance and should exceed those standards in order to be competitive; and secondly, students should possess the academic skills and abilities that result from a rigorous curriculum in order to avoid remediation once enrolled in a postsecondary institution (McDonough, 2005; 2008).

Beyond rigorous curriculum and required testing opportunities, K-12 schools should also provide students with knowledge about financial aid, an array of opportunities for academic and extracurricular activities that will make them competitive, and the skills necessary to reach college completion, such as study skills and time management skills (Cabrera, Burkum, & La Nasa, 2003). When creating a mentorship program aimed at building a college-going culture, for example, students should participate in activities including visiting college campuses with a clear plan and mission for the visit, attending financial aid and various college preparation workshops, and participating in individual meetings with educators focused on goal-setting. Radcliffe and Bos' (2011) study of these types of mentorship activities resulted in an increase in students' aspirations about college, higher high school retention rates, and a slight increase in math scores on state standardized tests.

Schools can also build a college-going culture and set students up for success by dispensing information about college and engaging students and parents in the college process as early as elementary school (Vargas, 2004). Messages about access should be sustained and reinforced through coordinated, systemic programming throughout students' K-12 educational experiences (Lapan & Harrington, 2008; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002). Planning for postsecondary education should begin, at minimum, in middle school, and ideally, as soon as students enter the K-12 education system. Developing, implementing, and maintaining a college-going culture should be considered a K-12 goal, as opposed to solely the goal of high schools (Radcliff & Bos, 2011). Part of this K-12 process is to partner with parents and families in order to promote students' aspirations and make changes in

postsecondary readiness. Specifically, equipping families with the information needed for long-term college financial planning in elementary school opens doors for students and further contributes to college-going culture (Vargas, 2004).

College-going culture must also be implemented and maintained through the collaborative efforts of all educators, with the continued support of administrators (in particular, the principal). It is important that leaders in the school are committed to creating and sustaining a college-going culture and that the entire school shares this vision (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Lapan & Harrington, 2008; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002).

Finally, as will be outlined later in the chapter, the literature indicates the critical importance of implementing a comprehensive school counseling program in schools, where all school counselors contribute to the college counseling process. Comprehensive college counseling services should include helping with direct preparation, sharing information, advising and guidance, and discussing and providing resources. Counselors should be given the opportunity to participate in professional development so they are equipped to advise and work with students who will work in a dynamic, technologically-advanced, global economy. Barriers to successful school counseling, such as non-counseling clerical and administrative duties, should also be reduced or eliminated (Lapan & Harrington, 2009; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002; McDonough, 2005).

Outcomes of College-Going Culture. A culture of high expectations and the presence of varied college-going activities and programs should result in certain outcomes. Outcomes that exist as a result of college-going are usually defined in

terms of measurable items associated with college applications, financial aid, and enrollment rates. Roderick, Coca, and Nagaoka (2011), for example, defined college-going culture using measurable outcomes that included: percentage of graduating class enrolled in four-year college, percentage of students who completed the FAFSA and who applied to three or more colleges, and a teacher assessment of the presence of college-going culture. Students were more likely to apply and enroll in a four-year postsecondary institution that matched their qualifications when their school had a pattern of students going to four-year colleges, teachers who reported high expectations for students, and high numbers of students who participated in financial aid applications. Measurable outcomes associated with students' aspirations, financial aid rates, application rates, enrollment rates, and measures of educators' expectations are essential signs that a successful college-going culture is present in a school (McDonough, 2005; Roderick, Coca, & Nagaoka, 2011).

McDonough's Principles of College-Going Culture. McDonough (2004) identified nine principles associated with creating, implementing, and maintaining a successful college-going culture in schools:

1) College talk: clear, ongoing communication about requirements (e.g. posters, newsletters, missions, activities, curriculum);

2) *Clear expectations:* educators expect all students to be prepared for a full range of postsecondary options; which, in turn, leads to students' own high expectations of self;

3) *Information and resources*: information and resources are continuously and consistently available to students in a variety of formats;

4) *Comprehensive counseling model*: In a building with multiple school counselors, all are engaged in college counseling; in other words, there is not just a single designated college counselor;

5) *Testing and curriculum*: Students are knowledgeable about curriculum and tests required for college acceptance. Barriers, such as testing fees and testing location sites, are reduced or eliminated in a manner demonstrating equity and access for all students;

6) *Faculty involvement*: Educators across all disciplines and ranks in a school building equally contribute to creating, implementing, and maintaining a college culture. In order to do so, they have access to necessary information through professional development;

7) *Family involvement*: Students' families are considered partners in the college process and are kept informed about the necessary steps in the college process;

8) *College partnerships*: Through the development and implementation of partnerships with colleges and universities, schools recognize that they can provide the most information and opportunities for students and;

9) *Articulation*: College culture is an endeavor that begins when students start school and continues throughout the entire K-12 experience. Each individual school works towards creating and maintaining college culture within the school building, but also collaborates with other elementary, middle, and high schools in the district or county.

These principles operate in an integrated and complex manner to ensure that all students, regardless of any demographic or cultural factors, can aspire to attend college, and are prepared to apply, enroll, and complete, once accepted. Though this study does not intend to use the principles in full, it does utilize several of McDonough's (2009) principles, which are represented by the variables, as well as the general framework in understanding college-going culture.

However, despite these numerous initiatives aimed at increasing college-going application and enrollment rates across the country, the substantial gap across socioeconomic status and race/ethnicity persists, as does the overall dismal college-going rates of US students.

College Access Barriers

Many schools are not meeting the mark in terms of building college-going cultures that provide access to varied and competitive postsecondary educational opportunities for students. The pervasive college-going gap that exists across race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status is indicative of a systems-wide failure of the K-12 educational system. Students from low-income and racial/ethnically diverse backgrounds are attending college at much lower rates than wealthier, white students. Furthermore, when these students do enroll in and complete college, they are overrepresented at 2-year institutions as opposed to 4-year institutions (Perna et al., 2008). As opposed to their wealthier counterparts, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are also less likely to even begin the college planning process, and more likely to require remediation once enrolled (Cabrera, Burkum, & La Nasa, 2003).

In many cases, schools can perpetuate systemic inequities towards groups of students, in particular low-income and diverse student populations, by closing doors for postsecondary education access (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002). This is an incredible barrier for these students, because in many cases, they rely on schools for college preparation (especially where parents are not college degree recipients). There are many factors that stand in the way of this information and guidance reaching students, including, but not limited to: rigor of coursework, location of school, size of schools, and multicultural considerations. Large urban schools, for example, do not have the access to resources (both material and human) that help students navigate the pathway to college enrollment and completion. They offer a set of unique challenges due to their distinctive organizational and contextual dynamics. As indicated by Lee (2005), students in urban settings face inequities in the educational system, per capita higher rates of poverty, and cultural heterogeneity.

In addition to school size and setting, socioeconomic status, and race/ethnicity, a tremendous challenge exists for those students who would be classified as first-generation college students if they applied to and enrolled in postsecondary institutions. These students do not have the benefit of speaking to parents, or in many cases, even older siblings, who are knowledgeable about the requirements for college acceptance and the college application process (Vargas, 2004). Additionally, many students who do not see a history of college-going in their own families are unable to visualize their place within such an environment. As an added challenge, the same students who not only categorize as first-generation, are often also low-income students who attend low-resource schools. In other words, the

students who need guidance and information from schools are the same students who are least likely to receive it. This lack of information or "cultural capital" often impacts students and families' perceptions of the college process. Parents and students may significantly overestimate financial costs, as well as the chances of receiving financial aid; and underestimate the various academic and extracurricular activities required for college acceptance, as well as the numerous steps needed to apply (Vargas, 2004).

In fact, parental support is imperative to the success of the college application and college enrollment process for students. This support is particularly important for low-income students and diverse student populations. However, many educators interpret parents, guardians, and families of low-income students and diverse student populations as uninvolved, due to a misunderstanding of systemic issues related to oppression and marginalization. Educators' false interpretations of parents' behaviors, as they relate to involvement educational and postsecondary planning process, may lead to decreased partnering between school and family (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010).

As outlined above, numerous barriers exist to equitable college access for students across the K-12 educational system. Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) argue that despite the lofty goals of No Child Left Behind (2001) and other educational reform efforts in raising the academic achievement of students, it is not enough. Students need to also leave high school with access to a postsecondary institution so they can enroll, and complete with the skills necessary to succeed. It is during this critical time when students are in high school that educators, including

school counselors, have a unique opportunity to shape and develop the school environment where students spend a significant portion of their life.

K-12 School Counseling and the College Process

The new vision for transformed school counselors, issued in 1997 by The Education Trust, included strong themes of leadership, advocacy, teaming and collaboration, counseling and coordination, and accountability. School counselors were charged with the mission of promoting and implementing college readiness programming in K-12 school systems. The Transforming School Counseling Initiative (TSCI), in collaboration with The Education Trust, also emphasized the use of a social justice lens to facilitate changes in individual schools, as well as school systems (EdTrust, 2009a; EdTrust, 2009b). In order to make a difference for students and the profession of school counseling, TSCI issued ten essential elements for change in Counselor Education programs educating future school counselors. The elements included a mission statement, pedagogy, field experiences, practices, and curriculum that all reflected the tenets of TSCI. Additionally, TSCI's elements included building partnerships between universities, school districts, state departments of education, and community organizations; continuous professional development for Counselor Educators, including technological competence; and actively recruiting and choosing school counseling students from culturally diverse backgrounds (EdTrust, 2009a).

School counseling students across the country are now trained using the principles of Transforming School Counseling Initiative as a foundational component of their work. Using data to recognize areas of inequity in schools and school

27

systems, collaborating with key stakeholders, and aligning programming with the ASCA National Model and K-12 core educational standards are among the expected activities of a transformed school counselor. Along with using data to close the achievement gap, school counselors can also use data to pinpoint groups of students who are not accessing the college pipeline in the same way as other students (Young & Kaffenberger, 2011).

Beyond the efforts of TSCI, school counseling programs are also directly charged by the counseling training accrediting body to train school counselors to make differences for students in terms of promoting equitable access to postsecondary educational opportunities. The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) issued its most recent standards for Counselor Education training programs in 2009. Listed are two of the most pertinent standards for school counselors' role in college counseling:

> "*Standard C.4:* Knows how to design, implement, manage, and evaluate transition programs, including school-to-work, postsecondary planning, and college admissions counseling" (CACREP, 2008, p.41);
>
> *"Standard L.2*: Implements strategies and activities to prepare students for a full range of postsecondary options and opportunities" (p. 44).

In addition to school counseling policies and standards, national educational reform efforts also emphasize the critical importance of increasing postsecondary educational opportunities for students. The Race to the Top grant, issued in 2009, granted funds to states in key education reform efforts targeted toward improving student achievement. An essential part of the Race to the Top grant is the absolute

priority to increase student achievement, aimed at preparing students to be ready for college and career by graduation. An additional priority is coordinate services and school systems in order to have a continuous elementary through postsecondary educational experience for all students (US Dept. of Ed, 2009).

School Counselors' Role and Experience in Building College-Going Culture

School counselors, in particular, who play a key role in the college process for students, should be at the forefront of setting up high expectations, planning and executing college-related activities, and ensuring equitable, measurable postsecondary outcomes (Vargas, 2004). School counselors can be critical to the growth of students, not only in the social/emotional, career, and academic arenas, but also in college-going, because they are often the ones who hold essential information related to college access. An effective school counselor plays an integral role in shaping school culture and providing information that students need in order to have future academic and career success (Cooper & Liou, 2007). Therefore, the presence of a comprehensive school counseling program in a high school is an important aspect of the college culture within school (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002).

Using the Educational Longitudinal Study (2002), Bryan et al. (2011) found that students who see a school counselor for college information are more likely to apply to college, particularly when they have contact prior to or in the 10th grade. In fact, for those students who are able to make contact with school counselors earlier on (i.e. before/in 10th grade), they are double as likely to apply to a single postsecondary institution than not applying at all, and three and a half times more likely to apply to

more than two institutions than not apply at all. Furthermore, the impact of counselor-student contact also extends to the number of counselors in a building: high school students who attended schools with higher numbers of school counselors were more likely to apply to two or more postsecondary institutions, as opposed to none. In particular, school counselors' contact with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds had a significant impact on students' application rates, indicating that relationship or information shared bares great weight. Utilizing a social capital framework, this indicates that school counselors may serve as a critical source of information and a resource for those students who may not have the same level of college access as their peers (Bryan et al., 2011).

School counselors who act as social justice advocates, recognize systemic injustices in educational systems and college-going process, and weave equity and access throughout their programs are essential producers of information and resources for students (Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). School counselors working in schools with diverse student populations confront additional challenges as they must work to overcome systemic barriers that are often in place in terms of college access. Conversations and information regarding testing and application deadlines is simply not adequate; counselors must use several venues including individual, group, and classroom settings, as well as school-wide programming opportunities to disseminate information. Developing and implementing college-going cultures in low-resource, urban schools is only the first hurdle; maintenance is most crucial and often quite difficult given the transient nature of student and families, and frequent staff and administrative turnover (Farmer-Hinton & McCullough, 2005).

School counselors can build college-going culture by establishing relationships with parents and families of students through a variety of means, including, but not limited to: promoting a positive climate where parents feel welcome, engaging in individual parent-and-student college advising sessions, and actively involving parent and community members as partners when creating college informational and financial workshops (Holcomb-McCoy, 2010). School counselors are trained and ideally positioned in schools to build and maintain relationships with parents, families, and community members in order to promote a climate focused on high expectations for all students. School counselors are also ideally situated to facilitate empowerment in the college process, both for students and families. Empowerment is the ability to take advantage of opportunities, while simultaneously overcoming various barriers, which typically results from the development of personal efficacy. Importantly, empowerment is not something that one person can give to another person (e.g. educator to student/family). Empowerment can give people the strong conviction that they can produce something meaningful, and in turn, give them the ability to do so (Bandura, 1997).

Collaborating with key stakeholders should serve the purpose of empowering families and students to expect academic success, with will open an array of postsecondary educational opportunities. This collaboration should extend beyond the traditional means of sharing information through individual or group meetings in the school building. For example, school counselors and other educators can communicate vital academic and college information in a community setting, as opposed to inside the school, and provide parent-led workshops and classes for other

parents and families. Steen and Nogeura (2010) also indicate that due to school

counselors' training in multiculturally competent practices, all efforts in working with

parents and families should be culturally sensitive (e.g. providing information in

multiple languages, adhering to the scheduling needs of families).

However, despite their critical role in the creation, implementation, and

maintenance of on college-going culture, school counselors are frequently

overburdened and time-constrained based on their need to complete non-counseling

related tasks, such as scheduling and testing coordination.

School Counselors' Use of Time, Priorities, and Barriers

The literature indicates that school counselors prefer to spend time engaging

in activities associated with the comprehensive school counseling program models

(i.e. Consultation, Counseling, Coordination), as opposed to non-counseling clerical

and administrative duties. As is particularly relevant to this study, the NACAC

Counseling Trends Survey (2004) reported that school counselors' ranked two

priorities above others: helping students prepare and plan for postsecondary education

and helping students with their academic achievement. However, despite counselors'

reported priorities, there is an apparent gap between preferred practices and actual

practices, in particular at the high school level (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011;

Hawkins & Lautz, 2005).

School counselors face a number of hurdles in performing their crucial role in

creating, implementing, and maintaining college-going culture. A significant hurdle

can include insufficient number of counselors in a school building or across school

districts or counties, particularly those who emphasize college counseling. These high

counselor-to-student ratios can result from budget restrictions, as well as district-level and state-level policies. Perna et al. (2008) indicate that in order to indirectly increase college-going rates among students, counselor-to-student ratios must decrease. Ratios have a hope of decreasing, but only through systemic changes in the educational systems and an emphasis on supplying counselors where they are needed (Perna et al., 2008).

Contemporary school counselors are frequently held responsible for the academic achievement of students, as well as the personal and social needs of students. Therefore, they may face role confusion as they determine if they are educators first or counselors first. (Perkins, Oescher, & Ballard, 2008). School counselors are faced with a myriad of responsibilities that fall inside the ASCA National Model, but in many cases, well outside as well. Counselors may be responsible for testing coordination, scheduling, maintaining records, as well as a multitude of other clerical and administration duties. This can, not only lead to job stress and low job satisfaction, but also to role ambiguity. Cervoni and DeLucia-Waack (2011) found that less time spent on "other duties" and more time spent on counseling predicted greater general job satisfaction. The study surveyed 175 school counselors, using three online measures: a demographic questionnaire, the Job Descriptive Index, which measures job satisfaction, and a questionnaire focused on role conflict and role ambiguity. Study results indicated that less role ambiguity and conflict was a significant predictor of job satisfaction. Role conflict relates to the incongruity connected to the expectations of a job, while role ambiguity is a self-perceived lack of clarify about a job (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011). In

particular, the more time spent on non-ASCA related duties was negatively correlated with job satisfaction. This indicates that school counselors have greater job satisfaction when they are receive clear messages from administrators about the use of time expectations, and when the expectations of what a school counseling position should be matches the actual reality of their position.

The Center for School Counseling Outcome Research designated areas that can help or hinder school counselors from assisting students in the college-going process in its 2008 study of Chicago Public Schools (Lapan & Harrington, 2008). First, despite school counselors' critical role in increasing student achievement, they are frequently overwhelmed with menial administrative and clerical tasks, such as substitute teaching or test coordination. Secondly, school counselors are essential to the entire college-going process from planning and preparation to application to matching and enrolling in a college or university. Furthermore, this process can be substantially hindered due to non-counseling specific duties: higher graduation rates, decreased dropout rates, higher attendance, and larger AP course enrollment is more likely to occur when school counselors report that they are more likely to provide college readiness duties, as opposed to non-counseling specific duties. Third, school counselors are equipped with the skills to significantly help students transition to high school and enter a college-going environment by mapping out a plan for four years of academically rigorous coursework and beginning to set early high expectations of college-going. Finally, a gap emerged between principals' expectations of the role of a school counselor and school counselors' role perceptions, which frequently led to school counselors experiencing a sense of burden from a large quantity of clerical and

administrative duties (Lapan & Harrington, 2008).

As outlined in this chapter, there are some studies that relate to the research questions in this study. Several studies have looked at the relationship between school counselors' priorities, desired use of time, and actual use of time (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Pyne, 2011; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). They found that there is a gap between school counselors' desired use of time and priorities, and actual use of time, which frequently leads to low job satisfaction. Other studies examined the impact school counselors have on college-going behaviors of students (Bryan et al., 2011; Farmer-Hinton & McCullough, 2008; Perna et al., 2008). These studies found that contact with a school counselor increased the likelihood that a student would apply to college. However, counselors who worked in low resource schools were less likely to prioritize college preparation due to other high needs of students, and the lower ratio of counselors to students. Finally, other studies looked at the role of expectations, and determined that educators' expectations of students impacted their college-going aspirations, and college-going behaviors (Sciarra and Ambrosino, 2011).

Despite the previous research on school counselors' priorities and use of time, there is a gap in the literature specifically related to their use of time, top priority, expectations and how that may relate to the college-going culture of a school.

Research Questions

Given the previous research and the need for further research related to school counseling and college-going culture, this study intends to explore the following four research questions:

Research Question 1: Do school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities differ depending on the urbanicity of the school where they are employed?

Research Question 2: Do school counselors' expectations of students differ depending on school counselors' top priority, use of time in college readiness activities, and perceptions of principal's expectations of students?

Research Question 3: Do school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities differ based on school counselors' top priority and expectations?

Research Question 4: Does the presence of a formal college access program in high school differ depending on school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities, and counselors' and principals' expectations?

This research is important for school counseling, as well as secondary school education, college access, and high school to college transition literature.

Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the nature of college-going culture in K-12 schools, particularly in regard to secondary schools. Known facilitators and barriers to college-going culture and college access were explored. It also included a description of school counselors' role in opening up college access for all students through equitable practices. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the gap between school counselors' priorities, as well as their desired use of time versus actual use of time.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology of this study, including the research questions and hypotheses, participants, procedures, instrumentation, variables, missing data, and description of data analysis used. The research questions were as follows:

> *Research Question 1*: Do school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities differ depending on the urbanicity of the school where they are employed?

> *Research Question 2*: Do school counselors' expectations of students differ depending on school counselors' top priority, use of time in college readiness activities, and perceptions of principal's expectations of students?

> *Research Question 3*: Do school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities differ based on school counselors' top priority and expectations of students?

> *Research Question 4*: Does the presence of formal college access program in high school differ depending on school counselors' top priority and counselors' use of time in college readiness activities, and counselors' and principals' expectations of students?

Based on previous research, the hypotheses of this study is as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Urbanicity of the school locale will have a significant relationship to school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities (Cooper & Liou, 2007; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Thomas, Anderson & Li, 2008).

Hypothesis 2: School counselors who spend the greatest percentage of time in a school year assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications, who place greatest priority on helping students plan and prepare for postsecondary schooling, and who perceive their principal has higher expectations for students will have higher expectations for students (Bryan et al., 2009; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002; Weinstein & Savitz-Romer, 2009).

Hypothesis 3: School counselors who spent the greatest percentage of time in a school year assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications will place top priority on assisting students with college readiness, and have higher expectations for students than those who do not (Lapan & Harrington, 2008; McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002; Perkins, Oescher, & Ballard, 2008).

Hypothesis 4: Formal programs that encourage students not considering college to do so are significantly more likely to be present where school counselors spend greater percentages of time assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications, prioritize assisting students with college readiness, and have higher expectations for students. Furthermore, formal programs that encourage students

38

not considering college to do so are significantly more likely to be present where school counselors perceive that their principal has higher expectations for students (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; McDonough, 2004, 2005, 2008).

Participants

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) sponsored the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009 (HSLS:09) as the fifth secondary longitudinal study in a series. The HSLS (2009) consists of multiple participants from each sampled school: 9th grade students, principals, parent(s)/guardian(s), science teachers, math teachers, and school counselors. This particular study's sample is composed of school counselors selected from the 944 participating schools throughout the United States. Each school recommended a counselor in the building based on his or her identification as the lead 9th grade counselor for each school. The lead 9th grade counselor was then contacted to fill out the questionnaire on behalf of the entire counseling staff. In some cases, if the lead 9th grade counselor was unavailable, an additional request was made for another counselor with knowledge about the 9th grade students (Ingels et al., 2011). Of the 944 eligible participants, a total of 852 school counselors filled out the questionnaire, which equaled a weighted percentage of 90.

Procedures

Baseline data for the High School Longitudinal Study (2009) was collected during the fall semester of the 2009-2010 academic school year. The nationally representative sample included 944 high schools. A total of 25,206 students who were

39

in the 9th grade were sampled to participate in the study, and approximately 25

students per school, or 22,790 students in total, chose to participate. The study used a

complex sampling process: a stratified two-stage random sample design, where the

first stage defined the units as schools, while the second stage defined the units as

students randomly selected from the sampled schools. Schools were sampled from all

50 states; they included regular public schools, charter public schools, and private

schools. The study oversampled in certain categories of both schools and students in

order to have larger samples for data analysis: private schools and Catholic schools,

as well as students who were Asian-American. The HSLS (2009) is currently

collecting follow-up data with the same sample during the spring semester of the

2011-2012. Once the sample student participants graduate, data will be collected an

additional two times: the summer of 2013 and again in 2015. The purpose of multiple

data collection points is to study patterns of transition of individual students and of

institutions (Ingels et al., 2011).

Instrumentation

The High School Longitudinal Study (2009) consisted of five different

questionnaires administered to six key stakeholders: student questionnaire, parent

questionnaire, teacher questionnaire for mathematics and science subjects, school

administrator questionnaire, and school counselor questionnaire. Broadly, the aim of

the HSLS study is to investigate individual and institutional changes over time.

According to NCES, the use of five surveys covering a broad array of questions will

allow researchers to discover: Academic and personal/social issues; contextual

concerns related to socioeconomic status and students from culturally diverse

background; choice and access issues associated with students' participation in STEM subjects and careers; the impact family experiences can have on students' educational experiences; specific school characteristics and the relationship to student outcomes; and postsecondary transitional patterns and postsecondary educational attainment patterns (Ingels et al., 2011).

According to NCES, the purpose of the school counselor questionnaire was to elicit information about counseling services, school transition services, and students' curricular program or course assignments (Ingels et al., 2011). The school counselor questionnaire included items in the following areas: background information about the school counselor (including certification/licensure and caseloads), types of programs and nature of programs (including enrichment programs or dropout prevention programs), and placement in mathematics and science classes (including placement criteria). It was available in two electronic formats: "web-based self-administration or CATI (Computerized interview-administration)" (Ingels et al., 2011, p. vii).

Variables

The variables in this study are (1) school counselors' top priority, (2) school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities, (3) school counselors' perceptions of principals' expectations, (4) school counselors' expectations of students, (5) urbanicity of school locale, and (6) presence of a formal program encouraging students to consider college who might not otherwise do so.

The first variable, school counselors' top priority was based on an item asking school counselors to rank the school counseling programs' top priority using the

following four areas: preparation for postsecondary schooling, preparation for work after high school, improvement in students' academic achievement, and help with students' personal concerns. Since college readiness is the area of focus for this study, the variable was recoded where 1=top priority as college readiness/preparation for postsecondary schooling, and 0=top priority as preparation for work after high school, improvement in students' academic achievement, or help with students' personal concerns.

The second variable, school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities, was based on an item asking school counselors to choose the percentage of time the school counseling program spent participating in college readiness activities. This study used the original coding for this item based on a Likert-type scale where 1 for "5% or less," 2 for "6%-10%," 3 for "11%-20%,"4 for "21%-50%," and 5 for "more than 50%."

The third variable, school counselors' perceptions of principal's expectations of students, was based on a scale developed by the original investigators for the High School Longitudinal Study (2009). Investigators developed the school counselors' perceptions of principal's expectations scale using factor analysis and incorporating the six individual items listed in variable Table 3.1. This scale was standardized to a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. The scale items' weighted reliability was then evaluated: this scale has a Cronbach's Alpha of .85.

The fourth variable, school counselors' expectations of students, was based on a scale similar to the school counselors' perceptions of principal's expectations of students scale. The High School Longitudinal Study (2009) school counselor

42

expectations' of students scale developed using factor analysis and incorporating the six individual items listed in variable Table 3.1. The scale was also standardized to a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. The scale items' weighted reliability was then evaluated: the school counselors' expectations scale has a Cronbach's Alpha of .78.

The fifth variable, urbanicity of school locale, was based on the item in the HSLS (2009), which categorized the school as city, suburban, town, or rural based on Census tabulations (Ingels et al., 2011). For the purposes of this study, this variable was recoded as follows: 1=urban and 0=non-urban. Urban is the same as the original "city" item used in The High School Longitudinal Study (2009). Non-urban is equivalent to the original items: suburban, town, and rural. This recoding was important to this study because it may demonstrate differences across urban and non-urban schools, but does not focus on the differences across each type of non-urban school (i.e. town, suburb, or rural).

The sixth variable, presence of a formal program encouraging students to consider college who might not otherwise do so, was based on an item in the school counselor questionnaire. The item asks school counselors to identify whether a formal program that encourages students to consider college who might not otherwise do so exists in their school. This study used the original coding for this item: 1=presence of this formal program, 0=absence of this formal program.

The HSLS (2009) survey items representing each variable and their respective scales are listed in the Table. 31. The original items used to develop the school counselors' expectations of students scale and the school counselors' perceptions of

43

principal's expectations scale are included in order to provide a greater and more in-

depth understanding of the items.

Table 3.1 Independent and Dependent Variables

Variables in the Study	Survey Items from HSLS (2009)	Scale
Urbanicity	City/Urban	1
	Suburban, Town, Rural/ Non-Urban	0
Presence of Formal College Access Program in High School	Yes	1
	No	0
School Counselors' Top Priority	Help students plan and prepare for postsecondary schooling	1
	Helps students with personal growth and development	0
	Helps students plan and prepare for their work roles after high school	0
	Helps students improve their achievement in high school	0
School Counselors' Use of Time in College Readiness Activities	Assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications	1 for "5% or less" 2 for "6%-10%" 3 for "11%-20%" 4 for "21%-50%" 5 for "more than 50%"
School Counselors' Expectations of Students	Scale of counselors' expectations	-6.43 – 1.15
Original item inputs to counselors' expectations scale	Counselors in this school set high standards for students' learning.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
	Counselors in this school have given up on some students.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
	Counselors in this school believe all students can do well.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
	Counselors in this school care only about smart students.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree"

		3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
	Counselors in this school work hard to make sure all students learn.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
	Counselors in this school expect very little from students.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
School Counselors' Perceptions of Principal's Expectations of Students	Scale of principals' expectations	-5.51 – 1.1
Original item inputs to principals' expectations scale	The principal sets high standards for students' learning.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
	The principal believes all students can do well.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
	The principal cares only about smart students.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
	The principal expects very little from students.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
	The principal in this school has given up on some students.	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"
	The principal in this school works hard to make sure all students learn	1 for "strongly agree" 2 for "agree" 3 for "disagree or strongly disagree"

Missing Data

The High School Longitudinal Study had low numbers of missing items, due to its high levels of item response. The student and parent/guardian questionnaires had the highest levels of item nonresponse, and researchers for the HSLS (2009) used a multiple imputation procedure on certain designated items. However, HSLS (2009) researchers did not think it was necessary to do so with the school counselor questionnaire because of its high levels of item response. The selected variables for this study had 4% or less missing data across all variables. Table 4.1 outlines the independent and dependent variables used in this study, and the corresponding non-response and missing data frequencies. All items were available for the variable "Urbanicity" because researchers used census data to determine the appropriate designation for each school in the dataset (see chapter 1 for definition of term). The other variables used in this study emerge from data collected in the school counselor questionnaire. The 92 nonresponse items listed in all of the variables reflects the following: 10 school counselors refused to complete the survey and 82 questionnaires were never completed due to a lack of response or lack of school counselor in the selected school (Ingels et al., 2011). The missing data in the selected variables range from .2% to 4.1%. For the purposes of this study, missing data was deleted prior to running analyses.

Table 3.2 Missing Data

Variable	Number analyzed	Non response	# Missing	% Missing
School Counselors' Use of Time in College Readiness Activities	944	92	12	1.3%
Formal Program to Encourage College	944	92	3	.3%
School Counselors' Top Priority	944	92	2	.2%
School Counselors' Expectations of Students	944	92	18	1.9%
School Counselors' Perception of Principals' Expectations of Students	944	92	39	4.1%

Data Analyses

Due to the complex nature of the sampling process for the HSLS (2009),

many researchers choose to use a statistical analysis program, such as SPSS Complex

Samples to conduct data analysis. SPSS Complex Samples is appropriate for use

when the study uses stratified sampling, clustered sampling, or multistage sampling.

This study examined variables only available in the publicly accessible dataset. The

strata and cluster variables were only available in the restricted version of the High

School Longitudinal Study (2009). Therefore, SPSS Complex Samples cannot be used in this study, and SPSS Standard Version 20 was used for this study. Using SPSS Standard, a new or normalized weight needed to be calculated in order to control for the complex sample design.

Preparation for Data Analysis

In order to manually re-normalize the weights for this data analysis in order to adjust for the artificially small standard error produced by complex samples, a DEFF was chosen, which had been previously calculated by the National Center for Educational Statistics. A DEFF is a design effect that computes the estimated variance that accounts for the complex sample, as compared to the simple random sample. The NCES derived DEFF that incorporated all school counselors for all of the schools in the sample was 4.7. To control for the complex design, a new or normalized weight was then calculated using the chosen DEFF and the following formula (Bryan et al., 2010; Ingels et al., 2011):

$$new\ weight = \left(\frac{1}{DEFF}\right) x \left(\frac{old\ weight}{mean\ of\ weight}\right)$$

The mean of the weight is 24.39, which was acquired by running descriptive statistics on the school level weight. Therefore, a new or normalized weight was created based on the following calculations and used for all of the following data analyses:

$$new\ weight = \left(\frac{1}{4.7}\right) x\ \frac{school-level\ weight\ (old\ weight)}{24.39}$$

Data Analysis for Research Questions

This section will discuss the variables within each research question and the data analysis method that was used for each question.

Research Question 1: *Do school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities differ depending on the urbanicity of the school where they are employed?*

In Research Question 1, the independent variable is urbanicity of the school. The first dependent variable for this research question is school counselors' time spent assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications. An additional dependent variable is school counselors' top priority: college readiness versus career development, academic achievement, and personal growth. A simple linear regression was conducted to see the mean differences in school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities across the urbanicity variable, and a logistic regression was conducted to see the mean differences in school counselors' top priority across the urbanicity variable.

Research Question 2: *Do school counselors' expectations of students differ depending on school counselors' top priority, use of time in college readiness activities, and perceptions of principal's expectations of students?*

In Research Question 2, the dependent variable is school counselors' expectations, which is a composite scale developed by the investigators of the High School Longitudinal Study (2009) and based on the six different items: (1) counselors set high standards for students' learning, (2) counselors believe all students can do well, (3) counselors care only about smart students, (4) counselors expect very little from students, (5) counselors work hard to make sure all students learn, and (6) counselors have given up on some students. The independent variables are: (1) school counselors' top priority, (2) school counselors' use of time in college readiness

activities, and (3) counselors' perception of principals' expectations. The principals' expectations independent variable is a scale composed of the six items similar to those used in the school counselors' expectations scale. The second independent variable for this research question is the following: a Likert-type scale of school counselors' time spent assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications. The final independent variable for this question is school counselors' top priority, which is a dichotomous variable where 1=college readiness and 0=career development, academic achievement, personal growth. A multiple regression was conducted to see the mean differences in school counselors' expectations of students across the use of time variable, top priority variable, and school counselors' perceptions of principals' expectations of students variable.

Research Question 3: Do school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities differ based on school counselors' top priority and expectations of students?

In Research Question 3, the dependent variable is school counselors' time spent assisting students with college readiness, selection, and applications. The independent variables in this research question are (1) school counselors' top priority, and (2) school counselors' expectations of students. A multiple regression was conducted to see the mean differences in school counselors' time spent in college readiness activities across the priority variable, and the school counselors' expectations of students scale.

Research Question 4: Does the presence of a formal college access program in high school differ depending on school counselors' top priority and use of time in

college readiness activities, and school counselors' and principals' expectations of

students?

In Research Question 4, the dependent variable is the presence of a formal

college access programs in high school, which is a dichotomous variable. The

variable was coded as follows: 1= the school *has* a formal program to encourage

students who might not be considering college to do so; 0=The school does *not have* a

formal program to encourage students who might not be considering college to do so.

The independent variables for this research question are the following: (1) school

counselors' time spent assisting students with college readiness, selection, and

applications, (2) school counselors' top priority, (3) school counselors' expectations

of students, and (4) school counselors' perceptions of principals' expectations of

students. A logistic regression analysis was used for this question due to the

dichotomous nature of the dependent variables (1=presence of formal program;

0=absence of formal program).

Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the research questions and hypotheses of a study

designed to explore the relationship between school counselors' priorities and use of

time/activities, and how they may relate to certain elements of college-going culture

in their schools. It also included information about the High School Longitudinal

Study (2009): participants, procedures, and instrumentation. Finally, it concluded

with information about the independent variables, dependent variables, and data

analysis process.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used for the preliminary analysis, and each research question. It then describes the results of the study based on the research questions. In conclusion, the chapter summarizes key findings from the study.

Preliminary Analysis

The following section will discuss the preliminary analysis for this study, which includes information regarding frequencies and correlation analyses.

Frequencies

In order to develop a stronger understanding of the data, a frequency analysis was run, and Table 4.1 demonstrates the results for the independent and dependent variables.

Table 4.1 Frequency Distribution

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Urbanicity		
Urban	272	28.8%
Non-urban	672	71.2%
School Counselors' Use of Time in College Readiness Activities		
5% or less	22	2.3%
6%-10%	137	14.5%
11%-20%	279	29.6%
21%-50%	319	33.8%
more than 50%	83	8.8%
School Counselors' Top Priority		
Prep for postsecondary schooling	436	46.2%
Prep for work roles after high school	25	2.6%
Improve achievement in high school	265	28.1%
Personally grow and develop	124	13.1%
Formal College Access Program in High School		
Yes	650	68.9%
No	199	21.1%
School Counselors' Expectations of Students		
Set high standards for students		
Strongly agree	482	51.1%
Agree	346	36.7%
Disagree/Strongly disagree	13	1.4%
Believe all students can do well		
Strongly agree	442	46.8%
Agree	375	39.7%
Disagree/Strongly disagree	23	2.4%
Given up on some students		
Strongly agree	124	13.1%
Agree	360	38.1%
Disagree/Strongly disagree	355	37.6%

Care only about smart students		
Strongly agree	16	1.7%
Agree	249	26.4%
Disagree/Strongly disagree	573	60.7%
Expect very little from students		
Strongly agree or agree	17	1.8%
Disagree	281	29.8%
Strongly disagree	542	57.4%
Work hard to make sure all students are learning		
Strongly agree	433	45.9%
Agree	375	39.7%
Disagree/Strongly disagree	31	3.3%

School Counselors' Perceptions of Principals' Expectations of Students		
Set high standards for students	540	57.2%
Strongly agree	269	28.5%
Agree	23	2.4%
Disagree/Strong disagree		
Believe all students can do well	427	45.2%
Strongly agree	378	40.0%
Agree	26	2.8%
Disagree/Strong disagree		
Given up on some students	11	1.2%
Strongly agree	119	12.6%
Agree	343	36.3%
Disagree	355	37.6%
Strong disagree		
Care only about smart students	27	2.9%
Strongly agree	294	31.1%
Agree	511	54.1%
Disagree/Strong disagree		
Expect very little from students	17	1.8%
Strongly agree/Agree	297	31.5%
Disagree	514	54.4%
Strong disagree		
Work hard to make sure all students are learning	478	50.6%
Strongly agree	312	33.1%
Agree	43	4.6%
Disagree/Strong disagree		

Correlation Analyses

Bivariate correlation analyses were run on the independent and dependent variables in this study prior to conducting logistic regression and multiple regression analyses. The correlation analyses led to three significant results. First, at the .01 level, school counselors' expectations of students were correlated to school counselors' perceptions of principal's expectations of students. Secondly, school counselors' expectations of students were also correlated to the presence of a formal program to encourage students to consider college who may not otherwise do so, and was significant at the .05 level. Third, school counselors' top priority as college readiness was correlated to the presence of a formal program to encourage students to consider college who may not otherwise do so, and was significant at the .01 level. These correlations are shown in Table 4.2. Correlation coefficients between the variables did not exceed .75, therefore multicollinearity is not a likely concern for running regression analyses in this study. Tolerance, a collinearity diagnostic factor, will be discussed in each relevant research questions results as well.

Table 4.2 Correlation Matrix

Variable	Urbanicity	Formal College Program	Principal Expectations of students	Counselor Expectations of students	Top Priority as college readiness	Time spent on college readiness
Urbanicity	1	.018	.108	.022	.089	-.020
Formal College Program	.018	1	.078	.165*	.218**	-.102
Principal Expectations of students	.108	.078	1	.727**	.069	.068
Counselor Expectations of students	.022	.165*	.727**	1	.079	.064
Top Priority as college readiness	.089	.218**	.069	.079	1	-.117
Time spent on college readiness	-.020	-.102	.068	.064	-.117	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*Correlation is significant at the .05 levels (2-tailed).

Research Question 1

Research question 1 focused on the role that urbanicity of the school locale may have in relation to school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities. Specifically, the question addressed whether school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities and top priority differed depending on the urbanicity of the school locale. A simple linear regression was run in this study in order to examine if urbanicity of school locale predicted school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities, and a logistic regression was run in order to

57

determine if urbanicity of school locale predicted school counselors' top priority as college readiness. The two different regression analyses were run in this research question due to the dichotomous nature of the top priority variable (1=top priority is college readiness; 0=top priority is not college readiness), and the continuous nature of the use of time in college readiness activities variable.

As demonstrated in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4, both regression analyses using urbanicity as predictor variables were not statistically significant.

Table 4.3 Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Role of School Locale on School Counselors' Top Priority

Variable	B (SE)	Exp b	Wald	95% CI for exp b	
				Upper	Lower
Constant	.029(.339)	1.029	.008		
Urbanicity	-.136(.369)	.873	.136	.423	1.799

Table 4.4 Simple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Role of School Locale on School Counselors' Use of Time in College Readiness Activities

Variable	Unstandardized B (SE)	Standardized Beta	95% CI for B	
			Lower	Upper
Constant	3.421(.084)		3.255	3.586
Urbanicity	-.052(.189)	-.020	-.424	.320

Research Question 2

Research question 2 examined the relationship between school counselors'
use of time in college readiness activities, top priority, perceptions of principal's
expectations of students, and expectations of students. Specifically, the question
addressed whether school counselors who spent a greater amount of time in college
readiness activities and who prioritized college readiness differed in their
expectations of students. Furthermore, it addressed whether school counselors who
perceived their principal had higher expectations of students differed in their
expectations of students than those who perceived their principal had lower
expectations of students.

A multiple regression was run for this question in order to examine which
predictor variables accounted for the greatest amount of variance in school counselors'

expectations of students. School counselors' perceptions of principal's expectations accounted for a significant portion of the variance (R^2 = .541, F(3 , 940) = 38.555, p < .001). The remaining predictor variables were not statistically significant in this model: school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities, and school counselors' top priority as college readiness.

Table 4.5 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting School Counselors'
Expectations of Students

| Variable | Unstandardized B (SE) | Standardized Beta | 95% CI for B | | Collinearity Tolerance |
			Lower	Upper	
Constant	.284(.215)		-.710	.141	
Principal's Expectations	.724(.054)	.720*	.618	.831	.997
Time spent on College Readiness	.033(.055)	.055	-.076	.142	.961
Top Priority as College Readiness	.056(.108)	.108	-.158	.270	.961

*significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 3

Research question 3 examined the relationship between school counselors'

use of time in college readiness activities, top priority, and expectations of students.

Specifically, the question addressed whether school counselors who spent a greater

amount of time in college readiness activities differed in their top priority and

expectations of students. Similar to research question 2, this analysis used the school

counselors' expectations of students scale based on the composite of six items listed

in Table 3.1.

A multiple regression was run in this study in order to examine which

predictor variables accounted for the greatest amount of variance in school counselors'

use of time in college readiness activities. School counselors' top priority as college

readiness accounted for a portion of the variance ($R^2 = .042$, $F(2, 941) = 3.845$, p

< .05). School counselors' expectations of students was not a statistically significant predictor in this model.

Table 4.6 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting School Counselors' Use of Time in College Readiness Activities

Variable	Unstandardized B (SE)	Standardized Beta	95% CI for B		Collinearity Tolerance
			Lower	Upper	
Constant	3.233(.104)		3.027	3.438	
Top Priority as College Readiness	.394 (.149)	.196*	.100	.689	.995
Counselor's Expectations	.049(.075)	.049	-.099	.197	.995

*significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Research Question 4

Research Question 4 addressed the relationship between school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities, top priority, school counselors' and principals' expectations of students, and the presence of a formal program that encouraged students to consider college who might not otherwise be doing so. A logistic regression analysis was run due to the dichotomous nature of the dependent variable (1=presence of formal program, 0=absence of formal program), where 0 (absence) is the reference category. Table 4.7 displays the logistic regression results. The Hosmer-Lernshow Goodness of Fit Test indicates that the model prediction does not statistically differ from the observed model (p = .631). The -2Log likelihood statistic and its associated chi-square statistic are statistically significant (199.072, χ^2 = 8.668, df = 4, p < .01). The results indicate a 3.7 percent increase in the predictive capacity of the model, from 66.9% to an overall success rate of 70.6%. Only one of the predictor variables, school counselors' expectations of students, significantly

predicts the dependent variable, presence of a formal college access program in high school, as demonstrated by the statistically significant Wald statistic ($p < .05$). The results indicate that as school counselor's expectations of students increase by 1 SD, the likelihood for the presence of a formal college access program in high school increases by 41%. In terms of effect sizes, the Nagelkerke R-square for the model accounted for 10.4% of the variability in the presence of formal college access programs, which is likely due to other unexamined contributing variables.

Table 4.7 Logistic Regression Analysis Predicting Presence of a Formal College Access Program in High Schools

				95% CI for exp b	
Variable	B (SE)	Exp b	Wald	Upper	Lower
Constant	.701(.166)	2.015	17.916		
Counselor's Expectations	.341(.165)	1.406*	5.573	1.069	2.057
Principal's Expectations	-.099(.249)	.906	.159	.445	1.475
Time spent on College Readiness	-.264(.175)	.768	2.278	.545	1.082
Top Priority as College Readiness	.093(.338)	1.097	.075	.565	2.130

*significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).

Summary of Key Findings

The key findings from this study are that the likelihood of a presence of a formal program to encourage students to consider college who might not otherwise do so increases when school counselors' expectations of students are higher. Additionally, as school counselors' perceptions of principals' expectations of students increases, the likelihood is that school counselors' expectations of students will increase. Also, school counselors who spent a greater percentage of time engaging in college readiness activities and programming with students are more likely to prioritize college readiness as opposed to other priorities. This is consistent with previous research that indicates that educators' expectations and priorities play a

significant role in college-going culture and programming in schools (McClafferty, McDonough, & Nunez, 2002; Weinstein & Savitz-Romer, 2009).

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the results from each of the research questions based on the various methods used to analyze the High School Longitudinal Study (2009). It began by discussing the preliminary analyses conducted: frequencies and correlation analyses. It then examined each of the four questions and the results that emerged as a result of conducting simple linear regression, logistic regression, and multiple regression analyses. The chapter then concluded with a summary of the key findings.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter links the findings of the four research questions to previous literature. It then discusses the limitations of the study, as well as implications of the study findings. The chapter concludes by proposing ideas for future research in the area of school counseling and college-going culture.

Linking Findings to Previous Research

This dissertation explores how urbanicity, school counselors' top priority, and school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities relate to the expectations of school counselors and principals, as well as the presence of formal programs that encourage students to consider college who might not otherwise do so. The four research questions explore these relationships using logistic regression, and simple and multiple linear regression analyses.

Research Question 1

The first research question for this dissertation was "Do school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities differ depending on the urbanicity of the school where they are employed?"

Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis one, that the urbanicity of the school locale where school counselors are employed will have a significant relationship to school counselors' top priority and use of time in college readiness activities was not supported. This may be a due to the nature by which "urbanicity" was defined for this study: solely based on census data and population sizes. It did not take into account

the socioeconomic status of the student population of the schools, due to the restricted nature of this variable. Previous research indicates that school counselors who work in low-resource schools do not prioritize and spend time in college readiness activities as much as those who work in high-resource schools. This may be due to the relationship between low-resource schools and lower standardized testing scores of students, which increases school counselors' responsibilities in preparing students for standardized testing. Also, the ratio of school counselors to students tends to be higher in low-resource schools, which may impact the priorities and use of time/activities of school counselors (Lapan & Harrington, 2008; McClafferty et al., 2002). Further analysis on the impact of caseload of school counselors or socioeconomic status of students may have elicited more information regarding the role of urbanicity in school counselors' priorities and use of time/activities.

Research Question 2

The second research question for this dissertation was "Do school counselors' expectations of students differ depending on school counselors' top priority, use of time in college readiness activities, and perceptions of principal's expectations of students?"

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis two, that school counselors who prioritize and spend a greater percentage of time in college readiness activities and who perceive that their principal has higher expectations for students will have higher expectations for students was partially supported. The results demonstrate that school counselors' perception of principal's expectations of students predicts school counselors' expectations of students. This result indicates that when school counselors perceive

that they work in a high school with a principal who has high expectations for students, they are more likely to also have higher expectations for students. Previous literature found that principals' behaviors and perceptions impact school counselors' role perception, job satisfaction, and use of time/activities (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Lapan & Harrington, 2008). Additionally, it is clear from previous research that educators' expectations influence students' expectations of self, as well as academic and college-going behaviors (Sciarra & Ambrosino, 2011; Weinstein & Savitz-Romer, 2009). This result adds to the literature on educators' expectations, and demonstrates that the role of principal's expectations of students can be very significant to that of school counselors' expectations of students. However, the hypothesis that school counselors' expectations of students may differ depending on their top priority and use of time in college readiness activities was not supported, and is not consistent with the current literature. This may be due to a variety of factors not examined in this study, such as the many obstacles that may impact school counselors' use of time/activities, including administrator's expectations of the school counselor's role, and school counselors' lack of time and resources.

Research Question 3

The third research question for this dissertation was "Do school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities differ based on school counselors' top priority and expectations of students?

Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis three, that school counselors who prioritize college readiness and have higher expectations for students will spend more time in college readiness activities was partially supported. School counselors who indicated that

college readiness was the top priority of their counseling program were more likely to spend time in college readiness activities. This is a promising result, given that previous research indicates that there is frequently a gap that exists between school counselors' desired use of time/activities and priorities, and their actual use of time/activities (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). School counselors' expectations of students was not a statistically significant predictor for school counselors' use of time in college readiness activities, which may be due to a variety of factors. Most likely, it is due to other variables that were not examined in the model, such as type of school, administrators' perception of the school counselor role, or clerical and administrative demands placed on the counselor.

Research Question 4

The fourth research question for this dissertation was "Does the presence of formal college access program in high school differ depending on school counselors' top priority, use of time in college readiness activities, expectations of students and perception of principals' expectations of students?"

Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis four, that the presence of a formal program for encouraging students to consider college who might not otherwise do so would be more likely if school counselors placed top priority on college readiness, spent a greater percentage of time in college readiness activities, and perceived that counselors and the principal in their school had higher expectations for students was partially supported. Interestingly, school counselors' expectations of students was a positive predictor on the presence of this formal program, while priorities, use of time/activities and principals' expectations were not. This result is partially consistent

70

with previous literature, which found that the expectations of educators can play a large role in the presence of college-going activities and programs in schools (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; McDonough, 2005; Sciarra & Ambrosino, 2011). Principals' expectations of students may not be a significantly significant result due to the exact nature of the scale, which stemmed from items that asked school counselors to report their perceptions of principals' expectations of students, as opposed to principals' own perceptions of their expectations of students.

Limitations

While the results of this study provide insight into the relationship between school counselors' top priority, expectations, use of time in college readiness activities, and the college-going culture in high schools, it is important to be familiar with the limitations of this study. The limitations of this study are associated predominantly with using a national secondary dataset as opposed to a primary dataset. Due to the secondary nature of the dataset, the study can only use the items chosen by the original investigators and must define constructs within the constraints of these items. For example, the school counselors' top priority variables used in this study was defined based on the four items offered by the dataset (academic achievement, personal growth, postsecondary schooling, and high school to work planning). Furthermore, the presence of a formal college access program in high school was defined only as the presence or absence of the program, as opposed to the type and nature of program. This item could be considered ambiguous in nature and offers some challenges in analysis and interpretation.

An additional limitation of this study is that though the students and schools are nationally representative, the school counselors are not. The counselors were selected based on their role as lead 9th grade counselor in the sampled schools. The school counselors do not represent 9th school counselors in the United States, which adds an additional challenge in terms of the generalizability of the results. Also, since the school counselors are all 9th grade counselors, it limits our understanding of the role of high school counselors' in college-going culture because it does not provide information from the perspective of 10th, 11th, or 12 grade counselors. In particular, this is a limitation due to the timeline of the college application process, which occurs in the later part of high school.

Another limitation of this study is the self-report nature of the school counselor questionnaire. School counselors are asked to provide information regarding their own, as well as their colleagues, priorities, use of time/activities, and expectations of students. It is possible that the counselors responded in a socially desirable way, as opposed to as truthfully as possible. Though there is a possibility of this type of response, it is less likely than if the questionnaire had asked for school counselors to only provide information about their own expectations, priorities, and use of time/activities, as opposed to that of the entire counseling department.

Implications

Despite the study limitations, there are several implications that emerge as a result of the findings of this study. First, and most generally, research on the relationship between college-going culture, and school counselors' behaviors and perceptions is important and deserves more attention. School counselors are trained to

deliver programming and interventions that should result in significant changes in students' lives, yet do not often report the outcomes that result from their work. This mentality seems prevalent in school counseling literature, as well, and it is imperative that the profession increases its efforts to show evidence for counselors' relevance to schools and students.

This study's results demonstrate that the higher school counselors' expectations of students are, the more likely that there is a formal program in the school to encourage students to consider college who might not otherwise do so. This is a small step in discovering ways that school counselors may be impacting college-going culture. In terms of college access, school counselors may have a direct impact on the presence of critically important college access programs in their schools because this is a program that specifically exists for those not already considering college. Interestingly, it is the expectations of school counselors, not the behaviors, that are the positive predictors of the college encouragement program. This aligns with previous research that finds that the beliefs and expectations of educators are an essential foundation part of the college-going culture of schools (Bryan et al., 2009; Sciarra & Ambrosino, 2011; Weinstein & Savitz-Romer, 2009). An additional significant result of this study is that school counselors' perceptions of principals' expectations of students positively predicted school counselors' expectations of students. In other words, school counselors who reported their principal had high expectations for students were more likely to have high expectations for students themselves.

The implication of this finding from the high school student perspective is that

students are more likely to attend schools where both the principal and the school counselor have high expectations, or both have low expectations for students. Due to the important influence educators' expectations have on students' own self-expectations and behaviors, particularly in regard to college-going, it is imperative that education programs address this concept (Schussler & Collins, 2006; Sciarra & Ambrosino, 2011; Weinstein & Savitz-Romer, 2009). Specifically, Counselor Education programs should stress the importance of principal/counselor collaboration, the role expectations plays in the success or failure of students, and choosing to work in schools whose culture supports personal and professional beliefs.

Furthermore, the results of this study indicate the school counselors who place college readiness as the top priority of the school counseling program are more likely to spend time in college readiness activities. Though this may seem an obvious connection, it has important implications. Though school counselors' time in various activities may be based on other factors, such as administrators' perception of school counselors' role or clerical, administrative, or testing needs of the school, this is a promising result that indicates that what school counselors perceive as the primary goal and priority of their program can, in fact, predict the way they spend their time. This holds important ramifications for Counselor Education programs in terms of teaching and supervising students, and providing certain field experiences. Counselor educators should instruct school counseling students in a manner that emphasizes college readiness as a priority for counseling programs. It is important for school counseling students and professional school counselors to consider program planning from the perspective of understanding the needs of students and stakeholders, while

also working within the context of high expectations of students. College readiness can be infused into Counselor Education programs' curriculum at multiple points: beginning in professional orientation courses, continuing in individual and group counseling skills and theories classes, and culminating in program development and evaluation courses.

Future Research

Further research on the role of school counselors in creating, implementing, and maintaining college-going culture in schools is necessary. Though this study begins to examine the role of school counselors' beliefs and behaviors, and the relationship to certain elements of college-going culture in high schools, further research would be beneficial.

The High School Longitudinal Study (2009) offers a wealth of information on school counselors and college-going culture. There are several variables that may be interesting to researchers, including the presence of college-going elements: college visits, college fairs, information sessions for parents and families, concurrent or dual enrollment, and partnerships with colleges and universities. Researchers should also investigate the role that counselor variables such nature of training, years of experience, and demographic variables may have on the priorities and use of time/activities of school counselors.

In order to be effective, educators should establish a strong college-going culture that begins in elementary school, continues in middle school, and culminates in high school (Lapan & Harrington, 2008; McDonough, 2004; 2006). Therefore, it would be helpful to understand the impact that elementary and middle school

counselors have on college-going culture, and the extent to which they may or may not impact college-going behaviors of students. More specifically, due to the ability of school counselor in building partnerships with parents and families, it would be interesting to discover the relationship between school counselors planning and implementing financial aid workshops and events and families and parents' financial understanding and preparation for college.

Qualitative studies examining the nature of school counselors' role in promoting college-going in K-12 schools would offer a considerable contribution to the literature. Individual interviews and focus groups with school counselors, students, parents and families, administrators, and other educators would allow school counselors and counselor educators to reach a better, in-depth understanding of the ways counselors can contribute to college-going culture.

Conclusion

This dissertation examines an under-studied area of school counseling: the relationship between school counselors' priorities, use of time in college readiness activities, expectations of students, and college-going culture in high schools. In order to provide comprehensive school counseling programs that contribute to the college-going behaviors of students, it is essential that practitioners, educators, and researchers understand what variables lead to postsecondary success for students. This study demonstrated results based on the examination of school counselors' beliefs and behaviors, and some elements of college-going culture. It concluded with implications for counselor education programs, practicing school counselors, and other stakeholders in the college-going process, and provides ideas for future research.

References

American School Counselor Association. (2004). *ASCA National Standards for Students.* Alexandria, VA: Author.

American Counseling Association (2005). *ACA Code of Ethics.* Alexandria, VA: Author.

Arredondo, P., Toporek, M. S., Brown, S., Jones, J., Locke, D. C., Sanchez, J. and Stadler, H. (1996) *Operationalization of the Multicultural Counseling Competencies.* AMCD: Alexandria, VA

Bandura, A. (1997). *Self-Efficacy.* New York: W.H. Freeman and Company.

Borman, G.D., & Overman, L.T. (2004). Academic resilience in mathematics among poor and minority students, *The Elementary School Journal, 104*(3), 177-195.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). Contexts of child rearing: Problems and prospects. *American Psychologist, 34*(10), 844-850.

Bryan, J., Holcomb-McCoy, C., Moore-Thomas, C., & Day-Vines, N.L. (2009). Who sees the school counselor for college information? A national study, *Professional School Counseling, 12*(4), 280-291.

Bryan, J., Day-Vines, N.L., Holcomb-McCoy, C., & Moore-Thomas, C. (2010). Using national education longitudinal data sets in school counseling research, *Counselor Education & Supervision, 49*, 266-279.

Bryan, J., Moore-Thomas, C., Day-Vines, N.L, & Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2011). School counselors as social capital: The effects of high school college counseling on college application rates. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 89,* 190-199.

Cabrera, A.F., Burkum, K.R., & La Nasa, S.M. (2003). *Pathways to a four-year degree: Determinants of degree completion among socioeconomically disadvantaged students*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the association for the study of higher education (Portland, OR, November 13-16, 2003).

Cervoni, A., & DeLucia-Waack, J. (2011). Role conflict and ambiguity as predictors of job satisfaction in high school counselors, *Journal of School Counseling, 9*(1), 1-30.

Coleman, J. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital, *American Journal of Sociology, 94,* 95-120.

Cooper, R. and Liou, D. D. (2007). The Structure and Culture of Information Pathways: Rethinking Opportunity to Learn in Urban High Schools during Ninth Grade Transition. *High School Journal* (October/November 2007), 91, 1, 43-56.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (2008). *2009 Standards*. Retrieved February 4, 2012, from http://www.cacrep.org/2009standads.html.

Corwin, Z.B., & Tierney, W.G. (2007). *Getting there and beyond: Building a culture of college going in high schools*. Center for Higher Education Policy Analysis.

Creswell, J. H. (2007). *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Deal, T.E., & Peterson, K.D. (2009). *Shaping School Culture*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Farmer-Hinton, R.L., & McCullough, R.G. (2008). College counseling in charter high

    schools: Examining the opportunities and challenges, *The High School*

    Journal, April/May, 77-99.

Farmer-Hinton, R. L., & Adams, T. L. (2006). Social capital and college preparation:

    Exploring the role of counselors in a college prep school for Black students.

    The Negro Educational Review, 57, 101-116.

Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2007). School counseling to close the achievement gap: A

    social justice framework for success. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2010). Involving low-income parents and parents of color in

    college readiness activities: An exploratory study, *Professional School*

    Counseling, 14(1), 155-124.

Holland, N.E., & Farmer-Hinton, R.L. (2009). Leave no schools behind: The

    importance of a college culture in urban public high schools. *The High School*

    Journal, Feb/March, 24-43.

House, R. M., Martin, P. J., & Ward, C. C. (2002). Changing School Counselor

    Preparation: A Critical Need. *Building School Counseling Programs:*

    Bringing Futuristic Approaches into the Present. (185-207). Greensboro, NC:

    CAPS Publication.

Ingels, J.L., Pratt, D.J., Herget, D.R., Burns, L.J, Dever, J.A., Ottem, R., . . . LoGerfo,

    L. (2011). *High school longitudinal study of 2009 (HSLS:09): Base-year data*

    file documentation. U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National

    Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved April 2, 2012 from

    http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch.

Knight-Diop, M.G. (2010). Closing the gap: Enacting care and facilitating black

    students' educational access in the creation of a high school college-going

    culture, *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk, 15,* 158-172.

Lapan, R., & Harrington, K (2008). *Paving the road to college: School counselors*

    help students succeed, Center for School Counseling Outcome Research.

Lee, C. (2005). Urban school counseling: Context, characteristics, and competencies.

    Professional School Counseling, 8(3), 189-195.

Lee, C. (2006). *Multicultural issues in counseling: New approaches to diversity* (3rd

    ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Lee, C. (2007). *Counseling for Social Justice* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American

    Counseling Association.

Leithwood, K. (2010). Characteristics of school districts that are exceptionally

    effective in closing the achievement gap. *Leadership and Policy in Schools,*

    9(3), 245-291.

Liou, D.D., Antrop-Gonzalez, R., & Cooper, R. (2009). Unveiling the promise of

    community culture wealth to sustaining Latina/o students' college-going

    information networks, *Educational Studies, 45,* 534-555.

McClafferty, K.A., McDonough, P.M., & Nunez, A. (2002). *What is college culture?*

    Facilitating college preparation through organizational change. Paper

    presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research

    Association (New Orleans, LA, April 1-5).

McDonough, P.M. (2004). Counseling matters: Knowledge, assistance, and

organizational commitment in college preparation. In W.G. Tierney, Z.B. Corwin, & J.E. Colyar (Eds.). *Preparing for college: Nine elements of effective outreach.* Albany, NY: SUNY Press.

McDonough, P.M., & Tierney, W.G. (2005). *The state of college admissions.* D.A. Hawkins & J. Lautz (Eds.). Alexandria, VA: National Association for College Admission Counseling.

McDonough, P.M. (2006). *Effective counseling in schools increases college access.* In NACAC's Research to Practice Brief. Alexandria, VA: National Association for College Admission Counseling.

McDonough, P.M. (2008). *Building a college culture: Needs, goals, principles, and a case study*. (Tech. Rep.). University of California, Los Angeles, Graduate School of Education and Information Studies.

Mueller, C.E., & Hart, C.O. (2010). Effective use of secondary data analysis in gifted education: Opportunities and challenges, *Gifted Children, 4*(2), 6-11.

National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (2009). *A close look at the principal-counselor relationship: A survey of principals and counselors,* The College Board.

National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (2010). *Eight components of college and career readiness counseling*, The College Board.

Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2011). *Education at a Glance 2011: OECD Indicators*. OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2011-en.

Pascarella, E.T., & Terenzini, P.T. (2005). *How college affects students.* San

Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Perkins, G., Oescher, J., & Ballard, M.B. (2008). The evolving identity of school

counselors as defined by the stakeholders, *Journal of School Counseling,*

8(31), 1-28.

Perna, L.W., Rowan-Kenyon, H.T., Thomas, S.L., Bell, A., Anderson, R., & Li,

Chunyan.(2008). The role of college counseling in shaping college

opportunity: Variations across high schools, *The Review of Higher Education,*

31(2), 121-159.

Pyne, J.R. (2011) Comprehensive school counseling programs, job satisfaction, and

the ASCA national model, *Professional School Counseling, 15*(2), 88-97.

Radcliffe, R., & Bos, B. (2011). Mentoring approaches to create a college-going

culture for at risk secondary level students, *American Secondary Education,*

39(3), 86-107.

Roderick, M., Coca, V., & Nagaoka, J. (2011). Potholes on the road to college: High

school effects in shaping urban students' participation in college application,

four year college enrollment, and college match, *Sociology of Education,*

84(3), 178-211.

Sandy, J., & Duncan, K. (2010). Examining the achievement test score gap between

urban and suburban students, *Education Economics, 8*(3), 297-315.

Scarborough, J.L., & Culbreth, J.R. (2008). Examining discrepancies between actual

and preferred practice of school counselors, *Journal of Counseling &*

Development, 86, 446-459.

Sciarra, D.T., & Ambrosino, K.E. (2011). *Post-secondary expectations and*

educational attainment, Professional School Counseling, 14(3), 231-241.

Snyder, T.D., & Dillow, S.A. (2011). *Digest of Education Statistics 2010* (NCES 2011-015). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.

Steen, S., & Noguera, P.A. (2010). A broader and bolder approach to school reform: Expanded partnership roles for school counselors, *Professional School Counseling, 14*(1), 42-52.

Strayhorn, T. L. (2009). Accessing and analyzing national databases. In T. J. Kowalski & T. J. Lasley II (Eds.), *Handbook of data-based decision making in education* (pp. 105 122). New York, NY: Routledge

The Education Trust: National Center for Transforming School Counseling. (2009a). The new vision for school counselors: Scope of the work. Retrieved on February 20, 2012 at http://www.edtrust.org/dc/tsc/vision.

The Education Trust: National Center for Transforming School Counseling. (2009b). School counselors working for social justice. Retrieved on February 20, 2012 at http://www.edtrust.org/dc/tsc/vision

Thompson, J. M., & Moffett, N. L. (2010). Clinical preparation and supervision of professional school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling, 8*(30).

U.S. Department of Education. (November 2009). *Executive Summary: Race to the Top.* Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Vargas, J. H. (2004). *College knowledge: Addressing information barriers to college.* Boston, MA: Education Resources Institute, College Access Services.

Venezia, A., Kirst, M., & Antonio, A. (2004). *Betraying the college dream: How*

disconnected K- 12 and post-secondary systems undermine student

aspirations. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Weinstein, L. & Savitz-Romer, M. (2009) Planning for opportunity: Applying

organizational and social capital theories to promote college going cultures.

Educational Planning, 18(2), 1-11.

Young, A., & Kaffenberger, C. (2011). The beliefs and practices of school counselors

who use data to implement comprehensive school counseling programs.

Professional School Counseling, 15(2), 67-76.

Zullig, K.J., Huebner, E.S., & Patton, J.M. (2011). Relationships among school

climate domains and school satisfaction. *Psychology in the Schools, 48*(2),

133-145.