AN EXAMINATION OF PARENTS' PREFERRED SCHOOL

COUNSELOR PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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The purpose of this study was to examine parent preferences for school counselor professional activities. The primary focus of research was to determine if any relationship exists between (1) parents' demographic factors – gender, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity – and their preferences for school counselors' professional activities; (2) educational factors – parents' level of education and grade level of their student (9-12) – and parents' preferences for professional activities; and (3) parents' experience parenting high school students and their preferences for school counselors' professional activities.

I utilized a 7-item demographic questionnaire and an adapted version of the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005). The SCARS is a 48-item standardized instrument that measures how school counselors actually spend their time engaged in professional activities compared to how they would prefer to spend that time. The format was adapted from a verbal frequency scale to a 5-point Likert-type scale. In the current study, parents indicated their preference for school counselors to enact certain tasks, with higher scores indicating greater endorsement of the task. Cronbach's alpha for each of the SCARS subscales indicated good internal consistency: Counseling .879; Consultation .831; Curriculum .933; Coordination .867; and "other" .828.

The sample was composed of 250 parents from a school district in the southwestern United States. The study population consisted of 198 female and 52 male participants ranging in age from 31 to 66 years old and included 6.4% African American, 1.6% Asian/Pacific Islander, 8.0% Hispanic, 4% Native American, and 83.6% White. Results indicated that parents overall

preferred counselors to engage, from most to least, in Coordination, Counseling, "other," Curriculum, and Consultation activities and that they most strongly endorsed counselors providing students with academic advising and counseling for school related behavior.

Regarding the primary focus of this study, the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was utilized to ascertain potential relationship between variables. Results indicated a small statistically significant correlation between gender and the Counseling subscale score, $r = .178, p < .01$. Compared to male parents, female parents' scored higher on the Counseling subscale. Results also indicated a small statistically significant negative correlation between parents' eligibility for their children to receive free or reduced-price lunch and Coordination subscale scores, $r = -.126, p < .05$. Parents eligible to participate in the government's free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program were more likely than non-eligible parents to indicate a preference for counselors to coordinate student referral to school-related programs and services.

Respondents' reports of their age, ethnicity, parents' educational attainment, student grade level, and parents' experience parenting high school students did not correlate significantly with their SCARS scores. Parents' preferences based on responses to the SCARS are discussed, as are implications for school counselors, directors of guidance, and counselor education faculties.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the introduction of vocational guidance and counseling into the public school

system in the early twentieth century (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Gysbers & Henderson, 1997;

Schmidt, 2008), the duties, roles, and responsibilities of its practitioners have faced numerous

political and social demands to delineate the roles and responsibilities of counselors. A historical

overview of the development of guidance and counseling shows several distinct phases of

growth, progress, and advancement of the counseling profession. In its critical opening stages of

development, the counseling profession responded to unanticipated social troubles associated

with the industrial revolution (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers &

Henderson, 2001; Schmidt, 2008).

The role of the counseling profession was extended when vocational counselors

incorporated use of vocational assessment instruments into their professional framework

(Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Schmidt, 2008). Career decisions and approaches to guidance and

counseling then focused on measurement of the distinctiveness of human traits. Schmidt (2008)

noted that growth in the use of psychometrics as guidance instruments lacked accuracy because

of poor design and standardization procedures.

The work of Carl Rogers and the growing interest in psychotherapy had an extensive

impact on the development of counseling, the focus of daily responsibilities of school

counselors, and the training school counselors received (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Lambie &

Williamson, 2004). Furthermore, the George-Barden Act of 1946 and the National Defense

Education Act of 1957 provided federal funding and material support for counselor training. This

level of political and social influence mandated specific responsibilities on the yet emerging counseling profession.

As the twentieth century progressed, a growing criticism of the mental health focus, or clinical-services model in school counseling yielded to a growing body of research for a broader methodical approach to school counseling that was more systematic, developmental, and accountable (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Gysbers and Henderson (2000) referred to the change from a mental health focus, with its emphasis on the counselor, to an emphasis on delivery of a guidance program as a change from a position focus to a program focus.

Today, school counselors are increasingly called upon to produce data that demonstrate accountability to administrators, school boards, and primary stakeholders demonstrating improved academic achievement of the students they serve through a guidance program (American School Counseling Association, 2005; Gysbers, 2004; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Sink, 2005).

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA, 2005) standards and the Transforming School Counselor Initiative (TSCI, 1996) support the notion that the primary responsibility of school counselors is to help all students succeed. Moreover, both organizations promote school counselors as educators with responsibilities as leaders to use data to illustrate accountability and advocate for all students.

Statement of the Problem

Guidance and school counseling has transformed considerably since the early twentieth century. The profession has adapted and responded to social and political events to provide a

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quality and indispensable service to meet ever-changing student needs. Throughout the evolution of the profession through the stages of vocational guidance, the clinical-services model, and the development of comprehensive school guidance programs, researchers have focused on the effectiveness of the delivery model in use at the time. Researchers have discussed accountability as well as appropriate and inappropriate utilization of counselors. Researchers have paid little attention to one of the primary constituents of school counselors: parents. Thus, researchers have few answers to an essential question pertaining to these constituents: What do parents view as essential school counselor tasks?

A wealth of research in counseling literature cites the effectiveness and necessity of a comprehensive guidance program. Certainly, the purpose of a comprehensive guidance program is to benefit students school counselors serve. Considerable research on data driven programs sought to validate accountability for primary stakeholders such as school administrators and school boards. Yet, my comprehensive review of pertinent databases resulted in very little research regarding parent preferences for the role, function, and utility of the school counselor. This lack of research creates a void in the literature and in development of comprehensive school guidance programs. Furthermore, this lack of research creates barriers for counselor educators as they design best practices in school counselor preparation programs.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, I review professional counseling literature applicable to the topic of parent preferences of school counselor functions. In the absence of literature related specifically to parent preferences of school counselor functions, I will refer to related literature. Specifically, I provide an introductory history of the school counseling profession, the implementation of credentialing standards, and a review of the changing roles of school counselors. In addition, I examine research related to school administrator and teacher views of the school counselor. I also briefly review the scant research of parents' perspectives of school counselors.

History of School Counseling

The initial development of vocational guidance was a response to the increasing social and economic problems related to the American Industrial Revolution (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Schmidt, 2008). Children from farming communities typically anticipated and were expected to continue farming. The age of industrialization required greater awareness and acquisition of higher-level skills for entering the workforce (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008).

The transition from an agrarian based society to an industrial society resulted in an unanticipated consequence: recognition that little thought or planning was considered in providing educational and career preparation. A rapidly changing social order included unanticipated negative mechanisms associated with industrialization (Cobia & Henderson, 2006; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000).

Jesse B. Davis and Frank Parsons originally introduced the concept of school counseling, originally known as vocational guidance (Cobia & Henderson, 2006; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). In 1907, Davis, a high school principal in Grand Rapids, Michigan, started a program that included guidance lessons in English classes. The goal of Davis' program included teaching vocational interests, training in character development, helping students acquire positive traits, and choosing constructive behaviors (Cobia & Henderson, 2006; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Schmidt, 2008).

The next year, Parsons, the "father of guidance" was instrumental in formulating a model of vocational guidance. Parsons believed ideal career choices were based on matching personal traits, such as aptitudes, abilities, resources, and personalities, with job factors. In addition, he believed having knowledge of wages and work environment produced the best conditions for vocational success. Parsons based his book, *Choosing a Vocation* (1909), on his work in the Boston Vocation Bureau and stressed a scientific approach in career selection and the emergence of trained vocational experts in the public schools (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Parsons' approach incorporated 3 emphases: knowledge of self, knowledge of the world of work, and "true reasoning" about those two points.

World Wars I and II pressed the United States military to use testing and assessment programs to evaluate skills and assign soldiers to jobs and related job functions. Testing allowed military recruiters to assess soldiers' skills and place them in a job function best suited to their abilities (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Schmidt, 2008). Vocational guidance leaders responded to the social-political situations of both World Wars by introducing appraisal into their work. The introduction of numerous assessment instruments during the 1930s and 1940s expanded the role of the counselor and provided increased accuracy to the field of

vocational guidance (Schmidt, 2008). Although many of those instruments later proved to be inaccurate, assessment became another function of the counseling profession.

Intense interest and growth in psychotherapy launched a new phase in the growth of vocational guidance and counseling (Gysbers, 2000, 2001). Carl Rogers further expanded the role of vocational guidance by bringing the distinct focus of counseling services to the individual. A focus on mental health (Gysbers, 2000, 2001) guided the direction of counseling for the next several decades and became the primary focus of counselor training programs. At this time, counselors helped people solve internal conflicts, discovered acceptable solutions to difficult situations, and monitored career and academic development in one-on-one or small group settings. The clinical service model defined the practice of counseling and the training techniques of pre-service counselors (Bernard & Fullmer, 1969; Lee & Putman, 2008; Littrell & Zink, 2005; Schmidt, 2004).

In 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first man-made satellite. This technological breakthrough fueled the fear associated with the cold war. In response, the United States Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1957. A primary effort of this act was to increase the technological advancement of the nation by identifying the nation's brightest students and guiding them into science and mathematics careers (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). A principle element of this legislation provided federal monies for school districts to hire school guidance counselors for secondary schools to assist in identifying and guiding the nation's students in the direction of math and science (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Congress expanded the National Defense Education Act in 1965 to include funding for elementary school counselors.

By the 1960s, school counseling services fell under the auspices of the pupil personnel services model (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). School counselors were administratively placed in the pupil personnel services model that emphasized an interdisciplinary method to aid student-learning outcomes. Pupil personnel services typically encompassed student services such as guidance, attendance, social work, reading, speech, hearing, and health services (Bernard & Fullmer, 1969; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000). Counselors were just one component of an interdisciplinary team of service providers.

Bernard and Fullmer (1969) noted a goal of pupil personnel services was to maximize the educational experience of every student regardless of intellectual, emotional, or physical functioning. Even under the pupil personnel services model, the focus of the implementation of the model was on student success. However, concern about the role of the counselor in the administrative organizational structure and the counselor's ability to influence all students' generated apprehension. Regarding the pupil personnel services model, Gysbers and Henderson (2000) summarized, "As a result, guidance became a subset of services to be delivered by school counselors who occupied positions within a broader framework of pupil personnel services" (p. 16).

Gysbers and Henderson (2000) noted that researchers increasingly utilized the term developmental guidance during the 1960s. The growth of the term was attributed to an evolution of educational movements with increased interest in career theory, development, research, and practice. The term developmental guidance and its defining structures translated into practical utilization in the 1970s (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000) by efforts to implement career development into the school curriculum and the movement to develop state guides for guidance

and counseling. Throughout the 1970s, a call for a more accountable and systematic operational model of guidance took place.

Lambie and Williamson (2004) cited legislation as an influence on the role of the school counselor. The publication of *A Nation at Risk* in 1983 by the National Commission of Excellence in Education cited diminishing student achievement. The authors called for reform proposals to lead to higher accountability through academic testing programs. Concerns about declining student achievement affected the role of the school counselor. Testing programs to monitor student academic achievement were introduced. The implementations of testing programs at the building level typically were assigned to the school counselor.

As the last decade of the twentieth century emerged, Gysbers (2001) noted that services provided by school counselors in the 1990s, much like previous decades, continued to respond to societal changes and concerns. Examples of primary societal concerns include family and school violence, substance abuse, and mental health concerns, all of which increased the demands and "tugged at defining the purpose of guidance in the school and role of the school counselor" (p. 5). Coy (1999) added gangs, suicide, divorce, pregnancy, poverty, and homelessness to the growing list of concerns that impacted student academic achievement that school counselors must be prepared to address.

<center>Training and Credentialing Standards</center>

In 1981, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) was created "to promote the professional competence of counseling and related practitioners through the development of preparation standards, encouragement of excellence in program development, and the accreditation of professional preparation programs" (2002, p. 2).

CACREP accredits member institutions that meet standards of accreditation. School counseling is one of six entry-level programs for which CACREP has established standards. CACREP (2009) standards for school counseling programs require students to "demonstrate the professional knowledge, skills, and practices necessary to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of all K-12 students" (p. 39).

The restructuring of CACREP standards for school counseling programs expanded the standards from the 2001 to 2009 edition. For example, in the 2001 standards, leadership strategies were addressed under the foundation section. In the 2009 standards, an entire section on leadership strategies was added. Some of the leadership subsections are previous standards that have moved to the leadership section. The changes in CACREP standards seemed to respond to the need for practicing school counselors to demonstrate leadership skills, principles, and qualities necessary to be an effective agent for change in the school system.

The 2009 standards now include a research and evaluation section. The new standards call for school counselors to demonstrate skills in planning and program evaluation and to understand outcome research and best practices identified in the school counseling literature. Additionally, school counselors must acquire and understand various methods of data evaluation to demonstrate accountability and school improvement. The changes in CACREP standards require counselor educators to change curriculum to meet the new standards and prepare school counselors to be effective leaders and consumers of data and counseling research.

Strong calls for accountability and demonstrated effectiveness of school counselors are found throughout the professional literature. Brott (2006) proposed counselor educators imbue training and development of accountability throughout the training program "so that demonstrating effectiveness as a school counselor develops as part of one's professional

identity" (p. 180). Brott suggested training programs for school counselors avoid developing

independent training courses but synergistically incorporate learning objectives that provide the

tools, techniques, and values necessary to teach accountability that is carried into service once

the student completes training.

Role of the School Counselor

The current role of the school counselor is inherently related to the historical

development of the counseling profession. As counselor duties expanded, the structures that

defined responsibilities and daily tasks were acquired through the known concepts of the time.

Even early in development of the profession, perceptions existed of an unorganized effort aimed

at improving and responding to societal needs. Jessie B. Davis created the first guidance program

in 1907 (Cobia & Henderson, 2006; Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000).

Coy (1999) reported that Davis' program was introduced in 1889 and stated that redefining the

role of the school counselor can be traced through approximately 100 years of research and

implementation of counseling skills.

Concern regarding the role of the school counselor, or vocational guidance as it was

known in the initial stages, was expressed as early as 1923. Myers (as cited in Gysbers &

Henderson, 2000) noted three crucial developments in vocational guidance. First, Myers noted

that vocational guidance was becoming an essential function of organized education. Second,

vocational guidance was becoming a specialized task requiring specific training and utilization of

the unique, innate gifting of the practitioner. Third, Myers noted the end of the stage when

schools organized their own efforts, and he called for an organized, centralized program in order

to provide the most effective work possible. Lieberman (2004) stated that the effective utilization

of school counselors is unclear to all primary stakeholders, and "there has been overwhelming evidence revealing the pervasive confusion which exists regarding any consistent role functions for professional school counselors" (p. 2).

Teachers carried out early vocational counseling duties. These additional vocational guidance responsibilities were assigned without relief of teaching functions and without any formal training (Cobia & Henderson, 2006; Gysbers, 2001). Counseling duties consisted of a list of responsibilities to be accomplished with little organizational structure. In 1936, Fitch articulated concern that counselors may inherit varied tasks that no one else cared to make the time to do. Teachers were asked to carry out additional duties of vocational counseling with no relief from their teaching responsibilities. A few of those additional duties were:

1. Gather and keep occupational information on file
2. Work with local libraries to acquires books about vocational and educational guidance
3. Work with teachers to connect curriculum to occupations
4. Interview students "who were failing, attempt to find a reason, and suggest a remedy"
5. Use cumulative records and consult intelligence tests to advise students
6. To persuade students to stay in school
7. To hold conferences with parents of students who are failing or withdrawing from school. (Gysbers & Henderson, 2000, p. 5)

Relationships among and between this partial list of duties and responsibilities of early vocational counselors and today's professional school counselor functions are evident.

Burnham and Jackson (2000) conducted an in-depth comparison of actual practice compared to ideal practice regarding school counselor roles and definition based on two existing counseling models. Burnham and Jackson used a convenience sample of 80 certified, full-time practicing school counselors. The participants served in various grade level combinations: 25 served in elementary schools; 9 in elementary-middle school combinations, 12 served in middle

schools, 3 in middle-high schools, 15 in high schools, and 5 in K-12 schools. Eleven participants did not give their grade level. Burnham and Jackson administered a survey designed by Jackson and Dooley (1988) and examined six primary functions of school counselors. The items addressed the following: individual counseling, group counseling, group guidance, working with parents, testing and appraisal, consultation, career and college planning, public relations, and clerical and administrative duties.

Burnham and Jackson found 73 of 80-school counselors utilized individual counseling on a regular basis. Of those surveyed, 20 counselors spent up to 50% of their time on this task. School counselors spent 10% to 23% of their time in small group counseling. Group guidance was utilized by 78 of 80 counselors surveyed, but time spent delivering group guidance varied. Only 30 of 78 counselors met once or twice a week. The remaining counselors used group guidance less than twice a month and in some cases not at all.

Burnham and Jackson (2000) identified 17 non-guidance activities routinely performed by school counselors. The identified non-guidance activities are similar to the activities cited by Fitch (1936). Following are the top five duties in rank order cited by Burnham and Jackson (2000):

1. Requesting and receiving records

2. Scheduling

3. Permanent records

4. Enrolling students

5. Special education referrals and placement

Burnham and Jackson (2000) also identified non-guidance activities and the percentage of counselors' assigned non-guidance duties. Sixty-five percent of school counselors were

responsible for student records, 56% scheduling, and 49% transcripts. School counselors were charged with the responsibility of helping students advance academically, personally, and socially, yet tasks unrelated to direct provision of student guidance and counseling occupied school counselors' time.

Murray (1995) stated that school counselor actual duties (compared to job descriptions) have grown exponentially, involving school counselors in almost every area of school operations and increasing the level of paper work for school counselors required by administrators. Confusion regarding the role and function of the school counselor exists at various levels among primary school stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and counselors. Murray (1995) further cited a history of ambiguous role description and confusion. Although Murray did not assign blame to any one group of people including school administrators, parents, students, and counselors, Murray cited changing forces and increasing requirements and responsibilities placed upon the school system as contributing factors in the uncertainty and confusion of responsibilities faced by counselors.

The American School Counseling Association (ASCA) attempted to more clearly define the school counseling profession by offering *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (2005). The ASCA model "is written to reflect a comprehensive approach to program foundation, delivery, management and accountability" (p. 9). Additionally, the model is designed to provide a structure to assist school counselors in the transition from service-centered approach for some students, to a program-centered approach to reach every student.

Contemporary researchers (Dahir & Stone, 2009) and the ASCA (2005) standards encourage professional school counselors to re-define their roles as student advocates and leaders

in the educational process and to move from the delivery of a set of services to data driven

comprehensive programs. ASCA (2005) set out to identify appropriate roles and functions for

professional school counselors (PSC) through its recommended delivery system. ASCA

standards stated school counselors are most effective and clearly define their roles appropriately

when utilizing the components of its four-part delivery system: school guidance curriculum,

individual student planning, responsive services, and system support.

In an effort to initiate accountability for school counseling programs, ASCA (2005)

established performance standards for school counselors that align with the ASCA national

model. According to ASCA, "now more than ever, school counselors are challenged to

demonstrate the effectiveness of their programs in measureable terms" (p. 59). Performance

standards recommended by (ASCA, 2005) align directly with the proposed national model.

Those school counselor standards are:

1. Program organization

2. School guidance curriculum delivered to all students

3. Individual student planning

4. Responsive services

5. Systems support

6. School counselor and administrator agreement

7. Advisory council

8. Use of data

9. Student monitoring

10. Use of time and calendar

11. Results evaluation

12. Program audit

13. Infusing themes

Infusing these standards and implementing the ASCA model continues to be a challenge for (PSCs) considering the long history of ambiguous role descriptions and confusion (Murray, 1995). The increase in counselor duties not related to guidance and counseling (Burnham & Jackson, 2000), and the ever changing societal concerns such as family and school violence, substance abuse, and mental health concerns that school counselors are often asked to address contributed to expanding role definitions and confusion (Coy, 1999; Gysbers, 2001).

Furthermore, school principals are held accountable for effective deployment of personnel assigned to the principal's campus (Lieberman, 2004). Campus administrators make decisions about utilizing specializations of school-based workforce in a manner that best supports the overall campus operations. Counselors' unique training and skills are often underutilized in lieu of temporary administrative assignments that meet the needs of a particular campus culture (Lieberman, 2004).

Although professional school counseling has a rich and fluid history, Lambie and Williamson (2004) asserted the essentiality of counselors' ability to convey and advocate for their roles on campus and within the communities where they serve to reduce role ambiguity and minimize the historical tradition of add-on responsibilities without a reduction in current counselor duties. Similarly, Brott and Myers (1999) stated that

> In spite of the best efforts of professional associations, accrediting bodies, and training programs to define the profession of school counseling, studies indicate that the actual functions of counselors in the schools do not always reflect what have been identified as the best practices in school counseling. (pp. 339–340)

Using archival data from a National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC) job analysis of school counselor work behaviors, Foster, Young, and Herman (2005) examined the data to

determine if national school counseling standards are being met. The job analysis examined 193 school counselor work behaviors. Researchers organized work behaviors into three content areas: academic, career development, and personal/social. Two scales were utilized. One scale measured how frequently a respondent performed a work activity, and the second measured how essential a respondent rated the activity.

Data examined by Foster et al. (2005) suggested respondents' work activities were congruent with the work behaviors deemed by the expert panelists as highly promoting students' academic growth. Respondents rated promoting student career development and job search skills as somewhat important and as rarely performed as a work activity. Data also indicated that respondents rated the 25 work activities in the personal/social domain from moderately to very important as essential school counselor work behaviors.

School counseling history is replete with role confusion and add-on responsibilities. That history creates a discrepancy between actual and preferred practice among PSCs. Scarborough and Culbreth (2008) examined discrepancies between actual and preferred practice of school counselors and found that school counselors preferred to engage in professional activities that were aligned with positive student outcomes and performed fewer non-guidance related duties. According to Scarborough and Culbreth, PSCs preferred activities aligned with a comprehensive developmental guidance program.

Furthermore, Scarborough and Culbreth (2008) determined that PSCs' level of employment was a factor in preferred practice and actual practice of school counselor professional activities. Elementary counselors reported practicing in alignment with their preferences. High school counselors were least likely to practice in a manner aligned with their preferences. Researchers also found that years of experience were also a factor in school

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counselor preferred practice. Finally, data revealed that school counselors with more years of experience practiced in a preferred style.

School Administrator View of the Role of the School Counselor

ASCA (2005), in setting out to bring clarity, uniformity, and cohesiveness to the role and function of the PSC, also advocated for PSCs to take increasingly visible leadership roles in school settings. Because principals are held accountable for school performance and based on their positions are viewed as the school leaders, several studies (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Lieberman, 2004) have explored perceptions of administrators regarding school counselors. Researchers have addressed how school principals view the role of school counselors, what tasks and responsibilities should occupy the time of the school counselor, and differences between appropriate and inappropriate school counselor functions.

Murray (1995) stated that the role and purpose of the counselor reflects a history of blurred definition and confusion. The indistinct role definition of school counselors becomes more complex as individual school culture, administrator expectations, actual campus needs, and administrator educational management responsibilities may not align with PSC job descriptions. School principals hold the ultimate responsibility for effective utilization and management of personnel assigned to their campuses (Lieberman, 2004).

Lieberman (2004) also recognized the challenge faced by campus administrators who must make decisions about utilizing the distinctive and varied specializations of school-based workforce in a manner that best supports overall campus operations. Lieberman (2004) reported that counselors are often called to perform tasks that under utilize counselor training and

effectiveness, stating counselors' professional contributions are diluted by temporary administrative assignments.

Pérusse, Goodnough, Donegan, and Jones (2004) examined the differences that PSC's and school administrators viewed regarding PSCs' adherence to ASCA national standards. Participants included a random sample of 1000 professional school counselors generated from the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) database. Random samples of 500 secondary and 500 elementary school administrators were constructed from the membership of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). For statistical purposes, respondents were categorized as follows: those participants who worked with students in any grade level from K-6 were categorized as serving elementary, and participants who worked with students in any grade level from 7-12 were categorized as serving secondary.

More than 80% of participants who were secondary school principals identified registration and scheduling, administration of tests, and maintenance of student records as appropriate tasks for school counselors (Pérusse et al., 2004). Moreover, Chata and Loesch (2007) stated that "importantly, it also is evident that principals' directives, rather than professional job descriptions, determine the roles and functions that PSCs actually fulfill in schools" (p. 3).

Presently, professional training of school administrators and school counselors occur independently of each other. Opportunities for training together to gain understanding of the roles, duties, and perspectives of the others profession are virtually nonexistent. School counselors tend to be student advocates (ASCA, 2005; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000) who focus

on reasons of student behavior, whereas administrators comprise whole group advocates who focus on effects of student conduct on the school at large.

Shoffner and Williamson (2000) described a seminar course that joined pre-service counselors and pre-service administrators. Goals of the seminar were to help students gain an understanding of their colleagues, gain insight into the roles, duties, and responsibilities of the others professional perspective, develop relationships, and enhance communication within the two groups. Students enrolled in the course indicated, "that hearing the perspectives of counselors-in-training and principals-in-training was an invaluable, extremely relevant, and much needed experience" (p. 6). Although these anecdotal results indicate a growing collaboration and understanding between pre-service administrators and pre-service counselors, it does not change the day-to-day reality of school operations. Furthermore, Shoffner and Williamson did not present follow up data on how this collaborative seminar translated into actual professional service.

In a somewhat similar program designed to examine perceptions of the school counselor role, Kirchner and Setchfield (2005) surveyed practicing school counselors and administrators who had previously enrolled in a graduate course several years prior to the study. The focus of the course was to orient principals-in-training and counselors-in-training to the others' role. Research participants had previously enrolled in a course designed to create collaborative change for school improvement. One of the goals of the course was for each group, pre-service principals and pre-service counselors, to develop a greater understanding of each other's professional activities and best practices for each profession.

The 65 participants, employed in K-12 settings, were surveyed on 15 role congruent statements based on the Kentucky Educational Professional Standards Board (Kirchner &

Setchfield, 2005) and reflected in the ASCA role statement at the time of the study. Researchers defined role congruent statements as appropriate school counselor activities. Kirchner and Setchfield (2005) found that means for counselors and administrators on role congruent statements were practically indistinguishable. Kirchner and Setchfield also found that endorsement of role-congruent statements were not correlated at a statistically significant level with program association or grade level of professional service.

The same was not true for role incongruent statements. Kirchner and Setchfield (2005) defined role incongruent statements as activities not appropriate to school counselor functions. Results indicated strong correlations for role-incongruent statements based on program association and grade level. Employment at higher-grade levels and years of service were positively correlated with the tendency of administrators to endorse role incongruent statements. Counselors were less likely than administrators to endorse role incongruent statements. In discussion of their results, Kirchner and Setchfield stated that concepts presented in the training environment tend to be less significant for administrators who face "real life" decisions regarding available human resources.

Chata and Loesch (2007) examined future principals' view of the role of PSCs and found principals-in-training were able to distinguish between appropriate and inappropriate functions of school counselors. Results were generally favorable for PSCs in that principals-in-training were able to make a distinction between appropriate and inappropriate counselor role and functions. Chata and Loesch concluded, "clearly there is a point at which academic knowledge and theorizing give way to actual responsibilities for principals just as it does for other educational professionals" (p. 8). Like Kirchner and Setchfield (2005), Chata and Loesch indicated that actual professional service and day-to-day responsibilities may outweigh theoretical study.

In a qualitative study utilizing grounded theory methodology, Amatea and Clark (2005) interviewed 26 public school administrators working in K-12 settings. The study was designed to construct further understanding of school administrators' conceptualized role of PSC's. Four distinct roles emerged from analysis of the data. The four roles were: the innovative school leader, the collaborative case consultant, the responsive direct service provider, and the administrative team player.

Only 3 of 26 principals saw it as a priority of school counselors to take an active leadership role with the school staff in order to improve overall staff performance (Amatea & Clark, 2005). More principals (9 out of 26) expected counselors to have specialized knowledge in psychological, social, and academic needs of students as well as appropriate intervention strategies in order to function as a case consultant to primary stakeholders, parents, teachers, and administrators. About one-third of respondents viewed their school counselors' roles as direct service providers through individual, small group, or classroom guidance. About one-fourth (8 out of 26) of principals did not view their school counselors as professionals with distinct training and specific skills. Instead, principals viewed school counselors as members of the administrative team. Although the small sample size restricted generalization to a larger population of principals, these results indicated school counselors face an ongoing variance with administrators in defining their professional role and utilizing their specialized training for the benefit of students.

Dodson (2009) examined high school administrators' perceptions of the high school counselor role. Specifically, Dodson compared administrators' "perceptions of the high school counselor role in a Recognized ASCA Model Program (RAMP) versus the perceptions that administrators had of the high school counselor role in counseling departments that had not

received the RAMP designation" (p. 480). RAMP designation identifies school counseling

programs that implement ASCA national model (2005). RAMP designations are awarded to

school counseling programs that deliver comprehensive, data-driven programs. According to

Dodson (2009), "the most significant finding in the administrator perceptions was that RAMP

administrators viewed their school counselors as having a significant role in collaborating with

teachers to present guidance curriculum lessons" (p. 480).

Leuwerke, Walker, and Qi (2009) conducted another study that examined school

administrator perceptions of appropriate school counselor functions. Leuwerke et al. focused on

three specific possibilities: First, school administrators had widespread exposure to the ASCA

national model. Second, school administrators who participated in short information sessions

about the ASCA national model, and school counseling outcome research to identify more

appropriate counselor time allocations than school administrators not exposed to the information

session. Third, school administrators who participated in the information sessions rate actual

school counselor professional activities as more important tasks and inappropriate counselor

duties as less important compared to principals not attending the information session.

Leuwerke et al. found that over 50% of school administrators had no exposure to the

ASCA national model. Administrators exposed to information sessions regarding the ASCA

national model were more likely to identify appropriate counselor time allocation for delivery of

the guidance curriculum, system support, and responsive services. Leuwerke et al. found there

was not a significant difference in administrator identification of counselor time distribution

between principals who participated in information sessions compared to those who did not.

Finally, Leuwerke et al. (2009) noted that information about school counseling outcome

research influenced time allocation recommendations for responsive services. Otherwise,

exposure to outcome research had little influence on administrator time allotments for school counselors. Although 505 of participants (*n* = 337) had no exposure to the ASCA national model, Leuwerke et al. (2009) found that even passive exposure through an online modality had some impact on administrator view of appropriate counselor duties and time allocation. The authors addressed the study limitations, specifically noting that study participants were from a single state and different states may produce dissimilar results. More specifically, Leuwerke et al. (2009) did not address actual translation of administrators' awareness through exposure to the ASCA national model into actual practice of time allocations and appropriate school counselor functions. Whereas a change in principal perceptions of school counselor duties seems beneficial, the more accurate question of effectiveness is best determined by tangible practice in the school setting.

Teachers' Views of the Role of the School Counselor

In a national survey, Reiner, Colbert, and Pérusse (2009) conducted a stratified random sample survey of high school teachers' perceptions of the PSC role. Using the ASCA (2005) role description as the underpinning of the survey instrument, the authors explored the degree to which teachers believe school counselors should engage in appropriate responsibilities and inappropriate activities as defined by ASCA. Additionally, Reiner et al. (2009) investigated the extent to which teachers believed counselors were actually involved in appropriate responsibilities and inappropriate activities.

Reiner et al. (2009) results indicated that teachers participating in the survey believed that counselors should engage in professional responsibilities defined as appropriate school counselor duties as outlined by ASCA. Academic and career planning, assisting students with

personal/social development, and helping administrators identify and resolve student issues were considered priority responsibilities for school counselors. Survey results also indicated that teachers identified more than half of inappropriate activities as appropriate duties for school counselors. Inappropriate activities identified by teachers as appropriate school counselor functions included administrative tasks such as registration, scheduling, record keeping, and test administration.

Role confusion, assignment of inappropriate duties, administrative tasks, and required response to social and economic difficulties often dilutes school counselors' actual duties compared to functions deemed most appropriate by ASCA. Reiner et al. (2009) study of teachers' perceptions of inappropriate counselor duties supported Pérusse et al. (2004) study of administrators' perceptions of counselor responsibilities. Both teachers and administrators identified inappropriate administrative tasks like registration, scheduling, record keeping, and test administration as appropriate school counselor functions. One possibility is that a history of inappropriate job assignments has created a culture in which other school professionals have come to expect counselors to complete tasks not appropriate for their specialized skills and training. Research outcomes of Pérusse et al. (2004) and Reiner et al. (2009) seemed to indicate that counselors must do a better job informing principals and teachers of appropriate school counselor functions.

In a qualitative study, Clark and Amatea (2004) found teamwork, communication, and collaboration as primary themes in the teacher-counselor relationship. Teachers valued the direct service element of small group counseling and classroom guidance offered by their school counselors. Teachers are often positioned to provide significant feedback on counselor effectiveness (Beesley, 2004). In a study of teachers' perceptions of counselor effectiveness,

Beesley (2004) found that overall teachers were satisfied with school counselor efficacy. Elementary teachers expressed greater satisfaction with counseling services than did middle and high school teachers.

Classroom guidance, individual/group counseling, and consultation were identified as school counselor strengths (Beesley, 2004). Teachers also identified several domains needing improvement including career counseling, academic planning/college preparation and referrals to community resources as areas of needed improvement. A noted feature of the data from Beesley (2004) is that only 18% of teachers perceived enrollment/scheduling as a counselor strength. This result is in stark contrast to Reiner et al. (2009) data in which teachers agreed that PSCs should engage in professional activities as defined by ASCA, which does not include enrollment/scheduling and other administrative tasks, yet teachers identified as appropriate school counselor functions.

Parent and Student Views of the Role of the School Counselor

After a comprehensive review of the counseling literature, I found an abundance of articles on school counseling history, credentialing standards, counselor role definitions, and perceptions of teachers and administrators on roles and responsibilities of PSC's. However, I found little information on parent or student expectations of PSC's roles and responsibilities.

Primary stakeholders are often defined in the literature as administrators, faculty, school boards, and the community the PSC serves. One definition of community includes, parents and students, both are primary stakeholders. Yet, little has been written about parent and student preferences of PSC activities. Most articles that discuss parent and student preferences of PSC

traits, qualities, and activities highlight some failure of counselors to adequately serve a disenfranchised group of students.

For example, Akos and Galassi (2004) explored middle and high school transitions from the perspective of parents, teachers, and students. Bryan and Holcomb-McCoy (2007) investigated school counselor involvement in school-family-community partnerships. Results indicated that counselors identify themselves as involved in school-family-community partnership activities. In a survey of high school seniors, Daigneault and Wirtz (2008) explored student reflections on graduating from high school.

In a study of career and college planning needs of ninth graders as reported by ninth graders, Gibbons, Borders, Wiles, Stephan, and Davis (2006) found that almost 85% of students planned on attending community college or a four-year college or university after graduation. Seventy-seven percent of parents expected their children to attend community college or a four-year college after high school graduation.

Gibbons et al. asked students the main way they learned about specific careers the students had chosen: parents and television were 26% and 27% of the way students learned about careers and school counselors were 3%. Parents and family were considered most helpful with students' future plans (54%). School counselors were ranked just below students' friends at 6%. Students in the Gibbons et al. study appeared to have little confidence in school counselors for career and college planning.

Public Agenda (2010) conducted a nationwide study of young adults 22 to 30 years of age and found that most respondents rated the guidance provided by their school counselor as "inadequate and often impersonal and perfunctory" (p. 3). The results from Public Agenda

survey respondents were severe. It is important to note the data appears to support the claim that large counselor caseloads limit counselor effectiveness.

The size and scope of high school counselors' day-to-day responsibilities, coupled with high caseloads, limits counselors' abilities to establish good working relationships with all but a few students. Furthermore, results indicated that respondents believed the guidance or lack of guidance they received affected their post-secondary choices.

Results from Public Agenda (2010) indicated a large majority of respondents was dissatisfied with their school counselor. However, it must also be noted that a full 98% of respondents indicated they "could have paid a lot more attention and worked harder" or "worked hard to learn" while they were in high school. Sixty percent of participants identified themselves as "somewhat" to "definitely" a daydreamer. Additionally, it must be noted the respondents in the Public Agenda survey were removed from high school four to twelve years. The impact time removed from high school, a history of daydreaming, and recognition of minimal effort in secondary education was not discussed as having potential impact on results.

Purpose of the Study

The rationale of this study is to investigate parents' preferences for school counselor professional activities for purposes of discerning implications for practice and research. I utilized an adapted version of the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005) to survey parents. The results of this study may provide crucial information for preferences of parents for professional activities among PSCs. This study may also provide data to examine between group differences at grade level, ethnicity, and economic status. Additionally, results

may help school counselor's design and implement grade level appropriate counseling, consultation, curriculum, and coordination activities.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The school counseling literature is replete with research citing the history and development of the school counseling profession and the evolving role and job functions of the professional school counselor (PSC). The literature also chronicles the development of comprehensive guidance programs as models of service delivery for PSCs to impact their primary constituency, students.

In a thorough literature review, I was unable to locate any articles that focused on parent preferences of PSC job functions and duties. In order to fill this void, I explored parental preferences of PSC job functions and duties. In this chapter, I review the research questions, furnish a definition of terms, and address methods of study. In particular, I discuss selection of participants, instrument development, and data collection methods.

Research Questions

The following four research questions are posed to determine the core elements of the study.

1. In what types of school counseling activities do parents prefer school counselors engage?

2. What, if any relationship exists between parents' gender, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and their preferences for school counselors' professional activities?

3. What, if any relationship exists between parents' level of education, grade level of their student (9-12), and their preferences for school counselors' professional activities?

4. What, if any relationship exists between parents' who have their first high school student and parents who have had other students in high school and their preferences for school counselors' professional activities?

Because this is an exploratory study, no pre-existing hypotheses related to the four research questions are noted.

Definition of Terms

Comprehensive school guidance program is defined as a guidance program with elements tailored specifically to the local school setting (Gysbers & Henderson, 2002). These elements include four component programs of responsive services, guidance curriculum, system support, and individual planning.

Parent is defined as an individual who has primary care taking responsibility for a student in Grades 9-12 who is enrolled in a local high school that was part of this study.

Professional school counselors are defined as individuals who are credentialed by their state, possess a master's degree, and who have received specialized training in school counseling, student learning styles, human development, assessment, and counseling theory. For the purposes of this study, school counselors are employed as certified school counselors in a public school district.

School counselors' professional activities were operationally defined by subscale items from the survey instrument utilized in this study, Counseling activities, Consultation activities, Curriculum activities, Coordination activities, and "other" activities.

Socioeconomic status is defined by participants' identification as eligible for the National School Lunch Child Nutrition Program.

Instrumentation

Demographic Questionnaire

Instrumentation for this study included a demographic questionnaire (Appendix A) to

gather descriptive statistics for the respondent population. Demographic questionnaires help researchers profile the nature of the respondents, compare the respondents to a larger population, and divide the respondent population into subsamples such as age, sex, ethnicity, and education (Arleck & Settle, 2004). Participants were asked to provide information related to personal characteristics, such as gender, age, student eligibility for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program, racial/ethnic identification, parent's highest level of education, and student grade level.

<div align="center">School Counselor Activity Rating Scale</div>

The School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005) is a standardized instrument that measures how school counselors actually spend their time engaged in professional activities compared to how they would prefer to spend their time engaged in professional activities. The SCARS utilizes a verbal frequency scale to "measure both the frequency with which the school counselor actually performs the activity and the frequency with which the school counselor would prefer to perform each activity" (Scarborough, 2005, para. 16). A verbal frequency scale is similar to a Likert scale. Verbal frequency scales measure "how often" an activity is performed. A Likert scale measures "strength of agreement" (Alreck & Settle, 2004).

The ASCA (2003) national model served to define counselors' preferred activities. The ASCA national model includes four primary counselor professional interventions: consultation, coordination, counseling, and curriculum interventions. A fifth category of "other" activities was also part of the SCARS development and consists of administrative non-guidance responsibilities.

The ASCA model delivery system components are composed of school guidance curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, and system support. A comprehensive written instructional program that is developmental, preventative, proactive, and delivered by the counselor or other campus education professional constitutes the school guidance curriculum (ASCA, 2005). The individual student-planning category is a systematic approach designed to work with parents and students to manage and monitor student-learning competencies as well as social, educational, and occupational goals (ASCA, 2005).

The responsive service component concentrates on direct student concerns. Counselor services are delivered in individual and small group counseling settings. Other responsive services include crisis intervention, peer mediation programs, and referrals to community and social resources. System support includes professional development activities as well as consultation with teachers, staff, and parents. System support includes management processes to support counseling program activities (ASCA, 2005).

The SCARS is divided into four categories of professional activities: counseling, consultation, curriculum, and coordination activities, and a fifth section of "other" activities. Scarborough (2005) derived the four primary SCARS categories based on task statements from the development of ASCA national model, the professional literature, and common school counselor functions. The SCARS was standardized with 361 school counselors from two southern states. Ninety percent of respondents indicated they held a master's degree in school counseling. Elementary school counselors comprised 117 of the participants. Middle school counselors comprised 120 of the participants and 124 participants were high school counselors (Scarborough, 2005).

Initial data on the reliability and validity of the SCARS indicated its efficacy in measuring school counselor professional activities. Scarborough found that "content validity, construct validity, and reliability were assessed on the 40 items representing the activities associated with the four intervention categories recognized by the school counseling profession" (Scarborough, 2005, para. 38).

The Counseling subscale is composed of 10 items that represent counseling related activities including "counsel students regarding personal/family concerns" and "conduct small group counseling for students regarding substance abuse issues." The Consultation subscale consists of 7 items that query activities related to interaction with other professionals both on campus and in the community. Items include "consult with staff concerning student behavior" and "consult with community and school agencies concerning individual students." Eight items focusing on classroom activities presented by school counselors comprise the Curriculum subscale and include "conduct classroom activities to introduce the counselor and explain the counseling program to all students" and "conduct classroom lessons addressing career development and the world of work." The Coordination subscale consists of 13 items, "conduct or coordinate parent education classes or workshops" and "coordinate with an advisory team to analyze and respond to school counseling program needs." "Other" activities are defined as administrative functions that are often assigned to counselors and considered non-guidance related or add-on responsibilities (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008).

Scarborough (2005) calculated Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients for the four SCARS subscales of Counseling, Coordination, Curriculum, and Coordination on both the Actual and Prefer scale. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients on the Counseling subscale were .85 for Actual and .83 for Prefer. The Coordination subscale Cronbach's alpha reliability

coefficients were .75 for Actual and .77 for Prefer. The Curriculum subscale Cronbach's alpha

reliability coefficients were .93 for Actual and .90 for Prefer. The Coordination subscale

Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients were .84 for Actual and .85 for Prefer.

I contacted Jana Scarborough, developer of the SCARS, via electronic mail in order to

obtain permission to adapt and utilize the SCARS for this study. "This sounds like a very

interesting study. I really wonder how much parents and students know about the role and

purpose of school counselors which could impact their ratings on the SCARS. Regardless, it will

provide some interesting data. "You may consider this email response as my permission to use

and modify the SCARS" (personal communication, September 28, 2009).

I employed the following adaptations to facilitate more appropriate instrumentation for

the target population.

- The verbal frequency scales were converted to a Likert scale format. The original SCARS

instrument measured the frequency that school counselors "preferred" identified work activities

and the frequency with which school counselors "actually" performed those work activities. The

format of "preferred" versus "actual" work activities was not considered suitable for the target

population of this study. Therefore, the "actual" column was dropped from the adapted

instrument and the "preferred" column was renamed "rating."

The adapted format allowed respondents to select from the following options. 1 = *I

would prefer my (child's) school counselor to NEVER do this*; 2 = *I would prefer my (child's)

school counselor to RARELY do this*; 3 = *I would prefer my (child's) school counselor to

OCCASIONALLY do this*; 4 = *I would prefer my (child's) school counselor to FREQUENTLY do

this*; 5 = *I would prefer my (child's) school counselor to ROUTINELY do this*.

- The layout of the instrument was adapted for utilization in an electronic format.

- A rewrite of one question took place to make it appropriate for the target population. The original question, written toward school counselors read, "Conduct classroom activities to introduce yourself and explain the counseling program to all students" (Scarborough, 2005). The question was rewritten, "conduct classroom activities to introduce the counselor and explain the counseling program to all students." Appendix B contains the adapted version utilized for this study.

Isaac and Michael, (1997) discussed advantages of utilizing pilot studies to help researchers review statistical and analytical procedures. The pilot study of this project utilized a small convenience sample of 75 adults with students presently enrolled in high school. Forty-seven adults responded to an email invitation to participate. Parents contacted for the pilot study were informed their results would help establish analytical procedures and results from the pilot study would not be reported in publications or used in educational settings such continuing education seminars or classroom instruction. Pilot study participants did not reside in the district where the study was conducted, thereby eliminating potential duplication and data contamination.

Feedback from pilot study participants prompted a minor change in how potential respondents were invited to participate. For example, several pilot study respondents recommended the informed consent be moved to the inside of the survey instrument once participants had the opportunity to consent or decline participation, stating the informed consent section placed in the invitation email made the initial email contact too extensive. Furthermore, a review of data from the pilot study indicated that established procedures for this project were satisfactory to ensure accurate collection and statistical analysis.

In order to determine internal consistency and estimate test score reliability for the

present study (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007), I conducted a reliability analysis on the 250 respondent

questionnaires for each of the four SCARS subscales utilizing Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's

alpha is a commonly used measure of internal consistency (Pallant, 2007) and refers to the

interrelatedness, or cohesiveness (Isaac & Michael, 1997) of individual items on a scale.

Cronbach's alpha is often utilized on scales not measured dichotomously (Gall, Gall, & Borg,

2007). Alpha scores of above .7 are recommended; however, values above .8 are preferred

(Pallant, 2007). The Cronbach's alpha for each of the SCARS subscales is reported as follows:

Counseling .879; Consultation .831; Curriculum .933; Coordination .867; and "other" .828.

These values imply reliable internal consistency for the present study.

Procedures

Site Selection

Gall et al. (2007) recommended four steps in field research in order to establish and

maintain constructive relationships with participating institutions. I have listed those four steps

and provide a brief explanation of each. These steps include: (1) select a research site, (2) obtain

permission and cooperation of the participating institution, (3) build a relationship with

personnel at the field site, and (4) human relations issues.

Step 1: Select a research site. In using field sites, homes, schools, and community

agencies are possibilities. For the purpose of this study, I selected a local public school district in

the southwestern United States. The community served by this school district is also home to two

state universities. This district currently operates three comprehensive high schools with student

a student population of 5,365 students in Grades 9-12. The district also operates an alternative

campus for students identified "at-risk." Because of the exploratory nature of this study, parents

of students enrolled at the alternative campus were not included in this study.

Table 1 contains the demographic information of the three high schools participating in

this study. The ethnicity identifiers used in this study are the same as required by school districts

for reporting demographic and other information in reports to the state education agency.

Table 1

School District Demographics by Campus

	School	A	School	B	School	C	Total	Total Percent
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
African American	253	17.9	247	14.1	231	10.5	731	13.6
Hispanic	454	32.2	529	30.2	518	23.5	1501	28.0
White	653	46.3	946	53.9	1349	61.3	2948	55.0
Native American	9	0.6	8	0.5	17	0.8	34	0.6
Asian/Pacific Islander	41	2.9	24	1.4	86	3.9	151	2.8
Campus Population	1410		1754		2201		5365	99.46
Economically Disadvantaged	587	41.6	719	41.0	527	23.9	2420	45.1
Limited English Proficiency	160	11.3	161	9.2	149	6.8	470	0.02
At-Risk	625	44.3	746	42.5	827	37.6	2198	41.0

Step 2: Secure permission and cooperation of the participating institution. Gall et al.

(2007) recommended carefully following the administrative structure of field sites. Informing the

institution's administrators of expectations of the institution is vital. Researchers should be

prepared to answer questions about potential problems and how those situations may affect day-

to-day operations and offer proposed solutions to positively influence cooperation. I obtained

permission to conduct this study from the assistant superintendent responsible for district

research. Because this study was a survey of parents of students, no interruption of instructional time, or direct costs to the district occurred.

Step 3: Building a relationship with personnel at the field site. Developing positive relationships and keeping key staff members informed will facilitate cooperation. A good relationship with field site personnel may minimize misunderstandings and reduce obstruction of research involvement. Prior to submission of my research request to the assistant superintendent, I scheduled several conferences with the district coordinator for student and staff assistance programs, director of counseling services, and associate superintendent. The purpose of those meetings was to facilitate support for the project, discuss how this project will benefit the school district, and to determine research procedures.

The administrative structure of the cooperating district required permission of each campus principal. The principal of campus B declined participation of his campus. He expressed concerns about potential interruption of student instructional time. After a follow up phone call to the principal and an additional email explanation of study procedures with the assurance of no disruption of instructional time, the principal consented to his campus' participation.

Step 4: Facing human relations issues. Even with the best planning, researchers must be prepared to face human relations issues. Community concern and parental objections may hinder research projects. Objections by parents typically are based on concerns that the research project is interfering with their child's educational process. Because parents are the primary research subjects, there was no interference with student instructional time. Survey research typically has low response rates and can influence the validity of research results (Arleck & Settle, 2004). Resistance by school administrators is possible. Concerns about negative information regarding their school or personnel may hamper cooperation (Gall et al. 2007).

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of North Texas, I conducted a pilot study to assure statistical procedures and data collection methods were sufficient.

Selection of Participants

Alreck and Settle (2004) indicated that mail-based survey instruments have a low rate of return and can shape validity of results. Therefore, I decided to use an electronic survey rather than a mail based survey instrument. Arleck and Settle also stated that electronic surveys typically had better response rates. Therefore, in an effort to improve respondent participation, I used an electronic survey.

Participants were selected by completing a public information request from the cooperating school district Superintendent's office. The public information request specifically asked for the primary email addresses of parents of students enrolled in Grades 9-12 and sorted by campus, A, B, and C. To qualify as a potential participant, parents were required to have a student enrolled in one of the three comprehensive high schools in the district selected for this study.

To assure the protection of subjects participating in this research study, I followed the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2005) code of ethics, Section G, regarding research and publication in order to contribute to the current knowledge base in the field of counseling that help uphold a healthy social order. ACA code of ethics, Section G encourages counselors to follow applicable ethical principles, state and federal research laws, institutional guidelines and assuring participant welfare through minimal disruptions of time, confidentiality, and informed consent (ACA, 2005). Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) stated adult participants in a research study

should receive informed consent explaining the purpose of the study, conditions of their participation, and an explanation of how the data will be used.

Potential participants were invited to participate through an email which explained the purpose, anticipated use of the results, and why they were selected for this study. Potential respondents were provided the option to select, "If you choose to participate click here:" or "If you choose not to participate click here:" Participants who entered the survey site were able to read the informed consent which explained the purpose of the study, study procedures, benefits, foreseeable risks, research participant rights, and confidentiality procedures. Participants were informed their identity and responses to the survey were confidential and that school officials will not be informed of individual responses (Appendix C).

Email addresses of parents with students enrolled in one of three comprehensive high schools in the cooperating school district totaled 2731. All 2731 parents were invited to participate by an email that explained the purpose of the study, anticipated use of the results, and how they were selected for this study. Eighty-nine parents opted out of participation and 305 emails were bounced as undeliverable. An effective total of 2337 emails reached potential respondents. A total of 276 parents responded to the email invitation to participate in this study, leaving a balance of 2061 emails with no response. Twenty-six partial responses were excluded from the results because entire sections of the survey were incomplete, leaving a total of 250 responses for analysis.

Data Collection and Analysis

For this study, data collection and analysis included collecting, organizing, coding, and analyzing the data. I consulted a statistician to ensure appropriate study design, proper coding,

data collection, and correct statistical analysis of the data. Raw data was collected utilizing Internet based survey collection software. For data analysis, I used Predictive Analytics Software [PASW] version 17.0 to answer the research questions posed in this study.

I employed descriptive statistics to investigate the characteristics of the respondent population. I calculated descriptive statistical data, including mean, standard deviation, and frequency to explore respondents' gender, age, ethnicity, student eligibility for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child nutrition program, and participants' highest levels of education.

I computed a Pearson product-moment correlation to answer the four research questions posed in this study. Correlation describes the strength and depth of relationship between variables; that direction can be either positive or negative (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007; Pallant, 2007). A strong correlation between two variables does not imply causality.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, I review the statistical analyses used to examine data for this research study of parents' preferences of school counselor professional activities. Specifically, I explain the descriptive statistics for the respondent population as well as the results of the correlation analysis.

For this study, I designated the alpha (α) level of statistical significance as .05. I collected and organized data from a survey administered to parents in a public school district in the southwestern United States.

Descriptive Statistics

In this section I report the descriptive statistics for the respondent population. Specifically, I report facts related to respondent population gender, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, highest level of education attained, student grade level, and experience parenting of high school students.

Additionally, I report the descriptive statistics from the four SCARS subscales Counseling, Consultation, Curriculum, and Coordination. A fifth subscale of "other" activities which are considered non-guidance and administrative duties are also examined.

Gender and Age

Four of the participants did not disclose their ages; of the remaining 246, ages ranged from 31 to 66 with a mean just under 46 years old ($M = 45.74$; $SD = 6.464$) (see Figure 1).
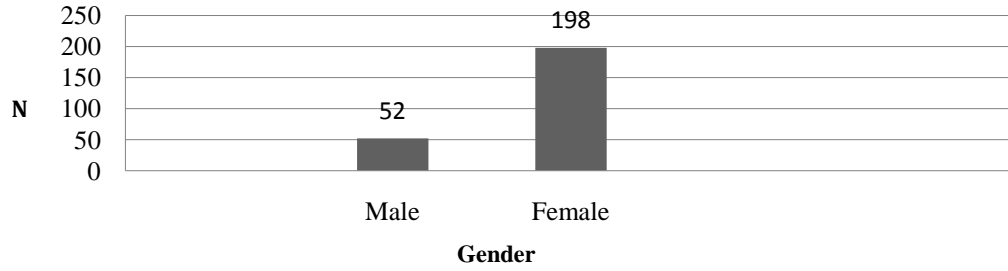
Figure 1. Distribution of participants' genders.

Ethnicity

Respondents reported their ethnicities as follows: African American ($n = 16$; 6.4%);

Hispanic ($n = 20$; 8.0%); White ($n = 209$; 83.6%); Native American ($n = 1$; .4%); Asian/Pacific

Islander ($n = 4$; 1.6%) (see Figure 2). Participants' ethnic identities were categorized according

to school district ethnic identifiers.
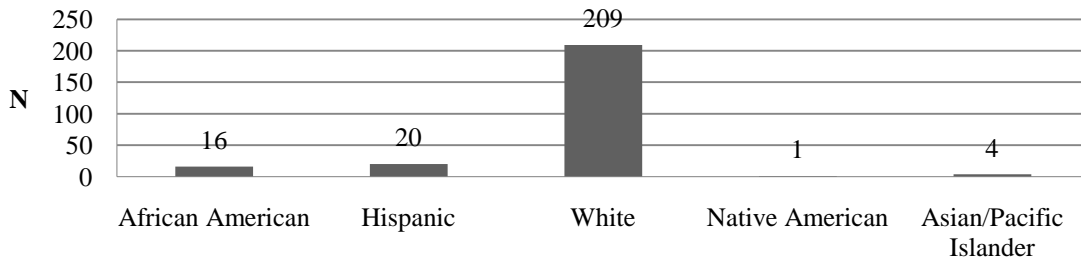
Figure 2. Distribution of participants' ethnicity groups.

Socioeconomic Status

In order to determine respondents' socioeconomic status, parents were asked if their

student was eligible for free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child

Nutrition Program. Of respondents, 211 (84.4%) parents indicated their students were not

eligible, and 39 (15.6%) indicated their students were eligible.

Respondents reported their levels of education as follows: GED/high school diploma (n = 30; 12.0%); some college (n = 67; 26.8%); associates degree (n = 20; 8.0%); bachelors degree (n = 79; 31.6%); graduate/professional degree (n = 54; 21.6%) (see Figure 3).
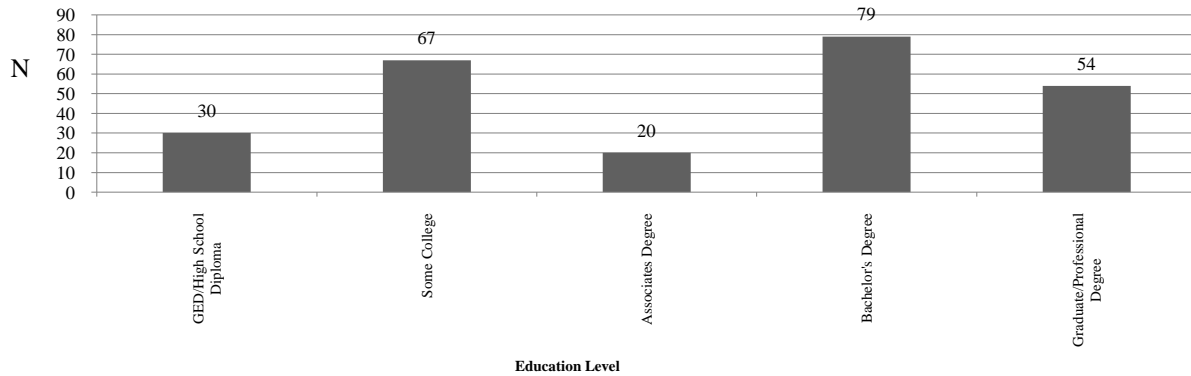
Figure 3. Distribution of participants' education levels.

Respondents reported their children's grade levels as follows: Grade 9 (n = 64; 25.6%); Grade 10 (n = 67; 26.8%); Grade 11 (n = 62; 24.8%); Grade 12 (n = 57; 22.8%) (see Figure 4).
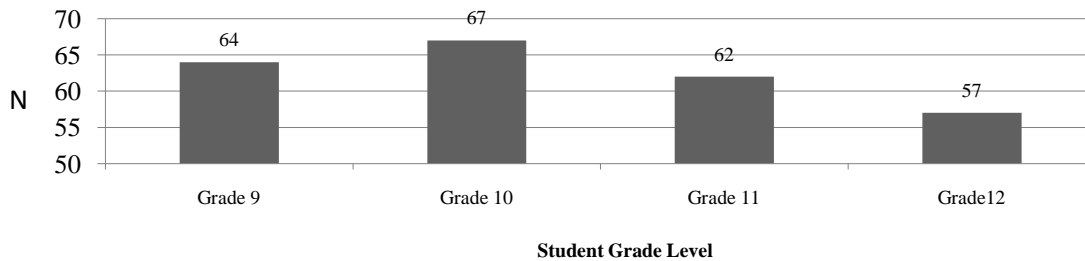
Figure 4. Student grade level as reported by respondents.

Respondents were asked if they were parenting their first high school student or if they have previously parented a high school student. Study participants reported 109 (43.6%) of respondents were parents of their first high school student, 137 (54.8%) were parents of previous high school students' and 4 (1.6%) did not answer. For the question, "I have older/other children

in high school," 63 (25.2%) parents reported having older/other children, 186 (74.4%) reported

not having older children, 1 (0.4%) did not respond.

School Counselor Activity Rating Scale

Respondents completed an adapted version of the School Counselor Activity Rating

Scale (Scarborough, 2005). The 48-item instrument measured parents' preferences for school

counselor professional activities on four subscales: Counseling activities, Consultation activities,

Curriculum activities, and Coordination activities. The instrument also measured data on a fifth

"other" subscale of non-guidance administrative functions. Participants' results were: Counseling

activities subscale ($n = 250$; $M = 31.19$; $SD = 6.55$); Consultation activities subscale ($n = 249$; M

$= 25.99$; $SD = 5.11$); Curriculum activities subscale ($N = 249$; $M = 30.56$; $SD = 7.18$);

Coordination activities subscale ($n = 249$; $M = 35.76$; $SD = 6.24$); other activities subscale ($n =$

249; $M = 31.12$; $SD = 8.04$). Results indicated parent's preferred school counselors utilize their

time engaging in Coordination activities. The means and standard deviation scores for the

SCARS subscales are presented in Table 2 from most to least preferred activity.

Table 2

SCARS Subscales Descriptive Statistics

SCARS subscales	N	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Coordination	249	35.76	6.240	-.476	-.299
Counseling	250	31.19	6.551	-.169	-.179
Other	249	31.12	8.043	.041	-.140
Curriculum	249	30.56	7.180	-.413	-.534
Consultation	249	25.99	5.110	-.107	-.542

Preferences for SCARS items by mean scores are presented in descending order in Table 3. SCARS items with mean scores above 4.0 indicated parents' strongest preferences. Four of the 9 items with mean scores above 4.0 were Coordination activities, 2 items each were from the Counseling and Curriculum subscales and 1 was a Consultation activity.

Table 3

SCARS Item-Means in Descending Order

SCARS Item	SCARS Subscales							
	N	*M*	*SD*	*Counseling*	*Consultation*	*Curriculum*	*Coordination*	*Other*
27. Coordinate and maintain a comprehensive school counseling program.	248	4.43	.807				x	
10. Counsel students regarding academic issues.	249	4.42	.742	x				
19. Conduct classroom lessons addressing career development and the world of work.	247	4.23	.946			x		
18. Conduct classroom activities to introduce the counselor and explain the Counseling program to all students.	248	4.15	.981			x		
6. Provide small group counseling for academic issues.	249	4.15	.827	x				
31. Inform teachers/administrators about the role, training, program, and interventions of a school counselor within the context of your school.	246	4.10	.931				x	
35. Coordinate with an advisory team to analyze and respond to school counseling program needs.	249	4.09	.907				x	
26. Coordinate special events and programs for school around academic, career, or personal/social issues (e.g., career day, drug awareness week, test prep).	248	4.08	.923				x	
15. Assist in identifying exceptional children (special education).	248	4.03	.964		x			
44. Schedule students for classes.	247	3.97	1.209					x

(table continues)

Table 3 (*continued*).

SCARS Item	SCARS Subscales							
	N	M	SD	Counseling	Consultation	Curriculum	Coordination	Other
34. Attend professional development activities (e.g., state conferences, local in-services.	247	3.95	.931				x	
36. Formally evaluate student progress as a result of participation in individual/group counseling from student, teacher and/or parent perspectives.	246	3.95	1.031				x	
30. Conduct or coordinate school-wide response for crisis management and intervention.	248	3.94	1.034				x	
24. Conduct classroom lessons regarding substance abuse.	249	3.92	1.046			x		
17. Participate in team/grade level/subject team meetings.	249	3.92	.979		x			
33. Keep track of how time is being spent on the functions that counselors perform.	246	3.89	1.077				x	
23. Conduct classroom lessons on conflict resolution.	248	3.87	1.026			x		
11. Consult with school staff concerning student behavior.	249	3.83	.932		x			
3. Counsel with students regarding crisis/emergency issues.	249	3.83	1.022	x				
28. Inform parents about the role, training, program, and interventions of a school counselor within the context of your school.	249	3.82	.933				x	
16. Provide consultation for administrators (regarding school policy, programs, staff and/or students).	249	3.81	1.055		x			
14. Coordinate referral for students and/or families to community or education professionals (e.g., mental health, speech pathology, medical assessment).	249	3.81	1.067		x			
2. Counsel with students regarding school behavior.	250	3.78	.963	x				
25. Conduct classrooms lessons on personal safety issues.	247	3.78	1.102			x		

(*table continues*)

Table 3 (*continued*).

SCARS Item	N	M	SD	Counseling	Consultation	Curriculum	Coordination	Other
29. Conduct or coordinate parent education classes or workshops.	247	3.75	1.162				x	
46. Maintain/Complete educational records/reports (cumulative files, test scores, attendance reports, drop-out reports.	249	3.71	1.435					x
9. Follow-up on individual and group counseling participants.	248	3.71	1.017	x				
21. Conduct classroom lessons on various personal and/or social traits (e.g., responsibility, respect, etc.).	249	3.66	1.215			x		
38. Coordinate orientation process / activities for students.	249	3.66	1.245				x	
13. Consult with parents regarding child/adolescent development issues.	248	3.65	1.042				x	
39. Participate on committees within the school.	248	3.65	.970					x
32. Conduct or coordinate teacher in-service programs.	246	3.60	1.079				X	
22. Conduct classroom lessons on personal growth and development issues.	249	3.54	1.177			x		
8. Conduct small group counseling for students regarding substance abuse issues.	249	3.51	1.100	x				
20. Conduct classroom lessons on relating to others (family, friends).	249	3.50	1.161			x		
41. Organize outreach to low income f families (i.e., Thanksgiving dinners, Holiday families).	248	3.22	1.234					x
40. Coordinate the standardized testing program.	246	3.20	1.325					x
45. Enroll students in and/or withdraw students from school.	249	3.20	1.464					x
5. Provide small group counseling addressing relationship/social skills.	250	3.17	1.093	x				
7. Conduct small groups regarding family/personal issues (e.g., divorce, death).	247	2.99	1.101	x				

(*table continues*)

Table 3 (*continued*).

SCARS Item	N	M	SD	Counseling	Consultation	Curriculum	Coordination	Other
				SCARS Subscales				
37. Conduct needs assessments and counseling program evaluations from parents, faculty and/or students.	247	2.99	1.101				x	
12. Consult with community and school agencies concerning individual students.	247	2.98	1.155		x			
1. Counsel with students regarding personal/family concerns.	248	2.83	1.058	x				
43. Perform hall, bus, cafeteria duty.	247	2.83	1.269					x
4. Counsel with students regarding relationships (e.g., family, friends, romantic).	249	2.78	1.095	x				

A summary of item responses detailing the number and percentage of respondents for each SCARS subscale item is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Sample Size and Percentage of Participants' Responses to Survey Items

Survey Item	Never n	Never %	Rarely n	Rarely %	Occasionally n	Occasionally %	Frequently n	Frequently %	Routinely n	Routinely %
Counseling Activities										
1. Counsel with students regarding personal/family concerns.	31	12.4	51	20.5	118	47.4	28	11.2	21	8.0
2. Counsel with students regarding school behavior.	4	1.6	21	8.4	68	27.2	93	37.2	64	25.5
3. Counsel with students regarding crisis/emergency issues.	3	1.2	12	4.8	82	32.8	83	33.2	70	28.0
4. Counsel with students regarding relationships (e.g., family, friends, romantic).	34	13.6	63	25.2	101	40.4	30	12.0	22	8.8
5. Provide small group counseling addressing relationship/social skills.	18	7.2	44	17.6	100	40.0	54	21.6	34	13.5
6. Provide small group counseling for academic issues.	1	0.4	5	2.0	51	20.4	94	37.6	99	39.6
7. Conduct small groups regarding family/personal issues (e.g., divorce, death).	25	10.1	50	20.2	105	42.3	39	15.7	29	11.7

(*table continues*)

Table 4 (*continued*).

Survey Item	Never		Rarely		Occasionally		Frequently		Routinely	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Counseling Activities										
8. Conduct small group counseling for students regarding substance abuse issues.	13	5.2	27	10.8	87	37.8	67	26.8	56	22.4
9. Follow-up on individual and group counseling participants.	10	4.0	15	6.0	76	30.5	88	35.3	60	24.1
10. Counsel students regarding academic issues.	1	0.4	5	2.0	23	9.2	84	33.6	137	54.8
Consultation Activities										
11. Consult with school staff concerning student behavior.	3	1.2	12	4.8	82	32.8	83	33.2	70	28.0
12. Consult with community and school agencies concerning individual students.	27	10.9	54	21.8	93	37.5	43	17.3	31	12.5
13. Consult with parents regarding child/adolescent development issues.	8	3.2	22	8.8	84	33.7	72	28.9	63	25.3
14. Coordinate referral for students and/or families to community or education professionals (e.g., mental health, speech pathology, medical assessment).	8	3.2	20	8.0	67	26.8	74	29.6	81	32.4
15. Assist in identifying exceptional children (special education).	4	1.6	12	4.8	57	22.9	78	31.3	98	39.4
16. Provide consultation for administrators (regarding school policy, programs, staff and/or students).	6	2.4	24	9.6	64	25.6	76	30.4	80	32.0
17. Participate in team/grade level/subject team meetings.	3	1.2	16	6.4	66	26.4	79	31.6	86	34.4
Curriculum Activities										
18. Conduct classroom activities to introduce the counselor and explain the Counseling program to all students.	2	0.8	14	5.6	49	19.8	63	25.4	120	48.4
19. Conduct classroom lessons addressing career development and the world of work.	4	1.6	8	3.2	40	16.2	69	27.9	126	51.0
20. Conduct classroom lessons on relating to others (family, friends).	12	4.8	39	15.7	71	28.5	66	26.5	61	24.5
21. Conduct classroom lessons on various personal and/or social traits (e.g., responsibility, respect, etc.).	15	6.0	29	11.6	63	25.3	61	24.5	81	32.5
22. Conduct classroom lessons on personal growth and development issues.	12	4.8	38	15.3	69	27.7	63	25.3	67	26.9
23. Conduct classroom lessons on conflict resolution.	5	2.0	16	6.5	70	28.2	72	29.0	85	34.3
24. Conduct classroom lessons regarding substance abuse.	4	1.6	17	6.8	71	28.5	59	23.7	98	39.4
25. Conduct classrooms lessons on personal safety issues.	5	2.0	29	11.7	66	26.7	63	25.5	84	34.0

(table continues)

Table 4 (*continued*).

Survey Item	Never		Rarely		Occasionally		Frequently		Routinely	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%

Coordination Activities

Survey Item	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
26. Coordinate special events and programs for school around academic, career, or personal/social issues (e.g., career day, drug awareness week, test prep).	0	0.0	13	5.2	57	23.0	75	30.2	103	41.5
27. Coordinate and maintain a comprehensive school counseling program.	3	1.2	3	1.2	23	9.3	75	30.2	144	58.1
28. Inform parents about the role, training, program, and interventions of a school counselor within the context of your school.	3	1.2	12	4.8	82	32.8	83	33.2	70	28.0
29. Conduct or coordinate parent education classes or workshops.	5	2.0	29	11.7	66	26.7	63	25.5	84	34.0
30. Conduct or coordinate school-wide response for crisis management and intervention.	2	0.8	22	8.9	62	25.0	65	26.2	97	39.1
31. Inform teachers/administrators about the role, training, program, and interventions of a school counselor within the context of your school.	2	0.8	9	3.7	56	22.8	74	30.1	105	42.7
32. Conduct or coordinate teacher in-service programs.	7	2.8	27	11.0	89	36.2	58	23.6	65	26.4
33. Keep track of how time is being spent on the functions that counselors perform.	3	1.2	26	10.6	61	24.8	61	24.8	95	38.6
34. Attend professional development activities (e.g., state conferences, local in-services.	0	0.0	9	3.6	86	34.8	60	24.3	92	37.2
35. Coordinate with an advisory team to analyze and respond to school counseling program needs.	2	0.8	7	2.8	59	23.7	80	32.1	101	40.6
36. Formally evaluate student progress as a result of participation in individual/group counseling from student, teacher and/or parent perspectives.	6	2.4	15	6.1	56	22.8	78	31.7	91	37.0
37. Conduct needs assessments and counseling program evaluations from parents, faculty and/or students .	25	10.1	50	20.2	105	42.3	39	15.7	29	11.7
38. Coordinate orientation process / activities for students.	15	6.0	29	11.6	63	25.3	61	24.5	81	32.5

"Other" Activities

Survey Item	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
39. Participate on committees within the school.	4	1.6	20	8.1	91	36.7	77	31.0	56	22.6
40. Coordinate the standardized testing program.	34	13.8	41	16.7	64	26.0	55	22.4	52	21.1

(table continues)

Table 4 (*continued*).

Survey Item	Never		Rarely		Occasionally		Frequently		Routinely	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
"Other" Activities										
41. Organize outreach to low income families (i.e., Thanksgiving dinners, Holiday families).	28	11.3	36	14.5	85	34.3	52	21.0	47	19.0
42. Respond to health issues (e.g., check for lice, eye screening, 504 coordination).	63	24.4	66	26.6	51	20.6	26	10.5	42	16.9
43. Perform hall, bus, cafeteria duty.	43	17.4	55	22.3	88	35.6	24	9.7	38	15.4
44. Schedule students for classes.	11	4.5	27	10.9	37	15.0	56	22.7	116	47.0
45. Enroll students in and/or withdraw students from school.	42	16.9	48	19.3	50	20.1	37	14.9	72	28.9
46. Maintain/Complete educational records/reports (cumulative files, test scores, attendance reports, drop-out reports.	34	13.7	22	8.8	31	12.4	56	22.5	106	42.6
47. Handle discipline of students.	61	24.6	57	23.0	73	29.4	29	11.7	28	11.3
48. Substitute teach and/or cover classes for teachers at your school.	83	33.6	73	29.6	63	25.5	13	5.3	15	6.1

Correlation Analysis

The purpose of correlation research is to ascertain possible relationships between variables (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). Correlation studies also examine potential relationships between two or more variables to depict the strength and direction of the relationship between variables (Heppner, Wampold, & Kivlighan, 2008; Pallant, 2007).

The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient is frequently utilized in the behavioral sciences to describe the relationship among variables (Hinkle, Wiersma, & Jurs, 2003). Pearson correlation coefficients (r) indicate the degree and direction of the relationship. Values for the Pearson *r* range from -1, indicating a perfect inverse relationship, to a +1, indicating a perfect direct relationship. A correlation coefficient of 0 is indicative of no

relationship (Pallant, 2008). Hinkle et al. (2008, p. 109) provided the following guidelines for interpreting Pearson *r* correlation coefficients; see Table 5.

Table 5

Interpreting the Size of a Correlation Coefficient

Size of Correlation	Interpretation
.90 to 1.00 (-.90 to -1.00)	Very high positive (negative) correlation
.70 to .90 (-.70 to -.90)	High positive (negative) correlation
.50 to .70 (-.50 to -.70)	Moderate positive (negative) correlation
.30 to .50 (-.30 to -.50)	Low positive (negative) correlation
.00 to .30 (.00 to -.30)	Little if any correlation

Note. From Hinkle et al. (2008).

Correlation Variables

For this study of parent's preferences of school counselor professional activities, the following items were selected as independent variables: gender, age, qualification for free/reduced lunch, ethnicity, parent's highest level of education, student's grade level, parent's first high school student, and parent's other/older high school students. The respondent population's descriptive statistics for each independent variable are found in Table 6.

The dependent variables for this study were the sum means of the five subscales of the SCARS instrument: Counseling Activities, Consultation Activities, Curriculum Activities, Coordination Activities, and "other" activities. Results of the means and standard deviations for the SCARS subscales are represented in Table 2.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics of Independent Variables

Variable	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Gender	250	1.79	.407	-1.448	.096
Age	246	45.74	6.464	.446	.253
Free/Reduced Lunch	250	1.84	.364	-1.908	1.652
Ethnicity	250	2.83	.613	-1.149	5.090
Parent Highest Level of Education	250	3.24	1.370	-.214	-1.335
Student Grade Level	250	2.45	1.105	.070	-1.322
First High School Student	250	1.56	.497	-.260	-1.948
Older/Other Children in High School	249	1.75	.436	-1.143	-.699

Note. 1 = male, 2 = female; 1 = African-American, 2 = Hispanic, 3 = White, 4 = Native American, 5 = Asian/Pacific Islander; 1 = yes for lunch eligibility, 2 = no for lunch eligibility; 1 = GED/High School Diploma, 2 = some college, 3 = Associates degree, 4 = Bachelor's degree, 5 = Graduate/Professional Degree; 1 = Grade 9, 2 = Grade 10, 3 = Grade 11, 4 = Grade 12. My first high school student, 1 = yes, 2 = no; I have older/other children in high school, 1 = yes, 2 = no.

I computed a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient utilizing PASW to assess the strength and degree of relationship between the independent variables with respondent's sum scores on the five subscales of the SCARS. Results from the correlation analysis are summarized in Table 7. Results indicated a small statistically significant correlation between gender and the Counseling subscale score, $r = .178$, $p < .01$. Results from these data suggest female parents were more likely to rate a higher score on the Counseling subscale indicating a preference for counseling activities over males. Results indicated a small statistically significant negative correlation between free or reduced-price lunch and Coordination subscale score, $r = -.126$, $p < .05$. Parents' participating in the government's free or reduced-price meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program were more likely than parents who did not receive free or reduced-price lunch to indicate a preference for Coordination activities.

Table 7

Correlation Matrix on SCARS Subscales

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1.	Gender	Pearson	1												
		Sig.													
		N	250												
2.	Age	Pearson	-.252	1											
		Sig.	.000												
		N	246	246											
3.	Free/Reduced Lunch	Pearson	-.085	.152	1										
		Sig.	.183	.017											
		N	250	246	250										
4.	Ethnicity	Pearson	-.047	.193	.221	1									
		Sig.	.455	.002	.000										
		N	250	246	250	250									
5.	Parent Education	Pearson	-.047	.149	.124	.102	1								
		Sig.	.460	.019	.051	.108									
		N	250	246	250	250	250								
6.	Student Grade Level	Pearson	-.105	.120	.055	-.052	.030	1							
		Sig.	.099	.061	.389	.415	.642								
		N	250	246	250	250	250	250							
7.	First Student	Pearson	.026	.296	-.045	-.049	-.200	.021	1						
		Sig.	.678	.000	.483	.437	.002	.744							
		N	250	246	250	250	250	250	250						
8.	Older/other Student	Pearson	.019	.145	.010	-.036	.066	-.043	-.160	1					
		Sig.	.763	.023	.876	.567	.302	.495	.012						
		N	249	246	249	249	249	249	249	249					
9.	Counseling Total	Pearson	.178*	-.051	-.050	-.040	-.003	-.041	-.041	.081	1				
		Sig.	.005	.425	.433	.532	.963	.521	.521	.204					
		N	250	246	250	250	250	250	250	249	250				
10.	Consultation Total	Pearson	.016	-.047	-.062	.014	-.019	-.010	-.032	.071	.621	1			
		Sig.	.799	.461	.327	.829	.763	.878	.612	.265	.000				
		N	249	245	249	249	249	249	249	248	249	249			
11.	Curriculum Total	Pearson	.105	.032	-.084	-.017	-.050	.056	.028	.084	.572	.539	1		
		Sig.	.098	.623	.189	.793	.429	.382	.661	.185	.000	.000			
		N	249	245	249	249	249	249	249	248	249	249	249		
12.	Coordination Total	Pearson	-.003	-.006	-.126*	-.060	-.106	.035	.007	-.026	.512	.591	.672	1	
		Sig.	.965	.924	.047	.345	.095	.581	.910	.679	.000	.000	.000		
		N	249	245	249	249	249	249	249	248	249	249	249	249	
13.	Other Total	Pearson	-.032	-.070	-.092	.072	-.056	.088	-.091	.097	.145	.269	.415	.463	1
		Sig.	.619	.276	.146	.261	.382	.168	.153	.128	.022	.000	.000	.000	
		N	249	245	249	249	249	249	249	248	249	249	249	249	249

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

I designed this study to assess parent preferences for school counselor professional activities. I conducted survey research utilizing an adapted version of the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005) among parents of high school students from a public school district located in the Southwestern United States.

I will center discussion in this chapter on the results of an adapted SCARS survey of parent preferences of school counselor professional activities. The focus of discussion in this chapter will include the following: demographic aspects of the respondent population, specific item discussion of SCARS subscales, correlation results, and parents' comments on school counseling, study limitations, implications for counselor educators and school counselors, and recommendations for future research.

In the early twentieth century, vocational guidance and counseling were introduced into the public school system (Dollarhide & Saginak, 2008; Gysbers & Henderson, 1997; Schmidt, 2008). Guidance and school counseling has changed considerably since the early twentieth century. Yet the need to continue defining the school counselor role and minimize add-on administrative tasks not related to best practices in school counseling, continues to be an issue today. The profession has adapted and responded to social and political events by attempting to provide a quality and indispensable service to meet ever-changing student needs. Researchers have focused on the effectiveness of delivery models and discussed accountability as well as appropriate and inappropriate utilization of school counselors.

A wealth of research in counseling literature cites the effectiveness and necessity of a comprehensive guidance program. Yet, my comprehensive review of pertinent databases resulted

in discovery of very little research of parent preferences for school counselor professional activities. This lack of research constitutes a void in the literature that detracts from attempts to develop high quality comprehensive school guidance programs. Furthermore, this lack of research creates barriers for counselor educators as they design best practices in school counselor preparation programs. A detailed discussion of the results of this investigation is provided below.

<center>Demographic Aspects of Respondent Population</center>

Respondents were prompted to complete an 8 item demographic questionnaire. Specific demographic items in this survey included gender, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, highest level of education, student grade level, and two questions to determine if respondents were parenting their first high school student.

<center>*Gender and Age*</center>

Results indicated that approximately 79% of respondents reported their gender as female. The mean age of the respondent population was 45 years old. The youngest respondent was 31 years old and the oldest respondent was 66 years old. No relationship between SCARS subscales and respondents' age were noted. The original participant pool provided by the participating school district indicated that mothers tend to be the primary contact for school administration. Because contact information is completed during enrollment and registration, it appears that mothers are more likely than fathers to be the parent who enrolls their students into the school system. I did not collect data to determine the number of single-parent homes, two-parent homes, and number of marriages of the respondent population.

Results revealed a small positive statistically significant correlation between gender and respondent's Counseling subscale score, ($r = .178$, $p < .01$). These findings appear to support data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2007). Data from this study indicated women received mental health treatment/counseling at twice the rate of men. The ratio of women to men who consent to treatment has demonstrated similar results since 2003. Data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2007) found that prevalence of serious psychological distress among women (13.7%) was higher than that among men (8.7%). Findings from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (2007) and data from this study appear to support Bankoff (1994), who stated that it is well known that women constitute the majority of counseling caseloads. Consequently, because mothers primarily take on the role of caring and nurturing their children, they promote and favor avenues of interventions that foster well-being and healthy behavior.

No relationship was found between males and preferences for personal counseling. These data indicate that men may view counseling less favorably than women. McKelley and Rochlen (2010) found that men who conformed at high levels to masculine norms also demonstrated higher stigma toward seeking help and viewed therapy as less favorable compared to executive coaching.

Ethnicity

The predominant ethnicity reported by the respondent population was White (83.6%). The remainder (16.4%) of the study population reported ethnicity as African American (6.4%), Hispanic (8.0%), Native American (0.4%), Asian/Pacific Islander (1.6%). Participants' ethnic

identities were categorized according to Texas Education Agency ethnic identifiers utilized in statewide reporting systems.

These findings are sizably dissimilar compared to the district high school ethnic distribution. The following represents the district distribution compared to the study distribution: African American (13.6% / 6.4%), Hispanic (28.0% / 8.0%), White (55.0% / 83.6%), Native American (0.6% / 0.4%), Asian/Pacific Islander (2.8% / 1.6%). There is a large discrepancy between district and study totals. Thus, the impact of the lack of diversity in responses may have influenced potential correlation between parents' ethnicity and their preferences for school counselor professional activities. Rubin and Babbie (2008) advised researchers to thoroughly understand the history, traditions, values, experiences, and attitudes about social services, social policies, and minority groups. Furthermore, they cautioned researchers to avoid combining all minority groups into one category when there is an insufficient sample size for data analysis.

The disparity among the district population distribution and respondent population distribution may be attributed to failure to specifically recruit a large enough sample size of minority populations represented in the district. Eap and Hall (2008) stated, "ethnic minorities may be more likely to participate if they perceive the research goals as relevant to them" (p. 432). Hsin-hsin and Coker (2010) identified multiple factors that may hinder African American participation in research studies. For example, Hsin-hsin and Coker cited distrust of research from past investigative mistreatment, institutional racism, insufficient information regarding informed consent and inadequate recruitment efforts from researchers as reasons African Americans may avoid research participation.

Inequality among the district population distribution and respondent population distribution may also be attributed to the use of an electronic survey method. Electronic surveys

typically have better response rates (Arleck & Settle, 2004); however, electronic survey methods may eliminate or minimize response rates of culturally diverse groups who, for financial reasons, distrust of organized institutions, and/or real or perceived disenfranchisement may choose not to participate.

Socioeconomic Status

Respondents' socioeconomic status was determined by asking if their student was eligible for free or reduced priced meals under the National School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program. The results of this study indicated that 39 respondents indicated their students were eligible for free or reduced-priced meals.

Findings from this study indicated that the respondent population (15.6%) was not representative of district population (45.1%) socioeconomic status. There was considerable discrepancy between district and study population on this variable. A small statistically significant negative correlation was discovered between the free or reduced-price lunch variable and respondent's Coordination subscale score, $r = $-.126, $p < .05$. Results indicated that if students are on free or reduced-price meals, parents prefer school counselors spend more time on Coordination activities.

For example, respondents expressed strong preferences for Coordination activities with themes centered on special events that focused on academic and career programs for students. Parents favored Coordination activities that required teaming and collaboration among professional staff on campus. For example, approximately 73% of parents preferred school counselors to work with an advisory team to analyze and respond to school counseling program needs. An equal percentage of parents expressed a preference for school counselors to educate

faculty and administration about their role on campus, but only 50% of parents saw it as the responsibility of the counselor to provide teacher in-service training. Conversely, only 61% of parents expressed a preference to be informed about the role, training, program, and interventions of a school counselor on their campus. Parents clearly desire Coordination activities performed by school counselors and preferred that information be shared with faculty and administration.

Analysis of the remaining variables indicated no other relationship between SCARS subscales and parents' education level, student grade level, and experience parenting high school students. The lack of additional relationships among the variables is somewhat surprising. It could be hypothesized that older parents who are more experienced in parenting might articulate stronger preferences for one or more subscale activities. It could also be hypothesized that parents of students in different grade levels may express varied preferences for school counselor activities. Furthermore, parents with higher levels of education might have conveyed preferences for specific subscale activities that promote strong academics, college preparation, and career exploration. Yet, results indicated no significant relationship between parenting experience, student grade level, parent educational attainment, and SCARS subscales.

<div align="center">School Counselor Activity Rating Scale</div>

As I previously discussed, the adapted version of the SCARS is a 48-item survey instrument utilized in this study to determine parent preferences for school counselor professional activities. The instrument has four subscales that help define potential school counselor professional responsibilities. Those subscales are: Counseling Activities, Consultation Activities, Curriculum Activities, Coordination Activities, and a fifth subscale of "other"

activities that are non-guidance related duties often performed by school counselors. Respondents were prompted to answer questions about each of the subscale activities and rate their preference for that activity from the following selections: never, rarely, occasionally, frequently, and routinely.

In this section, I discuss selected item results from each of the subscales of the SCARS. I will focus my discussion on selected items that demonstrated a clear pattern of parent preferences for specific school counselor professional activities.

Counseling Subscale

The Counseling subscale identified ten counseling activities that school counselors may utilize as part of an overall school guidance plan. Counseling procedures centered on themes related to personal, relationship, and family counseling, and academic counseling that focuses on school behavior and academic matters.

Results from the counseling subscale were of particular interest to informed school counselor practice. Counseling items that focused on issues of personal, family, and relationship counseling were considered less favorably than counseling items that focused on academic issues and student behavior at school. For example, in response to the following item, "Counsel with students regarding personal/family concerns," results indicated that 80.3% of parents preferred school counselors to never, rarely, or occasionally perform this activity. An equal number of parents indicated a strong preference for school counselors to never, rarely, or occasionally counsel students regarding family or romantic relationships.

Respondents demonstrated a slight preference for small group counseling that addressed personal, relationship, and family issues when compared to the same topics in an individual

setting. For example, in response to the following item, "Provide small group counseling addressing relationship/social skills," results indicated that 64.9% of parents preferred school counselors to never, rarely, or occasionally perform this activity. Likewise, about 73% of respondents preferred that school counselors never, rarely, or occasionally conduct small groups regarding family/personal issues.

Although the percentage of parents who expressed a preference for small group counseling activities was slightly higher than their preference for individual counseling, it is evident from these results that parents prefer school counselors to avoid counseling that center on personal, relationship, and family issues. It is unclear from these data if parents prefer privacy on personal matters or if they view school counselors as lacking the training and qualifications necessary to provide acceptable levels of intervention on personal, relationship, or family issues. For example, on the qualitative response section of the survey instrument one parent said, "I have had too many negative dealings with public school counselors who try to be 'psychologists'…to no avail, they have been unsuccessful!" To further illustrate the disparity of counseling demands on school counselors, one respondent expressed a preference for school counselors to be available to provide emotional as well as academic support for students.

Respondents generally favored counseling subscale items that concentrated on academic and school behavior issues. For example, in response to the following item, "Counsel with students regarding school behavior," results indicated that 63% of parents preferred school counselors to frequently or routinely perform this activity. Likewise, 88% of parents preferred school counselors to frequently or routinely provide counseling to their students regarding academic issues.

Results from the Counseling subscale indicated an emerging pattern for frequent or routine counseling for academic issues and school behavior. Furthermore, results indicated respondent ambivalence toward school counselors' providing counseling for personal issues. Parent preferences for school counselors providing counseling for academic issues and school behavior are clear. However, the role, duties, and services provided by school counselors have shown a history of responding to changing social concerns (Gysbers, 2001) and academic issues and counseling for school behavior are inextricably woven together. One parent expressed concern about the balance between academic and personal counseling, stating that

> I believe counselors should be trained to not only meet the academic needs of students, but their personal needs as well. My son has personally counseled with one of his high school counselors this year and it has been a tremendous help to our entire family. I do not feel counselors should perform hall, bus, or cafeteria duty simply because I feel they should be available to meet with students during those hours before and after school and during lunch. Likewise, I do not feel a counselor should be used as a substitute teacher as it takes them away from their office and the opportunity to meet with a student in need.

Examples of primary societal concerns facing many students include family and school violence, substance abuse, and mental health concerns, all of which increased the demands on school counselors and helped define primary school counselor responsibilities (Gysbers, 2001). Gangs, suicide, divorce, pregnancy, poverty, and homelessness are additional concerns that influence student academic achievement (Coy, 1999). School counselors are called upon to address social and family issues because of the direct impact those issues have on academic performance.

Consultation Subscale

The Consultation subscale identified 7 items that school counselors may utilize as part of their overall school guidance plan. Consultation activities centered on school counselor

interactions with other professionals including teachers, administrators, community agencies, and making referrals to community agency specialists in mental health, medicine, and speech pathology.

Consultation subscale items appeared to concentrate on two areas: consultation responsibilities to school professionals and consultation responsibilities to other community professionals. Data from the consultation subscale provided informative results for school counselors and directors of guidance to consider when developing a comprehensive school counseling program.

Consultation responsibilities directly related to school professionals yielded important results. For example, in response to the following item, "Consult with school staff concerning student behavior," results indicated that 61.2% of parents preferred school counselors to frequently or routinely perform this activity. This response is consistent with data from the Counseling subscale in which parents expressed a strong preference for school counselors to engage in academic counseling with their students. Likewise, a similar number of parents conveyed a strong preference for school counselors to consult with school administrators about policy, programs, staff, and students.

Data from the consultation subscale indicated an emerging pattern for teamwork and communication among professional school personnel. Sixty-six percent of respondents preferred school counselors to frequently or routinely contribute to team meetings, grade level meetings, and subject team meetings. Over 70% of respondents preferred school counselors to frequently or routinely assist in identifying students that may benefit from special education services. Parents clearly preferred school counselors' contribution to the identification process of exceptional children. In the qualitative response section, one parent shared the following: "If it

was not for a counselor…my daughter would have never been diagnosis [*sic*] for ADHD, dsylexia, and OCD."

Data from consultation activities with professionals outside of the school environment yielded mixed results. Consistent with their preference for school counselors to minimally engage in personal matters of students and their families, 70% of respondents preferred school counselors to never, rarely, or occasionally consult with community and other school agencies regarding individual students. Responses to the question, "Consult with parents regarding child/adolescent development issues," revealed that a small majority (54.2%) of respondents preferred that school counselors frequently or routinely perform this activity. Data from this question reveal that parents may view development issues as personal matters and, therefore, may not view this activity as an essential school counselor function. However, in response to the following item, "Coordinate referral for students and/or families to community or education professionals (e.g., mental health, speech pathology, medical assessment)," results indicated that 62% of parents preferred school counselors to frequently or routinely perform this activity.

From the qualitative response section, one respondent said, "Counselors should concentrate on academics. Medical and psychological issues should be left to the professionals in their respective fields." Parents clearly prefer school counselors to avoid involvement in student and family personal matters beyond assessment for those needs. Once a need is identified, respondents unmistakably prefer school counselors refer to community professionals rather than handle these issues on campus.

Data from the Consultation subscale indicated a preference for school counselors to actively engage with other campus professionals. This type of leadership preference appears to align with 2009 CACREP standards that require practicing school counselors demonstrate

leadership skills, principles, and qualities necessary to be an effective agent for change in the school system. CACREP accredits counselor education programs and requires school counseling program students to demonstrate the professional competence to advocate for learning experiences, programs, and services that promote academic, career, and personal/social development of students served by the school counselor. Additionally, CACREP standards call for school counselors to "engage parents, guardians, and families to promote the academic, career, and personal/social development of students" (2008, p. 41).

Amatea and Clark (2005) found that 35% of school administrators expected counselors to have specialized knowledge of the psychological, social, and academic needs of students as well as appropriate intervention strategies in order to function as a case consultant to primary stakeholders, parents, teachers, and administrators. Data from this study of parent preferences of school counselor professional activities appear to support the concepts of teamwork, communication, and collaboration as primary themes in the teacher-counselor relationship (Clark & Amatea, 2004).

Curriculum Subscale

The Curriculum subscale identified 8 curriculum activities that school counselors may utilize to effectively implement an overall school guidance plan. Curriculum activities are functions performed by school counselors in classroom or large group settings, teaching students on a variety of topics from career and personal development, personal responsibility, and conflict resolution.

Data from the Curriculum subscale yielded a less consistent pattern of results among respondents. Only 2 of the 8 items produced clear preferences for school counselor professional

activities. Over 73% of respondents preferred school counselors to frequently or routinely use classroom activities to introduce the counselor and the counseling program to all students. This strong preference by parents may reflect a desire for better communication between students and counselors to promote academic and career counseling preferences expressed in the counseling subscale. From the qualitative response section of this study, several parents expressed doubt in whether or not their child knew there was a school counselor or knew how to access the counseling services. It seems data from this particular question and parent comments indicated school counselors must improve communication to students about their role, the school counseling program, and how students access school counseling services.

The next item on the Curriculum subscale that produced clear respondent preferences was the item, "Conduct classroom lessons addressing career development and the world of work." Results indicated that 78.9% of respondents preferred school counselors to frequently or routinely perform this activity. From the qualitative section of the survey, several parents expressed their preference for school counselors to provide career information to students and schedule other speakers to address the world of work. Parent responses indicated a clear and emerging preference for school counselors to provide reliable and diverse information on careers and the world of work.

Consistent with items related to personal, relationship, and developmental issues from previous subscales, data indicated respondents expressed no strong or consistent preference for curriculum activities on these topics. Results from curriculum items focused on personal, social or development issues revealed a slight trend toward school counselors frequently or routinely performing this activity, yet a majority expressing a strong preference for this activity was absent.

Data revealed that respondents preferred school counselors who spend more time conducting classroom lessons on conflict resolution, substance abuse, and personal safety issues. Sixty to 63% of parents expressed a preference for school counselors to engage in activities that promoted awareness and utilization of skills to resolve conflict with others, present programs on substance abuse, and personal safety.

Data from the Curriculum subscale suggested that respondents were less inclined to prefer school counselors engage in professional activities from this domain. A strong majority of parents preferred school counselors who provide classroom lessons addressing the world of work. Responses from this subscale appear to support previous responses in which parents expressed a strong preference for academic interventions for their students. Future success in post-secondary endeavors is often attributed to academic success in high school. Results appear to support Gibbons et al. (2006) who found school counselors were least likely to be considered as a source for career information, ranked just below students' friends at 6%

In the qualitative response section, parents expressed specific preferences related to Curriculum activities. One parent stated, "School counselors should create and implement programs geared specifically towards students and the 'academic' life - to prepare them for the "academic" life once leaving high school." Another parent stated a preference for school counselors to "prepare students for the world of work. Coordinate outside speakers to address students on the working world." An additional respondent stated, "In my opinion it would benefit my high schooler [*sic*] if his counselor could focus on how better to prepare him or her for the future."

Coordination Subscale

The Coordination subscale identified 13 items that school counselors may utilize as part of their overall school guidance plan. Coordination activities focus on management, collaboration, and accountability of school counselor responsibilities to primary stakeholders. Data revealed a small statistically significant relationship between the free or reduced-price lunch variable and respondent's Coordination subscale score, $r = -.126$, $p < .05$. Results indicated that if students were on free or reduced-price meals, parents preferred school counselors spend more time on Coordination activities. Although this result is a small statistically significant correlation, this relationship between free and reduced-price lunch and Coordination activities revealed some insight and direction for counselors and directors of guidance to consider when developing school guidance plans. Further deliberation of this finding is considered essential for school populations with high percentages of students participating in the National School Lunch program.

Consistent with previous subscale items that revealed preferences for academic and career programs for students, respondents continued to express strong preferences for Coordination activities that focused on academic and career exploration. Seventy-one percent of respondents preferred school counselors to frequently or routinely coordinate programs and events for students with a career and academic emphasis. Data from this study indicated a strong preference from respondents to have school counselors devote more of their schedule to promote academic achievement and expand future educational and career opportunities by focusing time and resources to academic Coordination activities. Parents apparently view the role of the school counselor from a scholastic perspective and less as a personal counselor dealing with relationships and family issues. From the qualitative response section, one parent expressed

concern by indicating career counseling and college counseling were lacking in the school.

Similar to preferences for Consultation activities that favored teaming, collaboration, and communication among professional staff on campus, respondents demonstrated a preference for Coordination activities that required comparable actions from school counselors. Approximately 73% of parents preferred school counselors to work with an advisory team to evaluate school counseling program needs. An equal number of respondents preferred school counselors inform faculty and administration about the role, duties, and functions of the counselor and the school counseling program available on campus. However, fewer parents (61%) articulated a preference for the same information. Data from this survey indicated a subtle theme: Parents want a seamless, well defined, and coordinated effort among professional educators. Whereas this theme is aspirational at best, it does lend consideration for professional school staff to understand parents' perspectives and expectations when encountering school staff and managing the network of school services.

Although respondents expressed little preference for personal counseling activities on the Counseling subscale, they did prefer formal evaluation from students, parents, and teachers of students who participate in individual or group counseling at school as part of the Coordination subscale. Sixty-eight percent of respondents preferred counselors to "frequently" or "routinely" perform this activity. Whereas initially this finding appears contradictory to the Counseling subscale findings, it does support respondents' preference for Coordination activities that focus on management, collaboration, and accountability of school counselor responsibilities to primary stakeholders.

One item of particular interest on the Coordination subscale is the item, "Coordinate and maintain a comprehensive school counseling program." Eighty-eight percent of respondents

preferred counselors to frequently or routinely perform this activity. Respondents were not afforded explanation of SCARS items. This procedure, therefore, left respondents with a vast opportunity to interpret the meaning of each item; this is a limitation of this study. However, it is intriguing to note the majority of respondents preferred school counselors allocate their time to coordination of a comprehensive school counseling program. This finding is consistent with the current literature and ASCA (2005) national model which endorses a comprehensive approach to the delivery of school counseling services. The ASCA model is designed to provide a structure to assist school counselors in the transition from service-centered approach for some students, to a program-centered approach to reach every student. Both contemporary researchers (Dahir & Stone, 2009) and the ASCA (2005) standards encouraged professional school counselors to re-define their roles as student advocates and leaders in the educational process data supports movement from the clinical-service model that once defined the practice of counseling and the training techniques of pre-service school counselors (Bernard & Fullmer, 1969; Lee & Putman, 2008; Littrell & Zink, 2005; Schmidt, 2004), toward a more accountable and comprehensive approach that reaches more students (ASCA, 2005; Dahir & Stone, 2009).

"Other" Subscale

The "Other" subscale consists of 10 items that are considered administrative, non-guidance activities that may be assigned to school counselors, but not considered the most effective use of school counselors' specialized skill set. Activities from this subscale included participation on school committees, coordination of standardized testing programs, and student discipline.

Data from this subscale demonstrated a greater spread of responses, thus indicating less respondent favorability toward school counselors performing non-counseling duties. Parents overwhelmingly preferred school counselors to minimally coordinate standardized testing programs, perform hall, bus, or cafeteria duty, substitute teach, or handle student discipline.

Overall, parents consistently disfavored school counselors performing administrative activities not directly related to professional school counseling. However, two interesting preferences emerged from the data on this subscale. First, in response to the following item, "Schedule students for classes," results indicated that 69.7% of respondents preferred counselors to frequently or routinely perform this activity. Whereas respondents preferred school counselors who utilize their time and resources on this activity, it is clearly contradictory to effective use of school counselors' time and parent preferences for academic and career interventions. Data from this item support findings from Burnham and Jackson (2000) that identified four primary non-guidance activities: requesting and receiving records, scheduling students, managing permanent records, and enrolling students in classes. It is not clear why this contradiction exists. It is possible parents prefer this activity because proper course selection is directly related to academic and career preferences expressed by parents on previous subscale items. One parent's response seemed to support this supposition: "I would like to see the counselors take on the role of not only showing the students the classes they need while in high school but more about what careers they can follow, classes they can take in high school that will help them in college."

A second finding from the Other subscale referred to maintenance of complete educational records, including attendance reports, drop-out reports, and cumulative records. Sixty-five percent of respondents preferred school counselors allocate time and resources to this activity. This item is a non-guidance activity that is often assigned to school counselors as an

add-on responsibility. Data from this subscale item support Lieberman (2004), who reported that counselors were often called to perform tasks that underutilized counselor training and effectiveness. Additionally, results from this study also support Pérusse et al. (2004), who found registration and scheduling, administration of tests, and maintenance of student records appropriate school counselor tasks as identified by secondary school principals. It is also possible that parents are not aware that time spent on administrative tasks directly interferes with time spent on school counseling issues. Antithetical to the overall respondent preference, one parent stated, "I would like the counselors to function as advocates for the students in their course selection. However, I don't think they need to be the registrar for the school. I think the students and parents should feel the counselors are their advocates rather than gatekeepers."

Another emerging theme from this study was the overall lower preference for parent inclusion with specific school counselor duties. For example, only 54% of parents preferred counselors to "frequently" or "routinely" consult with parents regarding developmental issues. Parents also demonstrated lower response rates to being informed about school counselor practices and parent education workshops. Respondents' appeared to prefer school counselors who focus on student academic and career issues. Parents from this study desired consistent communication among school staff and a well coordinated academic and career program, yet they preferred that those plans not necessarily involve them.

Qualitative Responses

Because this was an exploratory study, I opted to include a final open-ended question requesting that participants record additional thoughts or comments regarding preferences for school counselor professional activities.

Table 8

Themes of Qualitative Responses

Theme	Comment
Academic	"I believe a counselor should be primarily concerned with the academic issues of a student and provide guidance to potential career fields based on the students apptitudes [sic] and goals." "Secondary counselors need to focus on academics, scholariships,[sic] etc.... Maybe you need one crisis counslor [sic]that handles "personal" issues of students and families - but DO NOT have any of the academic responsibilities. These are two very different jobs and really should require two very different degrees or certifications." "A school counselor should not be handling student's schedules; that is for the school registrar. School counselors should create and implement programs geared specifically towards students and the "academic" life - to prepare them for the "academic" life once leaving high school. That would include college or work." "The entire focus of school counselor should be on academics and career path guidance (what used to be called a "guidance counselor") -- leave the social aspects of raising children to parents. I don't need a school counselor bringing his/her agenda into my children's life."
College/Career	"Assisting with applying for colleges and financial aid. Assisting students with planning schedules for careers and college preparations." "Get more information for college and financial aid for the students." "Career counseling and College counseling. These seem to be lacking in the school." "I believe the primary duty of school counselors should be to direct the students on a career path following high school. Any career path, technical, college - two or more years etc. depending on students abilities." I" would like lots of information from our counselors about preparation for college. I would like the counselors to function as advocates for the students in their course selection. However, I don't think they need to be the registrar for the school. I think the students and parents should feel the counselors are their advocates rather than gatekeepers." "Provide more guidance in the college admission process and scholarships."
Counseling	"Counsel and be available to students who need help. They certainly can lend a helping hand at school as long as it does not take away from their main function to counsel and assist those in distress." "Counselors should concentrate on academics. Medical and psychological issues should be left to the professionals in their respective fields." "The Nurse should check for lice and eyes and health issues. Registrar should enroll and withdraw students. There are way too may responsibilities for a Counselor listed in this survey, other positions should be created to divide up these duties with qualified personnel." "It is my opinion that the counselors need to be allowed to do just that - COUNSEL! With so many children coming from a wide array of familial issues or socio-economic hardships, and with the bullying, drug issues, and the many other issues they face, counselors really need to be focusing on these students versus doing administrative tasks. Give the schools back their counselors!"

Ninety-one participants (36.4%) responded to the qualitative section. I reviewed responses for common themes and identified the following four themes: academic, college/career, counseling, and public relations. The following does not represent a thorough qualitative analysis, but reflects my personal review of subjective responses. Parent subjective responses are summarized in Table 8.

<center>Limitations</center>

Throughout the design and implementation of this study, I purposed to diminish any plausible threats to potential results of this project. However, several limitations do exist. In this section, I will discuss limitations of this study that may have importance when interpreting the results.

The first limitation of this project is the exploratory nature of this study. While the SCARS has been validated for use with PSCs (Scarborough, 2005; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008) it has not been validated for use with parents. Although strong Cronbach's alpha scores were noted for this study's sample, a factor analysis was not performed.

An additional limitation regarding the survey instrument is respondent understanding and interpretation of each item. Participants received no instruction or clarification as to the meaning of each item. Therefore, specific functions on the subscales may have lacked precision for respondents. Because the SCARS is designed for PSCs, responsibilities like "Curriculum Activities" and "Coordination Activities" may be vague terms for respondents in relation to school counselor professional duties.

Another consideration is the geographic limitations of this study. Parents from one school district in the Southwestern United States encompassed the total of the respondent population.

Some results are reflective of the district's specific use of school counselors. Therefore, a broader generalization of these results outside of the participating school district is limited.

The reported demographics of the participants also reflected a lack of diversity. Over 79% of the respondents were female. No attempt was made to discover the ratio of single parent homes to two parent homes. No data was collected to determine the number of students residing in stepfamilies. Furthermore, the great majority of participants (83.6%) were White. The demographic results of this study are vastly dissimilar to reported demographics of the cooperating school district. These demographic outcomes limit the generalizability to other genders and ethnicities. Limits on generalizing beyond the respondent population are also urged. Although an effective response rate of 11% was obtained, the lack of diversity among the respondent population shaped a homogeneous group. The question remains if differences exist between ethnicities, and the lack of equal representation within the sample led to a limited ability to assess for any differences.

I utilized an electronic survey because response rates tend to be higher. Mail-based instruments have a low rate of return and may shape the validity of results (Alreck & Settle, 2004). However, limiting responses to an electronic format may limit responses to participants with a higher socioeconomic status and higher level of education (Rubin, 2008). As a result of choosing to limit this study to an electronic format, the results may have restricted participants to those with higher incomes, higher levels of education, and hampered the ethnic diversity of the respondent population.

Implications

This exploratory study served to examine parent preferences for school counselor

professional activities. Although this study was limited to parents of one school district in the Southwestern United States, several professional implications seem worthy of consideration.

Results from this study indicated respondents preferred school counselors to actively engage in counseling services that promote academic achievement and responsible student behavior. Respondents were less likely to favor school counselors allocating their time to personal, relationship, or family counseling issues. This data suggests school counselors know and understand community standards, customs, and preferences for application of counseling services.

Results indicated respondents desired a cohesive educational platform for their students and view school counselors as instrumental in leading the effort to establish effective communication and collaboration among campus professionals. Results also suggest counselors should allocate time to large group and classroom activities that promote academic success and career awareness.

Further, results from this study indicated respondents expressed a preference for school counselors to engage in Coordination activities with themes centered on special events that focused on academic and career programs for students. A small statistically significant correlation was discovered between parents' qualification for free or reduced-priced lunch and the SCARS coordination subscale. Qualification for the National School Lunch program may be an indicator for school counselors to consider when developing their school counseling program.

Results also indicated a strong preference for school counselors to coordinate a comprehensive school-counseling program. Although it was not clear if respondents fully grasped the meaning of a comprehensive school counseling program, it ~~is~~ was an interesting

finding that parent preferences were aligned with the ASCA national model (2005) and the current research literature.

Furthermore, data from this survey of parent preferences for school counselor professional activities indicated an overall preference for school counselors to be minimally involved in administrative tasks. Contrary to the overall findings, parents did express a preference for school counselors to schedule students for classes and manage student educational records. Both of these activities are historically add-on responsibilities that consume school counselors' time and minimally utilize their unique training and skill sets. It will be important for school counselors to inform, educate, and communicate with parents about their roles, duties, functions, and unique skill sets that they contribute to the school-counseling program.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the followings recommendations are submitted for consideration by counselor educators, directors of guidance, and school counselors as possible avenues to promote awareness of appropriate school counselor responsibilities, advocate for effective utilization of school counselors unique training and skill sets, and create awareness of the indispensible service provided by school counselors.

Pre-Service Educational Opportunities

School counselors have historically faced confusion defining and utilizing their professional skills effectively. A long history that lacks clarity in appropriate role development has further added to the confusion. School administrators may recognize appropriate versus inappropriate tasks assigned to school counselors, yet the "real world" of school functioning

dictates counselors' assignments rather than professional training (Chata & Loesch, 2007; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005). Ineffective utilization of school counselors and assignment of inappropriate tasks will continue to exist as long as professional training of pre-service counselors and pre-service principals are mutually exclusive of the other. In-service principals who continue to identify inappropriate tasks as appropriate for school counselors exacerbate lack of effective utilization of PSCs. This type of school culture promotes ineffective utilization of school counselors because of a history of inappropriate and administrative tasks assigned to the school counselor.

Therefore, deans of colleges of education, department chairs, program coordinators, faculty of teacher education, educational administration, and counselor education should examine collaborative course seminars to introduce pre-service professionals to the duties, responsibilities, and best practices of each other's profession. Two studies into this type of pre-service training provided mixed results (Kirchner & Stetchfield, 2005; Chata & Loesch, 2007). Although training of pre-service professionals may occur in isolation, the work performed post-graduation does not (Wilder, 2009).

In-Service Education Programs

The long history of counselor role confusion calls for the professional school counselor to orient other school personnel to appropriate school counselor professional activities. Effective orientation is accomplished through school-wide in-service training, and participating in faculty and departmental meetings. Regular meetings with colleagues that develop strong working relationships can help counselors clarify misconceptions about the role of the school counselor.

Murray (1995) recommended counselor-administrative team meetings to clarify counselor roles and avoid job related assumptions that may occur after lengthy working relationships. Murray further suggested counselors develop a "strategic one-to-three year plan of desired goals, objectives, actions, and evaluation" (p. 3) to be incorporated as a basis to define the counselors' role in the school. Murray (1995) also recommended counselors maintain a busy schedule so inappropriate tasks are not assigned to counselors who appear to have free time. Counselors need to be proactive working with students rather than reactive. Furthermore, school counselors need to be heard by their administrators. School counselors and students alike will benefit when counselors take the time to educate school personnel about their training, skills, and how best those skills can be applied to the benefit of students.

Working with the Community

School counselors can initiate formal and informal association with community constituents to provide counselors the opportunity to discuss the appropriate and inappropriate role of the school counselor. Additionally, developing working relationships with community organizations allows for networking and support. Counselors generally support and have training in healthy relationships and good communication skills. Those tools and that help constitute the unique skills and abilities of counselors must be exploited to effectively communicate what the school counselor does day-to-day.

In the absence of self-promotion and clarity from the counselor, his or her constituents are free to fill that void with prevailing popular thought of the time. For example, one parent responded, "My biggest issue is I really do not know what the couselors [*sic*] do with their time.

It seems my only contact with them is in regards to scheduling so I assume that is all they work on." Another parent said,

> I thought school couselors [*sic*] job was to occupy an office and tie up funds that could be used for teachers. They have been used by staff for handling problem students. They are not used for all students, just the difficult ones. What benefit from their expense is applied to good or excellent students?

Alignment of Professional Association Goals and Credentialing Organizations

The lack of alignment of professional association standards and credentialing organizations possibly promotes PSC role confusion. ASCA (2005) identified individual counseling, engaging students in a one-on-one therapeutic environment, as an inappropriate school counselor activity. The 2009 CACREP standards for school counselor training require school counselors be familiar with professional organizations and the ASCA model. However, CACREP identified counseling theory as fundamental knowledge, and identified individual and group counseling skills along with classroom guidance as essential skills for school counselors.

ASCA (2005) posited that individual counseling was an inappropriate activity for PSCs, yet CACREP (2008) stated that counseling theory and skills as essential knowledge. Large counselor-student caseloads preclude individual counseling as the most effective means to work with students. At the same time, the school counselor may be the only mental health professional some students will have the opportunity to see. The profession must strike a balance between implementation of programs against the care of students the profession is charged to watch over.

A thorough knowledge of counseling theory and techniques are essential for school counselors because it is part of what makes the profession unique and specialized. Turning our back on theoretical training will simply make school counselors managers of programs rather than specialists with distinctive skill sets that make a difference in the lives of students. A

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balance must be found so the profession does not become so program focused that the distinctive skill set school counselors bring to campus can be easily replaced with a less trained professional (Wilder, 2009).

The ASCA (2005) model promotes "themes of advocacy, leadership, and systemic change…" (p.10). However, the question must be asked, what makes a leader? Are principals ready to share the leadership role mandated in their job descriptions? In a qualitative study of school administrators' conceptions of the school counselor role, Amatea and Clark (2005) found the role as school leader was least described by administrators' preference for their school counselors. In the same study principals, viewed their counselors as a direct service provider, one who provides counseling. Although Amatea and Clark's study cannot be generalized to the larger administrator population because of the small number of principals they interviewed, it does provide insight into the view some principals may hold of their counselors and what tasks in which they prefer their counselors to engage.

Recommendations for Further Research

Counselor educators and school counselors benefit from taking an active role in defining their roles, responsibilities, and duties of the profession. Additional research is needed to identify the constructs that create counselor professional identity and further understand how those constructs apply in the day-to-day activities of professional school counselors. Identification of parent and student preferences of school counselor professional functions may aid counselor educators in developing additional curriculum elements for counselors-in-training. Additionally, research of this nature may support school counselors in defining their roles, functions, and

purpose to avoid repeating the history of add-on responsibilities that others may deem appropriate for the school counselor.

Further investigation of effectiveness of the SCARS in determining parent preferences of school counselor professional activities may be justified. Determining the reliability and validity of the SCARS may lead to development of a need assessment instrument that can be employed by school counselors to assess parent perceived needs of the school counselor at the local level.

Conclusion

The concept of exploring parent preferences for school counselor professional activities is still in its early stages. Insufficient research in this area discounts the notion that parents are considered a primary stakeholder of school counselor services, yet excluded as a primary source for gathering information to study and improve school counseling services.

The purpose of this study was to investigate parent preferences for school counselor professional activities. In this exploratory study, I examined possible duties that may be carried out by school counselors by utilizing the SCARS as the assessment instrument. Although only two small correlations among the variables were discovered, participants expressed a strong preference for school counselors to focus on academic and school behavior related issues. Additionally, a vast majority of respondents expressed a preference for school counselors to avoid counseling with students on personal, family, and relationship issues.

This study is a first attempt at understanding parent preferences of school counselor responsibilities. Initial data is now available for counselor educators to utilize for future research, program evaluation, and professional discussion. Furthermore, directors of guidance and school

counselors now have preliminary data and study processes to assess specific district and campus

needs.

APPENDIX A

DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE

Personal Characteristics

1. What is your gender?   Male   Female

2. What is your age? _____

3. What is your ethnicity?

                                                             African American
                                                             Hispanic
                                                              White
                                                              Native American
                                                              Asian/Pacific Islander
                                                             Other (please indicate):
                                                             _____

4. Is your student eligible for free or
reduced-price meals under the National
School Lunch and Child Nutrition Program.   Yes   No

5. Your Education Level.

                                                             GED/High School Diploma
                                                             Some college
                                                             Associates Degree
                                                             Bachelor's Degree
                                                             Graduate/Professional Degree

6. Grade level of your student.
  (Circle one)   9   10   11   12

7. This is my first high school student.   Yes   No

8. I have older/other children in high school.   Yes   No

APPENDIX B

SCHOOL COUNSELOR ACTIVITY RATING SCALE

Below is a list of functions that may be performed by school counselors. Please write the number that indicates the frequency with which you would PREFER your school counselor to perform each function.

Please place the corresponding number in each box

Ratings: 1= I would prefer my (child's) school counselor to **NEVER** do this
2= I would prefer my (child's) school counselor to **RARELY** do this
3= I would prefer my (child's) school counselor to **OCCASIONALLY** do this
4= I would prefer my (child's) school counselor to **FREQUENTLY** do this
5= I would prefer my (child's) school counselor to **ROUTINELY** do this

Counseling Activities

1. Counsel with students regarding personal/family concerns.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

2. Counsel with students regarding school behavior.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

3. Counsel with students regarding crisis/emergency issues.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

4. Counsel with student regarding relationships (e.g., family, friends, romantic).

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

5. Provide small group counseling addressing relationship/social skills.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

6. Provide small group counseling for academic issues.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

7. Conduct small groups regarding family/personal issues (e.g., divorce, death).

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

8. Conduct small group counseling for students regarding substance abuse issues
(own use or family/friend use).

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

9. Follow-up on individual and group counseling participants.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

10. Counsel students regarding academic issues.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

Consultation Activities

11. Consult with school staff concerning student behavior.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

12. Consult with community and school agencies concerning individual students.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

13. Consult with parents regarding child/adolescent development issues.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

14. Coordinate referral for students and/or families to community or education
   professionals (e.g., mental health, speech pathology, medical assessment).

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

15. Assist in identifying exceptional children (special education).

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

16. Provide consultation for administrators (regarding school policy, programs,
   staff and/or students).

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

17. Participate in team/grade level/subject team meetings.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

Curriculum Activities

18. Conduct classroom activities to introduce the counselor and explain the counseling
   program to all students.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

19. Conduct classroom lessons addressing career development and the world of work.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

20. Conduct classroom lessons on relating to others (family, friends).

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

21. Conduct classroom lessons on various personal and/or social traits (e.g., responsibility, respect, etc.).

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

22. Conduct classroom lessons on personal growth and development issues.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

23. Conduct classroom lessons on conflict resolution.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

24. Conduct classroom lessons regarding substance abuse.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

25. Conduct classrooms lessons on personal safety issues.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

Coordination Activities

26. Coordinate special events and programs for school around academic, career, or personal/social issues (e.g., career day, drug awareness week, test prep).

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

27. Coordinate and maintain a comprehensive school counseling program.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

28. Inform parents about the role, training, program, and interventions of a school counselor within the context of your school.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

29. Conduct or coordinate parent education classes or workshops.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

30. Conduct or coordinate school-wide response for crisis management and intervention.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

31. Inform teachers/administrators about the role, training, program, and interventions of a school counselor within the context of your school.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

32. Conduct or coordinate teacher in-service programs.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

33. Keep track of how time is being spent on the functions that counselors perform.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

34. Attend professional development activities (e.g., state conferences, local in-services.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

35. Coordinate with an advisory team to analyze and respond to school counseling program needs.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

36. Formally evaluate student progress as a result of participation in individual/group counseling from student, teacher and/or parent perspectives.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

37. Conduct needs assessments and counseling program evaluations from parents, faculty and/or students .

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

38. Coordinate orientation process / activities for students.

Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

"Other" Activities

39. Participate on committees within the school.
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

40. Coordinate the standardized testing program.
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

41. Organize outreach to low income families (i.e., Thanksgiving dinners, Holiday families).
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

42. Respond to health issues (e.g., check for lice, eye screening, 504 coordination).
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

43. Perform hall, bus, cafeteria duty.
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

44. Schedule students for classes.
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

45. Enroll students in and/or withdraw students from school.
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

46. Maintain/Complete educational records/reports (cumulative files, test scores, attendance reports, drop-out reports.
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

47. Handle discipline of students.
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

48. Substitute teach and/or cover classes for teachers at your school.
Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Routinely
1	2	3	4	5

Developed by: Janna L. Scarborough, Ph.D., NCC, NCSC, ACS

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT EMAIL/INFORMED CONSENT

Recruitment email

Dear Parent/ Guardian

My name is Chris Wilder; I am a Doctoral Candidate in the counseling program at the University of North Texas (UNT). I am currently working on my dissertation regarding parent preferences for school counselor professional activities.

The current research regarding school counseling, school counselor professional organizations, and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) presently recommend a prescribed model of professional activities for school counselors. The purpose of my study is to better understand parent preferences for the type of practices and professional activities of their child's school counselor. Ideally, results from this study will support counseling faculty to design school counseling courses and assist school district administrators in aligning school counselor activities that support parent and student academic goals.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you have a student enrolled in one of three high schools in your community. Participation will involve completing a questionnaire that will take about 15 to 20 minutes of your time.

Though I hope you take this opportunity to share your preferences, you are not required to participate. If you choose not to participate in this study, you can delete this email.

If you are willing to assist with the study, continue to the next page and read the informed consent form for details regarding the purposes, benefits, possible risks, and confidentiality practices involved in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study you may call *Dee Ray*, (940) 565-2066 (dee.ray@unt.edu) or *Chris Wilder* at telephone number (xxx)xxx-xxxx (chris.wilder@unt.edu).

Thank you so very much for your help.

Sincerely,

Dee Ray, Ph.D., LPC-S   Chris Wilder, M.Ed., LPC-S
Associate Professor   Doctoral Candidate
Counselor Education   Counselor Education
University of North Texas   University of North Texas

Electronic Informed Consent Form

Before agreeing to participate in this research study, it is important that you read and understand the following explanation of the purpose, benefits and risks of the study and how it will be conducted.

Title of Study: An Examination of Parents' Preferred School Counselor Professional Activities.

Principal Investigator: Dee Ray, Associate Professor, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Counseling and Higher Education.

Key Personnel: Chris Wilder, University of North Texas (UNT) Department of Counseling and Higher Education.

Purpose of the Study: You are being asked to participate in a research study that involves an exploration of your preferences for the type of professional activities of your child's school counselor.

Study Procedures: You will be asked to complete a demographics questionnaire and a survey instrument. It is anticipated only 15-20 minutes of your time will be required to participate in this study.

Foreseeable Risks: There are no foreseeable risks to you by participating in this study.

Benefits to the Subjects or Others: Ideally, Results from this study will support counselor education faculty in the design of school counseling courses that better address parent preferences for school counselor professional activities, and assist school district administrators in aligning school counselor activities that support parent and student academic goals.

Procedures for Maintaining Confidentiality of Research Records: Your personal indentifying information will be strictly guarded. Signed informed consent forms and coded survey results will be maintained in separate locations and in locked cabinets. School district administrators will **not** know if you participated in this study. The confidentiality of your individual information will be maintained in any publications or presentations regarding this study. Any personal data gathered will be destroyed three years following the conclusion of this study. Federal Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations require data be maintained for three years after the study in completed.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions regarding this study you may call *Dee Ray*, (940) 565-2066 (dee.ray@unt.edu) or *Chris Wilder* at telephone number (xxx) xxx-xxxx (chris.wilder@unt.edu).

Review for the Protection of Participants: This research study has been reviewed and approved by the UNT Institutional Review Board (IRB). The UNT IRB can be contacted at (940) 565-3940 with any questions regarding the rights of research subjects.

Research Participants' Rights:

By clicking on the link to enter the survey instrument indicates that you have read all of the above and that you confirm all of the following:

- You have read and understand the purpose of study, your rights in choosing whether or not you would like to participate. Furthermore, you understand confidentiality procedures and answered all of your questions have been answered. You have read the possible benefits and the potential risks and/or discomforts of the study.

- You understand that you do not have to take part in this study, and your refusal to participate or your decision to withdraw will involve no penalty or loss of rights or benefits. The study personnel may choose to stop your participation at any time.

- You understand why the study is being conducted and how it will be performed.

- You understand your rights as a research participant and you voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

- You have received a copy of this form.

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