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The Perceptions of High School Counselors' Roles in Developing a College-Going Culture

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by

Lisa Condra Davies

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ABSTRACT

The Perceptions of High School Counselors' Roles in Developing a

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The role of high school counselors includes providing equitable access to college and career

opportunities for students (College Board, 2011). Attending college is viewed as a national

priority that includes precollege activities to promote postsecondary access (Savitz-Romer,

2012). High school counselors may have ambiguous roles that complicates their efforts

(Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). Role confusion may arise when the high school counselors are

asked to provide mental health services rather than professionally focus on college acceptance

and completion for students.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of public high school

counselors regarding their roles in developing a college-going culture. The participants were

asked to share practices, policies, and resources specific to promoting a college-going culture.

This case study included in-depth interviews that shed light on successes and struggles

encountered by the high school counselors. The criteria for participants included serving a

minimum of 3 years as a high school counselor and possessing a Tennessee school counseling

license. The interviews consisted of 15 semistructured questions framed in response to the 3

research questions guiding this study.

The findings resulted in the emergence of 4 themes relative to answering the 3 research questions. The 11 participants expressed their roles as facilitators to students' understanding, knowledge, and transition to access postsecondary education. The 11 participants provided insights and personal illustrations regarding the 4 themes. The findings revealed perceptions recognized from the participants' experiences in the development of a college-going culture.

Participants reported an expanded view of the term *college* and reflected that the college-going culture may be structured to address the needs specific to the respective high school's environment. The participants responded that family influences are key elements that determine students' entry to postsecondary education.

Recommendations included practices that strengthened communication to students and parents and raising the rigor of academic coursework. The recommendations for practice included increasing the number of licensed school counselors with master's degrees to reduce student caseloads. Currently, research from the American School Counseling Association (2017) suggests a student-to-counselor ratio of 250:1. Further research should explore barriers that prevent high school counselors from providing resources for the development of a college-going culture.

DEDICATION

To my husband Bob Davies, you have always encouraged me to pursue my dreams and never give up. Thank you for giving me time, space, and love to accomplish this goal of achieving my doctorate degree. Thank you to my two sons, Will and Harrison Davies, for your support in my journey to continue my education. You each have maturity, vision, and love for God and family that inspires me every day. I am appreciative of your love and excitement to travel with me or on your own to see the great wonders of this world.

I would like to include a special thank you to my parents William and Yvonne Condra for instilling in me the value of education. When I was a young child, you taught me how to reach for my goals, creating lists along the way to mark the accomplishments. Your examples provided me a framework to follow. Whenever I needed support or help, I knew I could always count on you.

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I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Jim Lampley, and committee members, Dr. Louise Dickson, Dr. Bethany Flora, and Dr. Hal Knight. Each of you provided expertise for me to accomplish this dissertation. The time you provided to guide and lead me through the process to reach my goal was appreciated and valued. You always allowed me to contact you with questions and in return, provided the correct answers to support my work. I am inspired by your professionalism and passion for education.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Every child should have access to a world-class education (White House, 2014). This

was the charge that came from former President Obama's *2014 State of the Union Address*,

recognizing various measures to be taken by educators to have a prepared workforce for the

United States (U.S.) economy. The measures included redesigning high schools and partnering

of colleges that lead to career opportunities. During President Obama's second term in office, a

College Opportunity Summit was organized composed of businesses, universities, and nonprofits

committed to helping all hardworking students go to college and succeed (White House, 2014).

Numerous states implemented initiatives that reinforce opportunities for students to achieve their

aspirations to attend postsecondary institutions. For example, the state of Oregon has in place

the 40-40-20 higher education goal for collective action and reform (Oregon Learns, n.d.). This

includes increasing the number of underserved students to enter the college pipeline rather than

relying on just the elite to achieve college degrees. Likewise, Tennessee's *Drive to 55* initiative

aims to have at least 55% of adults with a college degree by the year 2025 (Tennessee Higher

Education Commission, 2016a). This initiative, as well as many others managed by the

Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC), provides infrastructure and support for

educators to meet college completion goals established by Governor Bill Haslam (Tennessee

Higher Education Commission, 2016b).

The efforts to bridge the gap between student aspirations and college attainment are

important to the future of our economy (Dyce, Albold, & Long, 2013). For some students

college access remains imbalanced because of a variety of factors and inconsistent services

(Savitz-Romer, 2012). Entry into a postsecondary institution, viewed as a *nation*al priority,

includes precollege activities that promote college attendance (Savitz-Romer, 2012). Increasing

student enrollment and degree completion at a postsecondary institution is a goal that may help

build a stronger economic outlook for the U.S. (Tennessee Higher Education Commission,

2016a). Interventions from stakeholders such as churches, government agencies, private

foundations, and individuals may propel new programs to be created and implemented to support

students graduating from high school and college. Prior research has suggested that building a

college-going culture included academic knowledge and social sustenance (McKillip, Godfrey,

& Rawls, 2012a). Many states have designed public policies and approaches to advance

students' transition from high school to college (Perna, Klein, & McLendon, 2014). The U.S.

Department of Education funds many programs aimed at early intervention for college readiness

and persistence (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-b). Access to a variety of college resources

is required to make informed decisions for students who are transitioning from high school to

postsecondary institutions. The process of making well-informed decisions may be difficult for

students if college-going resources are not available. Multiple resources that supply college-

choice information may include books, journals, and the Internet. In addition, a variety of

stakeholders may influence the college-choice decision. These stakeholders may include

parents, high school administrators, high school counselors and faculty, community members,

and postsecondary representatives (admissions or financial aid counselors) who provide one-on-

one resources through formal or informal settings.

Multifarious efforts have encouraged high school students to enter postsecondary

pathways to be ready for the workforce (McKillip, Rawls, & Barry, 2012b). Many factors

influence students and the process by which they make decisions regarding college-choice.

Helping students make the right choice is an evolving practice for educators. Historically high

school counselors guided the students known as the "privileged few" to receive access to college (Rosenbaum, Miller, & Krei, 1996). Today, it is common for students to have broad access to postsecondary options because of open admissions and affordable programs of study (Gentry, 2013). To illustrate, Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam's Tennessee Promise scholarship initiative answered the call to affordability to enter postsecondary institutions once students complete high school (Tennessee Promise, 2016). This last-dollar scholarship provides complete tuition and fee funding free for Tennessee high school graduates to any of the state's community colleges or colleges of applied technology.

Besides affordability there are a variety of accessibility issues that students must consider regarding higher education. Prior research reports the role social and cultural capital may have on students for college access (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Students need access to people who provide resources to postsecondary institutions. Parents who possess limited understanding and know-how concerning higher education information may present barriers for students. For example, Hill (2012) indicated many urban school students were academically qualified for college yet insufficiently prepared for navigating steps to college. A student whose family has limited knowledge on college-related strategies will have increased dependence on the high school; however, some high schools may not be able to provide college-related social services due to inequalities in their structure (Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013).

Stephan and Rosenbaum (2013) reported middle-class parents may provide more information, support, and oversight in the college application process. Personal experiences from students of different ethnic groups may guide the college-choice process in countless directions. A family's socioeconomic status may influence the type of postsecondary institution a student selects (Bergerson, 2009). Gentry (2013) reported that improved college access for

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minority students did not result with an increase of college graduation rates; therefore, enhanced attention should be focused on these efforts. Previous studies indicated that students often lack the social and life skills for successful retention in higher education (Gentry, 2013). Regardless of challenges that exist, increased opportunities for college access and preparation for the academic and social demands are important for all students (Strayhorn, 2014). Recognition of the framework used to develop a college-going culture is necessary for all stakeholders.

Statement of the Problem

Traditionally, students have been identified as "college ready" through high school course grades and standardized test scores (Tortura, 2013). The accumulated grade point averages from coursework and standardized college entrance exams have been strong indicators for determining a student's readiness for entrance to postsecondary institutions. The high school environment played a crucial role in implementing a college readiness culture for its students by embedding strong academic courses-taking, college entrance assessments, and an emphasis on grade point averages (Strayhorn, 2014).

New approaches to support college readiness for students offer various accountability measures taken by high schools. These new approaches included the use of cognitive strategies, content knowledge, learning and techniques, and transition knowledge (Darling-Hammond, Wilhoit, & Pittenger, 2014). In the past, high school counselors' duties included delivering transition knowledge such as college entrance requirements or admission application details without appropriate training (Savitz-Romer, 2012). It has been postulated that high school counselors may not have had exposure to college counseling curriculum necessary to successfully direct students with college advising (McKillip et al., 2012a).

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The accountability of school reform from the federal and state levels required states to adopt college readiness standards (Welton & Williams, 2015). These updated policies changed the landscape of college readiness to extend beyond coursework and test scores. The interplay between college readiness standards and the development of a college-going culture with high school counselors should be examined (Welton & Williams, 2015). The investigation of the high schools' college-going culture was necessary because of the policies expressing expectations for all students to attend college after high school (McKillip et al., 2012b)

The context of a college-going culture with a high school may depend on a variety of factors associated with the role of a high school counselor. McKillip et al. (2012b) included four aspects involved with a high school counselor's role: (a) organization of the counseling department, (b) resources for college preparation, (c) collaboration with administration and staff, and (d) student and high school counselor interactions. To this end, local, state, and federal officials may be added to the list of individuals who support the development of a college-going culture. Additional stakeholders included teachers, administrators, and parents (Tortura, 2013). Similarly, Robinson and Roksa (2016) found the high school context to be comprised of college-linking resources and the college-opportunity structure that influenced a college-going culture to support enrollment to higher education. Engberg and Gilbert (2014) reported that high school counselors played a significant role in shaping the college-bound student. Thus, there is a need to explore the multiple factors involved with students transitioning from high school to postsecondary education.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine perceptions of high school counselors' roles in developing a college-going culture. Specifically, this study was focused on analyzing the perceptions of high school counselors' engagement with school policy, mission,

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and resources distinct to developing a college-going culture. Creswell (1998) reported "the best studies have strong inquiry procedures" (p. 27). Bergerson (2009) found the importance of preparing a student for college is developed from information delivered in the college-choice process and high school experiences. The high school years have been identified as a critical time to establish long-term support for students aspiring to attend college (Dyce et al., 2013). The interviews conducted through this study explored and reflected on high school counselors' roles in the development of a college-going culture. This study was conducted in Tennessee public high schools.

Research Questions

The research questions designed for this study were intentionally developed and chosen to determine school counselors' perceptions in developing a college-going culture. The research questions were crafted to probe their opinions of duties related to successful implementation of a high school college-going culture. The questions were:

1. How does the high school counselor's role impact the development of a college-going culture?

2. How do the resources provided by high school counselors foster a college-going culture?

3. How are a high school counselor's relationships integral factors in the development of a college-going culture?

Significance of the Study

For several decades policymakers and educators have initiated efforts to improve students' access to postsecondary institutions (Belasco, 2013). Previously Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca (2009) noted policies that the U.S. Department of Education proposed to establish high

school reform and accountability. This reform ascertained that high schools be held accountable for students' academic endeavors after graduation from high school (Roderick et al., 2009). To this end, high schools may create policies and practices that promote college access. These policies and practices contribute to the success of students' transition from secondary to postsecondary education. This study may add to the body of knowledge concerning high school counselors' roles in the development of a college-going culture. Resources, information, and tools to supplement preparation for college-choice decisions may aid in the development of a college-going culture; therefore, identification of these forms of capital may shed light on future direction. The high school counselors shared their views on the various forms of support they implement for students on their journey from high school to postsecondary institutions. The various forms of support included the application of resources, tools, academic programs, and precollege events from community stakeholders that contributed to the development of a college-going culture. The challenges recognized from the implementation of these various forms of support may allow high school counselors to reflect on new actions to undertake when refining a college-going culture. The information gained from the high school counselors' roles may reveal new directives to undertake when developing a college-going culture.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

A limitation to this study may have been an imbalance of knowledge and experience from the high school counselors in developing a college-going culture. As reported by Rubin and Rubin (1995), "A rich study keeps on asking and answering questions like when, why, how, and under what circumstances" (p. 275) and was the basis for this qualitative study. High school counselor perceptions for developing a college-going culture may have varied depending upon

the needs of that socioeconomic status level of the students. Therefore, the findings of this study are limited and cannot measure other high schools' efforts in developing a college-going culture.

Hessie-Biber (2017) suggested that qualitative research provide clear boundaries about what is studied in the case. This study was delimited to participants who were licensed Tennessee public high school counselors with a minimum of three years of employment in the high school setting. The variables studied included interviews from high school counselors' perceptions in shaping a college-going culture. The bounded system included experience with events focused on college entrance exams and college-going activities.

Definition of Terms

College Access Strategy. A high school student's entry to postsecondary education based upon secondary curriculum, assessment, aspirations, and hands-on assistance with college activities (U. S. Department of Education, 2009).

College-Going Culture. The environment for high school students that promotes student aspiration and behaviors in preparing for, applying to, and entering college (Corwin & Tierney, 2007). In addition, the term includes the norms, expectations, and resources provided by high schools used to support and advance college enrollment (Robinson & Roksa, 2016).

College Planning Process. A checklist describing steps high school students should take to be eligible for college admission (College Board, 2016).

College Readiness. Students possessing an accumulation of knowledge and academic experiences in preparation for college enrollment and success (Maruyama, 2012).

College Readiness Counseling. The preparations for success through college enrollment and beyond between counselors and students (Savitz-Romer, 2012).

Content Knowledge. A student's level of knowledge mastered in subject areas required for college success (Strayhorn, 2014).

One-Size-Fits-All College Readiness Agenda. Students, regardless of postsecondary aspirations, socioeconomic conditions, and cultural norms, are required to complete the same rigorous coursework where success is measured by grades and standardized test scores (Barnes & Slate, 2013).

Social Capital. The information and resources made available to students from their social networks (Hill, Bregman, & Andrade, 2015).

Tennessee Promise Scholarship. A last-dollar scholarship and mentoring program dedicated to increasing enrollment of college students in the state of Tennessee (Tennessee Promise, 2016).

Overview of the Study

This qualitative study is structured into five chapters. The chapters include the major themes of the study. Chapter 1 includes an introduction that describes the background, a statement of the problem, the research questions, the significance of the study, a statement of limitations and delimitations, and the definitions of terms. The literature is reviewed in Chapter 2 and explores elements impacting the research topic. Chapter 3 includes the research methodology and design used in conducting the study, the research questions, data analysis, and limitations. The findings of the analyzed data are reviewed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 includes the summary, conclusion, and recommendations practitioners may implement and research to improve the development of a college-going culture.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the last decades educational stakeholders have made significant efforts for students to continue their academic journey to postsecondary institutions (Belasco, 2013). As a result increased college enrollment has been attained (Belasco, 2013). Policy leaders have deferred college readiness counseling to high school counselors and placed the infrastructure in the counseling office (Savitz-Romer, 2012). For this literature review the origins of college preparation through the high school counseling office were examined. Furthermore, findings were examined to determine gaps in the literature regarding the influences that college readiness, college readiness counseling, college access, social and cultural capital, and technology suggest for creating a college-going culture.

Historical Perspective

College preparation connected to the political environment originated with the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 (Barnes & Slate, 2013). During 1957 the Soviet Union launched an artificial satellite, Sputnik, which challenged the status of public education in the U.S. (Barnes & Slate, 2013). The NDEA allocated large sums of money into the U.S.'s educational system to encourage students to study subjects dedicated to scientific research. The subjects of math, science, technology, and foreign languages were slated as the new road map for the American education system (Barnes & Slate, 2013). The funding provided by the NDEA interjected a new purpose for education (Webb, 2006). Barnes and Slate (2013) suggested that the launching of Sputnik can be viewed as the first maneuver that American politicians used to create a one-size-fits-all college readiness agenda; therefore, it changed the academic landscape in the U.S.

For over 50 years the one-size-fits-all agenda continued to influence education policy makers (Webb, 2006). During 1983 the National Commission on Excellence in Education produced the report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform*, which presented a pessimistic and hopeless economic forecast for the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-c). This report, presented to then President Ronald Reagan, was used as a negative foreshadowing for the educational outlook of the U.S. (Barnes & Slate, 2013). In fact, Barnes and Slate (2013) suggested this report served as a second maneuver to influence a one-size-fits-all agenda. The education system was viewed as in crisis and need of attention (Webb, 2006). This report provided recommendations that served as a blueprint for school reform at the state and local levels (Webb, 2006). Later, school reforme continued through the creation of then President George W. Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) educational program (Webb, 2006). The premise of NCLB program was aimed at changing academic achievement in the K-12 educational arena to increase academic outcomes for all students (Barnes & Slate, 2013). The implementation of NCLB placed heavy emphasis on proficiency target rates from mandated state tests to measure student learning and school quality (Barnes & Slates, 2013). These target rates were used as accountability measures by the state levels for school districts. Overall, NCLB reinforced the college readiness agenda by requiring all students to gain greater academic excellence though school cultures and educational environments (Webb, 2006). The NCLB authorized that all high schools provide a strong academic foundation for students' success for postsecondary education and careers (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009).

College Readiness Agenda

The one-size-fits-all college readiness agenda has been prohibitive due to disparities within the psychological, social, and economic levels in the U.S. (Barnes & Slate, 2013).

Students were identified as college ready if their academic knowledge, skills, and behaviors reflected the first year of college completion (College Board, 2011). The one-size-fits-all college readiness agenda established specific benchmarks of student achievement in the areas of high-stakes testing, accountability measures, and course data indicators. Barnes and Slate (2013), reported that the one-size-fits-all college readiness agenda was intended to provide greater academic achievement for all students. However, increasing academic requirements and insisting what students must know were not sufficient to ensure outcomes (Barnes & Slate, 2013).

During the last 30 years policy leaders emphasized the one-size-fits-all agenda for college readiness as a dichotomous variable for students (Barnes & Slate, 2013). The view of college readiness assumed all students were more similar than different in backgrounds and experiences (Strayhorn, 2014). The model for a one-size-fits-all college readiness description encompassed various challenges in the development of a college-going culture. Middle to upper-school districts typically had students perform well on standardized or high-stakes tests; however, lower and ethnically diverse school districts generally saw negative gains (Barnes & Slate, 2013). Therefore, students from the lower achieving districts were not as able to compete academically as those in the middle and upper socioeconomic levels (Barnes & Slate, 2013).

Multiple studies have been conducted that examine factors influencing students to become college ready through their K-12 school experience. For example, Royster, Gross, and Hochbein (2015) explored barriers that affect students in meeting college readiness benchmarks from urban school districts. As a result innovative programs to deliver resources or incentivize engagement in college-going culture activities were implemented to meet the needs respective to the socioeconomic status level of students (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). Student exposure to new

life experiences improved their connections with learning outcomes (Richardson, 2012). In addition, the sociocultural expectations from a family contributed to the student's portfolio for resources of college preparedness and were viewed as a catalyst to postsecondary enrollment (Dyce et al., 2013).

College readiness, as emphasized by former President Obama, was viewed as a national policy priority for the U.S. (Strayhorn, 2014). Recent literature reported that high school students' preparation for college readiness focused on these elements: (a) personal characteristics, (b) aspirations, (c) academic preparation, and (d) college preparatory activities (Royster et al., 2015). Earlier research provided by Roderick, Nagaoka, and Coca (2009) documented four areas of preparation for students to be identified as college ready: (a) content knowledge and basic skills, (b) core academic skills, (c) noncognitive skills and norms of performance, and (d) college knowledge. These four areas provided details relative to college readiness for high school students still applicable to current practices (Roderick et al., 2009).

First, content knowledge and basic skills were demonstrated through rigorous coursework available through the high school curriculum (Roderick et al., 2009). For example, a high school may have strived to offer advanced placement (AP) courses as a strategy for students to earn college credit while still in high school. Strayhorn (2014) reported that students proficient with content knowledge were prepared to be critically engaged with text and comprehensively ready.

Second, core academic skills referred to students' performance on achievement exams (Roderick et al., 2009). While some colleges currently do not require a standardized test score for entrance, others may have; therefore, encouragement was given for all students to be prepared just in case. For example, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) has been used by

colleges for selection in student admissions practices (College Board, 2016). In addition, the American College Testing (ACT) is a standardized college entrance exam taken by high school students in all parts of the U.S. (ACT, 2016). High school college-going cultures may encourage the offerings of ACT preparation courses to enhance students' success. The ACT scores were provided for a baseline of measures indicating college readiness on the part of the student (ACT, 2016).

Third, Roderick et al. (2009) reported noncognitive skills - behaviors that characterize self-awareness, student self-control, work habits, time management, and social problem-solving skills - as critical elements for meeting college demands. Likewise, Barnett (2016) recognized noncognitve skills that included perseverance and goal setting. Increased opportunities for students to be involved in the setting of goals propelled them for college attainment (Barnett, 2016). High schools advancing students' social skills may provide opportunities for engagement with college admissions interviews or conversations with financial aid counselors. Problem-solving skills impact student success in a multitude of arenas. For example, students figuring out their career path identified which college majors were appropriate (Barnett, 2016). To this end, students invested in their own personal inquiry relevant to awareness and reinforcing those skills necessary for problem-solving development (Scanlon, Anastopoulou, Kerawalla, & Mulholland, 2011).

Fourth, students' experiences with successful navigation brought self-awareness skills to the college-choice process, referred to as college knowledge (Roderick et al., 2009). Royster et al. (2015) reported high school counselors served as "brokers" to connect students to precollege and extracurricular activities. In addition, high school counselors assisted as a referral source to provide intense guidance when needed by students (Royster et al., 2015).

College-Going Culture

Culture has been defined as the belief, customs, or ways of behavior that exist in a particular society and its perception of the world (Snowman & McCowan, 2015). A college-going culture may be defined as one that nurtures students and provides resources for college success (McKillip et al., 2012a). The transition for students to move from high school to the postsecondary level has gone from proposition to principle (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2016a). The 21st century's global economy has stressed for students to pursue education beyond high school to become employable for the future (McKillip et al., 2012b).

Richardson (2012) maintained some type of postsecondary education will be essential for high school students to be eligible workforce recipients by 2025. Educators assisted students in preparation for postsecondary education by the development of a college-going culture for all students (Richardson, 2012). Prior research from Corwin and Tierney (2007) suggested the ideal college culture emanates inclusiveness and accessibility for all students. Specifically, students' school cultures strongly impacted the learning process (Richardson, 2012). The schools' cultures have influenced the "how" rather than the "what" is what is learned in regard for the students' preparation of college entrance. A study conducted by Robinson and Roksa (2016) expanded on identifying levels of a college-going culture. High school college-going cultures labeled as low, moderate, and high provided insight to the college opportunity structures and resources used to advance higher education (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Robinson and Roksa provided descriptions for each level:

- Low college-going level was defined in which the majority of students attended a 2-year college.

- Moderate college-going level was defined in which over half attended a 4-year college; additionally, middle was classified as half attending a 4-year college and one quarter or above attending a 2-year college.

- High college-going level included three quarters of students being sent to 4-year colleges.

Because of the increased rates of students aspiring to receive postsecondary education, understanding the required elements inside a college-going culture may assist educators in achieving this goal. A culture that promoted postsecondary education had someone communicate these ideas to students and parents who may need encouragement, inspiration, and resources to succeed in the transition to college (McCollough, 2011).

The composition of college-going cultures in American secondary schools has unique features that reflect various facets from their community. Earlier research identified five elements found in a college-going culture: (a) academic momentum, (b) knowledge of college planning, (c) mission statement, (d) comprehensive college services, and (e) systemic college support (Corwin and Tierney, 2007). The culture of the school has distinctive and diversified characteristics made up from the students, parents, faculty, and staff because of shared factors that make up their society. Likewise, Richardson's (2012) collective factors included these items: (a) beliefs, (b) perceptions, (c) accountability, (d) preparation, (e) support, and (f) efforts. When reviewing a school's college-going culture, a central question may be to ascertain the level of successful student participation in the college-choice process. Additionally, McKillip et al. (2012b) suggested four elements to a college-going culture relative to the high school counselor's role. These elements included: (a) structure of the high school counseling

department, (b) early college preparation for students, (c) collaboration with faculty and staff, and (d) precollege resources and activities.

A college-going culture has been found to be reflective of its community of stakeholders aspiring, searching, and transitioning to postsecondary education (Bosworth, Convertino, & Hurwitz, 2014). Comparatively, Totura (2013) affirmed three elements necessary to implement a college and career culture: (a) school leadership and staff commitment, (b) college access and readiness expectations, and (c) stakeholder support. Prior research reported that the school's vision provided elements from its environment for inclusive preparation for all students' success to postsecondary education (Richardson, 2012). High schools that promoted a college-going culture supported students' understanding in the navigation of postsecondary procedures and connections (Martinez, 2014).

The belief that a positive college-going culture may yield increased results towards college attainment by students was shown through school leadership and structure (Young, Dollarhide, & Baughman, 2015). To illustrate, The American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2016) national model stated that school counselors should have a primary role in developing aspirations in students attending college. However, school leaders' considered the opportunities and challenges for all students to become prepared for postsecondary education (Totura, 2013). School administrators cognizant of a college-going culture translated student context and life experiences towards a trajectory of postsecondary learning outcomes and goals (Richardson, 2012). School-led initiatives and programs influenced stakeholders to become invested in the college-choice process. Amatea and Clark (2005) found school counselor roles were transformed to become more of an educational leader and active social change agent to the school. Continued research suggested the high school counseling office has played the role in

developing and sustaining a college-going culture (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). Accordingly, school leadership has been postulated for directing a school-wide approach towards a college-going culture (Bosworth et al., 2014).

Hill (2012) suggested that high school counselors promoted a college-going culture that provided students with knowledge, materials, and strategies to navigate the college-planning process. Resource categories included economic, social, and cultural capital that influenced students to seek higher education (Edgerton, Roberts, & Peter, 2013). Various forms of capital included tangible resources such as books, computer software, publications, social media, billboards, and countless other marketing incentives. Robinson and Roksa (2016) reported that social and cultural capital have a distinct interplay in the development of a college-going culture because both include people. High school counselors were identified as social capital because of the resources provided to students lacking college entrance information and know-how (McKillip et al., 2012b). Students that came from families with lower educational attainment were more likely to rely on high school counselors for college resources (Bryan, Holcomb-McCoy, Moore-Thomas, & Day-Vines, 2009). Relationships between faculty, staff, and students served to reinforce expectations that college may be achieved by all students (Bosworth et al., 2014).

Many features in a college-going culture encourage college student success. Bosworth et al. (2014) stated the following elements: (a) college talk, (b) clear expectations, (c) information and resource, (d) testing and curriculum, (e) faculty involvement, and (f) parent or family involvement. The all-inclusive efforts from the high school counselor may impact the momentum to inspire students to engage in following through to completion with college-choice activities. Likewise, comprehensive school counseling programs transparent in a college-going

culture communicated a clear voice of postsecondary expectations, resources, and preparatory

experiences for all students (Bryan, Moore-Thomas, Day-Vines, & Holcomb-McCoy, 2011).

College-Choice Process

Models of college-choice continue to evolve over time because of student inequities for

college access (Welton & Martinez, 2013). The influences that impact college-choice decisions

usually come from a variety of stakeholders. Students' aspirations to attend college were guided

by school services often originating from preschool years through their senior year of high

school (McDonough, 2005). Therefore, the college-choice was influenced by a continuum of

student and school factors (Bryan et al., 2009). While individuals or family members influenced

the college-choice process, high schools cannot be overlooked in their structure and

organizational capacities that advocate for postsecondary education (Holland & Farmer-Hinton,

2009). Unfortunately, socioeconomic disparities existing with students and families resulted in

less familiarity of education norms (Edgerton et al., 2013).

Robinson and Roksa (2016) suggested that high school counselors served as facilitators

in a college-going culture, particularly helpful for students who were viewed as less advantaged.

Comprehensive school counseling programs have included expectations for parent and student

involvement, marketing strategies by postsecondary institutions, and meetings with the high

school counselor in the college-choice process (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). As stated in prior

research, high school students included family members to discuss goals and future plans

(Corwin & Tierney, 2007). However, parents' lack of understanding of the college-choice

process frequently prompted reliance on the school counselor (Savitz-Romer, 2012). High

schools may support parents in their understanding of the college-choice process by hosting

activities and events. The gateway to numerous sources of financial assistance originates with

the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for all students (U.S. Department of

Education, n.d.-a). Financial aid sessions or admission application nights provide occasions for

parent participation and engagement. Furthermore, college-going conversations allowed

students to discuss aspirations for college entry and completion (Bosworth et al., 2014).

Cholewa, Burkhardt, and Hull (2015) suggested high school counselor responsibilities to initiate

advanced equity and access for all students in planning for success in college and career

achievement.

It is beneficial for educators to examine the various models of college access programs

and examine the factors that impact students' college-choice processes. A number of models

have emerged based on the process model developed by Hossler and Gallagher. Built on Hossler

and Gallagher's (1987) model was Cabera and LaNasa's (2000) model of college-choice

(Bergerson, 2009). Their model was reflective of Hossler and Gallaher's framework, focused on

certain factors in the college process (Bergerson, 2009). Their college-choice model moved

through stages when students were seeking higher education (Cabera & LaNasa, 2000). In

addition, Pitre's (2006) research on college-choice strongly referenced Hossler and Gallagher's

three-phase process model for college-choice. Research provided by Klein and Washburn

(2012) was focused on the college-choice process relative to college recruitment practices

referencing the framework of Hossler and Gallagher's model. To this end models may provide a

view to understand complexities of the college-choice process.

Hossler and Gallagher's Model

Students encountered numerous influences affecting the decision of college-choice.

Klein and Washburn (2012) reported factors students considered to determine the *right fit* for

college enrollment. They referred to the three-phase model developed by Hossler and Gallagher,

which provided a framework for educators to understand a student's process of college-choice factors (Klein & Washburn, 2012). Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model was based on three phases of progression for students: (a) predisposition, (b) search, and (c) choice. Age ranges were identified with each phase (Bergerson, 2009). It was later recognized that the assumption to attend college takes place before adolescence begins (Hossler, Schmit, & Vesper, 1999). The three-phased model began with a student's hope to attend some form of higher education occurring in grades 7 and 9 (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). The expansive list of variables that influenced the student's college predisposition phase included family socioeconomic status, academic achievement, know-how, parent involvement, peers, teachers, and counselors (Bergerson, 2009). The critical element with Phase 1 was the involvement of family in events and activities to reinforce these aspirations (Bergerson, 2009). Students were encouraged to develop an academic plan of study to accommodate future entrance admission to a college or university. Parents may receive counseling from the high school administration to the process aligning with potential college-choice. The predisposition phase was a time of informed guidance for college expectations and realities (Hossler et al., 1999).

Phase 2 centered on students searching and sorting postsecondary resources, occurring in grades 10 and 12 (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Students in Phase 2 were navigating institutional characteristics. To aid in this process students and families were engaged in college visits and family information sessions. Students gathered college information in search of a particular postsecondary institution that a mentor or family member had attended. High school counselors performed college-going activities dependent on additional stakeholders such as community agencies and postsecondary institutions (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014).

The third phase focused on the right fit or the choice of where to attend, occurring in grades 11 and 12 (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Educational and occupational choices influence the directions students rely on when choosing a college to attend. Phase 3 identified family involvement as a strong influence and was critical in the decision-making process. The decisions students made in grade 12 became less abstract and more focused (Hossler et al., 1999). Financial aid availability was a determinant for some students when choosing a college with special emphasis on tuition costs during the student's senior year (Hossler et al., 1999).

Bourdieu's Social Reproduction Theory

Pierre Bourdieu's cultural and social reproduction theory provided a framework for educators to understand educational inequalities (Edgerton et al., 2013). Bourdieu (1997) viewed three forms of capital interconnected affecting opportunities for future education, occupational success, and broadening one's social network. The three forms were economic, social, and cultural capital (Edgerton et al., 2013). Edgerton, Roberts, and Tracey (2013) reported three additional concepts essential to Bourdieu's cultural and social reproduction theory: (a) habitus, (b) capital, and (c) field. Bourdieu's (1986) theory focused on understanding socioeconomic class disparities for students' engagement levels with education (Edgerton et al., 2013). Similarly, Cilesiz and Drotos (2016) reported Bourdieu's theory relative to the college-choice process and placed the school as the social structure that either limits or advances potential educational opportunities based on one's sociocultural background. Their study explored students who were situated in poverty-related issues aspiring and planning for postsecondary enrollment (Cilesiz & Drotos, 2016).

Bourdiu's framework indicated social capital was entrenched in the social reproduction theory. Hill (2012) suggested Bourdiu's perspective focused on investigating the characteristics

of social networks that students relied on for information to college. Engberg and Gilbert (2014) found the high school counseling and the college opportunity structure integral to Bourdieu's three concepts.

     First, the habitus stage explored students' attitudes and aspirations to be shaped by their social class status (McDonough & Calderone, 2006). The high school was identified as the setting that students would use to explore college options. Prior studies reported an increase of college enrollment when students met with their high school counselors on multiple occasions (McDonough & Calderone, 2006). The habitus stage provided an internalized set of beliefs acquired from the school environment to be used by the student to navigate the college-choice (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014).

     Second, the capital stage allowed the student to rely on the amount of resources or capital gained from the habitus. Students had access to resources, networks, and relationships that affected the accumulation of educational information. This was referred to as the collective consciousness of the school environment (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). School counselors worked along with postsecondary institutions to develop potential relationships for students (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014).

     Third, value was placed on the field environment stage – a category distinct with its own rules (Bourdieu, 1986). The context of the field relates to higher education decisions made by the student and family. Bergerson (2009) recognized Bourdieu's theory which surmised that students' college-choices were determined by the interaction from the habitus and available capital. Students made socially forced choices while at school to maintain the existing social order (Bergerson, 2009).

College Access

Bosworth et al. (2014) suggested that students from all backgrounds aspire to attend college. The increase of inequalities within public high schools' college resources and tools may limit students' ability to make well-informed choices. However, high school counselors that understood the college application process played a role in assisting students in the follow-through in applying to college (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Several bodies of literature focused on the practices in which students engaged in for college access. For example, Welton and Martinez (2013) suggested three steps to college access: (a) student aspirations, (b) academic preparation, and (c) completing college entrance exams and the college application. Likewise, Hill (2012) identified four resource dimensions promoting steps to college: (a) encouraging students visiting colleges, (b) assisting with college applications, (c) facilitating financial aid resources, and (d) promoting relationships between high schools and postsecondary institutions. Specific resources have been discovered that propel students to seek higher education. For example, new directives from the Tennessee Department of Education, required all graduating students to take the ACT or the SAT - beginning with the class of 2017 (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017). In fact, a new era was developed when the state of Tennessee agreed to finance the first two years of college for all high school students graduating-starting with the class of 2015 (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2016). Financial aid resources have been established to provide college access. Students were offered the opportunity to attend college tuition free. The tuition cost was absorbed by the state of Tennessee under the first time only, Tennessee Promise (Tennessee Promise, 2016). Overall, multiple elements that exist in a college-going culture expand student's access to higher education.

Social Capital

Social capital was described as the structures of social organizations such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and alliance for the good of society (O'Connor, Hammack, & Scott, 2010). Specifically, social capital concentrated on three forms: (a) information, (b) norms, and (c) support. The school context played a pivotal role in reinforcing students' aspirations to attend college (Pham & Keenan, 2011).

First, students investigated the college-choice process through networks. Social networks such as Facebook or Twitter gave students connections and new opportunities for identification. High school counselors were identified as formal ties that provided valuable knowledge and support (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Social capital affected students' understanding of college-choice resources by providing a social tie or network (Welton & Martinez, 2013). Bryan et al. (2011) concluded that parents' involvement in high schools contributed to students transitioning to college–serving as another network. Informal networks were identified as the parents or family members (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Family members were viewed to contribute various levels of college information to students from personal experiences (Cholewa et al., 2015).

Second, norms referred to the standard in one's culture or situation (Bryan et al., 2011). To illustrate, students may have a loyalty to a particular college or university because the family has a history of attendance. Students are described as a legacy when the family has a long tradition of completing a degree with the selected postsecondary institution. Under these circumstances, students' progression through the college-choice process was influenced by a certain situations (Bergerson, 2009). Students may choose to act in customs found familiar in their culture yet inconsistent within a selected model of the college-choice process.

Third, students' support for navigating the college-choice process relies on various stakeholders. Hill (2012) recognized that high school counselors' work involved directing and providing activities to help students make transitions to college. Collaboration efforts included placing responsibility on universities to reach out to prospective students to supply information (Dolinsky, 2010). The support of information was found through information hotlines and established websites (Dolinsky, 2010). In addition, students may depend on parents for direction and guidance when narrowing college-choice decisions. Peers and mentors provided support by sharing information about personal college experiences when identifying factors to consider for students' needs (Cholewa et al., 2015).

Students and parents may need encouragement and motivation in the development of a college-going culture (McCollough, 2011). Through precollege events and activities, high schools can demystify misconceptions associated with college access (McCollough, 2011). Trust was a core concept in relationships between parents and children (Snowman & McCowan, 2015). Specifically, Erik Erikson's psychosocial theory demonstrated how trust was a critical milestone for an individual (Sederer, 1998). The first stage of Erikson's theory invoked a trust versus mistrust crisis. The achieved sense of trust gives the student a foundation of hope to build upon for future conflicts. When future conflicts do arise, the student will trust on hope in the situation and find bases of support (Snowman & McCowan, 2015).

Social institutions such as schools were framed as primary sources of social capital (Bryan et al., 2011). Students' school experiences ranged from kindergarten through high school and were perceived as familiar places. Students relied on social networks from school to build relationships with friends. Students' relationships with teachers and school counselors possibly provided a venue for support and direction. Poorly developed relationships evoked negative

consequences for students (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). For example, if students viewed school

counselors solely as test administrators they may have been less connected to the school

counseling office as a source for college information. Social support was recognized as an

underpinning in student-to-counselor relationships to the college-choice process (Holland &

Farmer-Hinton, 2009).

<div align="center">School Counselor Roles</div>

The role of high school counselors has changed drastically in the last 60 years. During

the 1950s preparatory school headmasters began to rely on counselors to assist in student

submissions of admission applications to elite postsecondary institutions (McDonough, 2005).

High school counselors were labeled as "gatekeepers" assisting only the privileged to enter

college (Bryan et al., 2011). Relationships that existed between the principal and school

counselor were recognized as important, possibly impacting the school's counseling program

(Young et al., 2015). School principals' beliefs in school counselor responsibilities regarding the

college-choice process differed to some degree that resulted in their assigning unrelated job

duties to the high school counselor.

Several studies have focused on understanding the high school counselor's role in

developing a college-going culture (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). For example, prior research from

McDonough (2005) established the high school counselors' job to include the following

responsibilities: (a) providing information for students' aspirations to go to college, (b) offering

guidance on academic preparation and plans towards a career, and (c) advising students on

college-choices and navigation of future careers. More recent studies have comparable results.

Fischer's (2016) research suggested high schools should discover methods to help students

identify directions to and through college. Robinson and Roksa (2016) identified the high school

counselors as institutional agents who facilitate social and cultural capital to students and families in the acquisition of college access. In fact, their study found that high school counselors were a significant factor in furthering college applications and providing college information (Robinson & Roksa, 2016).

The review of literature that was focused on the high school counselor's role has been conflicting (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). Over the decades an increase of job responsibilities were added to high school counselors and at the same time, none of the existing ones were removed (McDonough, 2005). In addition, high school counselors were given administrative duties involving testing, scheduling, and reregistering for class schedules (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The addition of responsibilities over the decades has created some form of confusion through the lens of the high school counselor's role in the development of a college-going culture (McKillip et al., 2011b). Furthermore, multiple duties outside of the high school counselor roles have presented obstacles, leaving little time for future postsecondary advising (Belasco, 2013).

Stephan and Rosenbaum (2013) reported that assumptions were often made that college advising was a major part of a high school counselor's role. Prior literature has contradicted this assumption and recognized personal or crisis counseling as a role placed on the high school counselor (Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013). High school counselors have been assigned emotion-based counseling and other duties on a full-time basis leaving decreased time for academic college advising for higher education (Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013). Earlier research described responsibilities centered on therapeutic counseling and psychological development issues were added to high school counselors' roles (McDonough, 2005). Engberg and Gilbert (2014) suggested an emphasis for high school counselors in college related topics and training rather

than mental health training would serve students and parents towards postsecondary education. In addition, the high school counselor's role has been complicated with various service-orientated tasks and administrative duties (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). Comparatively, earlier research indicated similar findings with the numerous jobs assigned to high school counselors that did not satisfy all of the stringent demands made by parents, students, and school personnel (McDonough, 2005). Hill (2012) recognized the need to reconfigure the idea of the high school counselor as all things to all people.

The time, energy, and resources required to prepare students for college readiness from a cognitive and social-emotional domain are extensive. Prior research suggested one-on-one meetings between students and counselors sustained college readiness support (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009). An overabundance of caseloads may lessen the opportunities for school counselors to work with all grade levels from high schools. Cholewa et al. (2015) suggested that some schools with high student-to-counselors ratios left some students with little access to college counseling. To this end these same students may have been prevented from receiving college-choice information and early discussion for future direction. The high volume of student caseloads was arduous for high school counselors when attempting to deliver a multifaceted array of services (Bryan et al., 2011). High school counselors, due to lack of time, often were unsuccessful in the delivery of education and resources related to college counseling (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). In urban or low-socioeconomic status high schools students-to-counselor ratios were found to be 318:1 (Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013). Furthermore, counseling roles often integrated with non-counseling duties such as cafeteria duty or parking lot duty. ASCA (2016) recommended the students-to-counselor ratio of 250:1 for an ideal situation regarding high

school counseling. Belasco (2013) suggested limited research has been devoted to examine the relationship between students to counselors in regard to higher education.

Traditionally, the roles of school counselors had included academic planning and implementation of college and career programs to promote the college-choice process (Bosworth et al., 2014). Former President Obama's charge was that every American should achieve at least one year of college or vocational training by the year 2020 (Cholewa et al., 2015). High school counselors serve as a lynchpin in this movement for college entrance. Therefore, the navigation of resources and tools was strategically implemented when attempting to assist all students to reach the President's charge. Postsecondary opportunities were expanded for more students. Robinson and Roksa (2016) reported that students consulted with a variety of resources for college information. Improved college access was made available to students, specifically through community colleges (Gentry, 2013). In another study from Engberg and Gilbert (2014), the amount of time spent for college advising and average caseloads of the high school was significantly related to a college-going culture.

High school counselors were viewed as influential professionals improving college-choice opportunities and encouraging college aspirations for students (Belasco, 2013). In addition to high school counselors, policymakers implemented programs and initiatives to move students through the pipeline of the college-choice process. To illustrate, Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) was supported by a federally funded grant aimed to create college-going activities and support students in developing a strong college-going environment (Radcliffe & Bos, 2011). Some schools may have difficulty in establishing a strong and robust college-going culture without programs or initiatives provided by the government. A review of the impact high school counselors had in instituting a college-

going culture guided new approaches taken to impact students in the college-choice process (Belasco, 2013). Exploration of factors related to a college-going culture may assist educators with new implementation strategies. Because psychological and sociological theories are rooted in the students' aspirations to attend college, the navigation of resources, and the college-choice, it was important to understand the impact each played in college-choice models (Bergerson, 2009).

College Readiness Counseling

Royster et al. (2015) concluded that students graduating from high school still lacked being prepared for college. The term college-ready personified a student possessing knowledge, skills, and behavior that would lead to a successful first year of college (College Board, 2011). Readiness, when emphasized in the context of a college-going culture, suggested a myriad of indicators to address whether students were prepared for successful matriculation to postsecondary education. A review of these indicators influencing the college-choice process included these measurement qualifications: (a) grade point average, (b) test scores, and (c) required coursework (Roderick et al., 2009). Grade point averages described the student's cumulative measurement of points in comparison to peers in the same grade level. Test scores provided a summary of the aptitude of a student and the capacity for future success while in college. Similar research suggested students' content knowledge from high school coursework provided a foundation necessary for college-level courses (Welton & Martinez, 2013). Educators, when using the phrase "college readiness," were referring to the future outlook to ascertain whether the student would need remedial work for the general education courses when enrolled in postsecondary education (Totura, 2013).

Over the last 10 years research and policy has been focused on students' transitions from high school to college enrollment (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). Policy development influenced the structures that high schools adopted for academic preparation in college readiness; however, a growing recognition was concerned with the noncognitive factors (Nagaoka et al., 2013). Attention to understanding students' noncognitive factors included a focus on actions, skills, perceptions, and strategies for students to move and persist in postsecondary education. Students' social attributes influenced college degree attainment (Pike, Hansen, & Childress, 2014). As a result, it was necessary for high school counselors to be cognizant of the social challenges students encountered when entering college. High school counselors' knowledge from the interdisciplinary fields of psychology and sociology provided insight when counseling students regarding college and career planning experiences (Savitz-Romer, 2012). The discovery of theoretical bases aligned to college readiness counseling may advance new directions to broaden the array of services for students' aspirations to attend a college or university (Savitz-Romer, 2012).

Understanding the role of parents in a student's college-choice processes was critical because of the central part they often play (Savitz-Romer, 2012). College readiness counseling for parents may provide information to be used to help their children in the procedural steps of college preparation. The education level of parents impacted a student's success, especially in a negative way, if the student was a first generation to attend college (Pike et al., 2014). College-readiness counseling works to identify strategies to involve parents' participation, communication, and collaboration. For example, the parent participation in college admissions meetings serves to educate students and their families in requirements for enrollment. Mutually reinforcing behaviors through school and parents sends a message to students of college-going

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expectations and to continue a pathway to postsecondary education. Robinson and Roksa's

(2016) research found that students benefitted from early and consistent high school counseling

to promote college-going aspirations and future planning.

<p style="text-align:center;">*Social Sciences' Contributions to a College-Going Culture*</p>

Psychology is the study of understanding the behavior of people (Boyd & Bee, 2015). To

that end, specific focus regarded the cognitive, noncognitive, and emotional processes to shed

light to a deeper level of individual behavior (Savitz-Romer, 2012). The breakdown of subfields

such as developmental, occupational, or social psychology supported frameworks to describe

behaviors and connections that were applicable to the concept of the college-choice process.

High school counselors receive training in psychological practices to support students in multiple

cognitive and social issues. Savitz-Romer (2012) stated that counseling takes place between the

student and high school counselor for the dissemination of college-choice information. To

illustrate, students' aspirations, planning, and guided choices may focus on certain careers

directed by specific occupations. When students considered a career goal, postsecondary choices

were included in the decision-making process for that occupation (Savitz-Romer, 2012).

Adolescent developmental theory may be strongly linked to college readiness counseling

through a variety of tenets. The identity of self is a key focus for students while in high school.

Students attempting to navigate through the college-choice process are at the same time dealing

with discovery of self, abilities, and competencies (Snowman & McCowan, 2015). During this

time students possibly recognize that their future entrance into adult society is quickly

approaching. Erikson's theory on psychosocial developmental psychology underpinned

numerous implications during adolescent development (Sederer, 1998). Erikson formulated a

total of eight crises that individuals will move through for their entire lifespan. One of these

<p style="text-align:center;">41</p>

concerned an adjustment to be made in complying with society's guidelines and expectations, but to which the individual is not fully compelled to comply (Snowman & McCowan, 2015). While there was no guarantee for resolution from each crisis, the knowledge of each stage explored individual development for a given time. The crisis of identity versus role confusion, the fifth stage, was a time of exploration of the future roles on which one would embark for future careers (Snowman & McCowan, 2015). The methods by which students make meaning from life experiences or from mentorships during this stage may shape the choices for the future. Therefore, college readiness counseling impacts understanding the identity formation process. College readiness counseling integrates factors associated with students' identity achievement or role confusion with aspects of the college-choice process to give meaning to future postsecondary education. Adolescence has been considered a time to explore future careers relative to one's identity or future roles (Snowman & McCowan, 2015). To illustrate, high school counselors provided career inventories to students for exploration of future college and career aspirations (Barnett, 2016). Students' college-going decisions appeared to be shaped through the stage of adolescent development (Savitz-Romer, 2012).

High schools across the country are made up of various socioeconomic levels, which bring about significant disparities for students. Specifically, low-income and minority students face challenges in understanding how to navigate the college-choice information for entrance to postsecondary institutions. As suggested by Stebleton and Soria (2012), some students lacked the ability to merge the high school and college culture into one and felt isolated in the college-choice process. High school counselors' approaches in working with students to demystify the union of both cultures may provide interventions for resolution to these disparities. Students' perceptions of self-identity may impact college-choice decisions. Welton and Martinez (2013)

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stated that students possessing a college-going identity relate school experiences relevant to their future.

Social psychology is a discipline focused on blending individual and group behaviors with the context of a society (Boyd & Bee, 2015). The recognition of the culture's expectations provides a lens through which to view the engagement of actions and performances. High school students are less likely to make college-choice decisions alone; instead, their choices include various members of society relevant to college readiness counseling. Influences for a student's college-choice may be shaped by the relationships and expectancies from the social environment. When high school counselors recognized a student's habitus as a guiding force, attention to strategies conducive to transmitting resources for college-choice was increased (Savitz-Romer, 2012). To this end high school counselors' roles encouraged rigorous academics and the extracurricular support services preparing students as college ready for postsecondary education (Royster et al., 2015).

Technology's Impact

The availability of access to the college-choice process continues to expand in several ways. Until the 1990s the dissemination of college-choice information was viewed as manually furnishing literature to students (McDonough, 2005). Current research reported high school counselors delivered an assortment of material and resources to students and parents through the Internet (Kennedy & Baker, 2014). The novelty of computer applications, games, simulations, and school Web sites addressed key elements necessary for college preparation, access, and success (Corwin, Frome, & Groarch, 2014). Resources focusing on financial aid for students' tuition requirements can be found in estimated cost calculators or college loan calculators on many college or university Web sites.

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Technology is viewed as one possible method in closing the gap of access to college-choice information. High school counselors using the school Web site as a communication tool saw this approach as an effective means to reach diverse populations, share resources, and update critical information relevant to college-choice, thereby reaching a broader range of students (Kennedy & Baker, 2014). School Web sites were responsive to diverse needs of students, which may be viewed as demonstrating symbolic leadership and representing their environment as culturally responsive and inclusive (Kennedy & Baker, 2014). In addition, ASCA (2012) surmised that school counseling Web sites' display of service to diverse populations achieves the goal of serving all students.

The technological landscape included a multitude of games or tools for college-choice (Corwin et al., 2014). However, not all may have provided successful navigation in students' understanding of facts to enter college. While games are innovative tools that entertain and educate the student through the college-choice process, not all may make it successful. Students experiencing a balance between entertainment and education may find enrichment and engagement as a resource for college guidance while others may not. Games provided safe places for students to make errors in judgment and experience negative consequences (Corwin et al., 2014). For example, students playing a game centered on financial aid may miss the deadline to receive a loan because of noncompliance with completed paperwork. The loss is an experience but not a reality. Therefore, the next time the student is faced with completing paperwork when dealing with financial aid, exposure to prior games may help the student to remember its importance. Students engaged in personal inquiry sought additional information that was relevant to their situation (Scanlon et al., 2011). Personal inquiry encouraged students

to ask questions, plan, and carry out activities in order to find answers for questions and outcomes.

College and career exploration programs encourage students to seek understanding of self through learning style assessments. For example, the Kuder Career Assessment is a Web-based portal provided to all Tennessee students in the college-choice process (Kuder, 2017). After creating their own accounts, students may navigate through the system during school hours or on their own, to explore new college definitions, engage in virtual college tours, locate scholarships pertinent to college affordability, and access a suite of other features necessary for optimal knowledge (Kuder, 2017). Students connected to the Internet in such a way advanced the college search; otherwise, students have been limited to relying on one-on-one with teachers or counselors (Swank, Beimfohr, & Christy, 2012).

College services available for students are abundant as long as the student is engaged with what is available. To counter the lack of awareness by students, technology has stepped in to connect the student and high school counselor. Technology's latest approaches to encourage students to persist in the college related activities were found through a smart phone and texting (Zinth, 2014). The strategy to nurture students can be provided by texting students to complete college admissions applications or financial aid forms required for college entrance. Rather than depending upon one-on-one interaction, high school counselors made college-choice information available by systematically sending e-mails or texts to students (Zinth, 2014).

Although today's students may have been raised in a digital world, not all may have expertise with exploratory and search skills through technology. New approaches for students to develop the capacity to perform technology skills of gathering, analyzing, and problem solving for information were productive to the future workforce (Cordes, 2012). Recognizing this

demand, high school counselors leveraged the college-choice process through technology. Providing technological resources dedicated to the college-choice process assisted students in moving beyond basic abilities to successful navigation of performance actions and decisions for the future careers (Cordes, 2012).

Summary

Creating and sustaining a college-going culture involves various stakeholders in a technology-driven world. Previous models of the college-choice process reveal areas educators can refine to craft resources and tools necessary in establishing a college-going culture. Furthermore, national or state policies may validate high school counselors' efforts in establishing strategies for postsecondary preparation for all students. These strategies may be focused on communication, resources, and cognitive achievements. While students' development is centered on cognitive achievements, future educators may expand on literature that addresses the noncognitive factors relative to the college-choice.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD

Introduction

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of high school counselors' roles in the development of a college-going culture at high schools in Tennessee. The purpose was to understand opinions of high school counselors as they described duties that promoted a culture aimed at college enrollment by all students in Tennessee public high schools. Specifically, this study was focused on analyzing the meaning from high school counselors' engagement with school policy, mission, and resources distinct to developing a college-going culture. Yin (2014) stated that case studies allow researchers to explore an event while maintaining its holistic and real-world viewpoints. In order to shed light on the roles of high school counselors, this case study employed a theoretical framework based upon the literature related to the three-stage model from Hossler and Gallagher (1987). Hossler and Gallagher's model provided a general sense of the college-choice, stages, and occurrence of stages (Pitre, 2006).

Guiding students through the college-choice process may be viewed as a fundamental feature in the development of a college-going culture. For example, the Tennessee Promise scholarship increased college-choice opportunities for students to attend college (Tennessee Promise, 2016). Acknowledged by Hill (2012), high school counselors worked to prepare and support students in the process that leads to college enrollment.

Research Design

High school counselors may be assigned a multitude of personal, emotion based counseling and other duties leaving decreased time for academic college advising for postsecondary institutions (Stephan & Rosenbaum, 2013). The cross-intersection of duties

disrupts the expectancies placed on high school counselors in developing a college-going culture for their students. This case study was designed to understand the perceptions of high school counselors in their role for developing a college-going culture. Case studies are bound by time and place, are preferred when examining current events, and include direct observations and interviews (Yin, 2014). Qualitative case studies investigate bounded systems and provide in-depth examinations specific to that system (McCaslin & Scott, 2003). The case study methodology used for this research allowed a focus on contemporary happenings (Yin, 2014).

Research Questions

Yin (2014) reported that the most important step in a research study may be the process of defining the research questions. The fundamental research question for this case study was to explore perceptions of high school counselors' roles in the development of a college-going culture. The following research questions were crafted to probe the elements of preparation, activity, and influence of a college-going culture.

1. How does the high school counselor's role impact the development of a college-going culture?

2. How do the resources provided by high school counselors foster a college-going culture?

3. How are a high school counselor's relationships integral factors in the development of a college-going culture?

The Qualitative Approach

Creswell (2013) proposed that "Qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring in the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 44). Qualitative

research attempts to gather comprehensive information with the goal of developing a deeper level of knowledge from the lives of the participants (Lewandowski, Ciarocco, & Strohmetz, 2016). The importance of understanding the experiences that make up the duties of high school counselors influenced the choice to use the approach of a qualitative study.

McMillan and Schumaker (2010) identified an emergent design that allowed for the research questions to have flexibility, be loosely structured, and change as the study evolved. The opportunity to empower participants to share experiences and to make meaning from the perceptions yielded a holistic account of the issue for this case study (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, this study allowed the participants to paraphrase the interview questions, when necessary, to uncover new insight or perceptions from their roles as a high school counselor.

Case Studies

It is important to note that case studies with a qualitative approach have the purpose to discover meaning from the problems (Creswell, 2013). With this purpose the underlying premise of this study was to understand the perceptions of high school counselors' roles in developing a college-going culture. Furthermore, this study was focused on retaining a holistic and real-world perspective experienced through the roles of high school counselors (Yin, 2014).

Because this study revolved around current events, an instrumental case study was selected to draw attention to the participants' roles in developing a college-going culture in high schools (McMillan & Schumaker, 2010). The features of rich narrative descriptions from the high school counselors' experiences provided information from current practices. Case studies present findings with the ability to generalize to a larger sample (Lewandowski et al., 2016).

Interpretivist Framework

Qualitative researchers may hold philosophical beliefs about who is knowledgeable (Hesse-Biber, 2017). The interpretivist framework guided this research process. Researchers may attempt to extract social meaning from the experiences of the participants that guided the research process. Social constructivism was the approach existing from the interpretivist framework (Creswell, 2013). Based on the social constructivism perspective, the participants and I were united as cocreators in the knowledge-building process (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Value was placed on the participant because of the awareness and outlook serving as sources of knowledge for the study (Creswell, 2013).

The interpretivist framework was referred to as qualitative research because I was attempting to interpret the subtext from the participants' experiences and perspectives. I was the key instrument and relied on the participants' complex views of the situation (Creswell, 2013). For this case study it was important to realize that the participants' perceptions provided a lens through which to view high school counselors' roles in the development of a college-going culture. This qualitative research began with the philosophical assumptions, moved to how meaning was interpreted, and then to the procedures for understanding the problem (Creswell, 2013).

The Researcher's Role

The prior experiences, knowledge, and understanding I had as a high school counselor allowed for authenticity with the participants. As the researcher I focused on the problem because of my personal background and what there was to gain from the case study (Hesse-Biber, 2017). Before interviewing the participants I identified my previous experiences as a high school counselor in relationship to the concept of this case study. Furthermore, identifying

personal experiences with this case study allowed for transparency and to separate my experiences from the participants. Bracketing took place for the voice of the participants to be heard (Creswell, 2013). Through the process of bracketing any underlying biases of the high school counselors' roles were put aside to focus on the perceptions from the participants. I assured the high school counselors that I was not judging any prior successes or failures in the development of a college-going culture. Furthermore, I explained that my experiences took place in counties different from where the participants worked. I asked for volunteers to participate in the study of their own free will. To assure the study was unbiased, replicated semistructured questions were asked of each participant. The replicated questions ensured that I was consistent with the items worded and the inclusion of topics for the interviews.

Ethical Considerations

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) from East Tennessee State University (ETSU, 2016) established a protocol framework followed for this case study. After the IRB granted approval for the research, I followed the required protocol. Creswell (2013) identified a list of steps to assure that issues with qualitative research follow ethical requirements. The informed consent form approved by the IRB followed ethical guidelines (contained in Appendix A). Informed consent assured the participants that this case study could stop at any time, would remain anonymous, and provided confidentiality protection (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In addition, initial contact was made with the appropriate school district administrators to conduct the research with the respective high school counselors. This contact was communicated in the form of a letter sent through e-mail (contained in Appendix B). After approval was granted from the administrators, then another letter was sent through e-mail to the potential participants that explained the case study and asked for volunteer participation (contained in Appendix C).

The participants were identified by pseudonyms. Participants acknowledged

commitment to the study through an Informed Consent Document that provided the purpose,

methodology, and recording instruments used in this case study. In addition, this qualitative

study did not bring about any physical, cognitive, or social-emotional harm to the participants.

The formation of relationships with the participants allowed for trust and acceptance, thus

lessening the possibility for humiliation or intimidation.

Setting

The interviews with 11 high school counselors took place in the natural settings where

they worked, which provided a familiar location. Noted by Creswell (2013), the site selected

should be one that does not conform to any vested interest by the outcomes of the study. Each

high school counselor did have one area designated as his or her office space, which was usually

referred to as the high school counseling office. Because this was a natural environment where

the high school counselor performed activities or advised concerning the college-choice process,

it was used to collect data through interviews. Creswell (2013) recognized that researchers

should use caution in conducting on-site research because of possible disruptions from activities.

There was no guarantee that the participant would behave naturally for the on-site interview

(McMillan & Schumaker, 2010). Cognizant of this possibility, I offered to schedule the

interview at another place or time to gain maximum value from the information-rich participants;

however, each participant chose to meet in his or her office.

Participants

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of high school counselors' roles

in developing a college-going culture at their high schools. Therefore, it was incumbent to

identify high school counselors who were familiar and experienced in this field with a minimum

of three years in a high school setting. Eleven licensed high school counselors from the state of Tennessee were interviewed. The term *licensed* implied graduating with a school counseling degree from an accredited postsecondary institution and passing the Tennessee licensure exam for school counseling certification (Tennessee Department of Education, 2016). The high school counselors' engagement of precollege activities, collective levels of expertise, education, and experiences brought a thorough description to this case study and for this reason were chosen (Creswell, 2013).

<center>*Sampling Method*</center>

Yin (2014) cautiously warned that referring to words such as *purposeful sample* may bring conceptual problems to certain theoretical propositions. For this reason I avoided using the words purposeful sample, instead specifically choosing the design strategy for maximum variation sampling. Maximum variation sampling was used to obtain the various perceptions from the participants who offered information-rich experiences (McMillan & Schumaker, 2010). In addition, maximum variation sampling subdivided the criteria setting, separating the participants that allowed for best selection of the sample (Creswell, 2013). The use of maximum variation sampling posited the selection of public Tennessee licensed counselors with three or more years of experience as prime candidates to determine perceived behaviors, obligations, and norms conceptualized by high school counselors. Maximum variation sampling was reflected from the 11 participants through their distinctive and individualized expectations exhibited through their roles relative to a college-going culture. Four of the 11 participants had received their master's degrees in school counseling programs outside of the state of Tennessee. Also, six of the 11 participants had worked in high schools from other schools. The participants' experiences from these additional high schools allowed for expanded insight to the development

<center>53</center>

of a college-going culture. This allowed a wide-spread outlook of practices and policies witnessed through other states' high schools. E-mail letters were created to be sent to high school counselors at county school districts describing the study. The e-mail letters contained bulleted points that outlined the qualifications for participation: (a) possession of a valid Tennessee school counselor license, (b) completion of a minimum of 3 years' experience in the high school setting as a counselor, and (c) experience counseling with students ranging from Grades 9 through 12. In addition, male and female high school counselors, regardless of ethnicity and age, were included as potential participants for this case study. The types of rural, suburban, and magnet high schools were selected for recruitment of participants for this case study. The characteristics from each high school allowed comparisons to the approach taken to guide the development of a college-going culture. Henceforth, the selection of these types of high schools represented participants who would be instrumental in developing a college-going culture.

The process to initiate contact with the high school counselors was guided by the individual county school district's policies. Descriptive letters explaining this study were e-mailed to four county school district central offices asking permission to conduct interviews with the high school counselors. Three of the four county school districts gave permission for the study based upon consent from the principal of the high school. Descriptive letters explaining the study were then e-mailed to the high school principals and permission was granted to contact the high school counselors. Initial contact with the high school counselors was made through an e-mail describing the research study and asking for volunteers. Eleven high school counselors agreed to participate in the interviews that ranged from 60-90 minutes and were conducted using the interview protocol (contained in Appendix D). The interviews were recorded with a digital

recorder and transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was then e-mailed as a Word document

attachment to the participant as a member checking process to ensure validity and

trustworthiness. Participants were instructed to initiate contact or email with concerns if any

information was incorrect. No participants wrote back with identified errors or

misrepresentations in the transcription data.

Interviews

The research data were collected through in-depth interviews. I collected field notes as

participants answered the interview questions to assist with clarity if needed. A pilot test

interview was established before the actual interviews took place with the participants. This was

established to explore the planned procedures to administer the interviews. The pilot test

interview allowed a less structured approach in the context of data collection. The pilot test

interview provided an opportunity to develop questions relevant to the case study. From the

pilot test interview, I learned to pause between interview questions to allow for reflection and

insight from the participant. The pilot test provided a review of the interview questions that were

checked for clarity and understanding. McMillan and Schumaker (2010) suggested the pilot test

supported the researcher with procedures imitated during the interview of the study.

The features of rich narrative descriptions from the high school counselors' experiences

provided information from current practices and allowed for authenticity with the participants.

The interview method had specific objectives to reach the goals pertaining to this case study.

Yin (2014) reported the protocol may be played out as a laboratory for understanding interview

questions, observations to rely on, and new strategies to use for the real case study. In-depth

interviews, scheduled 60 to 70 minutes for each participant, allowed for a full exploration and

freedom of perceptions from the interviewee (Creswell, 2013). I created a relationship with each

participant to develop trust and authenticity to connect and bring assurance of integrity. To accomplish this task, I followed steps from interviewing skills associated with counselor training such as maintaining eye contact, a consistent voice tone, and an attitude of genuineness and legitimacy. Before asking the interview questions, I explained the purpose of the study and asked whether the participant had any concerns (McMillan & Schumaker, 2010). The interview questions explored perceptions, experiences, opinions, knowledge, and understanding related to the research questions. Therefore, the questions were transparent to each of the qualities listed above to encourage about maximum voice from the participants.

Data Collection

Interviews were conducted in the participants' high school counseling office or at a location of their choice. Interview questions were prepared and replicated with each participant in order to collect the data. The beginning of the interview session was spent gathering demographic information. McMillan and Schumaker (2010) suggested rapport can be established between the researcher and participant by the gathering of facts and focused attention at the start of the interview. Following the standardized, open-ended interview method, the questions probed the roles elucidated in a college-going culture. The face-to-face interviews were used to collect data, for note taking, and observations of nonverbal responses gleaned during the interview. The recorded digital audio of the interviewees took place to confirm verbatim data collection. The audio records and field notes were retained in a lock box for privacy through the entire scope of this case study.

McMillan and Schumaker (2010) provided a comprehensive list of do's and don'ts while interviewing for the collection of data. Subsequently, the necessity to conduct additional interviews of the participants was considered if further perceptions were needed to yield insight.

I was the key instrument of collection and interpretation of the data for this case study. The characteristics of this case study brought about interaction with participants as conversational and emphasized a personal tone (McMillan & Schumaker, 2010). Interactions such as these allowed for the collection of perceptions and elicited additional responses that moved deeper into the analysis. Hunt (2011) suggested that researchers should be aware of the point of data saturation to avoid the unnecessary interviewing additional participants.

Data Analysis

I used a systematic or structured approach in the process of data analysis that provided for a transparent summary (Hunt, 2011). Before each interview participants were assigned identification numbers that kept their various data sources together (Padgett, 2017). The task of keeping well-organized data records from each participant was important to eliminate confusion yet maintain conciseness. A list of the most significant statements was developed to eliminate repetitiveness. The process of refining the statements allowed detection of uniqueness and clarity the participants were thinking regarding the topic. The statements reflected the meanings from the participants. Each participant's statement was recognized for value and worth.

Coding was used during this process to identify the data and sort them into meaningful segments. Coding allowed for labels to be established and emerge from various sources (Creswell, 2013). The coding was broadened to highlight central themes or a clustering of themes from the data. Descriptions focused on the why and the how from the interviewed participants (Yin, 2014). A full set of the rich descriptions relating to the intent of this research was provided. The textural descriptions described what the participants experienced and was stated verbatim. The structural descriptions defined the setting and context from the experience. In addition, components from artifacts used in the development of a college-going culture or

other nuances discovered through the interviews to answer the research questions brought new interview questions for this case study.

The information gathered through the recorded digital audio interviews was analyzed interpretively and inductively (McMillan & Schumaker, 2010). The recordings were transcribed to notes for identification of common themes. Overall, the analysis provided meaning, a collage of themes, and descriptions compiled from the data. It was understood that the data analysis was a dynamic process as the themes emerge (Creswell, 2013).

Trustworthiness Strategies

The strategies that identify trustworthiness from a qualitative study were referred to as credibility, validity, and rigor (Hunt, 2011). Validity was intended to bring congruence and acceptance between this qualitative case study and the perceptions of the participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Based on the process of evaluating a social constructivist approach, the following strategies were employed that brought about credibility: member checking, triangulation, thick description, low-inference, and reflexivity.

Credibility

Member checking. A strategy intended to bring about verification through the rephrasing of topics and that allowed for deeper probing of meanings. Member checks were in place for verification of the accuracy of the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Triangulation. A method used to check validity from the multiple perspectives of high school counselors' perspectives in their roles of developing a college-going culture. Through the interviews and observations, various opportunities existed to corroborate the data and reduce possibilities of research bias (Amatea & Clark, 2005).

Thick descriptions. A detailed account of the behaviors I observed from the participant during or immediately following the interview. This step sought to uncover any misinterpreted information from the data by the participants. The participants were asked to review the data obtained from the interview to modify information and check for accuracy (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Low-Inference. Low-inference descriptors provided precise descriptions for identifying patterns in the data and recorded observations as concrete as possible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). I established dependability by obtaining accurate interpretations of the meanings from the participants.

Reflexivity. I minimized bias by employing multiple strategies that confirmed the findings. Strategies included awareness of my personal experiences and self-scrutiny as this case study was conducted (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Summary

Chapter 3 is a compilation of the methodology used for this qualitative case study. Specific elements included the description of the research design, research questions, sample selection, procedures used to collect the data, as well as an explanation of the data analysis.

This qualitative case study provided an understanding of new insights when providing a college-going environment. Furthermore, analyzed data revealed new forms of technology implemented from high school counseling offices to advocate for a student's journey to college. The research provided value in informing and improving practice by educators striving to pioneer initiatives for postsecondary enrollment.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine perceptions of the roles of high school counselors in developing a college-going culture. The three research questions that guided this study were:

1. How does the high school counselor's role impact the development of a college-going culture?

2. How do the resources provided by high school counselors foster a college-going culture?

3. How are a high school counselor's relationships integral factors in the development of a college-going culture?

The interview questions were aligned to elicit data related to the three research questions. Data were collected through personal interviews with 11 public high school counselors. The one-on-one interviews took place in the offices of the participants. Case studies required the researcher to collect data from people in everyday situations, integrate real-world events, and cater to the interviewee's schedules and availability (Yin, 2014). This chapter provides an overview of the findings from in-depth analysis of interview transcript data related to high school counselors and their roles of developing a college-going culture. Direct quotes are provided to support the themes that emerged from the analysis.

Selected Participants

The sampling strategy for the study, maximum variation sampling, allowed a diverse variation of the individual participants to provide different perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Three school types were used to provide different perspectives because the environments were each unique and independent from each other. The maximum variation sampling criterion for the

high school included: (a) suburban, (b) magnet, and (c) rural public school districts. The school types represented a variety of sizes in the student population and economically disadvantaged. The student population sizes were similar across school types. For example, all suburban schools' populations ranged from 1,600 to 1,900 students (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017b). However, the economically disadvantaged levels were distinct with the respective high schools. Two of the three suburban high schools showed levels over 29% as economically disadvantaged. The two rural high schools exhibited similar sizes, 530 to 630, in student population. Their economically disadvantaged levels were similar with over 60%. The magnet school's population totaled over 1,200 students and provided a level of 8.6% concerning economically disadvantaged (Tennessee Department of Education, 2017b).

Eleven high school counselors from six public highs schools met the participant criteria and volunteered for study. The descriptive profile of participants included two men and nine women who collectively represented over 125 years of professionally serving in the role of school counselor. Six participants were interviewed from two of the three suburban high schools with the remaining participants interviewed at individual high schools. Seven of the 11 participants had worked in high school counseling for more than 15 years in the state of Tennessee. The remaining four participants each had 5 to 9 years of high school counseling experiences.   Seven of the 11 participants received their master's degree in school counseling from postsecondary institutions in the state of Tennessee. In addition, four of the 11 participants had been employed by high schools outside of their respective school district. Two of the 11 participants had been employed in jobs separate from the high school counseling field. The participants were given a pseudonym and the name of the school was omitted from all transcripts to protect school and participant identities.

Table 1 provides an overview of the type of school and college-going rate data (Tennessee Higher Education Commission, 2016c) respective to each participant. The table presents the increased number of students who enrolled in postsecondary education since 2014. The table showed growth rates that emphasized the effectiveness of a college-going culture respective to each high school.

Table 1

School Type, Participants and 2014 College-Going Rates of High School Represented in the Study Compared to College-Going Rates for Entire District, 2014 and 2015

School Type	Participants	College-Going Rate for Respective High School 2015	College-Going Rate for County School District 2014	College-Going Rate for County School District 2015
Suburban	Joe, Sue, Stella	60.0%	59.0%	63.9%
Suburban	Cynthia, Bea, Jill	62.4%	59.0%	63.9%
Magnet	Kim, Mena	86.2%	59.0%	63.9%
Rural	Abe	61.8%	42.7%	58.8%
Rural	Tina	56.7%	42.7%	58.8%
Suburban	Dee	79.2%	59.7%	71.0%

Interview Findings and Research Questions

The findings were a result of the in-depth interviews from the 11 participants held in their high school counseling offices. The interviews were transcribed and the data analyzed for meaning from the participants. This section reviews the findings associated with the research questions. Qualitative studies may rely on interviews to answer the research questions (Creswell, 2013). A few of the participants' interview responses were included in the question

reviews. In addition, the emergence of themes followed the research questions that provided

detailed voices and rich descriptions from each participant.

Research Question 1:

How does the high school counselor's role impact the development of a college-going culture?

High school counselors have played various roles in advancing students to enroll to

postsecondary institutions. The influence that high school counselors have with students to

encourage attending some type of college or technical training is seen on many levels. Previous

research recognized high school counselors as influential professionals improving the college-

choice opportunities (Belasco, 2013). All of the 11 participants reported concrete examples of

how their roles impacted the development of a college-going culture. Totura (2013) included

school leadership, college access and expectations, and stakeholder support as three key elements

necessary to implement a college and career culture. The findings from this case study are

consistent to Totura's (2013) research. The perception of the high school counselor's role stated

by Cynthia included:

> I view 100% of my role that is what we are in this business for to get these kids prepared
> for whatever they want to do after high school. If I am helping a kid put their classes in
> that is getting them ready for college or for picking the right college. Whenever I am
> talking to the kid, I am asking what is your goal? What are you planning to do, what are
> you wanting to major in? I tell them you probably need to take this and talk about why
> they should take it. It is like it is inbred in what I do about how to get them ready for the
> next level whatever that is. Because we know not everyone is going to go to a four year
> college. Even if they go to the military they are learning something so whatever that next
> level is!

High school counselors continue to be the launch pad for next steps after high school.

Policy development has focused on transitions students make from high school to college

enrollment (Eccles & Roeser, 2011). The theme redefining the postsecondary culture emerged

from personal experiences from the participants. Participants voiced concerns that

socioeconomic disparities may impact the college-going culture for students. Therefore, high

school counselors cognizant of the availability and viable options after graduation may bridge

connections for students. Previous literature from Chapter 2 reports that students who possess a

college-going identity may pursue college or technical training relevant to their future (Welton &

Martinez, 2013). Dee supports this research by stating:

> The point is college culture is for the mere education however you get there. We talk the
> lingo that is necessary to students. When I go into classrooms if we talk about careers or
> what you need for certain degrees, you don't always need a 4-year degree for certain
> things too. We have to educate them on the level of what they are looking at.

Kim believed her role was instrumental when meeting with students each year:

> Speaking with nine through twelfth grades every year we meet which is numerous times
> for our school plus parents often come to schedule counseling meetings. We let our ninth
> graders know what is available to them at any different level whether it is a 2-year
> technical college, a community or a college or university or even the military.
> We always got the information out both with technology and offering scholarship
> information so it is always there in front of them. It is a part our natural conversations and
> we try do a good job with the twitter account. We try to keep everybody informed as
> much as we can and communication is the biggest thing.

Mena's description of her role included:

> That is my number one role here at this school. I see students more for academics and
> planning than I do anything else. I see my job to be their advocate. Not only for them
> looking at the best fit for them as far as which college would be the best for them but also
> helping them to discover their talents and their majors and what they might look for in a
> college. Do they want a small school, do they want a large school?

> Many of our students apply for honors colleges within the universities so we talk to them
> about all of those things. My number one goal here is to help them narrow it down
> because so many students apply. Last year I had a girl apply to 25 schools and there is no
> way you would be perfect for all 25. Our kids have high expectations and sometimes
> have all of these dream schools or high reach schools but don't necessarily have the safe
> one. I try and make sure they have that dream school but have a safe school and even a
> local school because you never know what might happen throughout the year.

> That is my goal here is for them to be realistic as well as some of those dreams. You
> don't want to ever squelch dreams but quite often I can tell that the student may not get in
> so you need to make sure that you have some other plans. Or may not be able to afford
> the school that they want to.

Research Question 2:

How do the resources provided by high school counselors foster a college-going culture?

The availability of resources includes economic, social, and cultural capital. Prior literature identifies resources that encourage college student success. These resources relative to answering this research question include: (a) information and resources, (b) testing and curriculum, (c) faculty involvement, and (d) parent or family involvement (Bosworth et al., 2014). The 11 participants provided affirmation in how and why these resources are important for students. These resources are supplied through economic, social, and cultural capital that high school counselors provide to students. In addition, these four sets of resources may be influenced by the context of the existing college-going culture of the high school (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Jill replied to the viewpoint on social and cultural capital:

> Location is our strength. We are so blessed to be where we are. In close proximity to so many college options. We are right down the road from a four year institution, down the road from a 2-year, down the road from a Tennessee College of Applied Technology (TCAT) center.

High school courses provide a foundation for taking college-level courses (Welton & Martinez, 2013). Findings from the 11 participants indicated how the coursework was a cornerstone of their academic foundation. Various examples of academic course resources (ACT or SAT) vital in developing a college-going culture were provided. Participant responses included increasing the rigor of academic courses and support the administration instilled in the school. Likewise, several participants stated ACT preparation courses and the retaking of the ACT was the beginning layer for enhancing the college-going culture. Numerous illustrations, from the 11 participants, provided detailed descriptions how their school initiated ACT activities and promotion events. Dee described the influences from the ACT on students and teachers:

We do ACT and our teachers are using ACT standards. Because of that they are increasing the environment of the terms, the nature for great success in what going to college is about.

Kim's expertise with the College Board resources gave a perspective that included discussing AP course credit, educational planning, and building of student relationships:

A lot of times I copy the report and look at things pulled up on my computer like how for the student to look up their AP scores. I will show the student how to look up the college and what credit the college will give for the AP score and print it out for them. For example, this student's report shows he got a high percentage and this is a socially awkward child too. We can look at check points and he is eighth grade and we have a lot to talk about and celebrate. There is nothing not to celebrate and talk about different things. There are websites on here and sometimes I copy and circle everything in red and write on this report and give it to him to show his scores. AP potential is a lot of trouble to use it but I believe it is underused for that reason.

In order to deliver additional resources for students to promote the college-going culture, all participants discussed how communication was an essential component for their work. Kim's description emphasizes one view on communication:

I think my role is communication on my part. If a student is not talking about college then I can open that door. It might just be a difference of not having self-confidence enough to think that they could go that direction and helping develop those strengths and that potential in that student.

The necessity to communicate through technology continues to evolve. School websites may have the capacity to reach a multitude of stakeholders and are viewed as culturally responsive and inclusive (Kennedy & Baker, 2014). Several examples provided how communication involves access to technology from the high school counselor and students or parents. The 11 participants provided cases in the use of technology to enhance the college-going culture. The availability of e-mail and school webpages were included by all counselors as important. In addition, one participant responded the reliance on the school's Facebook page to announce pertinent scholarship information to all students and families to strengthen communication. One participant reflected that high school counselors may depend on

technology to transfer students' time-sensitive information for college applications. Mena

provided an example of communication efforts with students in the absence of face-to-face:

> A lot more time than I have done in previous schools. At least half of my time is spent
> on college because so many of our students are applying to places, not only applying to
> the school but applying for scholarships. We are the point of contact for the schools.
> Even though I might not be that time face to face with the students I am doing a lot of
> loading their transcripts, writing a recommendation letter and filling out all of that. So
> much is electronic now that I don't have to have the student with me when I am doing
> that. I have students who there might be a problem with their application or they have
> not heard back from the school so they will come in and we will call the admissions. Or
> we will call with questions. They will come to me because every college is different in
> what they are looking for or their deadlines, their applications. They are all different so if
> I can't answer their question we will call the admissions office or the financial aid office
> and try to get it resolved for them. It would be way more than 50% for my time spent.

Previous research indicated the education level of the parents may impact how the

student views college (Pike et al., 2014). Correspondingly, the 11 participants illustrated holding

events with students and parents to deliver information and enforce communication strategies.

Jill states:

> A lot of times we are the front end so maybe these students are first generation college
> goers and their parents can't really help them. When we get in the classrooms and start
> talking about how important it is to do something after high school. A lot of our
> conversations with those students are the first time that they have kind of thought about
> it. Our role is facilitator, we are messengers, and we are the middle man. We talk a lot
> between the colleges and our high school students. We are big component to that as well
> with parents, with teachers. All stakeholders involved we are right in the middle of it all.

Research Question 3:

How is a high school counselor's relationship an integral factor in the development of a college-

going culture?

High school counselor and student relationships may provide a lens reflective of a

college-going culture. The opportunity to disseminate college information to students may

depend on the context of the high school (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Engberg and Gilbert

(2014) reported the percentage of time and caseload size between students and high school

counselors were significantly related to developing a college-going culture. Because the era of

college for all is imposed on high school counselors, new and innovative relationships must be

cultivated to achieve a college-going culture (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). High school counselors

compete with other entities in supplying college and financial aid resources and are not the only

source of information (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). It is common for students to have multiple

avenues to attain college-related links and associations. However, Engberg and Gilbert (2014)

reported these other entities do not replace consulting with a counselor. Mena's response aligns

with Engberg and Gilbert's (2014) research:

> … if you have this problem who do you go to and how to navigate? Just showing them that once you are in college these are the different offices where you will need to go to for that help. So many of them are hearing back from their college about admissions or financial aid but the colleges will e-mail them through their college e-mail account and that is how they apply for everything and navigate everything. They are used to pulling up their gmail account all the time on their phone and will say they have not heard back. I will have to call them in and the students log in and I show them here is where you need to find these things from the university. If you are applying to five places you are going to have to look at five different accounts because that is how they are going to let you know. That transition stuff they do not always think about. New territory. If they need something or if I need something from them I just call them out of class. But that is not going to happen when you are there at college.

Collaboration efforts with outside officials focused on college and financial aid

information were common among the 11 participants. All participants described scenarios that

included college representatives or financial aid officials to contribute in events and meetings for

college information. As a result, collaboration efforts resulted in the forming of relationships

that were used to develop a college-going culture. Findings from this study relate to the body of

literature from McCollough (2011) that states promoting a postsecondary education may need

someone to communicate ideas, encouragement, and resources.

Jill responded to relationships:

I call this office the hub. We are kind of the middle of the wheel. We get a lot of programs in place and facilitate a lot of outside people coming in to help us promote that college-going culture.

Sue provided a simple testament of where it may start and who may be involved:

I think it starts with academics and the student's desire and attitude towards different things. I think the parents must be involved. What is the old saying it takes the village to raise a child? That is the way I look at it. Whether it is the counselor, teacher, administrator, it takes all of the above to get a college-going culture in any school.

The 11 interviews provided insights and new perspectives on the roles that high school counselors play in developing a college-going culture. A linear-analytic structure was followed for the case study. Linear-analytic structures cover four stages: (a) present the issue, (b) methods of exploration, (c) result of the findings, and (d) conclusions (Yin, 2014).

Analyses and Emerging Themes

The data were imported into QSR International's NVivo 11 (n.d.). Each sentence or a small passage from the transcribed interviews were coded. Initial coding was derived from the participant's words and phrases. After the initial codes were established, each piece of text was then systematically compared and recoded through a second-round coding process. The second-round codes were checked and rechecked to assess coding alignment. Codes were then placed into categories that led to the identification of overarching themes. Four overarching themes emerged: (a) redefining postsecondary culture, (b) communication to all stakeholders, (c) educational planning, and (d) collaboration of resources.

Redefining Postsecondary Culture

The theme of redefining the postsecondary culture emerged through all 11 interviews. Joe acknowledged students' aspirations to attend some type postsecondary education:

It is a culture that promotes any kind of after postsecondary education because whatever job or career or activity that you are going to do in life is not going to be solely met by having a high school diploma.

Statements from participants further elaborated on their views from an increase in participation

to the broad array of postsecondary opportunities currently available in the state. Stella reported:

> To me college-going isn't just college. It is 2-year, 4-year, it is technical school, and it is going to some kind of training after high school.

Bea's perspective demonstrated that she perceived a difference between the terminology of

college and the phrase, college-going culture:

> I think of college as technology schools and 2-year schools. College-going culture - I think of education more than just a 1-year university. I think of telling our students and opening doors for our seniors and helping them get there. When I think of a college-going culture I want them to know that we can help them do that.

Several high school counselors addressed the need to refine the term postsecondary and at the

same time enlarge the scope of its meaning. Jill reflected on the term postsecondary:

> I think about it like in lots of different ways. A few not so many years ago it would have been answered by what are you doing to promote college paraphernalia in your school to make college admissions requirements ready information in school? Now it is much more than that because college is defined much more than just a 4-year university situation. Years back a college-going culture meant you were on a track to do a 4-year university plan. Now we look at college as any type of training after high school. We are looking at everything from 2-year, 4-year, military, and even on the job training. We would consider that a lot of that training.

Kim described how her school explained college opportunity with the ninth grade students:

> We let our ninth graders know what is available to them at any different level whether it is a 2-year technical college, a community or a college or university or even the military.

Cynthia reinforced the theme by stating:

> We try to instill in our students that everybody needs to have a plan to continue their education after high school. We know not everybody is going to go to a 4-year college. We phrase it as a 2-year college, technical school. All of that we would consider college, we try to encourage the students to go to a school that would complement their abilities and stretch their limits in terms of their potential. Help them to reach their potential and career goals. We have such a wide variety of a student body that not everyone is best suited for a 4-year college so we encourage them to look at the 2-year college route first. I call it the back door or the TCATs. We tell them just because you start at a community college does not mean you cannot end up at your 4-year college, it is just you are going in back door instead of the front door.

The majority of participants reported the term college indicated a message that was misleading

for some students and provided a lack of understanding to the different paths for postsecondary

options. Dee conceptualized the college-going culture in this statement:

> How we define it is by us educating anything after 12th grade. When we talk to students or I go into classrooms depending upon certain tests, we talk about the PSAT, ACT, ASVAB, everything. The point is college culture is for the mere education however you get there. We talk the lingo that is necessary to students. When I go into classrooms if we talk about careers or what you need for certain degrees, you don't always need a 4-year degree for certain things too. We have to educate them on the level of what they are looking at.

Abe, when asked if the terminologies postsecondary and college were synonymous, replied:

> Yes. Ten years ago you were talking college or vocational school. Now it is postsecondary. It was a joke when I was in high school to go to TCAT as they are called now and I was raised on a farm. But now the way I look at it and it has changed over time…college and TCAT are both training the mind. One of them may be for something technical and this one may be for running a machine but it is still postsecondary.

Participants often viewed college-choices based on careers by students. Tina stated:

> I would define it as part of the culture being students who actually go to college and are successful in completing their degree or certification they strive to obtain. Options are for post-secondary education. What is out there and what can they pursue based on their interest?

> Collectively, the high school counselors continued to include technical schools, the

military, and any after school training as options in the theme of redefining the postsecondary

culture. Sue reported the former system of paths students would take for college-choices:

> It used to be that kids chose either a college path or a technical path. So that changed back in 2013 to one path…

Mena conceptualized the state of Tennessee's progressive opportunities for multiple college

options:

> In Tennessee, they do have so many options even if they do not want to go to a 2-year or 4-year school.

Cynthia responded to the necessity to redefine college associated with parents' understandings:

Also, their parents may not understand the importance of education and sometimes getting that message to them about the importance of education is difficult because of a lack of transportation to get them to events or internet access. For instance if they don't have internet then they are not able to pull up this or something else that you want them to look at. If the parents have never experienced going to college before then they are not going to stress it or they are less apt to stress it to their children because they have not done it before. We do several things though to help the first generation students.

Tina's perspective gave an overall glimpse of a day in the life of a high school counselor:

Ninety-five percent of my time is spent on developing a college-going culture because all the activities I do in my current position tie in directly to what they are going to do after high school. Whether it is the ACT because that determines what they can major in or what classes they may be eligible to take in college. There are some duties I have to do that are indirectly related to it such as clerical things or helping out in other areas. But I could also argue that they all tie in to a college-going culture. So I would change it to 100%.

Jill concluded by saying:

Talking about that college-going culture and just being a contributing member of society is our goal. So, everything we do here at school and especially in this office that is 100% of the time. Everything that we do in this office is to do that and is to promote kids who want to do something to help society. Whether it is getting a job or going to school. I would answer that 100% of the time.

Communication to all Stakeholders

The high school counselors were intentional in various ways they communicated with stakeholders. The stakeholders included students, parents, administration, faculty, staff, local and state educational agencies, and members of the community. Specific to community stakeholders were businesses and job shadow mentors that had a vested interest in students transitioning from high school to college. Communication at the various levels was evident through the voices from the participant's interviews. Jill illustrated methods to communicate with parents:

We like to include the parents at all times. Whatever we are showing to the students in the classrooms or any kind of function we have here most of the time we are going to follow-up with the parent with that same subject just to make sure that everyone is on board. To even supplement that we put basically everything that we do and give on the

internet for the public to access. Making sure to have those night meetings and making sure to send things home.

Cynthia designated that student communication was equally important to parent communication:

We have an open door policy around here. You don't have to have an appointment, it would be nice, but you don't have to have one. I can understand how sometimes that will help with time management, but we are open door policy around here. If a student is here that I have sent for and a parent comes in unannounced, I am going to talk to the student first. I don't move the student over and talk to the parent. That is just what I do. I think they do feel like they are valued and appreciated or that what they have to say is important.

Sue reported on the activities used at night to communicate to parents:

We do a college planning night and at the same time it is a financial aid night for parents. Over the years I have done this job I have done it at different times of the year. I have done it with juniors, I have done it with seniors. It is a piece of the puzzle certainly.

Bea described student communication opportunities:

We call every senior in before Christmas. That would be 130 to 150 students or 100 students plus. I ask, What have you done on grades? Have you applied to college? To see where students are with college.

Likewise, Joe discussed communicating with students through the talking opportunities:

Talking to students about the possibilities of college, and the options that they have and what it means and talking to the younger students about how best to prepare.

Face-to-face communication may not be available at all times for the high school counselors. To increase efforts to communicate with students, high school counselors listed the insightful venues used to connect to stakeholders and reinforce sustaining the college-going culture. Dee expanded social media outlets as communication tools:

The senior newsletters, the school website and a Facebook page. We put things on Facebook, the guidance Facebook page and on our school website and guidance website. We try to communicate with parents to see if they don't have a Facebook, any avenue to get there.

Likewise, Cynthia described novel approaches to reach students:

Our counselors are very outgoing, we are very welcoming to the students and the kids like to talk to us. They like to see what we are doing. Nobody is stodgy or unwelcoming. That is the main thing.

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The administration and faculty were instrumental in providing communication support with the

high school counselors. Mena discussed approaches used with faculty:

> We support the faculty in writing the letters of recommendation and reminding them of deadlines for students. My role is to be on top of reminding faculty of scholarship deadlines.

Kim included the faculty's support to assist with communication efforts aligned to the overall

school's goal:

> You have a lot of buy-in from teachers. In their mindset everybody is going to college. I think counselors and everybody in education that is their main goal to get them to go to college.

Stella illustrated communication efforts by college representatives:

> I love having the college representatives here on campus. I like for the kids to get a chance to talk to them and see that they are people. So many seniors will come in and they are so afraid to graduate they are so afraid to go on to college. Explaining to them that it is not that bad and you will have your little group and having the college representative telling them how it works for incoming freshmen. I really encourage them to do a college tour. Don't just go to a school because your girlfriend or boyfriend is going there. My ratio is one counselor to 500 students. If a student came to me and asked for help in where to start with this application, then absolutely I would help them do that. The college representatives helping them do the applications too.

> Communication strategies to interweave soft skills were discussed by one high school

counselor. The aim was directed toward student accountability through interview skills. Jill

explained:

> Promoting a culture of accountability with academics with those soft skills like interviewing and being presentable - having our teachers hold their students to the highest expectations. I think all of that helps to promote a college-going culture here and in any other high school for sure.

Tina explained how the classroom visits allowed communication to reach the masses:

> Our administration allows us into the classrooms. Classroom instruction time is protected but they let us in English classrooms because everyone has English. They allow us in there to speak to every grade level to talk about the important steps that are coming up either in the fall or the spring depending on what grade level we are

addressing at that time. That is valuable I have no idea how we would talk to a student body this large if they did not allow us to do that.

In conclusion, Sue explained time spent in a middle school with students that may lead to any type of education after high school:

In my job we start with 8th graders as we register them for high school. We go through what they are going to take in high school. We used to have what we called the six year plan and even though we don't officially do that in Tennessee, we have what is called the one path now. That means that everybody in high school takes whatever you need that will get you into college after high school…It starts there. All of these classes will get students to a 2-year college or a TCAT or a 4-year college.

Educational Planning

High school counselors noted that educational plans were created for students to provide direction for the path to college and careers. Individualized meetings were held with students to design an educational plan influenced by multiple factors. The theme, educational planning, shed light on core planning principles indigenous to a college-going culture. Cynthia explained the various components taken into consideration for educational planning.

I love the academic advisement and talking to the kids one-on-one about what their goals are and what classes do they think will help them with that. Get them thinking about what activities they can be involved in, even community service wise that relates to what they want to do later on to give them some practical experience or connections for networking down the road for when they need jobs or internships.

Joe commented that preparing students for educational plans starts with freshmen and includes the parents:

We meet with all our students at least once a year and with seniors it is more than once a year. But I think with the freshmen we tell them what it takes to be eligible to go to college on whatever level. We tell them what the expectations are. We educate them and we educate the parents. We send home newsletters and we send information to the teacher to share with the students and we just make it important from the very beginning that this is your goal. Your goal is not just high school graduation and it is important.

And we are judged for our graduation rate but we always say it is not the end but the beginning. By the end of the freshmen year, they realize what it is all about.

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Reinforcing an educational plan was carried out in several methods. Tina traced hopeful

outcomes for students when exploring an educational plan:

> More time is being spent with the students to help them develop a solid plan for what they want to do after high school. I hope that we will see that comfort level with the established plan that will help them be more successful after they leave us in high school. The established plan starts in their junior year; however, some activities are taking place in the freshmen year with the career exploration.

Sue's perspective attested to the complexities in meeting with students regarding educational

plans:

> I do think we do an ok job but it is not enough. So parents do want more from me and I can't figure out how to give it. I think they are assuming that the guidance counselors have time to do that and we do have time to touch on it but there is one of me and 500 of them… They see me as being able to pull in their child and do a career or interest inventory, figure out what they want to major in in college and then advise them where to go to college and then tell them every scholarship that is available. I don't know how to do that because there is no time. Do you get that attention in an elite school?

Bea alluded to the approach her school took to provide educational plans:

> With our rising seniors, spring of their junior year, we are in their classrooms and we give them a senior survival guide. You have just taken your ACT and this is what this means. You need to retake it again, this is how you do it, this is how to write a personal statement letter. This is what you need to be thinking about when you are looking at colleges and not just the cost of tuition but did you know you have to pay for books and know it cost to park on campus? It is about 35 pages of information as students that you need to know and hopefully they are going to keep it and utilize it. It has ACT and SAT information.
>
> Everything that if they use it they are going to be completely on track if they use it over the summer to come back in August and be ready to apply to their schools because they have picked them. Over the summer they did some college tours hopefully. That is a wonderful thing we do to try to get them geared up. We do it again in the fall but a shorter version and then they get startled because what about this is their question? I say remember you have the college guide.

Cynthia responded to the increased responsibility of high school counselors' roles associated

with educational planning from Tennessee's Department of Education:

Even a lot of the free stuff from the state is great but who has time because of the large caseloads we have. We need smaller caseloads. If we had time to look at it or use it because of the caseloads. That is just a fact.

Sue's procedures to guide students were similar to many other participants:

Before we do registration in the spring with underclassmen, we spend an entire day teaching so we work through and we try to find a non-tested subject to be able to go into classrooms. It is hard to find one now because U.S. History is tested this year but I know last year we went into U.S. History.

With 9th graders we went into history and geography classrooms and 10th grade perhaps foreign language classrooms. We spent a day or a class period with each of those talking about graduation requirements, talking about graduation with honors, graduation with distinction. I would classify that as college-going preparation and would increase then the percentage because that all does count.

ACT and SAT tests were noted as critical to preparing educational plans and directly

influencing outcomes. The availability of test score data from the ACT was viewed as valuable

by several participants. Kim explained her high school's approach to assessment of ACT scores:

I have lots of tools and all the data I need and I love data. I even like helping with the testing because I like the data.

In the past at other schools I have worked in rural areas I was frustrated because I could not get my teachers to look at this data and to learn what they needed to do for the next year. They like to look at the test scores and see how we did or did not do. But in looking at these answers and areas of improvement in something you are going to teach next year why are you not going to look at the weaknesses? That administration did not make them because we were doing ok.

But at a magnet school they will look at our data. At those other schools I worked at I sometimes I felt like we might have missed an opportunity for a student to become a doctor. Like my daughter for example. She went to those schools. Or a lawyer or some other professional level where they did not see that possibility coming up because they were not challenged as much or did not have a mentor or someone to believe in them. A teacher or counselor or principal. It makes a huge difference.

Cynthia examined opportunities for students to prepare for the ACT that could benefit a students'

educational plan:

Their materials and even their free stuff they have on the ACT website for the students we refer them all the time to get free test preparation in additional to other resources that

we might send to other places. If we have a private business come in for ACT preparation. We have a relationship with the ACT preparation business. They come in and offer a two day seminar. The students pay for it and it is after school. It is a two day seminar that we work with the company that does that in the fall and the spring.

Sue responded to the impact the administration can influence with the ACT:

> The younger assistants are more open to seeing changes that we need to make. They look at data… and they know that improving the ACT is huge and I think they are open to new ideas. That is really good.

Likewise, Jill viewed the ACT as an integral factor with educational plans:

> I feel like the state is definitely on board with the ACT. That is a huge component of a lot of stuff that we do. There has been a push towards meeting those benchmarks and having appropriate preparation materials in schools whether that is classes or online technology. ACT is definitely mainstreamed now.

Statements from high school counselors included descriptive reasons why courses that students may choose impacts the direction chosen to a postsecondary institution. High school counselors stated that the level of academic courses, referred to as honors, AP, dual credit and dual enrollment, were examples that increased contributing to a college-going culture. Stella stated how course selection connected with the ACT:

> We visit with all the students twice a year and every time we go into the classes we always tell them take the highest level class you can take. It will help with your ACT scores. We want to make students smarter.

> Sometimes they ask us about why our students don't go to out-of-state colleges and we try to say that well we want our smart students to stay here in Tennessee. That is the whole point of the pathways and getting them to take those certification classes and continue on and that way they will ride and transition into the school and the career right here locally. With our administration that is a big part of where we are.

Kim's reflection included:

> Administration is very big on kids taking higher level classes. They have really worked with us on getting more dual enrollment classes available to the students. There were not enough higher level classes for them to take. Once they took our basic few the way it went into our master scheduling it did not take as many as they could because of when the classes were offered. So administration worked through that a little bit to rearrange that master schedule.

Jill recognized the restructuring of curriculum and addition of technology as a positive effect:

> Revamping curriculums, adding new interesting classes and technology to help students get a better understanding to what it takes to get to college but also what it takes to be successful at college.

In addition, rigor was included as an essential component of an academic course that made a positive difference contained in the educational plan. Abe discussed the principal's influence for increasing rigor:

> She backed us by offering incentives for these kids for taking the more strenuous classes and the upper level testing that goes along with it. We worked closely with the principal to raise the rigor of some of our classwork and courses so they would be prepared. Our biggest strength is administration supporting teachers and counselors to raise the rigor and they are not afraid to talk about let's go to college.

Tina expanded her perspective on AP courses:

> AP classes are typically very difficult and I try to keep up with the students who took AP classes after they graduate and some of those students have told me I did not pass that AP class; however, if I would not have taken that class I do not think I would be doing as well as I am now in college. Even though they don't get that AP credit just going through the experience and the difficulty and rigor of the class has helped them.

Dee presented how the educational plan was finalized during the student's senior year:

> The thing with students is we do senior appointments in the fall of the year and go over their credits. We talk about what their plans are and what is their goal. Is it a 2-year, 4-year, military and that is also on the flyer that I get back from all of the counselors. At least I can start figuring out if it is just two years at the community college. I try to get with them later to find out which area and some of them are undecided.

Stella surmised the benefits of dual enrollment courses:

> Trying to get those students to take those higher level classes. Dual enrollment has been really great too because the students can dabble in it and take one or two classes. I have had students come back and say that was easier than my high school class. I tell them see it is not that bad. It is a nice transition than just jumping straight into college.

Tina's description encouraged students to participate in the expanded offerings:

> We are trying to expand dual enrollment, dual credit and more advanced classes to help give them a better foundation for college. Because the more rigorous courses in high school help prepare them for college.

Similarly, high school counselors may encourage students to enroll in practice courses when preparing to take a college entrance exams (ACT or SAT). Several high school counselors concurred utilizing the ACT practice exams aligned with developing a college-going culture.

Abe reasoned why this process was important:

> We have worked very closely with at least the last year's principal. She was here two years and she stressed it more than our first principal. This changed the morale of the school which we were supporting her in helping her for lack of terms sell the ACT test. Which we really did not sell it but the kids thought we were selling it. We started basically with nothing here except the upper 10% of our kids even thinking about going to college. Now they were excited to take the ACT test last year and it was amazing. The administration at our school and the central office paid for 60 plus of our seniors to retake the February ACT test. They made a party out of it basically. They all rode up there on a bus and they had breakfast for them. After the test they took them out to the… restaurant and they ate and stayed together and came back. It was neat.
>
> This year the state paid for the retake. We had 100 students who retook and we are going to try to get the 18 to 20 students to take it again in February. That is how much the ACT has changed from dreading it to making a party out of it.

The ACT may be viewed as the most common college entrance exam for students in Tennessee.

Joe formalized his perspective on the school's relationship with ACT:

> We're partners with them. Again, ACT is important schoolwide and we talk about the benchmarks and we talk about the relationship between ACT scores and course selection and levels of courses, whether you are taking honors or standard makes a big difference statistically on how well you do on the ACT.

Tina's perspective allowed finances for college tuition to be included in the discussion of how the ACT impacts a college-going culture:

> The ACT is very important because so much is tied to it. The student's HOPE scholarship, their honors diploma and the prerequisite scores they need to take certain college level classes. It is very critical and this school has been putting a big focus on how important it is and how it relates to what they are going to do after high school. It ties in with my part in that you cannot get to that career without a certain ACT benchmark. For example, we have a lot of students interested in nursing but they have to have a minimum score of a 19 to be eligible and that is just a minimum. That does not mean they will get in because the college takes the highest score. You have to have a certain score before you can take a college level math class so we have the SAILS class here to help students that score less than a 19 on the ACT to meet that prerequisite.

Verified by the majority of the participants, the interplay between coursework and the ACT impacted the college-going culture with students. For example, Joe indicated specific examples when taking AP courses and the increase of scores.

> There are a lot more resources than ACT has that I and other counselors here did not know existed... Everything from preparing kids for college level courses such as AP, what the AP courses are and what their expectations are and maybe what courses you need to take to be ready for an AP course or an ACT practice test. Statistics show that. Like, for example, one statistic we were shown that if a child completes physics their average ACT score goes up five points. Just because they took physics. That is a statistic we like to share and the physics teacher loves it too.

ACT standards may be tied to the coursework of a high school. Some schools may mirror the course standards to those ACT standards. Dee validated this proposition:

> We do ACT and our teachers are using ACT standards. Because of that they are increasing the environment of the terms, the nature for great success in what going to college is about.

Preparation for the ACT may come in various approaches. Bea expounded on the steps maximized to encourage students to sign up for the ACT.

> This year we took an entire week out of the office in a computer lab just to register students for the ACT because that is a new graduation requirement. Registering for the ACT sounds very manageable. It is a 45 minute process and even for our extremely high achieving, our AP kids or dual enrollment, once a child gets frustrated and wants to do it later, they are never going to do it. Often times they are never going to do it. I think our office is very willing to work and help our students try. Those little stumbling blocks of just applying and completing if they don't get it done here with us may not get it done once they leave the building. We are willing to do that.

Additional reinforcement for taking the ACT was through preparation courses within the high school. Abe described a new initiative that made a powerful impact:

> I think one of the big things is our ACT preparation course that the Career and Technical Education (CTE) is offering and they came up with. All the AP courses and our honor courses are trying to make them aware of what is out there and push them to their potential. Now the ACT test you would be surprised to see the kids who are making 15 or 16 score the first time and then making 18 or 19 score the second time. It just makes a big difference in their attitudes.

Collaboration of Resources

The theme, collaboration of resources, provided multiple means to promote the college-going culture. The high school counselors valued collaborating with postsecondary officials to distribute information and materials for the students. The topic of financial aid was discussed by all the high school counselors. The participants expressed numerous collaboration efforts between college financial aid offices, state agencies, and other stakeholders to encourage filing of the FAFSA. High school counselors indicated substantial partnerships with college or government representatives in dissemination of FAFSA procedures. Tina believed meeting with administrators on multiple occasions was necessary to keep abreast of important dates and events:

> We typically have informal meetings several times per week to discuss what is going on and what we are doing. Right now it is FAFSA completion and that happens quite often with the administration. We have good support to help support the college-going culture. The administrators in the county have bought-in to developing a college-going culture from the top down.

Joe responded with his role in the process:

> I think my role is to offer information first, to parents, students alike and assist as much as possible in the application process and all that with students and parents.

The continued collaboration between financial aid officials and high school counselors was discussed by several high school counselors. The financial aid officials may be viewed as the "experts" in the field according to some counselors. Joe attested to collaboration opportunities:

> And we also have people from Tennessee State Assistance Corporation (TSAC) to help these kids with the FAFSA which is even more streamlined now than it ever used to be and hopefully it will even be more streamlined in the future. I think that has been the biggest obstacle to kids, not only getting financial aid but even going to college is that complicated form from the federal government. That is beginning to change.

> High school counselors described the intensification of developing a college-going

culture through the financial support of the administration at the local and state levels. Several

participants voiced the assistance of mentors surrounding the Tennessee Promise scholarship.

Mena, as well as others, remarked on the involvement of stakeholders outside of the school that

characterized collaboration of resources:

> Money can be a barrier but at least now we have the Tennessee Promise that has been a help. Even though we have high achieving students some of them use the opportunity of the Tennessee Promise to go to the first two year of college free with the hopes of transferring. Academically they are well prepared and have so many AP classes. They will go into college maybe with one or two semesters under their belt when they enter.

Sue specified mentors who contribute to support:

> We registered all of our students for the Tennessee Promise… We had the lady from the Tennessee Promise who had our first meeting here in October or November.

Similarly, Abe recognized collaborated support through the Tennessee Promise scholarship was

changing the dynamics within the culture:

> It is changing here. A lot of our parents did not have high school diplomas and with the Tennessee Promise it helped because they are getting to go to a community college or TCAT for almost nothing.

Mena affirmed innovative collaboration methods from the College Board to inspire

underrepresented students towards postsecondary education:

> One thing that a lot of places may not be so familiar with that the College Board is doing is a huge push in trying to attract those underrepresented students and those first-generation college-going students. They are doing a push for students to be able to apply if they have taken a SAT or any test fee waiver for them to waive at least four application fees as well. That helps because that can sometimes be a barrier. If the application fee is $50 and they waive four then they are saving that family $200. College Board has a lot of resources on their website and they send us information about what they are doing and what you can be doing for those underrepresented students. That is not so much of an issue at our school but at other schools it definitely would be if the parents had never been to college or see the importance in it then they are not going to push their own kids to do that either. So that is where our role would come in and reinforce those efforts.

> Specifically, participants expressed enthusiasm for initiatives to encourage college

enrollment. Bea mapped procedures used to motivate students to take advantage of the

Tennessee Promise:

In the fall as soon as they come back and we get everyone in classes we start talking about Tennessee Promise. It is time to register for Tennessee Promise. The deadline is November 1 and reiterating the highlights of that senior survival guide information we gave the previous spring to…

Dee associated the collaboration efforts of specific mentors who partner with schools to the

advancement of the Tennessee Promise scholarship:

Anything I can get my hands on. TN Achieves sends me a lot because they have asked me to be a part of their web thing in talking to other counties about what we do here for our success. I have enjoyed that.

Cynthia labeled the process implemented to facilitate application completion:

We have college app week in the fall. That is where we especially target the first generation students and we help them to fill out their applications for college and that would include Tennessee Promise application as well as we talk to them about the FAFSA.

Also, Jill asserted reflection in collaboration efforts common to her high school faculty

contributing to student engagement for the Tennessee Promise scholarship:

Making sure our faculty is aware of what we are doing if we are doing any types of special programs or if we are focusing on college application week or college week or Tennessee Promise week. We make sure to let them know here are some ideas that you can share with your students or please share with your students any kind of stories you want to tell them about college.

Joe provided a fundamental overview regarding the opportunity to finance postsecondary

education:

I go back to Tennessee Promise. Tennessee Promise has had a tremendous impact on high schools because for the first time anybody can go to a college. All they have to do is graduate from high school and jump through some hoops.

Kim's inclusion of "outside" folks expanded the group of resources for financial information

given to students.

Our administrators, one principal and two assistant principals, are always on board for any events we want to host that provides outside folks that are going to talk about ways to finance college, ways to write essays, different tips. Out of state or in state, whatever we need. They have been great to do that.

Navigating college-choices or technical training can be tedious for students. The resourcefulness of college admissions or postsecondary representatives may bring in-depth insight and knowledge to students. High school counselors remarked that the college fairs provide a wealth of excitement to students in regard to resources, direction, and expectations all contributing to the college-going culture. Mena described the college fair with the high school:

> We have a college fair here in the spring every year. We all participate. We promote it with freshmen and sophomores so they can come and get that initial information from all of the schools. We invite through the Tennessee organizations. We try and always have it near the NACAC college fair in Nashville so a lot of the college representatives are still in town that will come.

Bea's high school provided incentives for students to attend the college fairs:

> Yes. State college fairs are open to the juniors and seniors. They get two lunches that day. We are in the classrooms talking to them about that as well. We ask them to treat it like a job interview. Dress for the part. We have had several students get scholarships during the college fairs which is great. I think it makes it real to them when they actually speak to college representatives about their interest.

The high school counselors perceived that students were often unaware of the steps in transitioning to postsecondary institutions. Creative engagement activities between college representatives, high school counselors, and students may lead to innovative approaches for collaboration in the college admissions process. Joe stated:

> Having college representatives on campus and college fairs on campus is certainly a positive influence. I think having them here and available to students and talking about it more and several times during the year where they are available to the students is great. We bring in local universities and schools with applications. It used to be paper applications but it is now done all online but still they actually have the opportunity to sit down with the university and college representatives and apply to the school.

Repeatedly, the high school counselors stated that collaboration between college representatives and the high school counseling office was influential for sustaining in a college-going culture. For example, Tina interpreted scenarios played by students and college representatives when applying for college admissions:

We have had some of the colleges come to us and have students sign up for their classes here at school. That was very successful when they did that. It was …Community College - they came here.

Jill depicted an overview of the stakeholders that invested time and energy with their school:

We work closely with all of the educational systems around here. We have a large network and people who we know personally who we can call on at any time for help. The materials that are most valued by me in regards of helping us maintain and grow our college-going culture are the other people or are people in general.

All of these people who we look out to for the different parts of the college culture such as financial aid. We have a huge network of people we can call at any given moment in time and they are experts in the field. They can come down and meet with our kids and serve as a resource for students if they have question at any time. Everyone is very accessible and I am very thankful for that. The professional people in the field are our strengths.

Summary

The four themes collected through the findings designate areas instrumental to high school counselors in the development of a college-going culture. The college-going culture can be defined, in large part, by the efforts of preparation, information, and resource provision. The high school counselor role is specifically positioned to work with numerous stakeholders, each with additional roles that are vital to increasing the likelihood of postsecondary attainment after high school graduation. These stakeholders included students, parents, faculty, staff, administration, postsecondary representatives, local and state officials, and the community. As a result of the data analysis, Chapter 5 includes a summary, conclusions and recommendations for practice relevant to high school counselors. Chapter 5 concludes with recommendations for future studies on the topic of a college-going culture to add to the present body of literature.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the role of high school counselors in developing a college-going culture. The 11 participants answered 15 semistructured interview questions. The three research questions that guided this study were:

1.   How does the high school counselor's role impact the development of a college-going culture?

2.   How do the resources provided by high school counselors foster a college-going culture?

3.   How are a high school counselor's relationships integral factors in the development of a college-going culture?

Participant's responses to the interview questions allowed opinions and perceptions to be expressed in their role of creating a college-going culture. The participants presented academic program components, barriers for students, and daily practices that exist in a college-going culture. This study allowed participants to voice their views of the struggles and successes that arise to provide college access. The information from this study may be instrumental in providing new and improved insights in the methods used to encourage students to attend some form of college, technical training, or the military. Further, the findings from this study may cause high school counselors to refine an environment that propels students to be engaged, connected, and successful for transition to some form of postsecondary education.

The participants included two men and nine women employed by Tennessee public high schools. The interview questions were designed in response to the three research questions from Chapter 1. Data were collected from the interviews in an open-ended format. The interview

questions were conducted in the participants' offices. Following the interviews I transcribed the data. The findings were a result of the analysis from the collected data. Four themes emerged as a result of the analyzed data: (a) redefining postsecondary culture, (b) communication to all stakeholders, (c) educational planning, and (d) collaboration of resources. The emergence of themes allowed implications to address the three research questions presented in this chapter.

The first theme, redefining postsecondary culture, emphasized the complexities of the term college. The landscape of the postsecondary culture has evolved over the past decades (Rosenbaum, Stephan, & Rosenbaum, 2010). As the *college for all* idea permeated the culture, the word "college" became synonymous with a 4-year degree (Rosenbaum et al., 2010). In accordance with the literature review, the 11 participants voiced the evolving landscape of how students perceive college. It was noted that the description of college should expand to include 2 and 4-year colleges, technical trainings, military, or any additional learning experiences that are experienced after graduation.

For the second theme, communication to all stakeholders, value was placed on communication efforts to students, parents, faculty, administration, and community officials. Communication came through various methods with technology serving as the most preferred vehicle to disseminate information.   The 11 participants' perceptions stated that collaboration efforts with stakeholders impacts students' college-choice. This finding corroborated with the literature found in Chapter 2 from Dolinsky's (2010) research.

The third theme, educational planning, was the starting place for high school counselors when introducing academic resources to students. Relationships were formed between high school counselors and students when selecting courses towards graduation while simultaneously creating a trajectory for advancing to a postsecondary pathway. Several participants revealed

seeing students on a limited number of occasions due to a large student-to-counselor case load of 500:1.

The fourth theme, collaboration of resources, delineated numerous experiences that described partnerships and relationships vital to supporting a college-going culture. The high school counselors explained economic, social, and cultural capital opportunities that exist with their schools that accent access to postsecondary pathways. The availability of resources for access to postsecondary education were dependent on the context of the high school (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). All participants identified student interactions with the resources. For example, the participants noted the meetings between college representatives and students as beneficial and creating a vision of college-choices. Furthermore, this chapter includes conclusions, recommendations for practice, and further research for educators concerned with promoting a college-going culture.

Conclusions

Through the personal experiences, reflection of current practices, and sincere viewpoints from the 11 participants, I was able to develop insightful conclusions for this case study. This section is a review of the findings from Chapter 4 in relationship to the three research questions that guided this case study and may assist high school counselors in the development of a college-going culture.

The participants acknowledged their role in enlarging the vision of college to extend beyond a 4-year university. The expanded definition of the term *college* was evident from all participants despite the type of high school involved in this study. In like manner, Hill (2012) ascertained the roles high school counselors play in providing students with knowledge, materials, and strategies to navigate postsecondary education. The participants noted an

illuminated view of college when discussing postsecondary options with students. Specifically, emphasis was placed on broadening the term *college* to extend beyond the traditional view of a 4-year university to include all other educational opportunities after high school. Richardson's (2012) research concurs with this perspective that some type of postsecondary education is essential for the future outlook of jobs for today's high school students.

Over half of the high school counselors inferred that their role demanded additional responsibilities different from college advising at times. As a result, high school counselors commented on the prospect of receiving additional college-choice practices rather than mental health initiatives when receiving professional development. Engberg and Gilbert (2014) found it was imperative for counselor education programs to include more than social and emotional problems; hence, go forward with equipping students with tools that provide knowledge and know-how about college information. The majority of participants noted increased emphasis in college advising roles rather than a social emotion focus could provide strength in sustaining a college-going culture. Participants echoed research presented by Hill (2012) that suggested a restructuring of education programs to provide high school counselors tools to interpret and disseminate information for higher education.

Conclusions were gathered regarding the various forms of resources the participants implemented to develop a college-going culture. All of the 11 participants commented that college related events were important. The suburban high schools, with similar student populations, respectively leveraged certain college-going events to refine a college-going culture. All counselors from the three suburban high schools believed college fairs were important; however, each organized the structure of the college fairs differently and required students to attend using different methods. To this end, it is not possible to provide a generic college-going

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organizational structure for the suburban high schools because of the differentiated leadership. Robinson and Roksa (2016) indicated that the high school counselor served as a facilitator specific to their environment. Counselors from the suburban, rural, and magnet high schools alluded to the leadership styles and expectations that set apart the methods undertaken to develop and sustain a college-going culture. The review of literature found in Chapter 2 resonates the interplay leadership may have on developing a college-going culture. To illustrate, Young et al. (2015) showed school leadership increasing college attainment from students engaged in a positive college-going culture.

The majority of participants responded to a supportive administration for developing a college-going culture. Two of the six high schools designated *college for all* as a new trend and implied expectations arising from the leadership of their administration. Specific to the rural high schools was mentioned a competiveness to attend college that appeared to permeate to their county and surroundings. I concluded this competition exists because of increased efforts of the high schools to propel expectations to attend some form of college. Fischer (2016) recognized that high schools should discern approaches to help students identify directions to and through postsecondary education.

All of the participants concluded the importance of communication connected to resources and relationships. The participants elaborated on the actions and implementation strategies associated with attempts to reach students and parents through communication. Martinez (2014) suggested that high schools that promoted a college-going culture supported students' understanding to the operational procedures of postsecondary education. I concluded from the voices of the participants that they valued their time with students. In fact, most participants cited too little time available to meet with all students on a regular basis. Consistent

with findings from Stephan and Rosenbaum (2015), all 11 participants expressed concerns over the size of student caseloads.

Technology was concluded as evident, necessary, and a resource by the participants. Nine of the 11 participants discussed strategies to use technology as a vehicle to disseminate information. Technology was concluded as a vital element to college admissions, financial aid, and understanding the procedures for college success; however, all participants attested to the face-to-face student interaction as most imperative in relationship building. Consistent with the literature regarding technology, high school counselors increased students' opportunities for the college search through technological networks (Zinth, 2014).

All 11 participants were involved in collaboration with postsecondary institutions. The reliance on collaboration provided examples the participants found instrumental to developing a college-going culture. Novel approaches such as college admission representative assisting with student applications were identified with each high school. High school counselors and college admissions representatives worked closely together to support the college advising practices. Overall, the high school counselors had invested time and energy in developing collaboration efforts for the end goal of developing a college-going culture that provided rich experiences and solidified students' transitions to postsecondary institutions. In relation to the literature from Chapter 2, Robinson and Roksa (2016) maintained students consulted with a variety of resources for college-choice and understanding.

Recommendations for Practice

The three research questions that guided this study explored perceptions of high school counselors' roles in developing a college-going culture. The 11 participants' experiences, knowledge, and responses to the interview questions collectively contributed to the

recommendations for practice. Based on participants' viewpoints and the context of their high school, these recommendations cannot be generalized to all high school counselors.

1. Recommendations are given for all high school counselors to evaluate their resources that provide students and parents access to postsecondary pathways. These resources would include economic, social, and cultural capital relevant to promoting a college-going culture. High school counselors often play the role of a facilitator. Therefore, these resources may be scrutinized to fit the context of the high school beneficial for developing a college-going culture. High school counselors practice filling in the gaps for those students and families who may lack resources (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). College-going cultures vary across high schools; nevertheless, high school counselors serve as strong sources of information and are beneficial to students (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). High school counselors supply the necessary knowledge, networks, and know-how of higher education.

2. High school counselors should continue to practice cultivating relationships with their feeder middle schools for the purpose of transitioning students into the high school college-going culture. For example, high school counselors who provide professional development opportunities to the middle school administration, faculty, and staff on the college-planning process for students may continue to engage stakeholders in a college-going culture. Middle school students should continue to have the opportunity for college-planning exploration when registering for the up-coming school year. Engagement activities and events related to this college-plan provide insight for middle school students. In

addition, this practice for students would bring familiarity, relay expectations, and ease the shift to the high school college-going culture. The end goal would be a developed college-going culture scaled to the middle school level.

3. High school counselors should persist in increased higher education opportunity structures that strengthen a college-going culture. The National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC, 2017) underscored academic achievement and college planning as primary responsibilities for high school counselors.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations concerning research opportunities may add to the body of literature that exists concerning the roles of high school counselors in developing a college-going culture.

1. Research and develop mechanisms that represent effective college-going culture levels with all secondary schools. Conduct quantitative and qualitative studies that examine underlying structures that high school counselors facilitate for postsecondary pathways. The findings from these studies may result in more operative and efficient methods to initiate and sustain college-going cultures.

2. Research the effectiveness of embedding increased college advising curriculum to the master's degrees for all school counseling programs. Further research may examine college counseling practices and policies relevant to the structure of a college-going culture.

3. Research the effectiveness of lowering the students-to-counselor ratio in high schools. To illustrate, recent research presented findings that seeing a school

counselor increased students' likelihood of attending college over no entrance at all (Belasco, 2013). For this reason, licensed high school counselors perpetuate the college application and student retention rates by providing valuable information. High school counselors begin college education as early as the middle school years and continue through the senior year. This early consulting may provide a narrative for students to learn about selective college admission and enhances application to a 4-year institution (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Collaboration and communication between high school counselors and postsecondary institutions may convey this data to substantiate the success of student achievement.

Summary

Chapter 5 provided a summary, conclusions, recommendations for practice, and recommendations for further research. Through the 11 interviews of the participants, data were collected and analyzed that brought forth patterns and themes. The three research questions that guided this case study were addressed from the findings. High school counselors' roles continue to be instrumental in developing and sustaining a college-going culture. In addition, the new era of *college for all* may require high school counselors to review the college opportunity structures, analyze the underlying processes, and develop systematic means for postsecondary pathways to all students. To this end, high school counselors will continue to play an even greater role in college access and college attainment.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent

Principal Investigator's Contact Information: Lisa Condra Davies, 2709 Hemingway Drive, Nashville, TN 37215; 615-516-7005; daviesl@etsu.edu

Organization of Principal Investigator: East TN State University, Johnson City, TN

<u>**INFORMED CONSENT**</u>
This Informed Consent will explain about being a participant in a research study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to **voluntarily** participate.

A. **Purpose:** The purpose of this research study is to examine the high school counselor perceptions of their roles in developing a college-going culture. This study will focus on analyzing the meaning from high school counselors' engagement with school policy, mission, and resources distinct to developing a college-going culture. Interviews will be conducted with high school counselors to explore their perceptions for developing a college-going culture.

B. **Duration:** The duration of your interview will last between 60 and 90 minutes one time at the location of the counselor's high school office. The option to conduct the interview at another location will be offered to you if you choose so that you feel more comfortable, such as a private room in a library. The interview will occur one time for you. If the interview recording is not clear or becomes damaged, it may be necessary to conduct a second interview to receive clarity on the questions asked during the first interview. The interview time period will be after school has ended for the day or at a time more convenient determined by you. The interviews will be conducted during the 2016-2017 school year.

C. **Procedures:** The procedures, which as a participant in this research will involve you, include a total of 15 questions asked that pertain to your role as a high school counselor in the development of a college-going culture. The researcher will interview a total of ten individual public high school counselors that have at least three years of high school counseling experience at the high school. The interview will be recorded by an audio recorder to ensure complete recall of the interview for transcription purposes. The researcher will take field notes during the interview. The researcher will ask you questions about activities and processes of your daily work perceived to develop a college-going culture. The interview questions that are to be presented are in no way intended to judge, influence or bring about coercion in the development of a college-going culture at your high school. The purpose of this case study is to gather data from your perceptions as a high school counselor in your role in the development of a college-

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going culture. Data will be collected from you to be used to contribute to the body of literature that promotes and aids in the development of a college-going culture by educators. The transcribed interview (referred to as a transcription) will be emailed to you for your review to confirm that no collected data was misstated and to check for accuracy. You will have five days to notify the researcher of any concerns. The results of this case study are intended to bring about findings that do or do not exist in high school counselors' roles in the development of a college-going culture.

D. Alternative Procedures/Treatments: The alternative procedure available to you if you elect <u>not</u> to participate in this research study may be the review of this case study findings for the general good of the high school counseling community once this case study has been concluded.

E. Possible Risks/Discomforts: No questions will be asked by the researcher that could impair the relationship between you and your employer. The researcher will avoid asking you about any dissatisfactions with your high school's administrators. The possible risks and/or discomforts from your participation in this research study include:
(1)   Sensitivity to interview questions that are a reminder of bad memories related to the school's   college-going culture
(2)   Loss of time from participating in the interview
(3)   Recalling negative feelings of an event associated with the school's college-going culture
(4)   Boredom, mental fatigue, frustration, or embarrassment in the school's college-going culture

F. Possible Benefits: The possible benefits of your participation in this research study are exploring additional methods or processes used by high school counselors to develop a college-going culture on a personal level as well as to high school counselors in general. You will be contributing to increase understanding of the activities, events, and methods high school counselors use to promote and sustain a college-going culture. There may be benefits gained by public high schools in the Middle Tennessee region because of this research results or review. There is a possibility that no direct benefit will be received by you as a participant from this study.

G. Compensation in the Form of Payments to Participant: Compensation to you will be in the amount of a $20 VISA gift card after this research study has been completed unless prohibited by the school district policy.

H. Voluntary Participation: <u>Your participation in this research case study is voluntary</u>. ***You may choose <u>not</u> to participate.*** If you decide to participate in this research study, you can change your mind and quit at any time. If you choose not to participate, or change your mind and quit, the benefits to which you are otherwise entitled will not be affected. You may quit by calling Lisa Condra Davies at 615.516.7005. You will be told immediately if any of the results of the study should reasonably be expected to make

you change your mind about continuing to participate. You will receive a copy of this Informed Consent for your records by email.

I. **Permission to Quote:** Your identity will remain confidential. Your words may be used to clarify elements of the theoretical framework within the final report. The researcher will not identify the source of the quote. Every precaution will be taken to ensure that there are no identifiers in the body of the final research report.

J. **Contact for Questions:** If you have any questions, problems, or research-related problems at any time, you may call Lisa Condra Davies at 615.516.7005, or Jim Lampley, at 423.439.7619. You may also call the Chairperson of the ETSU Institutional Review Board at 423.439.6054 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant. If you have any questions or concerns about the research and want to talk to someone independent of the research team or you can't reach the study staff, you may call an IRB Coordinator at 423.439.6055 or 423.439.6002.

K. **Confidentiality:** Every attempt will be made to see that your study results are kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in a lockbox at 2709 Hemingway Drive, Nashville, Tennessee, 37215, for at least six years after the end of this research. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at meetings without naming you as a participant. Although
your rights and privacy will be maintained, ETSU IRB, and Lisa Condra Davies and her research team have access to the study records. Your records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as described in this form.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understand this Informed Consent Document and that I had the opportunity to have them explained to me verbally by calling Lisa Condra Davies on her cell phone. You will be given a signed copy of this informed consent document. I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions and that all my questions have been answered. By signing below, I confirm that I freely and voluntarily choose to take part in this research study. I am aware that this informed consent form needs to be returned two weeks from the day in which I received it from Lisa Condra Davies in order to move forward with the process of receiving an email letter asking for me to select a day and time for the interview for this case study.

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Printed Name of Participant   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Principal Investigator   Date

_____   _____
Signature of Witness   Date

 Ver. 11/18/16   Participant Initials _LCD_

APPENDIX B

Email Letter to School Officials

DATE: November, 2016

FROM: Lisa C. Davies

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Dear School Superintendent or Principal:

My name is Lisa C. Davies and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis at East Tennessee State University. For the completion of my dissertation, I am gathering information on perceptions of high school counselors' roles in developing a college-going culture.

I will be conducting interviews of high school counselors in the Middle Tennessee region. Specifically, I would like to discuss perceptions of college-going cultures in public high schools with Tennessee licensed high school counselors.

I would appreciate your willingness to allow your high school counselors to voluntarily join this research study. Their expertise, experiences, and insight as a high school counselor will provide an overview about how public high school counselors' roles influence college-going cultures. I would like to discuss their perspectives at the counseling office if this would be approved. As a former high school counselor, I have kept in touch with many school counselors and would feel comfortable in reaching out to them should you grant me permission. The criteria to be eligible as a participant of this study include:

Criteria for inclusion:

- Male or Female;
- Possess a valid Tennessee Professional School Counseling License;
- Have at least 3 years of experience of working in a high school with grades 9 through 12;
- Attended an ACT or College Board workshop within the last five years focused on college entrance exams and students aspiring to attend college;
- Participated in a College Fair within the last three years;
- Provided resources that provide college-going steps to students;
- Participated in events at their local high school that reference college-going activities over the last 3 years; Criteria for Exclusion:

- Work as a part-time high school counselor for the last 3 years;
- As a high school counselor only provide only registration activities for students

This research study will involve:

- Interviews between the researcher and participant that last from 60-90 minutes
- The interview times will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to the participant such as the high school counseling office or a private room in a library
- Involvement in this interview is totally voluntary and the anticipated risks include:
  - Sensitivity to interview questions that are a reminder of bad memories related to the school's college-going culture
  - Loss of time from participating in the interview
  - Recalling negative feelings of an event associated with the school's college-going culture
  - Boredom, mental fatigue, frustration, or embarrassment in the school's college-going culture
- The interview questions are framed to bring about discussion of the development of a college-going culture in public high schools
- The participant has the option to decline to answer the interview questions at any time and may terminate the interview at any time
- The interviews will be audio recorded to collect information which will then be transcribed for analysis and sent back to the participant to review
- Participation remains confidential. If participants grant permission, their quotes for this research study may be included in the findings using a pseudonym name
- Compensation for participating in this research study includes a $20 VISA gift card to each participant if allowed by the school district policy. This payment will be made at the completion of this research study
- Any and all information provided by the participant through the interview will be considered confidential
- Data collected by the researcher will be contained in a lock box and disposed of in six year's time from the date of the interview
- If participants have any questions or need additional information to assist in reaching a decision about participation, calls or e-mails to my cell phone at 615-516-7005 or e-mail address of daviesl@etsu.edu are available at any time during this case study

- Please be aware that the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at East Tennessee State University will determine if this research study can take place
- After the data has been analyzed, participants will receive a report or summary of the research results through an e-mail to check for accuracy

This research study is totally voluntary. If you approve for any of your high school counselors to be contacted by me, then I will send an e-mail letter similar to this letter to ask for their voluntary participation.

If you agree, please reply back to me through an e-mail confirmation letter that I may contact your high school counselors through an e-mail to inquire of their interest. *Please advise me if your school district requires a specified document for me to complete to make this request.* My contact is daviesl@etsu.edu or 615-516-7005. Thank you for your consideration.

APPENDIX C

Email Letter to High School Counselors

DATE: November, 2016

FROM: Lisa C. Davies

SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Dear High School Counselor:

My name is Lisa C. Davies and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Educational
Leadership and Policy Analysis at East Tennessee State University. For the completion of my
dissertation, I am gathering information on perceptions of high school counselors' roles in
developing a college-going culture.
I will be conducting personal interviews of participants who are high school counselors in the
Middle Tennessee region. Specifically, I would like to discuss perceptions of college-going
cultures in public high schools with Tennessee licensed high school counselors.

I would appreciate your willingness to voluntarily join this research study from your role as a
high school counselor. Your expertise, experiences, and insight as a high school counselor will
provide an overview about how public high school counselors' roles influence college-going
cultures. I would like to discuss your perspectives at your office if this is convenient for you. If
you prefer another public location of your choice, such as a reserved room in a library, this is an
option so that this interview could be conducted in which to discuss your perspectives. The
criteria to be eligible as a participant of this study include:

Criteria for inclusion:

- Male or Female;
- Possess a valid Tennessee Professional School Counseling License;
- Have at least three years of experience of working in a high school with grades 9 through
  12;
- Attended an ACT or College Board workshop within the last five years focused on
  college entrance exams and students aspiring to attend college;
- Participated in a College Fair within the last three years;
- Provided resources that provide college-going steps to students;
- Participated in events at their local high school that reference college-going activities
  over the last three years; Criteria for Exclusion:

- Work as a part-time high school counselor for the last three years;
- As a high school counselor only provide only registration activities for students

This research study will involve:

- Personal interviews between the researcher and participant that last from 60-90 minutes
- The interview times will be scheduled at a time and place convenient to the participant such as the high school counseling office or another private office at the high school ☐ Involvement in this interview is totally voluntary and the anticipated risks include:
  - Sensitivity to interview questions that are a reminder of bad memories related to the school's college-going culture
  - Loss of time from participating in the interview
  - Recalling negative feelings of an event associated with the school's college-going culture
  - Boredom, mental fatigue, frustration, or embarrassment in the school's college-going culture
- The interview questions are framed to bring about discussion of the development of a college-going culture in public high schools
- The participant has the option to decline to answer the interview questions at any time and may terminate the interview at any time
- The interviews will be audio recorded to collect information which will then be transcribed for analysis and sent back to the participant to review
- Participation remains confidential. If you grant permission, your quotes for this research study may be included in the findings using a pseudonym name
- Compensation for participating in this research study includes a $20 VISA gift card to each participant. This payment will be made at the completion of this research study
- Any and all information you provide through the interview will be considered confidential
- Data collected by the researcher will be contained in a lock box and disposed of in six year's time from the date of the interview
- If you have any questions or need additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, you may direct your call or email to my cell phone at 615-516-7005 or my email address of daviesl@etsu.edu
- In order for this research study to take place, please be aware that the Office of Institutional Review Board (IRB) at East Tennessee State University has approved this research case study
- After the data has been analyzed, you will receive a report or summary of the research results to check for accuracy

This research study is totally voluntary. If you agree to participate in this research study, reply to me through email indicating the items you have met for eligibility (page 3 of this letter provides the list of criteria for eligibility you may complete and return to me through email within the next two weeks). Once I have received your returned criteria of eligibility form, I will forward to you the informed consent form for your review and ask that you return within two weeks to me

through email. This will allow me to then contact you for an interview and begin scheduling the interview session most convenient for you. If you are not interested in participating, you do not need to email me back. Thank you for your time in reading this email and the interest you may have in participating in this research study.

Criteria for Eligibility
(FORM TO RETURN FOR CONSIDERATION TO PARTICIPATE)

Name of Volunteer (Participant):_____

Address of high school:_____

Address of email:_____

Telephone number:_____

Please check yes or no to any and all items in the Criteria for Eligibility Checklist apply to you and return to Lisa Condra Davies through email at daviesl@etsu.edu ***within*** two weeks ***from the date that you received this email letter.***

Criteria for Eligibility:

Description of Criteria for Eligibility	Yes	No
Male or Female		
Possess a valid Tennessee Professional School Counseling License (Indicate number of years)		
Have at least three years of experience of working in a high school with grades 9 through 12		
Attended an ACT or College Board workshop within the last five years focused on college entrance exams and students aspiring to attend college		
Provided resources that provide college-going steps to students		
Participated in events at their local high school that reference college-going activities over the last three years		

Please print and sign your name that you are interested in participating:

Print Name:_____
Signature of Name and Date_____
*If you do not meet eligibility, I will email you that you are not eligible to participate in this case study within two weeks of receiving your form of Criteria for Eligibility.

Return this form (page 3) to daviesl@etsu.edu within two weeks of receiving this email. An informed consent form will be emailed to you after this form has been received and reviewed for you to complete in order to participate in this case study conducted by Lisa Condra Davies.

APPENDIX D

Interview Questions

The interviews consisted of a set of semi-structured questions that explored professional roles in developing a college-going culture. The interview questions included:

1. How do you define a college-going culture in public high schools?

2. How do you define your role in the development of a college-going culture?

3. Describe collaboration efforts between the administration and high school counselors to develop a college-going culture?

4. What barriers exist for your school in the development of a college-going culture?

5. What strengths exist for your school in the development of a college-going culture?

6. What materials are most valued by you in the development of a college-going culture?

7. What engagement activities do you initiate with students to create and sustain a college-going culture?

8. What engagement activities do you initiate with parents to create and sustain a college-going culture?

9. What engagement activities do you initiate with faculty to create and sustain a college-going culture?

10. What percentage of time is spent in activities or events for the purpose of creating a college-going culture?

11. Do you participate in college fairs? If so, how does this impact a college-going culture for the high school students in your perception?

12. What resources, such as ACT or College Board materials, have you noticed that impact developing a college-going culture that state or federal educational officials are not overtly aware of in efforts to develop a college-going culture?

13. What other resources that have not been mentioned could provide evidence that a college-going culture exists in a high school?

14. What college preparation interactions with students do you believe are positive to influence transition to college?

15. What types of engagement practices are most valued by you when implementing a college-going culture?

VITA

LISA CONDRA DAVIES

Education:

Ed.D. Educational Leadership
East Tennessee State University
Johnson City, TN 2017

M.S. Psychology - Guidance and Counseling
Tennessee State University
Nashville, TN 1989

B.S. Office Administration
Lipscomb University
Nashville, TN 1985

Professional Experience:

Adjunct Assistant Professor of Psychology
Lipscomb University
Nashville, TN 2011-Present

Assistant Professor of Psychology
Nashville State Community College
Nashville, TN 2011-2016

Study Abroad Faculty Instructor
Tennessee Consortium of International Studies
Knoxville, TN 2014-2015

College Counselor
Lipscomb Academy
Nashville, TN 2010-2011

High School Counselor
Harpeth High School
Kingston Springs, TN 2009-2010

Middle School Counselor
Grassland Middle School
Franklin, TN 2005-2009

Elementary Counselor
Joelton Elementary School
Joelton, TN 2004-2005

High School Counselor
Mt. Juliet High School
Mt. Juliet, TN 1990-1994

Financial Aid Counselor
Cumberland University
Lebanon, TN 1989-1990