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School Counselor Accountability Practices: A National Study

by

Cindy M. Topdemir

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Psychological and Social Foundations
College of Education
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Debra Osborn, Ph.D.
Yi-hsin Chen, Ph.D.
Herbert Exum, Ph.D.
Sarah Kiefer, Ph.D.

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Abstract

This study focused on school counselor accountability practices. The role of the school counselor is changing and the need to be more accountable is now here. This study attempted to answer several critical questions regarding school counselor accountability. It examined the degree to which school counselors use accountability measures, to what extent they believed certain accountability practices were deemed helpful to their school counseling program, and what they believed their barriers were. Accountability is a "hot" topic in present school counseling literature; but little research has been done up to this point investigating these issues related to school counselor accountability nor school counselors' perceptions and beliefs about them. This study attempted to delve into those perceptions and beliefs.

Participants were members of state school counseling associations from across the United States. Three hundred seventy-five school counselors participated. Of those, 70.2% were currently using accountability practices. A total of 47.4% of the participants report presently being required to implement accountability practices. The most frequently reported barrier to accountability practices was that it was "too time consuming." The most frequently reported type of assistance desired from professional organizations or university programs was training. Support was reported most frequently as the type of assistance desired from school systems. Results from other analyses are also included. Limitations, implications, and suggestions for further research are provided.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Educators, including school counselors, share accountability for student achievement (Dahir & Stone, 2003). Accountability in education entails collecting and analyzing data to confirm progress, reveal areas of concern, and determine if there's a need for change. School counselors are now feeling the pressure to show that the outcomes of their programs and services make an impact on student achievement (Astramovich & Coker, 2007). With the influx of state and national mandates such as *No Child Left Behind* (2001), school counselors have to work harder to demonstrate accountability.

School counselors and administrators are being increasingly challenged to demonstrate the effectiveness of their school counseling program in measurable terms and to identify barriers that are causing students to struggle (Young & Kaffenberger (2009). To evaluate their programs, school counselors must collect and use data that tie their program to student achievement. By using an accountability measure counselors will be able to accomplish that goal. Accountability cannot be demonstrated without data and many school counselors feel at a loss as to how to collect these data (Bauman, Siegel, & Davis, 2002).

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the degree to which school counselors were collecting data and using accountability measures and to what extent they believed certain accountability practices were deemed as helpful to their school counseling program. By knowing what type of measures are being implemented nationwide and which types of accountability practices were seen as helpful, a greater awareness was gauged into the critical issue of school counselor accountability measure usage. Also, by investigating school counselors' behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions in regard to accountability practices the field of school counseling will have a better understanding as to some of the factors involved in accountability usage. To date there has not been a study done in this area with a national sample.

Statement of the Problem

Recently there have been several national occurrences of school counselor cuts. According to the California Association of School Counselors (2010), some school districts in California have decided to eradicate or make significant cuts to their school counseling programs because of budget cuts even though mental health issues in their schools are at an all time high. This shows that there is a real need for school counselors to be able to show the value of their positions. It may be helpful for the stakeholders in these districts to be shown these data supporting why their schools are more successful because of the school counselors' work.

Minnesota is another state where the school counselors are feeling additional pressure due to legislative demands and budget issues. In recent years students with interpersonal and family problems, depression, aggressive behavior, anxiety, and ADHD have markedly risen (Fitzgerald, 2009). Roughly half of their school counselors spend

less than 10 percent focused on helping students with mental health issues. Nearly 75 percent of school counselors in Minnesota feel they are not completely supported by their school boards (Fitzgerald). In the 2006-2007 school year Minnesota's student-to-counselor ratio is more than triple the recommendation set forth by ASCA (2003), 800:1 vs. the recommended 250:1.

The school counselor's role has changed over the years. Much of the changes in the school counselor's role are a result of changes in the education world and society (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006). There is now an expectation for school counselors to be able to demonstrate their effectiveness and a push to show their impact on student achievement (Myrick, 2003).

It is seen by some to be a positive step for counties to require that school counselors implement some type of accountability measure or practice in their programs (Astromivch & Coker, 2007; Dahir & Stone, 2003; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Holcomb-McCoy, Gonzalez, & Johnston, 2009, Loesch & McRitchie, 2005). Funding for school employees who do not teach core academic subjects continues to dwindle. The school counseling field will soon be feeling these effects as well (Dahir & Stone, 2003). Because of budget cuts, legislators and other school administrators may not see the work of school counselors as an effective utilization of financial resources in regard to student achievement. By analyzing their guidance programs, school counselors can communicate and show how they contribute to student success (Dahir & Stone, 2003).

Significance of the Study

This study is significant for the field of school counseling for several reasons. First, it gauged the current level of accountability practices across multiple states and

districts. Second, this study showed if the accountability practices that school counselors are using aligned with the ASCA model (2003, 2005). Third, this study showed what accountability practices school counselors see as helpful. There has been much research discussing the reasons why school counselors do not engage in accountability practices; but little if any has been done to see which practices school counselors see as helpful. This study provides information for counselor educators and school districts to assist with planning trainings and instruction on how to implement accountability measures. Additionally, this study investigated school counselors' beliefs about their ability to implement these practices. If one does not believe they have the ability to do something, they will be less likely to engage in that activity (Bandura, 1997). Lastly this study examined if years of experience was a factor in the accountability practices of school counselors. This variable has not previously been researched with accountability practices of school counselors. Klassen and Chiu (2010) found relationships between teachers' self-esteem and years of experience. Teacher self-efficacy was highest mid-career. The same may or may not hold true for school counselor accountability practice self-efficacy.

Research Questions

The research questions in the study were expanded from those used by Edwards (2009). Her study on school counselor accountability measures focused solely on school counselors in Alabama. The questions in this present study are more specific. The following are research questions that were used with this nationwide sample.

1. What are the reasons why school counselors in the United States are collecting student data to plan and improve their school counseling programs?

2. What student achievement data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?

3. What type/s of accountability data are school counselors in the United States collecting?

4. What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?

5. What are the barriers that may prevent school counselors in the United States from using accountability practices?

6. What are the ways in which school counselors in the United States learned about accountability methods?

7. What student background data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?

8. What are the categories that school counselors in the United States are disaggregating data by?

9. What are the ways that school counselors in the United States share their accountability data?

10. To what extent do school counselors in the United States believe that they have the ability to effectively implement accountability practices?

11. For Research Questions 1-9, is there a variance in their answers between each of these groups- work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), years of experience, whether their state or district mandates accountability practices or reports, and whether they are currently participating in accountability practices?

Research Hypotheses

Due to the limited amount of research in this area, there are only two hypotheses for this study. The tentative hypotheses are as follows:

H_1: The reasons, types, barriers, and assistance needed in regard to accountability practices of school counselors in the United States will be similar to the findings of Edwards (2009).

H_0: The reasons, types, barriers, and assistance needed in regard to accountability practices of school counselors in the United States will not be similar to the findings of Edwards (2009).

H_2: Accountability practices among school counselors will vary based on their work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), years of experience, whether their state or district mandates accountability practices, and whether they are currently using accountability measures.

H_0: Accountability practices among school counselors will not vary based on their work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), years of experience, whether their state or district mandates accountability practices, and whether they are currently using accountability measures.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is based primarily on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory. Self-efficacy is a major tenet of Social Cognitive Theory and has been the focus of Bandura's work since the 1970's (Grusec, 1992). Self-efficacy refers to judgments of what we think we can and can't do and one's overall competence (Cervone, Artistico, & Berry, 2006). Self-efficacy makes a difference in the way people think and act, thus lending itself to new learning and accomplishments (Bandura, 1997).

Bandura described self-efficacy as domain specific beliefs people have about their abilities. In the postulates of self-efficacy, self-perceptions provide a framework for which information is judged (Grusec, 1992). One's general self-efficacy beliefs impact their cognitive, motivational, affective, and selection processes (Bandura, 1992). People tend to avoid activities that they believe exceed their abilities (Bandura).

Bandura (1992) described reciprocal causation between one's self (including one's beliefs and perceptions), environment, and behavior. They all influence each other simultaneously. School counselors' beliefs/perceptions toward accountability practices may influence their behavior.

This study focused on school counselors' perceptions about accountability and their accountability usage. School counselors' perceptions or beliefs about accountability are important to study because according to Bandura's theory, one's perceptions of their abilities lead to new learning and could possibly lead to learning or usage of accountability measures.

Operational Definitions of Terms

In this section the following terms will be operationally defined- accountability, American School Counselor Association, evidence-based practices, perception data, process data, and results data.

Accountability. Being responsible for performance, program implementation, and results (ASCA, 2005). School counselor accountability involves collecting analyzing, and using data to document how the school counseling program supports student success (Dahir & Stone, 2003).

American School Counselor Association (ASCA). This is the national professional organization for school counselors. They provide professional development, publications, and other resources for school counselors.

Evidence-based practices. These practices are "the intentional use of the best available evidence in planning, implementing, and evaluating school counseling interventions and programs" (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007, p. ix). Using evidence-based practices is a paradigm shift for many school counselors. It is incorporating the use of data in all phases of the school counselor's work to support their decision making (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch).

Perception data. Data that answers the question, "What do people think they know, believe, or can do?" (ASCA, 2005, p.50). For example, 85 percent of 5th graders can correctly identify the steps in conflict resolution. It can also include student, teacher, or parent attitudes and beliefs.

Process data. Data that answers the question, "What did you do for whom?" (ASCA, 2005, p. 50). This type of data will describe what services were offered. For example, conducted five eight-session study skills groups for forty-seven 8th graders.

Results data. Data that shows whether there is an impact on students who participated in a counseling activity or program (ASCA, 2005, p. 50). For example, students who participated in small group guidance improved their attendance by 10 percent.

Scope and Delimitations

The population to which generalizations can be made from this study include school counselors in the United States who are members of professional school

counseling associations. They can only safely be generalized to school counselors in elementary, middle, high school, and K-12 settings who are members of professional school counseling associations. This study has low external validity and generalizability for school counselors in other countries other than the United States, ones whom are not members of state school counseling associations, and for school counselors in settings other than those listed above.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This chapter will review the literature in the area of school counselors' accountability practices. It will begin with the accountability movement. Next the purposes of accountability practices will be explained. Then accountability research will be discussed. The initiatives affecting school counselors will be described. The ASCA model is presented next. Specific accountability measure frameworks are then detailed. Barriers to accountability practices are next discussed. After this, program evaluation is described. Lastly, a review of the literature in regard to the assistance school counselors need to increase their accountability usage is presented.

Accountability Movement

For many years the question that drove the actions and communication of school counselors was "What do school counselors do?" (Johnson & Johnson, 2003). The question guiding the school counseling profession is now, "How are students different as a result of what counselors do?" (ASCA, 2005). This question has led to the results based guidance paradigm. This new approach focuses on the student/s not the services. Johnson and Johnson (2003) describe the changes that have occurred in the area of school counseling and accountability for counties or schools that adhere to this paradigm:

1) Focus on student results. Previously students were provided with guidance services at their own or their parent's request. The difference now is that all

students are provided with a planned developmental guidance program that assures that students achieve specific competencies.

2) Accountability. School counselor accountability is now centered on student results- academic and behavioral. Traditionally, accountability for school counselors was seen as a way to tally how much time was spent on each role.
3) Teaming. School counselors have often worked as individuals in the past to meet the needs of the students they were assigned to. Presently school counselors must work with teams of teachers, counselors, and other professionals to address the needs of all students.
4) Inductively planned. Traditionally school counselors used needs assessments to design their programs. These do not always show accurate data and can often be more subjective. School counselors are now using data (research) to identify needs in their schools and programs.
5) Program evaluation. Program evaluation used to mean how many services were offered and how many students participated in the services. Program evaluation is now seen as how many students or what percentage of students demonstrate an expected outcome.
6) Counselor evaluation. Previously school counselors were evaluated based on performing a standardized list of duties. School counselors can no longer be evaluated in a one size fits all evaluation. They now should be evaluated on their success in implementing programs that achieve student results.

7) Management/leadership. School counselors are now expected to provide leadership in their school. They do this by evaluating, generating, and analyzing data in student support teams.
8) Systems oriented. School counselors now aim to be proactive in reaching all students. Previously counselors were often in crisis mode when dealing with issues as they arose (p. 182).

All of these changes should result in making the school counseling profession be seen as more accountable. These all are seen as positive steps for school counselors to be able to show their value to their stakeholders. This article by Johnson and Johnson (2003) is an example of the frequent articles in the field of school counseling that offers a new paradigm or approach of how to be more accountable. Few articles, though, are actually research based or report on what's really going on in the field from the school counselor's perspective.

Purposes of Accountability Practices

Using accountability practices can link the school counselors' program to the academic achievement of all students (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). Accountability strategies have three purposes. These are to (a) monitor student progress and close the achievement gap, (b) to assess and evaluate programs, and (c) to demonstrate school counseling program effectiveness (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009).

To monitor student progress and close achievement gaps school counselors must begin by looking at the school's data and determine where the gaps exist (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). Once the gaps are identified, a data gathering project can then be implemented. An example of this would be identifying that 8 students have 2 or more F's

on their report card in the first quarter of school, inviting them to be included in an academic success skills guidance group, and charting their grades on their next report card.

To assess and evaluate programs, school counselors need to look at the effectiveness of their existing programs (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). Although most school counseling programs have several ongoing programs, Young and Kaffenberger believe that many school counselors are not consistently evaluating their programs. Needs assessments can also be used in this area. An example of this strategy would be to evaluate a preexisting program such as an ongoing social skills program. Has this program increased the students' social skills from the teachers' or students' perspective? Do they feel that there is a need to continue the program?

To demonstrate school counseling program effectiveness, school counselors share data with stakeholders. Data can be used at this time to advocate for additional resources (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). An example of this strategy would include a school counselor sharing that their volunteer mentor program increased students' GPA and decreased their absenteeism. This would enable them to advocate for more volunteers and funds for the program.

Accountability Research

Little research has been done in the area of school counselor accountability or school counselor accountability measures. Edwards (2009) examined the extent that school counselors in Alabama were engaged in accountability practices in alignment with the ASCA National Model. Her results showed that 59% of school counselors in Alabama do not participate in accountability activities. Forty-two percent of the

participants reported needing a training, in-service, or workshop to increase their accountability practices. The greatest barriers found included the time required to implement accountability practices, their dislike of research, and concerns about the negative consequences if the data did not show favorable results (Edwards, 2009).

Recent research showing how school counselors "make a difference" has focused on comprehensive school counseling programs and how these impact student achievement. Methods of reporting accountability have also been described in the literature (Astramovich & Coker, 2007; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). These include the Accountability Bridge (Astromovich & Coker, 2007) and M.E.A.S.U.R.E. (Dahir & Stone, 2009) which are described later in this chapter. Yet there is little known about what types and the frequency that school counselors are using these practices. Edwards (2009) was the only study to research this; but it only focused on school counselors in Alabama.

Initiatives Affecting School Counseling Accountability

In recent years there have been several initiatives that have changed the school counseling field. The predominant ones, which have led to these changes, include the No Child Left Behind Act (U.S. Department of Education, 2001), the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (Educational Trust, 2007), and the ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs in 2003 (ASCA, 2003).

The purpose of the No Child Left Behind Act was to close the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers (U.S. Department of Education, 2001). One of the requirements included in this act is that schools must be using evidence-based practices to close the achievement gap. Because of NCLB, school counselors as well as

all educators must be more accountable due to the fact that federal funding is tied to these practices and school-wide academic performance (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006).

Dollarhide and Lemberger (2006) believe that with the emphasis of NCLB on the 3 R's, reading, writing, and arithmetic, the emotional and social needs of students have been "placed on the back burner if at all on the stove" (p. 300). They conducted a national survey of 210 school counselors. In their research, school counselors were found to be knowledgeable of current legislation relative to NCLB. An additional positive effect that was found was in regard to being more accountable. Due to NCLB, 9.8% of school counselors that were surveyed felt more accountable and able to share how they make a difference (Dollarhide & Lemberger). It is not stated as to whether the other 91.2% felt indifferent or if they felt less accountable.

The Transforming School Counseling Initiative's objective was to reshape school counseling. Prior to the initiative the Educational Trust conducted a national assessment of school counselor preparation. They found that it was rare for school counselors to be using data to guide their programs. The Educational Trust's vision for school counselors considers quantitative data skills to be critically important (Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007).

The Educational Trust (2007) concluded that there was little relationship between how school counselors were trained and the services they provided and noted skill deficits in the areas of leadership, advocacy, and collaboration. The initiative focused on counselor education programs that were willing to fundamentally change their programs to include the following elements:

- Diverse criteria for selection and recruitment of candidates for counselor preparation programs
- Curricular reform of content, structure, and course sequence
- New methods of instruction, field experiences, and practices
- Induction process into the profession
- Ongoing professional development for counselor educators
- University-school district partnerships
- University-state department of education partnership

This initiative also trained school counselor graduate students at six universities to close achievement gaps of low income and minority students (Educational Trust, 2007). They also received instruction in how to collaborate with stakeholders and how to use data to advocate for systematic changes. This initiative was timely due to the fact that school districts now needed to train school counselors in accountability practices (Edwards, 2009).

ASCA National Model

The ASCA National Model was created in response to the need for the National Standards for School Counseling Programs to have a framework for implementation of a comprehensive, data-driven school counseling program (ASCA, 2005). The model also includes tenets from the Transforming School Counseling Initiative (Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008). It essentially outlines how to connect school counselors' work to student achievement data.

The ASCA National Model includes four quadrants: foundation, delivery, management, and accountability. The accountability section includes 3 subsections:

results reports, school counselor performance standards, and program audit (ASCA, 2005). These areas help school counselors to evaluate their programs and to be accountable. These data will enable a school counselor to link their program to student achievement (ASCA). These are defined as:

- Results reports: Results reports include process, perception, and results data. They ensure that programs are completed, analyzed, and modified if needed. Sharing these results with the school's stakeholders will help to advocate for students and school counseling programs.
- School counselor performance standards: These include the basic standards of practice. The standards provide a basis for counselor evaluation and self-evaluation.
- Program audit: The function of a program audit is to collect information that will guide future action for the school counseling program and lead to improvements in students' results.

The ASCA National Model is a foundation from which school counselors' programs should be built (ASCA, 2005). It is based on the ASCA National Standards. The use of data and the need for accountability are weaved throughout the other 3 elements (foundation, delivery system, and management system) as well. Much research has been done suggesting the use of the ASCA National Model for school counselors; but it seems that there is not any research actually comparing this model to other models or truly testing the efficacy of this model.

Hatch and Chen-Hayes (2008) researched school counselors' beliefs about the ASCA National Model. Their sample included over 3,000 ASCA members who were

presently school counselors. This may or may not be reflective of all school counselors. The participants rated the importance of the aspects of the model. All of the items were rated as at least moderately important components to have in a school counseling program although some had large standard deviations suggesting variability among the school counselors surveyed. The item that received the highest rating of importance was having explicit goals for the school counseling program. Participants in this study believed that items related to program foundation components (mission, goals) and administrative support were more important than that of using data (Hatch & Chen-Hayes).

In response to these initiatives and mandates school counseling programs have changed (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006). The emphasis on accountability in education in general has pushed school counselors to also become more accountable (Dahir & Stone, 2009). It is crucial for school counselors to fully understand and adhere to these initiatives and mandates in order to continue to thrive as a profession.

Accountability Measure Frameworks

One reason discussed in the literature as to why school counselors have been disinterested in program evaluation thus far is the lack of models available. Two of the models prevalent in the school counseling literature are the M.E.A.S.U.R.E. program and the Accountability Bridge Model. Both of these will be discussed.

M.E.A.S.U.R.E. is a seven-step process that helps school counselors in implementing an accountability component into their program. It supports the accountability component set forth by the ASCA (American School Counseling Association) National Model (2003). M.E.A.S.U.R.E. stands for Mission, Elements,

Analyze, Stakeholders, Unite, Reanalyze, and Educate. The steps are described as follow.

Mission. In the first step the school counselor aligns their school counseling program to the mission of the school and to the goals in the school improvement plan. This step will help school counselors to be seen as an integral part of the school's leadership team.

Elements. In this step the goal is to identify critical data elements. School counselors can use existing school data or collect their own. Examples of critical data elements are attendance records, FCAT or other standardized test scores, and discipline data. Data can then be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity, or social economic status if needed.

Analyze. Analyzing critical data elements is the next step in the M.E.A.S.U.R.E. model. After the data elements are disaggregated the data must be analyzed. The analysis can be formal or informal.

Stakeholders. In the fourth step, school counselors must identify stakeholders to help. There are a variety of stakeholders available to school counselors. Possible stakeholders include teachers, administrators, school psychologists, school social workers, clerical staff, parents, community members, or the P.T.A.

Unite. Dahir and Stone (2003) describe this step as uniting to strategize. This is the step where an action plan is developed. The action plan should include their desired results, what other information is needed, the necessary strategies, resources needed, who will implement each component, a timeline, and a means for measuring its effectiveness (Dahir & Stone, 2003).

Reanalyze. The reanalyzing step enables school counselors to examine what worked and what needs to be changed or modified. This step also allows school counselors to refocus on their program and goals.

Educate. In the final step of the M.E.A.S.U.R.E. process results are publicized. Stakeholders will better understand the contributions that a school counselor makes to student success. There should also be an opportunity to celebrate success and recognize the individuals involved. This process has been shown to assist school counselors in effectively completing an accountability measure (Dahir & Stone, 2003). In Dahir and Stone's (2009) research of over 175 school counselors who implemented a M.E.A.S.U.R.E., all but two showed favorable results in positively impacting the targeted group of students.

The Accountability Bridge Model provides a framework for counselors to be able to plan, deliver, and assess their effectiveness (Astramovich & Coker, 2007). It is broken down into two cycles, a counseling program evaluation cycle and a counseling context evaluation cycle. It has an Accountability Bridge connecting the two cycles. The counseling program evaluation cycle involves program planning, program implementation, program monitoring and refinement, and outcomes assessment. At the end of this cycle (outcomes assessment) final data is collected and analyzed.

Next in the model is the Accountability Bridge. This is conceptualized as their process of communicating the results to the stakeholders. This stage can also be seen as a marketing tool. When communicating results to stakeholders, school counselors can maintain support and increase the demands for their services (Astramovich & Coker, 2007). Evaluation reports can be provided at this stage to stakeholders.

The counseling context evaluation cycle consists of feedback from stakeholders, strategic planning, needs assessment, and service objectives. Two types of objectives are described in the service objectives stage, process and outcome objectives. Process objectives are the steps needed for achieving long-term goals. Outcome objectives refer to specific competencies to be achieved (Astramovish & Coker, 2007). Once the objectives have been finalized the process then begins again. Though the Accountability Bridge Model seems of practical use for schools counselors, it does not appear to be well researched. There does not appear to have been any research involving school counselors using this model.

The Accountability Bridge Model seems to be practical and helpful as a guide for school counselors in implementing accountability. The M.E.A.S.U.R.E. process seems to be more prevalent in the literature and offers school counselors an actual outline to guide them in the process as well as offers examples of actual M.E.A.S.U.R.E.'s created by school counselors (Dahir & Stone, 2003). There surely are other frameworks for school counselors to use in their accountability practices; these were just two examples of possible frameworks for school counselors to use in their accountability implementation.

Barriers to Accountability Implementation

There have been many reasons cited supporting why counselors have not participated in accountability practices in the past. Reasons include that counselors typically receive little training to prepare them for demonstrating accountability outcomes (Whiston, 1996) counselors not seeing the connection between their skills and research (Whiston), school counselors not being held to the same accountability standards as other fields (Dahir & Stone, 2003), counselors fearing their services may be ineffective (Lusky

& Hayes, 2001), having a negative attitude towards research (Bauman, 2004), and counselors placing minimal value on evaluation activities (Loesch, 2001). Therefore, counselors may lack the knowledge and confidence to effectively collect and analyze outcome data, though little is known as to what school counselors see as helpful in being able to implement an accountability measure.

Much of the literature relating to school counseling accountability has cited the lack of school counselors' ability to evaluate their counseling services and interest in conducting this activity (Bauman et al., 2002; Hatch & Chen-Hayes, 2008; Whiston, 1996). Several reasons have been speculated as to why school counselors do not conduct accountability measures. One reason that has been discussed in the research is that conducting accountability measures requires expertise in research methods, collecting relevant data, and selecting appropriate analyses. School counselors typically receive inadequate training to prepare them for demonstrating this (Hosie, 1994)). Research has suggested that counselor education programs begin to train school counselors in accountability practices; but little has been written about how to do so (Brott, 2006).

Another reason given in the literature for school counselors not using accountability practices is their lack of confidence. Isaacs (2003) found that school counselors lack the confidence in their ability to collect, analyze, and apply findings to their professional practices. This researcher also found that school counselors with accountability skills are often hesitant to use accountability measures because of a fear of finding that their program/s may be ineffective. Fall and Van Zandt found that research "typically evokes emotional reactions of fear, anxiety, and even disdain" (p. 2) for school

counselors. This is another explanation for the lack of emphasis on research and accountability.

Holcomb-McCoy, Gonzalez, and Johnston (2009) found that 25% of the variance related to school counselor data usage was due to self-efficacy. Their research study involved 130 school counselors and focused on finding predictors of school counselor data usage. The only predictors that were found for data usage were general and counselor self-efficacy (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2009). Another reason cited in the literature is that school counselors typically receive little training to prepare them for demonstrating accountability outcomes (Whiston, 1996). This could also result in lower self-efficacy beliefs. Hatch and Chen-Hayes (2008) found that school counselors valued items related to accountability the least on their measure of perceived importance. They surveyed over 1200 ASCA members in their research on the components of the ASCA model. The three items receiving the lowest ratings were "using school data to identify achievement gaps, monitoring students' academic development, and monitoring students' personal/social development."

School counseling does not have the amount of outcome studies in the literature that other counseling fields do (Sexton, 1996). The historical assignment of clerical duties to school counselors may in part be due to their failure to conduct research that shows the effectiveness of their programs. Without research to back their value to student success, school counselors are vulnerable to external sources (school boards or administrators). Whiston (1996) suggests there would be an exponential growth of knowledge in the field of school counseling if the clinical wisdom could be more closely joined with evaluation. The school counseling profession will benefit by an increase in field-based studies.

Research and practice should complement each other and not be mutually exclusive (Whiston).

Edwards (2009) found that the greatest barriers as to why 59% of the school counselors in Alabama did not practice accountability were the amount of time required, the dislike of research, and concerns about negative consequences if the data showed unfavorable results. Her participants were 420 members of the ASCA, Alabama School Counseling Association. With the current educational mandates facing school counselors this researcher believed the results were alarming. School counselors must collect and use data to be able to show that their work impacts student achievement (Astramovich & Coker, 2007).

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation has been discussed in the school counseling literature for many years; but few studies have been conducted examining the use of program evaluation (Astramovich & Coker, 2007). Isaacs (2003) discussed program evaluation as a form of accountability. The terms program evaluation and accountability are often used interchangeably in the research. A program evaluation can provide the necessary data to provide accountability that a school counseling program is effective. It can also help counselors to analyze student progress, determine the need for systems change, and confirm progress (Johnson & Johnson, 2003).

Program evaluation in school counseling is discussed in depth by Astramovich and Coker (2007). A quote in their article drove this research. “We believe that a key shift in the profession would be to have counselors continually evaluate their programs and outcomes not because of external pressures, but from a desire to enhance client

services and to advocate for clients and the counseling profession" (p165). It is also suggests that a new perspective on the role of evaluation may help program evaluation become a standard of practice in school counseling (Astramovich & Coker, 2007).

For more than 50 years, researchers have worked on methods to study the effectiveness of counseling programs. The inaugural issue of *Professional School Counseling* began with an article pushing school counselors to "see research as an ally" (Fall & VanZandt, 1997, p. 2). Counselors not only need to collect and analyze data; but also need to disseminate it as a way to advocate for the profession. If school counselors could demonstrate that their research has found them to be effective in student's success, they would be in a better position to justify their practices (Bauman, Siegel, & Davis, 2002).

Sharing accountability for school improvement with stakeholders is a driving force in transforming the work of school counselors in our nation's schools (Dahir & Stone, 2007). School counselors should not view research and practice as mutually exclusive activities. They complement each other and are both necessary for growth in the field of school counseling. The results of merging research and practice can provide important data to the stakeholders although counselors have often felt uncomfortable with research because they viewed it as involving statistical analysis (Whiston, 1996).

Accountability measures answer questions about the effectiveness of school counseling programs. Different questions that could be answered include:

- Are the program objectives being met?
- What programs are most effective?

- What impact does the school counseling program have on student achievement?

Edwards Study

Edwards (2009) researched the extent to which school counselors were using accountability practices and what assistance they required to be able to implement these practices. This study offered a unique perspective to the field by showing what is actually going on in the field in her population. School counselors for the most part know accountability is a best practice; but how many are actually using accountability practices? Edwards began to answer this question.

Assistance needed to increase accountability measure usage. In Edwards (2009) study of 420 Alabama school counselors, 42% stated that they need training to increase the likelihood that they would collect, analyze, and share accountability data. Those that did practice accountability learned their methods from conferences (39%), their state department of education (39%), or by developing their own/collaborating with colleagues (39%). Interestingly, only 38% reported learning these skills from their university training programs. If those entering the profession have not been trained to use an accountability measure they may not be motivated to develop these skills on the job (Edwards).

Because her study included only school counselors in Alabama who were members of their state school counseling association, there still was a need for a similar study to be done on a national basis. This study did this on a national basis along with answer other questions not fully covered in the literature.

Pilot Study

A pilot study (Topdemir, 2009) regarding accountability practices and beliefs was conducted in 2008-2009. The county chosen was preparing to require accountability practices of their school counselors. This study investigated the effect that training in accountability measures had on school counselors' beliefs about accountability measures. The researcher surveyed 100 school counselors in a southeastern county of the United States. The survey looked at their professional practices in regard to using data, knowledge of accountability measures, and comfort level in analyzing data. Dependent t-tests were used to analyze the predata and postdata. The results showed that a significant positive improvement in all survey items with the exception of one.

The breakdown by school level consisted of 44 elementary school counselors, 29 middle school counselors, and 27 high school counselors. Approximately 86% of the school counselors in this county participated in the voluntary and anonymous pre-survey. Eighty-four percent were female and 16% were male, typical of the general population of school counselors in this county. Forty percent had worked as a school counselor for 13 or more years, 16% for 4-7 years, 14% for 8-12 years, and 30% for 3 years or less.

The school counselors were asked by their district supervisor to complete the online survey in reference to accountability measures and data analysis in June 2008. The participants were informed that they would be part of a research study and that the results would be used additionally to guide the training that would occur on accountability measures. The title of the survey was Data Analysis Survey for Guidance Counselors (D.A.S.G.C.). This topic was most likely an appealing one to most school counselors in the county due to the fact that it was common knowledge that they would

be being trained in the fall in how to implement an accountability measure. They were asked to complete the "pre-survey" in June and were going to be trained in and required to implement an accountability measure the following school year. They were trained in accountability practices throughout the year. At the end of the year, May 2009, they completed an accountability measure. In June 2009 the participants completed the measure a second time.

The results of the survey showed several positive effects of the accountability training and implementation (see Table 1). The results showed significant improvement at the p =.05 level for all questions with the exception of "I am involved in developing school improvement plans based on interpreting school wide data." This question showed no significant change in the results. This may have been due to not being involved in school leadership groups or because of having "too many" other duties. The areas of knowledge of accountability, comfort level with data, confidence using data, and data usage in general all showed positive gains. Although this study involved only one county, the results showed positive impact that accountability training and implementation can have on school counselors. Further research is needed in this area.

Table 1 Pilot Study Results

		SA	A	D	*SD*
I have the knowledge to conduct a data driven accountability project.	Pre	12.1%	52.5%	29.3%	6.1%
	Post	16.9%	72.3%	7.2%	3.6%
I am comfortable in analyzing data (FCAT scores, Pasco Star, etc…).	Pre	21.0%	47.0%	28.0%	4.0%
	Post	21.7%	61.4%	15.7%	1.2%
Data from my school was used when writing the 2007-2008 annual guidance plan.	Pre	10.4%	49.0%	34.4%	6.3%
	Post	18.5%	56.8%	24.7%	0.0%
I feel confident in my ability to analyze data that identify patterns of student achievement.	Pre	13.0%	57.0%	25.0%	5.0%
	Post	17.1%	67.1%	14.6%	1.2%
I feel confident in my ability to analyze data that identify patterns of student behavior.	Pre	14.0%	59.0%	22.0%	5.0%
	Post	15.7%	71.1%	12.0%	1.2%
I am able to define a measureable objective.	Pre	23.5%	64.3%	11.2%	1.0%
	Post	26.5%	66.3%	7.2%	0.0%
I know how to use technology designed to support student success (TERMS, Pasco Star, etc…)	Pre	14.0%	58.0%	25.0%	3.0%
	Post	17.1%	61.0%	20.7%	1.2%
I am involved in developing school improvement plans based on interpreting school-wide data.	Pre	10.2%	39.8%	44.9%	5.1%
	Post	12.3%	38.3%	43.2%	6.2%

Number of professional journals read regularly Pre 14.3% (3+) 50.0% (1-2) 35.7% (0)
Post 13.6% (3+) 59.3% (1-2) 27.2% (0)

Critical Analysis of the Literature

How school counselors can show their accountability is a theme guiding much of the recent school counseling literature. There are many researchers discussing the need for accountability (ASCA, 2005; Astramovich & Coker, 2007; Bauman, 2004; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Dimmitt, Carey, & Hatch, 2007; Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006; Edwards, 2009; Isaacs, 2003; Loesch & McRitchie, 2005; Lusky & Hayes; 2001; Whiston, 1996; and Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). Because of recent initiatives, such as NCLB, it is clear that school counselors do need to show how students are positively affected because of what they do. The missing piece in the school counseling literature, though, appears to be that few articles on school counselor accountability are actually research-based.

Dahir and Stone's (2009) research included 175 school counselors who all implemented an accountability measure. Positive growth was seen in all but two cases. Much of their research has been on how to implement their M.E.A.S.U.R.E. model. This appears to be the most popular model discussed in the literature. This type of research, though, only focuses on school counselors who have and are open to implementing an accountability measure. What about those who are not practicing accountability or are facing barriers in being able to implement one?

Edwards (2009) researched the extent to which school counselors in Alabama were using accountability practices and what assistance they required to be able to implement these practices. The current study addressed the limitation of generalizability by including a national and more diverse sample. This study also took the analyses used in Edwards (2009) a step further by including Pearson Product Moment Correlations and ANOVAs.

Purely being accountable doesn't inherently make the best school counselor. However, according to Loesch and Ritchie (2005), "all the best school counselors are accountable and any school counselor who is accountable is, at very least, a better school counselor" (p. 126). The number of stakeholder groups that school counselors must be accountable to are increasing and it makes sense for all school counselors to be aware and to respond to this trend (Loesch & Ritchie, 2005).

This study addressed the factors associated with school counselor accountability. Most school counselors realize that accountability is now considered a best practice; but how many are really using these practices? This study explored these practices with a

national sample, which had not been done previously. It also provided school counselors "a voice" regarding their assistance needed and perceived barriers.

Chapter 3

Methodology

In this chapter the research questions and research design will be presented. A description of the participants, the instrument being used, and the study's procedures will be explained. A data analysis plan of the study will be provided. Lastly, limitations of this study will be discussed.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding this study were expanded on from the ones Edwards (2009) used in her research with Alabama school counselors. Additional questions were added to provide more information. The questions were clarified after the pilot study. Research questions were also revised for this study to make them more specific. The questions used in Edwards' research were

1. Are school counselors in Alabama collecting, analyzing, and using student achievement and related data to plan and improve school counseling programs?

2. What data-driven school counseling initiatives are school counselors in Alabama implementing?

3. What assistance do school counselors in Alabama need to collect, analyze, and present accountability data about their school counseling program (Edwards, 2009).

Edward's research on accountability practices did not analyze possible interactions between accountability practices and other variables. The current study

attempted to take Edwards' study a step further and look at possible variance and/or interactions between accountability practices and work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), number of years as a school counselor, whether their state or district requires accountability practices, and whether they are presently participating in accountability practices. The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. What are the reasons why school counselors in the United States are collecting student data to plan and improve their school counseling programs?

2. What student achievement data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?

3. What type/s of accountability data are school counselors in the United States collecting?

4. What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?

5. What are the barriers that may prevent school counselors in the United States from using accountability practices?

6. What are the ways in which school counselors in the United States learned about accountability methods?

7. What student background data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?

8. What are the categories that school counselors in the United States are disaggregating data by?

9. What are the ways that school counselors in the United States share their accountability data?

10. To what extent do school counselors in the United States believe that they have the ability to implement accountability practices?

11. For research questions 1-9, is there a variance in their answers between each of these groups- a) work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), b) years of experience, c) whether their state or district mandates accountability practices or reports, and d) whether they are currently participating in accountability practices?

Research Hypotheses

Based on the previous studies, the current study has two hypotheses:

1. The reasons, types, barriers, and assistance needed in regard to accountability practices of school counselors in the United States will be similar to the findings of Edwards (2009).

2. Accountability practices among school counselors will vary based on their work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), years of experience, whether their state or district mandates accountability practices, and whether they are currently using accountability measures.

Research Design

In Edwards' study, a cross-sectional survey design was most appropriate to examine the accountability practices of Alabama's school counselors. The same research design was used in this study but was extended to analyze possible relationships between the variables. A mixed methods study was chosen because it added breadth and depth to understanding the topic (Onwuegbuzie, Bustamante, & Nelson, 2010). The mixed methods approach has emerged in the last decade and is now seen as the third major research approach (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). Descriptive statistics were used to

describe the data collected. This study analyzed the accountability practices of school counselors in the United States based on their answers to each of the independent variables (work setting, years of experience, state requirement, and current usage).

Participants

In order to yield generalizeable results and a high external validity, a variety of school counseling associations were contacted to participate in this study. Participants were obtained from state counseling associations. State associations agreed to either post the survey on their home page, on a discussion board, or to e-mail the survey link to their members. ASCA was also contacted for possible participation; but declined to participate. State organizations that did not respond to the first request to participate in this survey were contacted a second time to ask for their member participation. The states' organizations were provided with the survey link to review and a letter for the participants. School counselors from a total of 15 school counseling associations participated. Table 5 displays the sample demographics.

In Edwards' (2009) study of Alabama school counselors, a response rate of 44% was obtained. Her survey link was sent via e-mail to Alabama's listserv. Although there are many variables to take into consideration, replicating this study on a larger scale produced a smaller response rate. The response rate for this study was approximately 10%. This rate is an approximate estimate due to the fact that many of the states did not provide the number of members in their association. Those that did provide this information were calculated and 10% was the average response rate. Most states that participated posted the survey link on their website versus sending it via their listserv.

The location on the discussion board on the website and the ease to find it may also have been a factor in the lower response rate. The survey link was active for 30 days.

Instruments

Edwards (2009) did not find an existing instrument for measuring school counselor accountability so she created a survey that aligned with the ASCA National Model. During this study's literature review the same held true (i.e., that no instrument for measuring school counselor accountability exists). Edwards' School counselor Accountability Practices Questionnaire (SCAPQ) was revised based on the pilot study, literature review, and expert reviewers for this study. The original survey consisted of 13 questions and was used to answer the three research questions in the study. The SCAPQ does not have any pre-existing reliability or validity information.

This instrument was divided into three sections (see Appendix A). Section 1 includes 10 demographic questions. Section 2 includes nine global questions. Nine domains were created for the global items. Section 3 includes a total of 13 specific questions which correlate with the global questions.

Additional questions were added. Demographic Question Number 4, "Does your state or district require you to use accountability practices?" was added. This question was used as one of the independent variables in the study. Being able to compare the groups of school counselors who do and do not use accountability measures and by analyzing how this variable affects the rest of the answers on the survey was beneficial information for the field and possibly showed differences and interactions among the questions. Other demographic questions were added to provide additional information.

Additional sub questions were added to number eight in Section 3. This included presentation to school staff and presentation to parents or P.T.A. These were included due to the strong recommendation in the literature on school counselor accountability measures to suggest that school counselors should be sharing their accountability findings with their school's stakeholders (ASCA, 2003, Dahir & Stone, 2003; Dahir & Stone, 2009; Loesch & Ritchie, 2005; Young & Kaffenberger, 2009).

Question Number 9 in Section 3 was added to help answer research Question Number 4, "What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?" Although Questions 12 and 13 also address the same research question, those questions are open-ended. Question nine offered suggestions or options to choose from. The items listed in question nine came from the literature in this area (Edwards, 2009; Hosie, 1994; Whiston, 1996).

Question Number 1 asked if the participant was currently a practicing school counselor. If they responded "no", it asked them to "please stop here, you are not eligible for this survey." In the various school counseling associations a small percentage of the members who may have attempted to take the survey may be either have been retired school counselors, professors, or others who have an interest in school counseling but are not school counselors. This question increased the internal validity by screening the potential participants.

Questions 7, 8, and 10 are demographic questions that were used to analyze possible correlations or interactions. These included questions which asked about the participants' current work setting, years of experience, if their state or district mandates accountability practices, and if they are presently using accountability practices.

All of the global questions in Section 2 and Specific Questions 1 through 10 in Section 3 used a Likert type scale. The options were the same for all of them and have not been changed from Edwards' (2009) options. These include the choices of "not at all," "sometimes," "frequently," "often," and "always." Table 4 shows the alignment of the global and specific questions with the research question they answer.

Research Question Number ten, "to what extent do school counselors believe they have the ability to use accountability practices?" was answered by specific Question Number ten. This question was added due to the importance of looking at school counselor beliefs, given that beliefs influence behavior (Bandura, 1997). It did not have a global question connected to it.

Validity. Six school counselors were given the survey for an initial survey review. Each of the six school counselors has been in the field for 10 or more years. Their knowledge and background with accountability practices varied from having been exposed to accountability practices recently to being very knowledgeable in the area. They were asked to give feedback about the survey and questions. They were asked to give feedback on anything that was unclear, any additional options they believe should be included, or any other information they felt was pertinent. Saturation was reached with the six school counselors. Their feedback was positive and there were not any unclear items.

Additionally one Supervisor of Guidance Services was given the survey for the purpose of giving feedback about the construct validity of the survey. This supervisor has been involved in training guidance staff in the use of accountability measures and was able to provide feedback about this construct. The supervisor believed this survey had

strong construct validity. This assessed the extent to which the items appear relevant and important (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010).

Pilot study. Edwards (2009) did not conduct any type of reliability analyses on her original survey. Test-retest reliability was conducted on this version of the survey during a pilot study. It was given to 20 school counselors to take twice, two weeks apart. This provided an estimate of the reliability of the survey. If there appeared to be a low test-retest reliability score, the school counselors would have been contacted by the researcher. They would have been asked if there were questions that were not clear and to provide feedback about the survey instrument.

Reliability

Three types of reliability analyses were conducted in this survey. Inter-rater reliability was used for Questions 11 through 13 (see Appendices D-F for coding). These questions were qualitative in nature and were open-ended. After the answers to these questions were coded into groups or themes, an expert in the area of school counseling also coded the responses to check for inter-rater reliability. Categories were given to the expert for assistance in coding the responses. Test-retest reliability was used with a sample in a pilot test. A Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal reliability consistency.

Pilot Study

Pilot Study 2010. An initial pilot study was conducted with this instrument. Six school counselors also provided feedback as to the survey constructs and understandability. This provided information as to whether there were any items that were unclear or had a low reliability.

A test-retest reliability was conducted with a pilot study sample. The purpose of this study was to gauge if there were any survey questions with low reliability and to see if there were any unclear questions. Twenty school counselors from one county participated and completed the instrument two weeks apart. The only items that were not able to be computed were those that asked about "other" practices (Questions 1g, 3f, 4g, 6i, 8g, & 9h). Only one participant answered each of those items. Item number 5h asked about "other" practices; but not enough participants ($N = 4$) completed the item to obtain a reliability coefficient. For all items except for those mentioned above the sample was N = 20.

All items reached statistical significance at either the .01 or .05 level. The reliability coefficients ranged from .509-.962. Almost all of the items were significant at the $p < .01$ level. The items that were significant only at the .05 level were Questions Number 1a, 4e, and 8f. It should be noted that specific Question Number 10, "To what extent do you believe you have the ability to effectively use accountability practices?" was added to the instrument after this pilot study was conducted. Table 2 provides these results.

The constructs used in this survey (i.e., beliefs, professional practices) are ones that would be expected to slightly vary over time because they are not stable characteristics. Thus it is acceptable to have slightly lower reliability coefficients when measuring unstable characteristics (Field, 2009). It should also be noted that the school counselors in this pilot study had just completed a mandatory accountability measure within a month of taking the measure. This may have impacted the results.

Table 2 Test-retest Reliability

Global question	r	Global question	r	Global question	r
1	.858**	4	.867**	7	.762**
2	.783**	5	.798**	8	.855**
3	.791**	6	.842**	9	.794**
Specific question	r	Specific question	r	Specific question	r
1a	.547*	4f	.808**	7b	.866**
1b	.876**	5a	.868**	7c	.651**
1c	.727**	5b	.939**	7d	.841**
1d	.884**	5c	.962**	7e	.890**
1e	.821**	5d	.823**	7f	.889**
1f	.663**	5e	.835**	8a	.839**
2a	.943**	5f	.959**	8b	.934**
2b	.797**	5g	.959**	8c	.586**
2c	.902**	5h	.870**	8d	.909**
3a	.813**	6a	.843**	8e	.892**
3b	.882**	6b	.879**	8f	.509*
3c	.907**	6c	.885**	9a	.576**
3d	.887**	6d	.885**	9b	.763**
3e	.683**	6e	.811**	9c	.840**
4a	.801**	6f	.908**	9d	.874**
4b	.813**	6g	.899**	9e	.907**
4c	.948**	6h	.907**	9f	.944**
4d	.783**	7a	.813**	9g	.849**
4e	.560*				

**= Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
*= Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).
A= Correlation cannot be computed

An additional six school counselors provided feedback as to the survey's constructs, understandability, and ease in completing. Their feedback was positive and there were not any unclear items. Due to the moderate to high level of item reliability and the feedback from the six school counselors, survey items were not altered after the pilot study.

Internal Consistency Reliability

A Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency reliability. The 54 specific questions were analyzed. The results showed that $a = .93$. This result shows a high level of internal consistency among the items. The items on this survey can be seen

as closely related due to this high reliability index (Field, 2009). The reliability of the subscales was also calculated (see Table 3). The results ranged from *a* = .74 - .91.

Table 3 Internal Consistency Reliability

Overall instrument reliability	.93
Subscale reliabilities	
Barriers	.74
Types of data	.77
Reasons for accountability	.78
How accountability was learned	.74
Achievement data	.91
Background data	.91
Categories data is disaggregated by	.87
How accountability data is shared	.86
Assistance needed	.90

Correlations Between Global and Specific Items

For the purpose of survey development Pearson r Correlations were conducted. One was conducted for each of the global (general) questions to see if they were correlated with the specific questions of the same theme. Table 4 shows the correlations.

Correlations for Global Question 1. For the first correlation global Question Number 1, "To what extent do you have a particular reason/s for collecting accountability

data?" was analyzed with the subquestions of specific Question Number 3. There were positive correlations at the $p < .01$ level between this global question and all of the specific subquestions ($r = .412$, $r = .524$, $r = .284$, $r = .340$, and $r = .305$. The subquestion with the highest correlation to the global item was "program planning and improvement, $r = .524$, $p < .01$. No negative correlations were found

Correlations for Global Question 2. The correlations for global Question Number 2, "To what extent do you use student achievement data for accountability purposes?" was analyzed with subquestions of specific Question Number 5. There were positive correlations at the $p < .01$ level between this global question and all of the specific subquestions ($r = .655$, $r = .489$, $r =. = .308$, $r = .499$, $r = .469$, $r = .291$, $r = .340$. The subquestion with highest correlation to the global item was standardized test scores, $r = .655$, $p < .01$. No negative correlations were found.

Correlations for Global Question 3. The correlations for global Question 3, "To what extent do you use student background data (e.g. discipline referrals or absenteeism) for accountability purposes?" were analyzed with the subquestions from Specific Question 6. There were positive correlations at the $p < .01$ level between this global question and all of the specific subquestions, $r = .212$, $r = .544$, $r = .488$, $r = .412$, $r = .600$, $r = .452$, $r = .383$, and $r = .386$. The highest correlation with the global item was parent or guardian involvement, $r = .600$, $p < .01$. No negative correlations were found.

Correlations for Global Question 4. The correlations for Global Question 4, "To what extent do you categorize student data (e.g. race or gender)?" were analyzed with the subquestions from Specific Question 7. There were positive correlations at the $p < .01$

level between this global question and all of the specific subquestions, $r = .599$, $r = .581$, $r = .522$, $r = .424$, $r = .238$, and $r = .343$. The highest correlation with the global item was race/ethnicity, $r = .599$, $p < .01$. No negative correlations were found.

Correlations for Global Question 5. The correlations for Global Question 5, "To what extent do you collect data?" were analyzed with the subquestions from Specific Question 2. There were positive correlations at the $p < .01$ level between this global question and all of the specific subquestions, $r = .301$, $r = .251$, and $r = .445$. The highest correlation with the global item was perception data, $r = .445$, $p < .01$. No negative correlations were found.

Correlations for Global Question 6. The correlations for Global Question 6, "To what extent do you find ways that would help you to increase your accountability practices (e.g. training, extra time)?" were analyzed with the subquestions from Specific Question 9. There were significant positive correlations at the $p < .01$ level between this global question and three out of the seven specific subquestions. These three were a professional association conference, $r = .162$, having a peer mentor, $r = .162$, and a university course $r = .161$. No negative correlations were found.

Correlations for Global Question 7. The correlations for Global Question 7, "To what extent do you feel there are barriers preventing you from practicing accountability?" were analyzed with the subquestions from Specific Question 1. There were significant positive correlations at the $p < .01$ level between this global question and two out of six specific subquestions. These two were unfamiliarity with accountability procedures $r = .166$ and too time consuming $r = .349$. No negative correlations were found.

Correlations for Global Question 8. The correlations for Global Question 8, "To what extent did you learn about accountability practices from a particular way/s?" were analyzed with the subquestions from Specific Question 4. There were positive correlations at the $p < .01$ level between this global question and all of the specific subquestions, $r = .364$, $r = .263$, $r = .456$, $r = .478$, $r = .271$, and $r = .257$. The highest correlation with the global item was professional conference, $r = .478$, $p < .01$. No negative correlations were found.

Correlations for Global Question 9. The correlations for Global Question 9, "To what extent do you use a particular way/s to share your accountability data?" were analyzed with the subquestions from Specific Question 8. There were positive correlations at the $p < .01$ level between this global question and all of the specific subquestions, $r = .588$, $r = .359$, $r = .484$, $r = .416$, $r = .322$, and $r = .228$. The highest correlation with the global item was formal report to administrators, $r = .588$, $p < .01$. No negative correlations were found.

Table 4 Correlations for Global Question and Subquestions

Global Question	Sub question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Reasons	.412**	.524**	.284**	.340**	.305**			
2	Achievement data	.655**	.489**	.308**	.499**	.469**	.291**	.340**	
3	Background data	.212**	.544**	.488**	.412**	.600**	.452**	.383**	.386**
4	Categorize data	.599**	.581**	.522**	.424**	.238**	.343**		
5	Collect data	.301**	.251**	.445**					
6	Assistance	.104	.162**	.162**	.117	.108	.108	.161**	
7	Barriers	.166**	.064	.349**	.100	.051	.079		
8	Learn	.364**	.263**	.456**	.478**	.271**	.257**		
9	Share data	.588**	.359**	.484**	.416**	.322**	.228**		

Note. ** Correlation significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
Note. Refer to Table 4 Alignment of Research, Global, and Specific Questions for alignment of global and specific questions.

Procedures

After approval from the University of South Florida Institutional Review Board, school counselors were invited to participate in this study. State school counseling associations that agreed to participate in this study were sent a survey link to review. Upon their acceptance of the survey, the organizations agreed to post the link on their discussion board, post the link on their website/home page, or send an e-mail with the link to the members on their listserv. If they chose to post the survey link, they were

asked to keep the link on their site until I contacted them. Depending on the date the survey link was posted, the link was on the websites from 21-27 days. No incentive was offered for their participation. The survey was created through Survey Monkey. This is an online survey tool. The participants' identities remained anonymous. For those state organizations using an e-mail with the link, they were asked to send a follow-up e-mail to members approximately two weeks after the first e-mail invitation to complete the survey.

Data Analysis Plan

Data were retrieved from the Survey Monkey online tool. It is used to collect and minimally analyze quantitative data. Once the data were retrieved the responses to the global and specific items were coded as either 0 (*not at all*), 1 (*sometimes*), 2 (*frequently*), 3 (*often*), or 4 (*always*).

Descriptive statistics were used to describe all of the survey questions. The mean, median, standard deviation, kurtosis, and skewness were obtained. SPSS was used to analyze the data in this study.

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations were computed between the specific items in Section 3 and their global items in Section 2 of the survey. This was done for Questions 1-9 in the global questions section (second section) and the specific questions section (third section). This showed the strength of the relationship, if any, between the global and specific items. The purpose of these correlations was to assist in instrument development.

A series of ANOVA's were conducted to compare the means among groups. For example, to compare the means of those school counselors at the different school levels

and what they feel would be helpful in implementing accountability. The ANOVA's were conducted for all Questions 1-9 in the global questions section and for Questions 1-10 in the specific questions section.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was that it only involved school counselors who were members of professional associations. Members of these associations may be more involved in professional development or may be more knowledgeable about accountability practices. Accountability has been a popular topic at many of the professional associations' conferences and workshops including ASCA's 2010 Annual Conference. The results in this study are only generalizable to school counselors in professional associations.

This study used mixed methods, incorporating elements of qualitative and quantitative methods. The threats to internal validity will be discussed. One possible threat to internal validity is other research and data mandates set forth by the individual counties or schools. For example, in some counties not only are the school counselors required to implement an accountability measure; but they are also part of the R.T.I. (Response To Intervention) movement and training. Other counties may have had similar concurrent movements and trainings occurring which could have confounded the data. The researcher attempted to control for these extraneous variables by asking the question, "Does your state or district mandate the use of accountability practices?" School counselors who are heavily involved in similar trainings may have shown higher levels of accountability practices.

Another possible limitation was relocation, for example, if a school counselor had previously been in a county that required accountability measures; but now they were in a county that does not, they may have been more similar to school counselors that are currently required to implement accountability practices.

The role of the school counselor is changing and the need to be more accountable is now here. This study attempted to answer several critical questions regarding school counselor accountability. The information gained from this study will add to the literature in this area and provide greater awareness of the perceptions and beliefs school counselors hold, their actual practices, their needs, and barriers in regard to accountability practices.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which school counselors were collecting data, using accountability measures, to what extent they felt barriers, to determine what assistance they needed, and what their perceived self-efficacy beliefs were. By knowing what type of measures and other accountability practices were being implemented nationwide, a greater awareness was gauged into the critical issue of school counselor accountability measure usage. The research questions for this study were as follow:

1. What are the reasons why school counselors in the United States are collecting student data to plan and improve their school counseling programs?

2. What student achievement data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?

3. What type/s of accountability data are school counselors in the United States collecting?

4. What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?

5. What are the barriers that may prevent school counselors in the United States from using accountability practices?

6. What are the ways in which school counselors in the United States learned about accountability methods?

7. What student background data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?

8. What are the categories that school counselors in the United States are disaggregating data by?

9. What are the ways that school counselors in the United States share their accountability data?

10. To what extent do school counselors in the United States believe that they have the ability to implement accountability practices?

11. For Research Questions 1-9, is there a variance in their answers between each of these groups- work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), years of experience, whether their state or district mandates accountability practices or reports, and whether they are currently participating in accountability practices?

In this chapter, the sample demographics are discussed. Next descriptive statistics and other statistical results are included. Qualitative analyses are then presented descriptively and in tables, the hypotheses are discussed, and lastly a summary of the chapter.

Present Study Sample

Table 5 displays the sample demographic results. Three hundred and seventy-five individuals participated in this study. Of those 367 (98.4%) responded that they were currently a practicing school counselor and 6 (1.6%) responded that they were not currently practicing (see Table 6). Two participants skipped this question. A total of 316

(85.6%) were female and 53 (14.4%) were male. Six participants skipped this question. The ethnic background of the participants consisted of the following: 316 (85.6%) were Caucasian, 36 (9.8%) were African American, 8 (2.2%) were Hispanic, 3 (0.8%) were Asian, 2 (0.5%) were of mixed racial background, and 4 (1.1%) chose "other" as their ethnic background. Six participants skipped this question. One hundred and nine (29.8%) of the participants had been a school counselor for 1-5 years, 97 (28.5%) for 6-10 years, 86 (23.5%) for 15+ years, and 74 (20.2%) for 11-15 years. Nine participants skipped this question. The breakdown by geographic region included 153 (41.7%) from the Midwest, 123 (33.5%) from the Southeast, 87 (23.7%) from the Northeast, 4 (1.1%) from the Southwest, and no participants from the West. Eight participants skipped this question.

The participants were also asked demographic questions about their schools. One hundred forty-seven (40.8%) participants described their school setting as suburban, 124 (34.4%) as rural, 76 (21.2%) as urban, 13 (3.6%) as "other." Fifteen participants skipped this question. Approximately half of the participants 189 (53.1%) worked in Title I schools and 167 (46.9%) worked in non Title I funded schools. Nineteen participants skipped this question. The work setting demographic for this study was 123 (33.9%) worked in a high school, 107 (29.5%) in an elementary school, 99 (27.3%) in a middle school, 8 (2.2%) in a K-12 school, and 26 (7.2%) in a setting described as "other." Twelve participants skipped this question.

The participants were asked two demographic questions regarding accountability. One hundred seventy-three (47.4%) of the participants are required to use accountability practices and 192 (52.6%) are not required to do so. Ten participants skipped this

question. At the time of the survey, 254 (70.2%) were using accountability practices and 108 (29.8%) were not. Thirteen participants skipped this question.

Table 5 Sample Demographics

Characteristic	*N*	%	M.D.
Currently practicing			2
Yes	367	98.4	
No	6	1.6	
Gender			6
Female	316	85.6	
Male	53	14.4	
Ethnicity			6
Caucasian	316	85.6	
African American	36	9.8	
Hispanic	8	2.2	
Asian	3	0.8	
Mixed background	2	0.5	
Other	4	1.1	
Geographic Region			8
Midwest	153	41.7	
Southeast	123	33.5	
Northeast	87	23.7	
Southwest	4	1.1	
West	0	0	
School setting			15
Suburban	147	40.8	
Rural	124	34.4	
Urban	76	21.1	
Other	13	3.6	
Title I funded			19
Yes	189	53.1	
No	167	46.9	
School level			12
High School	123	33.9	
Elementary	107	29.5	
Middle School	99	27.3	
K-12	8	2.2	
Other	26	7.2	
Years of experience			9
1-5	109	29.8	
6-10	97	26.5	
11-15	74	20.2	
15+	86	23.5	
Required to use accountability			10
Yes	173	47.4	
No	192	52.6	
Currently using accountability			13
Yes	254	70.2	

No	108	29.8	

M.D. = Missing Data

Research Questions

For ease in interpreting this chapter, Table 6, Alignment of Research, Global, and Specific Questions, is provided below to assist with determining which global and specific questions were aligned to the same topic. This should assist with understanding the analyses provided in this chapter.

Table 6 Alignment of Research, Global, and Specific Questions

	Research question and number	Global question	Specific question
1	What are the reasons why school counselors in the United States are collecting student data to plan and improve their school counseling programs?	1	3
2	What student achievement data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?	2	5
3	What type/s of accountability data are school counselors in the United States collecting?	5	2
4	What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?	6	9, 11, 12
5	What are the barriers that may prevent school counselors in the United States from using accountability practices?	7	1
6	What are the ways in which school counselors in the United States learned about accountability methods?	8	4
7	What student background data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?	3	6
8	What are the categories that school counselors in the United States are disaggregating data by?	4	7
9	What are the ways that school counselors in the United States share their accountability data?	9	8
10	To what extent do school counselors in the United States believe that they have the ability to implement accountability practices?	10	NA
11	For Research Questions 1-9, is there a variance in their answers between each of these groups- work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), years of	NA	1-9

experience, whether their state or district mandates accountability practices or reports, and whether they are currently participating in accountability practices?

To answer the research questions all global and specific items were coded as 0= not at all, 1= *sometimes*, 2= *frequently*, 3= *often*, 4= *always*. For each category the number (*N*) of participants and the corresponding percentage are given in each table below the description (Tables 7-16). For the skewness and kurtosis the statistic and the standard error (in parentheses) are given.

Question 1**.** Research Question 1 of this study was "What are the reasons why school counselors in the United States are collecting student data to plan and improve their school counseling programs?" Specific Question Number 3 asked this question. The most common reason chosen was for program planning and improvement (M = 2.0), followed by personal choice for professional growth (M = 1.62), supervisor or principal requirement (M = 1.20), district/central office requirement (M = 1.18), and lastly state department of education requirement (M = .92). For this question skewness showed that the majority of the data was centered to the left. The normal limits given the sample size for the skew would be between -.28 to .28. All items fall beyond this range except for "program planning and improvement." This is due to the fact that there are more lower valued responses. The kurtosis for all items except for "state department of education" shows that most of the values are concentrated in the tail of the distribution. All values are within the normal kurtosis limits (-2.0 to 2.0).

Table 7 Research Question 1

	0	1	2	3	4	M.D.	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Program planning and improvement	14 5.2%	83 30.6%	92 33.9%	54 19.9%	28 10.3%	101	2.0	1.06	.27(.15)	-.63(.30)
Personal choice for pro. growth	41 15%	108 39.6%	55 20.1%	52 19%	17 6.2%	99	1.62	1.14	.43(.15)	-.72(.30)
Supervisor or principal requirement	88 32.4%	91 33.5%	53 19.5%	30 11.0%	10 3.7%	100	1.20	1.12	.71(.15)	-.32(.30)
District/central office requirement	96 35.3%	86 31.6%	49 18%	28 10.3%	13 4.8%	100	1.18	1.16	.79(.15)	-.25(.30)
State Dept. of Ed. requirement	127 47.4%	79 29.5%	29 10.8%	22 8.2%	11 4.1%	104	.92	1.13	.1.19(.15)	.55(.30)

M.D.= Missing data

Question 2. Research Question Number 2 was "What student achievement data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?" The student achievement data that school counselors report most frequently is standardized test scores (M = 2.01), followed by passing all classes (M = 1.71), promotion and retention rates (M = 1.63), grade point averages (M = 1.61), graduation rates (M = 1.20), completion of a specific academic program (M = 1.09), and lastly dropout rates (M = 1.06). The skew for this question shows that most of the scores are slightly off to the left except for "standardized test scores." Promotion and retention rates, graduation rates, completion of a specific program, and dropout rates are beyond the upper limit of a "normal skew." The kurtosis shows that the scores are primarily centered in the tail versus the peak in all questions. All scores are within the normal kurtosis range.

Table 8 Research Question 2

	0	1	2	3	4	M.D.	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Standardized test scores	36 13.3%	61 22.6%	71 26.3%	67 24.8%	35 13%	102	2.01	1.24	-.04(.15)	-.98(.30)
Passing all classes	57 21.2%	73 27.1%	61 22.7%	48 17.8%	30 11.2%	103	1.71	1.29	.28(.15)	-1.01(.30)
Promotion and retention rates	61 22.6%	77 28.5%	59 21.9%	46 17%	27 10%	102	1.63	1.28	.35(.15)	-.95(.30)
Grade point average	67 24.8%	68 25.2%	59 21.9%	55 20.4%	21 7.8%	102	1.61	1.27	.26(.15)	-1.06(.30)
Graduation rates	126 46.8%	42 15.6%	47 17.5%	28 10.4%	26 9.7%	103	1.20	1.38	.77(.15)	-.73(.30)
Completion of a spec. program	125 47%	54 20.3%	43 16.2%	27 10.2%	17 6.4%	106	1.09	1.27	.90(.15)	-.37(.30)
Dropout rates	138 51.5%	45 16.8%	39 14.6%	24 9%	22 8.2%	104	1.06	1.33	.98(.15)	-.32(.30

M.D.= Missing data

Question 3. Research Question 3 was "What type/s of accountability data are school counselors in the United States collecting?" Process data had the highest reported use (M = 1.79), followed by results data (M = 1.44), and then perception data (M = 1.31). There is a slight skew to the left (towards lower values). All of the skewness scores indicate that the results are significantly skewed. The kurtosis shows that the scores are slightly more centered in the tail of the distribution, but are within the normal range.

Table 9 Research Question 3

	0	1	2	3	4	M.D.	*M*	*SD*	skewness	kurtosis
Process data	41	85	71	36	37	102	1.79	1.25	.36(.15)	-.84 (.30)
	15.2%	31.5%	26.3%	13.3%	13.7%					
Results data	52	111	55	39	13	101	1.44	1.10	.58(.15)	-.41 (.30)
	19.3%	41.1%	20.4%	14.4%	4.8%					
Perception data	59	113	63	29	7	102	1.31	1.01	.59(.15)	-.15 (.30)
	21.8%	41.7%	23.2%	10.7%	2.6%					

M.D.= Missing data

Question 4. Research Question Number 4 was "What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?" The item that school counselors believed would be most helpful was extra time to implement accountability practices (M = 2.65), followed by examples of accountability measure implementation (M = 2.49), a professional association conference session on accountability (M = 2.18), having a peer mentor available for assistance/questions (M = 2.05), a district training in accountability (M = 2.02), supervision (M = 1.74), and lastly a university course in accountability (M = 1.61). The questions in this section show very little skew, with the exception of extra time, supervision, and university course having a slight skew. These three items had a skew beyond the normal limits. This was due to extra time having more higher valued responses and supervision and university course having more lower valued responses. This group of questions showed a high negative kurtosis indicating the scores were much more centered in the tail of the distribution due to the scores being more evenly dispersed than many of the other items on the survey.

Research Question 4 was also answered using the qualitative data collected. Survey Questions Number 12 and 13, "What assistance could your professional

organizations or university training programs provide that would increase the likelihood that you collect, analyze, and present accountability data about your school counseling program?" and "What assistance could your school system provide that would increase the likelihood that you collect, analyze, and present accountability data about your school counseling program?" were also used to analyze these results by school level. The results of these analyses are presented below in Table 10.

Table 10 Research Question 4 Quantitative Data

	0	1	2	3	4	*M*	M.D.	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Extra time	9 3.4%	41 15.3%	67 25%	69 25.7%	82 30.6%	2.65	104	1.16	-.40(.15)	- .87(.30
Examples	9 3.4%	50 18.8%	79 29.7%	57 21.4%	71 26.7%	2.49	106	1.17	-.15(.15)	-1.03(.30)
Association conf. session	10 3.7%	80 30%	77 28.8%	52 19.5%	48 18%	2.18	105	1.16	.20(.15)	-1.03(.30)
Peer mentor	22 8.1%	87 32.2%	66 24.4%	45 16.7%	50 18.5%	2.05	102	1.25	.23(.15)	-1.07(.30)
District training	31 11.6%	84 31.3%	54 20.1%	47 17.5%	52 19.4%	2.02	104	1.32	.17(.15)	-1.19(.30)
Supervision	39 14.7%	95 35.7%	63 23.7%	34 12.8%	35 13.2%	1.74	106	1.24	.46(.15)	-.77(.30)
University course	62 23.3%	81 30.5%	56 21.1%	34 12.8%	33 12.4%	1.61	106	1.31	.47(.15)	-.88(.30)

M.D.= Missing data

Question 5. Research Question Number 5 was "What are the barriers that may prevent school counselors in the United States from using accountability practices?" The item indicated as the most frequent barrier was that it is too time consuming (*M* = 1.78), followed by unfamiliar with accountability procedures (*M* = .98), do not like research (*M* = .79), have not given it much thought (*M* = .48), concern about potential negative

consequences (*M* = .45), and perceive accountability information as unnecessary (*M* = .28). The questions in this section all showed a skew to the left and were all beyond the normal limits. This was due to more lower valued item responses. The kurtosis for all of the questions except for "too time consuming" showed the scores were centered in the peak of the distribution. "Have not given it much thought," "concern about negative consequences," and "perceive accountability as unnecessary" were beyond the normal positive kurtosis limits indicating the scores are predominately in the peak due to high levels of lower responses.

Table 11 Research Question 5

	0	1	2	3	4	*M*	M.D.	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Too time consuming	34 12.4%	98 35.6%	63 22.9%	55 20%	25 9.1%	1.78	97	1.17	.32(.15)	-.83(.30)
Unfamiliarity with accountability	80 29.1%	151 54.9%	20 7.3%	18 6.5%	6 2.2%	.98	97	.91	1.28(.15)	1.89(.30)
Do not like research	122 44.2%	114 41.3%	21 7.6%	14 5.1%	5 1.8%	.79	96	.92	1.40(.15)	1.98(.30)
Have not given it much thought	186 67.4%	65 23.6%	11 4%	10 3.6%	4 1.4%	.48	96	.85	2.15(.15)	4.7(.30)
Concern about negative consequences	173 63.1%	86 31.4%	9 3.3%	4 1.5%	2 0.7%	.45	98	.70	2.0(.15)	5.56(.30)
Perceive as unnecessary	216 78.3%	49 17.8%	6 2.2%	4 1.4%	1 0.4%	.28	96	.61	2.8(.15)	9.51(.30)

M.D.= Missing data

Question 6. Research Question Number 6 was "What are the ways in which school counselors in the United States learned about accountability methods?" The most common way reported was through a professional conference (*M* = 1.76), followed by

developed on own/collaborated with colleagues (*M* = 1.65), reading professional literature (*M* = 1.42), a university course (*M* = 1.06), district training (*M* = .99), and lastly through the state department of education (*M* = .81). These questions had a positive skew to the left, all beyond normal limits due to high amounts of lower valued responses. The kurtosis for these questions showed mixed results. Three of the questions had a slight centering of scores in the tail (professional conference, developed on own, and reading professional literature). University course had a very small kurtosis, .001. District training and state department of education showed positive values indicating the scores were more centered in the peak of the distribution.

Table 12 Research Question 6

	0	1	2	3	4	M.D.	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Professional conference	36 13.2%	94 34.4%	66 24.2%	53 19.4%	24 8.8%	100	1.76	1.17	.31(.15)	-.81(.30)
On own/collaborated with colleagues	35 12.8%	105 38.5%	70 25.6%	47 17.2%	16 5.9%	99	1.65	1.09	.41(.15)	.56(.30)
Reading professional literature	43 15.8%	128 46.9%	57 20.9%	33 12.1%	12 4.4%	99	1.42	1.03	.71(.15)	-.01(.30)
University course	100 36.6%	97 35.5%	42 15.4%	27 9.9%	7 2.6%	99	1.06	1.07	.87(.15)	.00(.30)
District training	108 40.1%	99 36.8%	30 11.2%	21 7.8%	11 4.1%	103	.99	1.09	1.14(.15)	.64(.30)
State Dept. of Ed. requirement	130 47.8%	98 36%	18 6.6%	18 6.6%	8 2.9%	104	.81	1.02	1.44(.15)	1.62(.30)

M.D.= Missing data

Question 7. Research Question Number 7 was "What student background data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?" The most commonly reported background data used was

excessive absenteeism (*M* = 1.87), followed by discipline referrals (*M* = 1.70), parent or guardian involvement (*M* = 1.48), suspension rates (*M* =1.41), homework completion rates (*M* = 1.24), participation in extracurricular activities (*M* = .94), alcohol, tobacco, and other drug violations (*M* = .93), and lastly course enrollment patterns (.81). This group of questions all had a skew to the left. The only two items within normal limits showing a more symmetric population were "excessive absenteeism" and "discipline referrals." All kurtosis values were negative showing they were more centered in the tail except for course enrollment patterns, alcohol and drug violations, and participation in extracurricular activities. Those three showed slight positive values indicating the scores were more centered in the peak. All kurtosis values were within normal limits.

Table 13 Research Question 7

	0	1	2	3	4	M.D.	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Excessive absenteeism	39 14.6%	68 25.4%	79 29.5%	54 20.1%	28 10.4%	104	1.87	1.20	.12(.15)	-.86(.30)
Discipline referrals	48 17.8%	77 28.5%	72 26.7%	53 19.6%	20 7.4%	102	1.70	1.19	.21(.15)	-.86(.30)
Parent/guardian involvement	63 23.4%	93 34.6%	54 20.1%	38 14.1%	21 7.8%	103	1.48	1.21	.54(.15)	-.65(.30)
Suspension rates	80 29.9%	75 28%	53 19.8%	43 16%	17 6.3%	104	1.41	1.24	.49(.15)	-.85(.30)
Homework completion rates	83 22.3%	92 24.7%	49 13.2%	32 8.6%	11 3.0%	105	1.24	1.14	.70(.15)	.36(.30)
Extracurricular activities	118 44.2%	78 29.2%	46 17.2%	18 6.7%	7 2.6%	105	.94	1.06	.99(.15)	.28(.30)
Alcohol, tobacco, drug violations	121 45.3%	82 30.7%	34 12.7%	21 7.9%	9 3.4%	105	.93	1.10	1.12(.15)	.49(.30)
Course enrollment patterns	145 55.1%	60 22.8%	26 9.9%	27 10.3%	5 1.9%	109	.81	1.10	1.21(.15)	.36(.30)

M.D.= Missing Data

Question 8. Research Question Number 8 asked, "What are the categories that school counselors in the United States are disaggregating data by?" The category selected most often was socioeconomic status (M = 1.37), followed by gender (M = 1.27), proficiency with English/ESOL (M = 1.17), race/ethnicity (M = 1.15), students who are overage for grade by two years or more (M = 1.13), and lastly students retained in kindergarten or first grade (M = .76). All scores in the section had a positive skew, indicating scores were more centered to the left. They are all beyond the upper limit of .28. The kurtosis for these items were primarily small and positive, showing the scores were more centered in the peak. Socioeconomic status and students who were overage had a slight negative kurtosis indicating the scores were towards the tail of the distribution.

Table 14 Research Question 8

	0	1	2	3	4	M.D.	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Socioeconomic status	54 20.1%	118 43.9%	54 20.1%	30 11.2%	13 4.8%	103	1.37	1.07	.72(.15)	-.50(.30)
Gender	65 24.1%	119 44.1%	46 17%	29 10.7%	11 4.1%	102	1.27	1.07	.80(.15)	.55(.30)
Proficiency with English/ESOL	84 31.5%	105 39.3%	40 15%	25 9.4%	13 4.9%	105	1.17	1.12	.91(.15)	.13(.30)
Race/ethnicity	83 30.7%	114 42.2%	34 12.6%	28 10.4%	11 4.1%	102	1.15	1.09	.94(.15)	.20(.30)
Students overage 2 or more years	103 38.9%	80 30.2%	43 16.2%	22 8.3%	17 6.4%	107	1.13	1.20	.93(.15)	-.06(.30)
Students retained in K or 1st grade	146 54.3%	74 27.5%	27 10%	12 4.5%	10 3.7%	103	.76	1.05	1.51(.15)	1.74(.30)

M.D.= Missing Data

Question 9. Research Question Number 9 was "What are the ways that school counselors in the United States share their accountability data?' The most chosen category was formal report to administrators (*M* = 1.24), followed by presentation to school staff (*M* = 1.14), presentation to parents or P.T.A. (*M* = .69), school website (*M* = .64), presentation to school board (*M* = .43), and lastly local newspaper (*M* = .37). This set of questions had the highest overall skew to the left. This showed that this set of questions had the highest percentage of participants choosing lower valued responses. The kurtosis for the majority of these questions were very high and positive indicating that the scores were heavily centered in the peak. Formal report to administrators was not as high but still in the same direction. These were the only two items within normal limits. The other four subquestions were not within normal limits indicating there were extreme scores.

Table 15 Research Question 9

	0	1	2	3	4	M.D.	*M*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Formal report to admin.	80 29.5%	103 38%	48 17.7%	22 8.1%	18 6.6%	101	1.24	1.16	.87(.15)	.03(.30)
Presentation to school staff	71 26.2%	131 48.3%	41 15.1%	17 6.3%	11 4.1%	101	1.14	1.01	1.06(.15)	.96(.30)
Presentation to parents or P.T.A.	133 49.1%	108 39.9%	19 7%	3 1.1%	8 3%	101	.69	.88	1.79(.15)	4.06(.30)
School website	156 57.8%	78 28.9%	21 7.8%	6 2.2%	9 3.3%	102	.64	.96	1.83(.15)	3.35(.30)
Presentation to school board	187 69%	67 24.7%	6 2.2%	7 2.6%	4 1.5%	101	.43	.79	2.45(.15)	6.78(.30)
Local newspaper	196 73.1%	54 20.1%	10 3.7%	6 2.2%	2 0.7%	104	.37	.73	2.42(.15)	6.54(.30)

M.D.= Missing Data

Question 10. Research Question Number 10 was "To what extent do school counselors in the United States believe that they have the ability to implement accountability practices?" The highest percentage of school counselors reported that they believed they "frequently" had the ability to effectively implement accountability practices. This question had a slight skew but was within normal limits indicating that the scores were evenly distributed on both sides of the mean.

Table 16 Research Question 10

	N	%	M.D.	*Mean*	*SD*	Skewness	Kurtosis
Not at all	9	3.3%	102	2.08	1.08	.53(.15)	.60(.30)
Sometimes	82	30.4%					
Frequently	89	33%					
Often	62	23%					
Always	28	10.4%					

M.D.= Missing data

Question 11 ANOVA's: Variance between Groups

Research Question 11 was "For Research Questions 1-9, is there a variance in their answers between each of these groups- work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), years of experience, whether their state or district mandates accountability practices or reports, and whether they are currently participating in accountability practices?" One way ANOVA's were conducted for all of the specific questions. The groups were the variables in Demographic Questions 7, 8, 9, & 10 (work

setting, years of experience, whether they are mandated to implement accountability practices, and whether they are currently participating in accountability practices. One of the hypotheses of this study was that there would be a significant difference among these groups.

ANOVA for Demographic Question 7 with Work Setting Variable.

Demographic Question Number 7 asked, "What is your current work setting?" The options were elementary, middle/junior high, K-12, or other. The "other" option was removed from the analysis due to the lack of information about this group. All of the specific questions and subquestions (n = 54) were analyzed. Appendix D displays the ANOVA data for all items. Of the 54 items, 21 showed significant group differences at either the .05 or .01 level.

A Tukey HSD post hoc test was then conducted for this variable to find which means were significantly different from each other. To control for Type 1 errors, the p level of .05 was divided by the number of comparison for each of the specific questions. The new p was .008. Twelve items were found to be significant at the lowered p level. Table 18 shows which questions and their corresponding groups that had significantly different means. The coding for the school level groups is as follows: 1= Elementary School, 2= Middle School, 3= High School, and 4= K-12. The following domains did not have any significant group differences: barriers, reasons for accountability, method of learning, and methods of help.

Five of the nine domains did show significant group differences for one or more subquestions. For the domain of types of data collection, only process data were significant. There were significant differences found between elementary level and high

school level (*M* = 2.13, 1.28, *SD* = 1.13, 1.19) and middle school and high school level (*M* = 1.92, 1.28, *SD* = 1.21, 1.19).

For the domain of student achievement data, there were differences found for the five of the seven subquestions. Grade point averages showed significant group differences between elementary level and middle school level (*M* =1.00, 1.97, *SD* = 1.14, 1.33) and elementary level and high school level (*M* =1.00, 1.89, *SD* = 1.14, 1.17). Graduation rates showed significant group differences between elementary level and high school level (*M* =.38, 2.16, S. D. =.76, 1.20), elementary level and K-12 (*M* =.38, 2.00, *SD* = .76, 1.20), and middle school level and high school level (*M* =.87, 2.16, *SD* = 1.43, 1.20). Passing all classes showed group differences between elementary level and middle school level (*M* = 1.03, 2.05, *SD* = 1.08, 1.29) and elementary level and high school level (*M* = 1.03, 2.11, *SD* = 1.08, 1.24). Dropout rates showed significant group difference between elementary level and high school level (*M* = .37, 1.80, *SD* = .75, 1.34) and between middle school level and high school level (*M* =.81, 1.80, *SD* = 1.34, 1.34). Completion of specific academic programs showed significant differences between elementary level and middle school level (*M* = .34, 1.19, *SD* = .77, 1.35) and elementary level and high school level (*M* = .34, 1.63, *SD* = .77, 1.23).

For the domain of background data, group differences were found in four of the eight subquestions. Group differences were found in course enrollment patterns between elementary level and middle school level (*M* = .11, .92, *SD* = .51, 1.19), elementary level and high school level (*M* = .11, 1.12, *SD* = .51, 1.02), and elementary level and K-12 (*M* = .11, 1.50, *SD* = .51, 1.31). For the item of discipline referrals, differences were found between elementary level and high school level (*M* = 2.04, 1.29, *SD* = 1.12, 1.14) and

middle school level and high school level (*M* = .92, 1.29, *SD* = 1.16, 1.14). Group differences for the item of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug violations were found between elementary level and middle school level (*M* = .36, 1.25, *SD* = .71, 1.22) and elementary level and high school level (*M* = .36, 1.06, *SD* = .71, 1.05). The item regarding parent involvement show differences only between elementary level and high school level (*M* = 1.82, 1.08, *SD* = 1.28, 1.06).

The domain of categories to view data by only had one item showing significant group differences. This item was students retained in kindergarten or first grade. The differences were found between elementary level and middle school level (*M* = 1.46, .63, *SD* = 1.18, .88) and elementary level and high school level (*M* = 1.46, .28, *SD* = 1.18, .68).

The domain of sharing data had one item showing significant group differences. This item was presentation to school board. The differences were found between elementary level and K-12 (*M* = .19, 1.50, *SD* = .40, 1.51) , middle school level and K-12 (*M* = .46, 1.50, *SD* = .84, 1.51), and high school level and K-12 (*M* = .45, 1.50, *SD* = .80, 1.51).

Table 17 Tukey Post Hoc Test for School Level Variable

Item number	F	Df	Original P	Groups	*M*	Post Hoc P
201 Process data	5.68	4, 259	.000	1,3 2,3	2.13, 1.28 1.92, 1.28	.000 .008
502 G.P.A.	7.81	4, 259	.000	1,2 1,3	1.00, 1.97 1.00, 1.89	.000 .000
503 Graduation Rates	26.32	4, 258	.000	1,3 1,4 2,3	.38, 2.16 .38, 2.00 .87, 2.16	.000 .002 .000
504 Passing all classes	10.35	4, 258	.000	1,2 1,3	1.03, 2.05 1.03, 2.11	.000 .000
506 Dropout rates	15.91	4, 257	.000	1,3 2,3	.37, 1.80 .81, 1.80	.000 .000
507 Program completion	13.34	4, 255	.000	1,2 1,3	.34, 1.19 .34, 1.63	.000 .000
601 Course Patterns	15.85	4, 253	.000	1,2 1,3 1,4	.11, .92 .11, 1.12 .11, 1.50	.000 .000 .002
602 Discipline referrals	4.96	4, 259	.001	1,3 2,3	2.04, 1.29 .92, 1.29	.000 .008
604 Alcohol/drug violations	8.58	4, 257	.000	1,2 1,3	.36, 1.25 .36, 1.06	.000 .000
606 Parent involvement	4.20	4, 259	.003	1,3	1.82, 1.08	.001
705 Retention in K /1st grade	16.95	4, 258	.000	1,2 1,3	1.46, .63 1.46, .28	.000 .000
802 Presentation school board	7.07	4, 260	.000	1,4 2,4 3,4	.19, 1.50 .46, 1.50 .45, 1.50	.000 .003 .002

Note: only items that were significant after post hoc test are included.
Note: 1= elementary, 2= middle, 3= high school, 4= K-12 setting

ANOVA for Demographic Question 8 with Years of Experience Variable.

Demographic Question Number 8 asked, "How many years have you been a school counselor?" The options were 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, or 16+. All of the specific questions and subquestions ($N = 54$) were analyzed. Appendix E contains the full data for this ANOVA. Of these, eight questions originally showed significant group differences at either the .05 or .01 level.

A Tukey HSD test was conducted for this variable to find which means were significantly different from each other. To control for Type 1 errors, the *p* level of .05 was divided by the number of comparison for each of the specific questions. The new *p* was .008. Only one item found to be significant at the lowered *p* level. This was Specific Question 4 subquestion 3 (403), "To what extent did you learn about accountability methods from a university course?" The groups were coded as 1= 1-5 years, 2= 6-10, 3= 11-15 years, and 4= 16+ years. Table 18 shows the group differences for this question.

Table 18 Tukey for Years of Experience Variable

Item number	*F*	*Df*	Original P	Groups	*M*	Post Hoc P
403	9.47	3, 267	.000	1,2	1.59, .90	.000
University				1,3	1.59, .93	.001
Course				1,4	1.59, .76	.000

ANOVA for Demographic Question 9 with Requirement Variable.

Demographic Question Number 9 asked, "Does your state or district require you to use accountability practices?" The options were "yes" or "no." All of the specific questions and subquestions ($n = 54$) were analyzed. Appendix F contains the initial ANOVA results

for this variable. Of these, 37 questions showed significant group differences initially at either the .05 or .01 level.

A Tukey HSD test was not conducted for this variable due to their only being 2 groups. To control for Type 1 errors, the *p* level of .05 was divided by the number of subquestions for each of the specific questions. For example, Specific Question 1 has 6 subquestions, .05/6= .008. The *p* value for this set of subquestions would then be .008. The options for this question were 1= *yes* and 2= *no*. Table 20 below shows the 28 items that had significantly different means. The only domain that did not have any significant group differences was that of methods of help/assistance to increase accountability.

The group differences will be discussed by domain. Group 1 consists of those who answered "yes" they were required to use accountability practices and group 2 consists of those who answered "no" they were not required to use accountability. The first domain, barriers, had three items with significant group differences. For the item of unfamiliarity, Group 2, the group that was not required to use accountability had a higher mean (M = 1.13, SD = .97) than Group 1 who was required to use accountability practices (M = .78, SD = .76). For the item of time consuming the group that was not required to use accountability, Group 2, had a higher mean (M = 1.99, SD = 1.25) than Group 1 who was not required (M = 1.56, SD = 1.04). Group differences were also found for "not given it much thought." Those that were not required had a higher mean (M = .64, SD = .97) than those who were required (M = .30, SD = 67). Overall, those who were required to use accountability practices, felt fewer barriers than those who were not required to.

For the domain of types of data collected, all three subquestions showed significant group differences between those who were and were not required to use accountability practices. The item of process data showed that those who were required reported using process data more (M = 2.08, SD =1.15) than those who were not required (M =1.53, SD = 1.27). For the item of perception data, those who were required reported higher usage (M =1.65, SD =.99) than those who were not required (M = 1.01, SD = .93). Results data showed that those who were required had a higher usage (M = 1.89, SD =1.07) than those who were not required (M = 1.05, SD = .97).

For the domain of reasons for collecting accountability data, four of the five subquestions showed significant group differences. Those who were required to practice accountability showed higher means for all subquestions than those who were not required. For program planning Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 2.32, SD = 1.04) than Group 2 (M = 1.70, SD = 1.00). For supervisor/principal requirement Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 1.76, SD = 1.09) than Group 2 (M = .69, SD = .88). For district office requirement Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 1.81, SD = 1.09) than Group 2 (M = .60, SD = .90). For state department of education requirement, Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 1.53, SD = 1.17) than Group 2 (M = .36, SD = .74).

For the domain of how accountability practices were learned, three of the six subquestions showed group differences. For all subquestions those who were required to practice accountability had a higher reported mean of learning for each item than those who were not required to use accountability practices. For the item of developed on own/collaborated with colleagues, Group 1, those that were required, showed a higher mean (M = 1.91, SD = 1.07) than those in Group 2 who were not required (M = 1.42, SD

= 1.06). For the item of state department of education, Group 1, those that were required, had a higher mean (M = 1.22, SD = 1.16) than those in Group 2 who were not required (M = .43, SD = .68). For the item of district training, those in Group 1 who were required had a higher mean (M = 1.59, SD = 1.17) than those in Group 2 who were not required (M = .43, SD = .65).

The domain of student achievement data usage showed group differences in three of the seven subquestions. All three showed higher means for Group 1 who was required to use accountability practices. For the item of standardized test score usage, Group 1 had a higher mean (M =2.38, SD = 1.12) than Group 2 (M =1.67, SD = 1.26). For the item of passing all classes Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 1.98, SD = 1.30) than Group 2 (M = 1.46, SD = 1.21). For the item of promotion and retention rates, Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 2.01, SD = 1.25) than Group 2 (M =1.28, SD = 1.18).

The domain of background data usage showed group differences in four of the eight subquestions. All items showed that Group 1, those that were required, had higher means than those in Group 2 who were not required to practice accountability. For the item of discipline referrals, Group 1 showed significantly higher mean (M = 1.97, SD = 1.22) than Group 2 (M = 1.49, SD = 1.11). For the item of suspension rates, Group 1 showed a higher mean (M = 1.69, SD = 1.32) than Group 2 (M = 1.18, SD = 1.12). For the item of excessive absenteeism, Group 1 showed a higher mean (M = 2.14, SD = 1.16) than Group 2 (M = 1.63, SD = 1.16). For parent involvement, Group 1 showed a higher mean (M = 1.80, SD = 1.24) than Group 2 (M =1.20, SD = 1.11).

The domain of viewing data by categories, four of the six subquestions showed significant group differences. Group 1, those who were required to use accountability

practices, had higher means for all subquestions than Group 2, those who were not required to use accountability practices. For the item of race/ethnicity, Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 1.35, SD 1.11) than Group 2 (M = .95, SD = 1.05). For the item of proficiency with English/ESOL Group 1 showed a significantly higher mean (M = 1.41, SD = 1.14) than Group 2 (M = .93, SD = 1.05). For the item of students retained in kindergarten or first grade, Group 1 showed a significantly higher mean (M = 1.01, SD = 1.15) than Group 2 (M =.51, SD = .87). For the item of students who are overage for grade by two years or more, Group 1 showed a significantly higher mean (M = 1.40, SD = 1.29) than Group 2 (M = .91, SD = 1.08).

The domain of ways data is shared showed group differences in four of the six subquestions. Those in Group 1, who were required to use accountability practices, showed higher means in all subquestions than Group 2, those who were not required. For the item of formal report to administrator, Group 1 had a significantly higher mean (M = 1.62, SD = 1.14) than Group 2 (M = .91, 1.08). For the item of presentation to school staff, Group 1 had a significantly higher mean (M = 1.36, SD = 1.05) than Group 2 (M = .94, SD = .93). For the item of presentation to parents/P.T.A., Group 1 had a significantly higher mean (M =.96, SD = 1.03) than Group 2 (.45, SD = .63). For the item of school website, Group 1 had a significantly higher mean (M = .88, SD = 1.11) than Group 2 (M = .43, SD = .74).

Table 19 Mean Comparison for Requirement Variable

Item number	F	df	P	Groups	*M*
101 Unfamiliarity	10.89	1, 270	.001	1,2	.78, 1.13
103 Time consuming	9.20	1, 270	.003	1,2	1.56, 1.99
104 Not given much thought	11.02	1, 271	.001	1,2	.30, .64
201 Process data	13.65	1, 265	.000	1,2	2.08, 1.53
202 Perception data	30.21	1, 266	.000	1,2	1.65, 1.01
203 Results data	45.32	1, 265	.000	1,2	1.89, 1.05
302 Program planning	24.12	1, 266	.000	1,2	2.32, 1.70
303 Supervisor/principal requirement	79.32	1, 267	.000	1,2	1.76, .69
304 District requirement	97.85	1, 267	.000	1,2	1.81, .60
305 Dept. of Education requirement	95.91	1, 264	.000	1,2	1.53, .36
402 Developed on own	13.98	1, 268	.000	1,2	1.91, 1.42
405 Dept. of Education requirement	47.07	1, 267	.000	1,2	1.22, .43
406 District training	102.03	1, 264	.000	1,2	1.59, .43
501 Standardized scores	23.35	1, 265	.000	1,2	2.38, 1.67
504 Passing all classes	11.24	1, 264	.001	1,2	1.98, 1.46
505 Promotion/retention rates	23.52	1, 265	.000	1,2	2.01, 1.28
602 Discipline referrals	11.39	1, 265	.001	1,2	1.97, 1.49
603 Suspension rates	11.27	1, 263	.001	1,2	1.69, 1.18
605 Excessive absences	13.05	1, 263	.000	1,2	2.14, 1.63
606 Parent involvement	17.87	1, 264	.000	1,2	1.80, 1.20
701 Race/ethnicity	9.46	1, 265	.002	1,2	1.35, .95
704 English proficiency	12.42	1, 262	.001	1,2	1.41, .93
705 Retained in K or 1st	15.62	1, 264	.000	1,2	1.01, .51
706					

Overage by 2+ years 801	11.44	1, 260	.001	1,2	1.40, .91
Formal report to administrator 803	27.96	1, 266	.000	1,2	1.62, .91
Presentation to staff 804	12.21	1, 266	.001	1,2	1.36, .94
Presentation to parents/P.T.A. 805	24.02	1, 266	.000	1,2	.96, .45
School website	15.27	1, 265	.000	1,2	.88, .43

Group 1= those required to implement accountability
Group 2= those not required to implement accountability

ANOVA for Demographic Question 10 with Participating Variable.

Demographic Question Number 10 asked, "Are you currently using or participating in accountability practices?" The options were "yes" or "no." All of the specific questions and subquestions (n = 54) were analyzed. Appendix G contains the ANOVA results for this variable. Of these, 43 questions showed significant group differences at either the .05 or .01 level.

A Tukey HSD test was not conducted for this variable due to their only being 2 groups. To control for Type 1 errors, the p level of .05 was divided by the number of subquestions for each of the specific questions. For example, Specific Question 1 has 6 subquestions, .05/6= .008. The p value for this set of subquestions would then be .008. The options for this question were 1= *yes* and 2= *no*. Table 21 below shows the 35 items that had significantly different means.

The results will be discussed by domains. The only domain not showing any significant group differences was that of help/assistance needed to increase accountability practices. The first domain was barriers. Four of the six subquestions regarding barriers showed significant group differences. All of the subquestions had a higher mean for

Group 2, those who were not currently participating in accountability practices than for Group 1, those who were participating in accountability practices. This would mean that those who were not participating in accountability reported feeling greater barriers. For the item of unfamiliarity with accountability, Group 2 had a higher mean (M = 1.46, SD = .74) than Group 1 (M = .79, SD = 1.08). For the item of it being too time consuming Group 2 had a higher mean (M = 2.10, SD = 1.26) than Group 1 (M = 1.67, SD = 1.13). For the item of not having given it much thought, Group 2 had a higher mean (M = 1.00, SD = 1.17) than Group 1 (M = .29, SD = .62). For the item concern about potential negative consequences, Group 2 had a higher mean (M = .65, SD = .96) than Group 1 (M = .39, SD = .58).

The domain of types of accountability data collected all three subquestions showed significant group differences. For all three types of data, Group 1, those currently participating in accountability practices, showed higher means than Group 2, those who are not currently participating. For the item of process data, Group 1 showed significantly higher means (M =2.06, SD 1.14) than Group 2 (M = 1.00, SD 1.17). For the item of perception data, Group 1 resulted in a higher mean (M = 1.58, SD = .95) than Group 2 (M =.56, .78). For the item of results data, Group 1 had a significantly higher mean (M = 1.75, SD = 1.06) than Group 2 (M = .62, SD = .75).

The domain of reasons for accountability data collection had all five of its subquestions reaching significantly different group means. Group 1, those participating in accountability practices had a higher mean in all subquestions than Group 2, those not participating in accountability practices. For the item of personal choice for professional growth, Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 1.79, SD 1.07) than Group 2 (M = 1.09, SD =

1.12). For the item of program planning, Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 2.26, SD = .97) than Group 2 (M = 1.23, SD = .93). For the item of supervisor or principal requirement, Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 1.39, SD = 1.13) than Group 2 (M = .69, SD = .92). For the item of district office requirement, Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 1.41, SD = 1.16) than Group 2 (M = .54, SD = .95). For the item of state department of education, Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 1.09, SD = 1.13) than Group 2 (M = .38, SD = .90).

The domain of how accountability methods were learned showed significant group differences for five of its six subquestions. All subquestions showed a higher mean for Group 1, those presently practicing accountability, than Group 2, those who were not presently practicing. For the item of developed on own/collaborated with colleagues, Group 1 had a significantly higher mean (M = 1.86, SD = 1.06) than Group 2 (M = 1.10, SD = .99). For the item of university course, Group 1 had a significantly higher group mean (M = 1.21, SD = 1.07) than Group 2 (M = .67, SD = .98). For the item professional conference, Group 1 showed a higher mean (M =1.92, SD = 1.15) than Group 2 (M = 1.30, SD = 1.08). For the item of state department of education, Group 1 showed a higher mean (M = .91, SD = 1.05) than Group 2 (M = .47, SD =.78). For the item of district training, Group 1 had a higher mean (M = 1.18, SD = 1.12) than Group 2 (M = .42, SD = .74).

The domain of using student achievement data had two of its seven subquestions show significant group differences. The item of standardized tests showed more that Group 1 had a significantly higher mean (M = 2.17, SD = 1.17) than Group 2 (M = 1.57,

SD = 1.33). Promotion and retention rates showed that Group 1 had a significantly higher mean (*M* =1.83, *SD* =1.24) than Group 2 (*M* =1.09, *SD* = 1.20).

The domain of background data usage had seven of its eight subquestions show significant group differences. All subquestions showed higher group means for Group 1, those who were participating in accountability practices than Group 2, those that were not participating. The item of course enrollment patterns had a higher mean for Group 1 (*M* = .91, *SD* = 1.12) than for Group 2 (*M* = .47, *SD* = .92). The item discipline referrals showed a higher group mean for Group 1 (*M* = 1.95, *SD* = 1.14) than for Group 2 (*M* = 1.07, *SD* = 1.06). The item of suspension rates had a higher mean for Group 1 (*M* =1.65, *SD* =1.23) than for Group 2 (*M* =.76, *SD* = 1.06). The item excessive absenteeism showed a higher group mean for Group 1 (*M* = 2.11, *SD* = 1.10) than for Group 2 (*M* = 1.22, *SD* = 1.21). The item parent involvement showed a higher group mean for Group 1 (*M* = 1.70, *SD* = .84) than for Group 2 (*M* =.84, *SD* = .97). The item of extracurricular activities showed a higher mean for Group 1 (*M* =1.08, *SD* = 1.09) than for Group 2 (*M* = .60, *SD* = .90).The item of homework completion rates showed a higher group mean for Group 1 (*M* = 1.41, *SD* = 1.15) than for Group 2 (*M* =.78, *SD* = .98).

The domain of categories used to view data had all six of its subquestions show significant group differences. For each subquestion those who were participating in accountability practices, Group 1, had significantly higher means than those who were not participating, Group 2. The item race/ethnicity showed higher means for Group 1 (*M* = 1.29, *SD* = 1.09) than for Group 2 (*M* = .71, *SD* = .97). The item for gender showed higher means for Group 1 (*M* = 1.42, *SD* = 1.07) than for Group 2 (*M* = .84, *SD* =.93). The item for socioeconomic status show a higher mean for Group 1 (*M* = 1.50, *SD* =

1.06) than for Group 2 (*M* = 1.00, *SD* = .98). The item proficiency with English/ESOL showed a higher mean for Group 1 (*M* = 1.33, *SD* = 1.11) than for Group 2 (*M* = .69, *SD* = .98). The item students retained in kindergarten or first grade showed a higher group mean for Group 1 (*M* = .87, *SD* = 1.10) than for Group 2 (*M* = .46, *SD* = .80). The item students who are overage for grade by two years or more showed a higher mean for Group 1 (*M* = 1.27, *SD* = 1.25) than for Group 2 (*M* = .75, *SD* = .93).

The domain for ways to share data had three of its six subquestions show significant group differences. All subquestions in this section showed a higher mean for Group 1, those who were participating in accountability practices than Group 2, those who were not participating in accountability practices. The item formal report to administrators show a higher mean for Group 1 (*M* = 1.47, *SD* = 1.15) than Group 2 (*M* = .62, *SD* = .93). The item presentation to school staff showed a higher mean for Group 1 (*M* = 1.28, *SD* = 1.00) than Group 2 (*M* = .74, *SD* = .93). The item presentation to parents/P.T.A. showed a higher mean for Group 1 (*M* = .82, *SD* = .93) than Group 2 (*M* = .32, .58).

Table 20 Mean Comparison for Participating Variable

Item number	F	df	P	Groups	*M*
101 Unfamiliarity	33.46	1, 268	.000	1,2	.79, 1.46
103 Too time consuming	7.09	1, 268	.008	1,2	.1.67, 2.10
104 Not given much thought	41.08	1, 269	.000	1,2	.29, 1.00
105 Concern about neg. consequences	7.04	1, 267	.008	1,2	.39, .65
201 Process data	42.54	1, 263	.000	1,2	2.06, 1.00
202 Perception data	63.06	1, 264	.000	1,2	1.58, .56
203 Results data	65.79	1, 263	.000	1,2	1.75, .62
301 Personal choice	21.48	1, 266	.000	1,2	1.79, 1.09
302 Program planning	58.30	1, 264	.000	1,2	2.26, 1.23
303 Supervisor/principal requirement	21.28	1, 265	.000	1,2	1.39, .69
304 District office requirement	30.78	1, 265	.000	1,2	1.41, .54
305 State department of ed. requirement	21.87	1, 262	.000	1,2	1.09, .38
402 Developed on own	27.15	1, 266	.000	1,2	1.86, 1.10
403 University course	13.81	1, 266	.000	1,2	1.21, .67
404 Professional conference	15.31	1, 266	.000	1,2	1.92, 1.30
405 State department of ed. requirement	10.16	1, 265	.002	1,2	.91, .47
406 District training	27.34	1, 262	.000	1,2	1.18, .42
501 Standardized scores	12.76	1, 263	.000	1,2	2.17, 1.57
505 Promotion/retention rates	18.47	1, 263	.000	1,2	1.83, 1.09
601 Course patterns	8.41	1, 256	.004	1,2	.91, .47
602 Discipline referrals	31.50	1, 263	.000	1,2	1.95, 1.07
603					

Suspension rates 605	27.78	1, 261	.000	1,2	1.65, .76
Excessive absences 606	31.71	1, 261	.000	1,2	2.11, 1.22
Parent involvement 607	28.49	1, 262	.000	1,2	1.70, .84
Extracurricular activities 608	10.64	1, 260	.001	1,2	1.08, .60
Homework completion rates 701	16.32	1, 261	.000	1,2	1.41, .78
Race/ethnicity 702	15.26	1, 263	.000	1,2	1.29, .71
Gender 703	16.11	1, 263	.000	1,2	1.42, .84
S.E.S. 704	11.84	1, 263	.001	1,2	1.50, 1.00
Proficiency with English/ESOL 705	17.60	1, 260	.000	1,2	1.33, .69
Retention in K or 1st 706	8.01	1, 262	.005	1,2	.87, .46
Overage by 2 or more years 801	9.62	1, 259	.002	1,2	1.27, .75
Formal report to administrators 803	30.45	1, 264	.000	1,2	1.47, .62
Presentation to school staff 804	15.43	1, 264	.000	1,2	1.28, .74
Presentation to parents/P.T.A.	17.65	1, 264	.000	1,2	.82, .32

Group 1= those who are using accountability practices
Group 2= those who are not using accountability practices

Qualitative Analyses about Accountability Practices

Participants were asked three open ended questions to further assess their accountability practices. To gauge a better overall view of the specific types of accountability practices that school counselors were implementing Question Number 11, "Briefly describe the most recent accountability practice you implemented and how it contributed to student achievement," was asked. Of the 173 (46%) participants who answered this question, 223 comments regarding the types of practices were given. Some

participants described more than one accountability practice and all of their responses were counted in the total number of comments. The themes were first developed based on school counseling literature, Edwards (2009) study, and the prevalence of responses. The categories were coded by the research and by an expert in the field of school counseling (see Appendix D). The expert and the researcher initially coded the items similarly 93% (207 out of 223 comments) of the time. After discussing the items the expert and the researcher coded the items similarly 98% (219 out of 223) of the time.

For Question Number 11, "Briefly describe the most recent accountability practice you implemented and how it contributed to student achievement" the themes were behavior, test scores, graduation, success skills, grades, attendance, guidance unit, group, and other (see Table 21 below). The other theme captured ideas that were not represented in any other theme. The other category consisted of responses given five times or less. Some examples of responses included in the "other" category were career awareness (N= 4), retention rates (N= 5), homework completion (N= 3), and college acceptance rates (N= 4). The breakdown by number and percentage of comments in each category was as follows: Other= 51 (22.8%), grades= 34 (15.2%), test scores= 32 (14.3%), guidance unit= 25 (11.2%), behavior= 23 (10.3%), group= 19 (8.5%), success skills= 15 (6.7%), attendance 14 (6.3%), and graduation= 10 (4.5%).

Table 21 Analysis of Question 11

Theme	*N*	%
Other	51	22.8
Grades	34	15.2
Test scores	32	14.3
Guidance unit	25	11.2
Behavior	23	10.3
Group	19	8.5
Success skills	15	6.7
Attendance	14	6.3
Graduation	10	4.5

Specific Question Number 12, "What assistance could professional organizations or university training programs provide that would increase the likelihood that you collect, analyze, and present accountability data about your school counseling program?" was asked to help answer research Question Number 4, "What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?" One hundred seventy participants (45%) answered this question. There were a total of 197 comments to this question. Some participants gave more than one way their professional organization or university could assist them. All responses were counted.

The themes for Question 12 were manual/program, training, university course, examples, support, and other. The other category captured items that were not represented in any other category. Themes in the other category received seven or less responses. The breakdown was follows: training = 70 (35.5%), other = 36 (18.3%),

manual/program = 28 (14.2%), examples = 28 (14.2%), support = 19 (9.6%), and university course = 16 (8.1%). Table 22 displays the results for this question.

Table 22 Analysis of Question 12

Theme	*N*	%
Training	70	35.5
Other	36	18.3
Manual/program	28	14.2
Examples	28	14.2
Support	19	9.6
University course	16	8.1

The qualitative analysis for survey Question Number 12 was taken a step further. It was analyzed based on school level. This would add to the results for research Question Number 4, "What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?" and the part of research Question Number 11 pertaining to differences by school level. The responses from elementary school counselors showed that 45.8% of the responses were wanting training from their professional organizations followed by the "other" category with 16.9%, examples with 13.6%, manual/program and university course both had 8.5%, and 6.7% reported wanting "support." Middle school counselors reported wanting training with the highest frequency, 30.5%, followed by "other" 18.7%, manual/program and examples at 16.9%, and support and university course both at 8.5%. High school counselors also reported wanting training most frequently at 30.6%, followed by "other" 18.1%, manual/program 16.7%, examples and support both at 13.9%, and university course 6.8%. K-12 school

counselors only had seven participants that responded to this question. The breakdown for K-12 was as follows, training 42.9%, other 28.5%, manual/program 14.3%, and university course 14.3%. No K-12 participants reported needing examples or support (see Table 23).

Table 23 Analysis of Question 12 by School Level for Professional Organizations

	Elementary		Middle		High		K-12	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Training	27	45.8	18	30.5	22	30.6	3	42.9
Other	10	16.9	11	18.7	13	18.1	2	28.5
Manual/program	5	8.5	10	16.9	12	16.7	1	14.3
Examples	8	13.6	10	16.9	10	13.9	0	0
Support	4	6.7	5	8.5	10	13.9	0	0
University course	5	8.5	5	8.5	5	6.8	1	14.3

Specific Question Number 13, "What assistance could your school system provide that would increase the likelihood that you collect, analyze, and present accountability data about your school counseling program?" was asked to help answer research Question Number 4, "What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?" One hundred eighty two participants (49%) answered this question. There were a total of 229 comments to this question. Some participants gave more than one way their school system could assist them. All responses were counted.

Themes for Question 13 were time, training, examples, support, manual/program, requirement, and other. The other category captured items that were not represented in

any other category. Themes in the other category received seven or less responses. The breakdown among themes was as follows: support = 59 (25.8%), training = 55 (24%), time = 42 (18.3%), other = 30 (13.1%), manual/program = 23 (10%), requirement = 11 (4.8%), and examples = 9 (4%); (see Table 24).

Table 24 Analysis of Question 13

Theme	N	%
Support	59	25.8
Training	55	24
Time	42	18.3
Other	30	13.1
Manual/program	23	10
Requirement	11	4.8
Examples	9	4

The qualitative analysis for survey Question Number 13 was taken a step further. It was analyzed based on school level. This would add to the results for research Question Number 4, "What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?" and the part of research Question Number 11 pertaining to differences by school level. Elementary school counselors reported training from their school districts with the highest frequency at 29%, followed by support 24.6%, time and "other" both with 14.5%, manual/program at 11.6%, and requirement and examples both with 2.9%. Middle school counselors reported needing support with the highest frequency at 30.9%, followed by training 22.1%, "other" 14.7%, time 13.2%,

manual/program 11.8%, examples 4.4%, and requirement 2.9%. High school counselors reported most needing three types of assistance support, training, and time at 23%. These were followed by "other" 11.5%, manual/program 8%, requirement 6.9%, and examples 4.6%. Only five K-12 school counselors responded to this question. The highest reported needed for K-12 was time 60%, followed by support and requirement both with 20% (see Table 25).

Table 25 Analysis of Question 13 by School Level for School Districts

	Elementary		Middle		High		K-12	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Support	17	24.6	21	30.9	20	23	1	20
Training	20	29	15	22.1	20	23	0	0
Time	10	14.5	9	13.2	20	23	3	60
Other	10	14.5	10	14.7	10	11.5	0	0
Manual/program	8	11.6	8	11.8	7	8	0	0
Requirement	2	2.9	2	2.9	6	6.9	1	20
Examples	2	2.9	3	4.4	4	4.6	0	0

Support for Hypotheses

The tentative hypotheses of the study were

1. The reasons, types, barriers, and assistance needed in regard to accountability practices of school counselors in the United States will be similar to the findings of Edwards (2009).

2. Accountability practices among school counselors will vary based on their work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), years of experience, whether their state or district mandates accountability practices, and whether they are currently using accountability measures.

Hypothesis 1**.** Hypothesis number one suggested the results of this study may have similar findings to that of Edwards (2009). When the two qualitative questions from both studies were compared (see Tables 26 and 27) the percentage results in each category were very similar. In Edwards (2009), the category "information to administrators" was a standalone category. In this study it was included within the "support" category. When the two categories of support and information to administrators are combined for this study very similar percentages are seen as to those of Edwards (2009). In this study the "other" category included those that wrote N/A or none. If Edward's categories of "other" and "none/N/A" are combined similar findings are found to this study's "other" category.

Table 26 Assistance from Professional Organizations Comparison by Percentage

Present study		Edwards (2009)	
Training	35.5	Training	42
Other	18.3	None/NA	20
Manual/program	14.2	Manual	18
Examples	14.2	Info. to admin.	8
Support	9.6	Courses	8
University course	8.1	Support	1
		Journal articles	1
		Other	1%

Table 27 Assistance from School System Comparison by Percentage

Present study		Edwards (2009)	
Support	25.8%	Training	45%
Training	24%	None/NA	21%
Time	18.3%	Info. to admin.	15%
Other	13.1%	Manual	10%
Manual/program	10%	Support	5%
Requirement	4.8%	Other	3%
Examples	4%		

When comparing the barriers of the participants in both studies they showed some similarities. Although the means were not the same, the rank order of highest perceived barriers were similar. Edwards (2009) did not describe the coding used. Both surveys used the Survey Monkey online tool. For this survey the items were recoded from the original Survey Monkey for ease in analysis. If Edwards' items were not recoded then to compare the means 1 would be subtracted from each of her means (see Table 28).

Table 28 Comparison of Barriers

Present study		Edwards study	
	M		*M*
Too time consuming	1.78	Too time consuming	3.94
Unfamiliar with accountability	.98	Concern negative consequences	3.73
Do not like research	.79	Do not like research	3.73
Have not given it much thought	.48	Unfamiliar with accountability	3.71
Concern negative consequences	.45	Have not given it much thought	3.34
Concern negative consequences	.28	Perceive as unnecessary	3.14

When comparing the reasons for collecting accountability data both studies showed some similarities. The means were not the same; but the rank order of highest reasons were similar. Again the differences in the coding are unclear. It can be surmised that the means in Edwards study are at least 1 point higher due to the recoding in this study (see Table 29).

Table 29 Comparison of Reasons for Accountability

Present study		Edwards (2009)	
	M		*M*
Program planning/improvement	2.00	Program planning/improvement	3.88
Personal choice for professional growth	1.62	Supervisor/ principal requirement	3.71
Supervisor/principal requirement	1.20	Personal choice for professional growth	3.69
District office requirement	1.18	District office requirement	3.62
State Dept. of Ed. requirement	.92	State Dept. of Ed. requirement	3.59
		Other	2.00

The types of data the participants in both studies collected were also compared. The most often type collected in both studies was process data. Both studies have means that were very close between each of their categories. Due to the number of similarities in many of the results hypothesis 1 is partially supported (see Table 30).

Table 30 Comparison of Types of Data Collected

Present study		Edwards (2009)	
	M		*M*
Process data	1.79	Process data	3.61
Results data	1.44	Results data	3.54
Perception data	1.31	Perception data	3.36

Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis Number 2 was presented in the results of the ANOVA's. For the variable of work setting the groups did vary in some of the items and the hypothesis was partially supported. There were differences in 12 of the subquestions.

When the variable of years of experience was analyzed group differences were found in only one subquestion. This item was the way participants learned about accountability through a university course. The analysis by this variable had limited support.

For the variable of whether their state or district requires accountability practices group differences were found among those participants who were and were not required for 28 subquestions. This variable offered partial support of the hypothesis.

The last variable, whether the participants were using accountability practices or not showed the highest number of significant group differences. There were 35 subquestions showing significant group differences. This variable also offered partial support of the hypothesis.

Summary

Descriptive statistics were analyzed. Table 31, Summary of Study Results, provides information gauged from the descriptive statistics analysis along with the research question that they answer. Information for each specific question's results are provided in Tables 7-16. The results of these analyses reveal the most frequently reported accountability practices of school counselors and the distribution of the responses.

Results of the four ANOVA's were mixed. For the variable of school level there were initially group differences found in 21 items at the $p < .05$ level. When a smaller p

value was used to control for Type 1 errors, 12 items were still found to have significant group differences. For the variable of years of experience initially there were eight items showing significant group differences. After the *p* value was decreased only one item remained showing significant differences. This item was Specific Question 4's subquestion regarding the extent that the participant learned about accountability practices from a university course. For the variable of whether the participant was required to implement accountability practices, the majority of the items had significant differences. The same held true for the variable of participating in accountability practices.

A qualitative analysis was conducted on Specific Questions 11-13. Question 11 asked "Briefly describe the most recent accountability practice you implemented and how it contributed to student achievement." The results showed that school counselors were using a variety of accountability practices. The most frequently reported themes were "other practices" 22.8%, "grades" 15.2%, and "test scores" 14.3%. Question 12 asked, "What assistance could professional organizations or university training programs provide that would increase the likelihood that you collect, analyze, and present accountability data about your school counseling program?" The most commonly reported themes for this question were "training" 35.5 %, "other" 18.3 %, and" manual/program" 14.2 %. Question 13 asked, "What assistance could your school system provide that would increase the likelihood that you collect, analyze, and present accountability data about your school counseling program?" The most commonly reported themes for this question were "support" 25.8 %, "training" 24 %, and "time" 18.3 %.

Table 31, Summary of Study Results, provides information gauged from the descriptive statistics analysis along with the research question that they answer. Information for each specific question's results are provided in Tables 7-16.

Table 31 Summary of Study Results

Research question	Findings
1.What are the reasons why school counselors in the United States are collecting student data to plan and improve their school counseling programs?	The three most frequently reported reasons were program planning and improvement (*M* =2.0), personal choice for professional growth (*M* =1.62) and supervisor or principal requirement (*M* =1.20).
2.What student achievement data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?	The three most frequently reported types of student achievement data were standardized test scores (*M* =2.01) passing all classes (*M* =1.71), and promotion and retention rates (*M* =1.63).
3.What type/s of accountability data are school counselors in the United States collecting?	Of the three types, process data was most frequently reported (*M* =1.79) followed by results data (1.44), and perception data (*M* =1.31).
4.What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?	The three most frequently reported types of assistance were extra time (*M* =2.65), examples (*M* =2.49), and a professional association conference (2.18). Qualitative Assistance needed from professional organizations: training (35.5%), other (18.3%), and manual (14.2%). Assistance from school system- support (25.8%), training (24%), and time (18.3%).
5.What are the barriers that may prevent school counselors in the United States from using accountability practices?	The three most frequently reported barriers were too time consuming (*M* =1.78), unfamiliar with accountability (*M* =.98) and don't like research (*M* =.79).
6. What are the ways in which school counselors in the United States learned about accountability methods?	The most frequently reported ways were a professional conference (*M* =1.76), developed on own (*M* =1.65), and Reading professional literature (*M* =1.42).
7. What student background data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?	The most frequently reported background data were excessive absenteeism (*M* =1.87), discipline referral (*M* =1.70), and parent involvement (*M* =1.48).
8. What are the categories that school counselors in the United States are	The most frequently reported categories were socio-economic status (*M* =1.37), gender (*M* =1.27), and

disaggregating data by?	proficiency with English (*M* =1.17).
9. What are the ways that school counselors in the United States share their accountability data?	The most frequently reported ways were formal report to administrators (*M* =1.24), presentation to school staff (*M* =1.14), and presentation to parents/P.T.A. (*M* =.69).
10. To what extent do school counselors in the United States believe that they have the ability to implement accountability practices?	The highest percentage (33.3%) reported that they "frequently" believe they have the ability to implement accountability practices. Only 3.3% reported that their belief fell in the "not at all" response.
11.For research questions 1-9, is there a variance in their answers between each of these groups- work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), years of experience, whether their state or district mandates accountability practices or reports, and whether they are currently participating in accountability practices.	There was some variance among groups for the variables of work setting and whether their state or district mandates accountability. There was limited support for the variable of years of experience. There was high support for the variable of currently participating in accountability practices.

Hypothesis 1 and 2 were both partially supported. Hypothesis 1 regarding the similarities between this study's findings and Edwards (2009) was partially supported due to the similarities in school counselors' reasons for accountability, types of accountability measures, barriers, and assistance needed. Though the means were not comparable, similar information and rankings were found in both the qualitative and quantitative data. Hypothesis two regarding the differences between groups in the present study was also partially supported. There was partial support for variables of school level, whether their state or district mandates accountability, and whether they were currently participating in accountability practices. Limited support was found for the variable of years of experience. Chapter 5 will discuss these findings along with limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, contributions for the field, and final conclusions.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This study focused on school counselor accountability practices. It examined the degree to which school counselors use accountability measures, to what extent they believed certain accountability practices were deemed helpful to their school counseling program, and what they believed their barriers were. Chapter 5 will include a summary of the results, discussion of the research findings, limitations of the study, suggestions for future research, implications for the field, and final conclusions.

Summary of Results

The results of the study provide information about school counselors' accountability practices. First a Pilot Study (2010) was conducted. It showed high test-retest reliability for all items (see Table 2). Information from the pilot study also showed high construct validity. A Cronbach's alpha also showed high internal consistency reliability for the present study. Descriptive statistics, group differences, and correlations were also analyzed. Table 31, Summary of Study Results, provides information gauged from the descriptive statistics analysis along with the research question that they answer. ANOVA results were mixed providing either partial or little support for the hypothesis. Qualitative analyses provided information as to the most frequently reported types of accountability practices being implemented and the assistance school counselors want from their professional associations and school districts.

The hypotheses of this study were both partially supported. Hypothesis 1, which suggested there may be similarities found with Edwards (2009) was partially supported due to the similarities in school counselors' reasons for accountability, types of accountability measures, barriers, and assistance needed. Though the means were not comparable, similar information and rankings were found in both the qualitative and quantitative data (see tables 26-30). Hypothesis two was also partially supported. This hypothesis suggested there would be group differences found for the variables of school level, years of experience, requirement, and participation. There were differences found in some of the questions for school level, only one question for years of experience, and most of the questions for the variables of requirement and participation.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which school counselors were collecting data and using accountability practices. By knowing what type of accountability practices are being implemented nationwide and which types of accountability practices were seen as helpful, a greater awareness was gauged into the critical issue of school counselor accountability measure usage. This study sought to confirm and expand on Edwards (2009) accountability study. To explore this topic several questions were asked about the participants' accountability practices. For the purpose of this discussion, research questions have been consolidated to address the following themes: reasons for collecting data, what types and how data is being used, assistance to increase accountability practices, barriers to accountability practices, how accountability practices were learned, school counselor beliefs, and group comparisons.

Reasons for Collecting Data. Research Question 1 of this study was "What are the reasons why school counselors in the United States are collecting student data to plan and improve their school counseling programs?" The most common reason chosen was for program planning and improvement, followed by personal choice for professional growth, supervisor or principal requirement, district/central office requirement, and lastly state department of education requirement. There was only one difference in the results found in Edwards (2009), professional growth and supervisor/principal requirement (the 2nd and 3rd highest in this study) were reversed. Both studies showed the highest response was for "program planning and improvement." This is an encouraging finding given that three of the four other subquestions ask if they are collecting accountability data for a requirement and the highest two means are for reasons other than a requirement. In this study the highest two subquestions indicated that school counselors are more often collecting data for their own purposes, either for "program planning and improvement" or "personal choice for professional growth." The fact that participants were all members of their state school counseling association may have been a factor in the mean for "personal choice for professional growth." Though there has not been a study addressing these issues with school counselors who were not members of their state association, one could surmise that school counselors who are members of such organizations would possibly be more interested professional growth. Future research would be needed to establish if this played a factor in the results to this question.

The results in this question not only confirmed that of Edwards (2009) but also that of Hatch and Chen-Hayes (2008). When their participants were asked to rate the aspects of the ASCA model based on importance to them, the item that received the

highest rating of importance was having explicit goals for the school counseling program. "Program planning and improvement" could be seen as this.

What types and how data is being used. Research Question Number 2 was "What student achievement data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?" The student achievement data that school counselors report most frequently is standardized test scores, followed by passing all classes, promotion and retention rates, grade point averages, graduation rates, completion of a specific academic program, and lastly dropout rates. The items with the highest and lowest mean scores were ranked similarly to that of Edwards (2009). It is not surprising that the most frequently reported data used was that of standardized test scores because of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and other educational mandates. Due to NCLB, school counselors as well as all educators must be more accountable due to the fact that federal funding is tied to these practices and school-wide academic performance (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006).

Research Question 3 was "What type/s of accountability data are school counselors in the United States collecting?" Process data had the highest reported use, followed by results data, and then perception data. Process data describes the services that were provided, for example an eight session anger management group was conducted. Results data describes the changes that occurred in the student, for example attendance increased in the second quarter by 50%. Perception data describe the attitude or perception changes in the student, for example 90% of students can accurately describe the effects of smoking. Similarities were found with Edwards (2009) results. The type most often collected in both studies was process data. Both studies have means that were

very close between each of their categories. Process data looks at what services were provided for example, conducting one 8-session anger management counseling group to five students. This type of data may answer the old school counselor question of "What does a school counselor do?" but would provide little information to the more important question for school counselors to be able to answer according to ASCA (2005), "How are students different as a result of what school counselors do?" Pre/post perception data and results data would both provide school counselors with the ability to answer this question. Process data obviously would be the easiest data to collect and would require the least amount of accountability skills. Young and Kaffenberger (2009) suggest that accountability practices can link the school counselors' program to the academic achievement of all students and that accountability strategies have three purposes. These are to (a) monitor student progress and close the achievement gap, (b) to assess and evaluate programs, and (c) to demonstrate school counseling program effectiveness (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). The information gained from process data would not be able to aid in these goals of accountability.

According to Johnson and Johnson (2003) the accountability movement within the school counseling field and the subsequent paradigm shift has led to changes in school counselor accountability. This new approach focuses on the student/s not the services. School counselor accountability is now centered on students' academic and behavioral results (Johnson & Johnson, 2003). Hopefully with accountability training more school counselors will begin to use perception data and results data. These types of data will help them to be able to show their value in the school.

Research Question Number 7 was "What student background data are school counselors in the United States using to plan and improve their school counseling programs?" The most commonly reported background data used was excessive absenteeism (M = 1.87), followed by discipline referrals (M = 1.70), parent or guardian involvement (M = 1.48), suspension rates (M =1.41), homework completion rates (M = 1.24), participation in extracurricular activities (M = .94), alcohol, tobacco, and other drug violations (M = .93), and lastly course enrollment patterns (.81). The items with the highest means in Edwards (2009) study were as follows: excessive absenteeism, discipline referrals, and suspension rates. Again the items with the two highest means were similar, and it shows that both samples of school counselors are most often using the background data of absenteeism and discipline referrals to plan and improve their school counseling programs. The means for this study were not very high considering that 0 = not at all, 1= sometimes, 2 = frequently, 3 = often, and 4 = always. The means for this question were all between the "not at all" category and "frequently" category. To monitor student progress and close achievement gaps school counselors must begin by looking at the school's data and determine where the gaps exist (Young & Kaffenberger, 2009). It is possible that the means were so low due to the number reason not being listed.

Research Question Number 8 asked, "What are the categories that school counselors in the United States are disaggregating data by?" The category selected most often was socioeconomic status, followed by gender, proficiency with English/ESOL, race/ethnicity, students who are over age for grade by two years or more, and lastly students retained in kindergarten or first grade. The results of Edwards (2009) to this

question were somewhat different. The high means for her study showed race/ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status as the most reported categories to disaggregate data by. This may be to the unique population of students in Alabama versus the present study's more diverse population or because of possible mandates to increase achievement for certain racial or ethnic groups in Alabama. The means for the present study centered primarily around the "sometimes" response coded at a 1.0. It is important for school counselors to disaggregate data by looking at achievement levels of all groups of students; but it seems that school counselors are not doing so at a frequent or often rate. Disaggregating data enables school counselors to be able to see how school policies and practices affect issues of equity (Stone & Dahir, 2006).

Research Question Number 9 was "What are the ways that school counselors in the United States share their accountability data?' The most chosen category was formal report to administrators (M = 1.24), followed by presentation to school staff, presentation to parents or P.T.A., school website, presentation to school board, and lastly local newspaper. Additional subquestions were given so that this question cannot be completely compared with Edwards (2009) study; but the most frequently reported way of sharing data was the same in both studies, "formal report to administrators." The subquestions means centered around the "sometimes" or "not at all" responses. If school counselors are taking the time to collect and analyze data, the next step would be to share the data. What good is the data if it's not being shared other than for program development. School counselors need to share their accountability data to gain support for their programs. This need was a finding in Research Question 4. By sharing

accountability data an awareness and the value of the school counselor can be presented. Future research should address why school counselors aren't sharing their data.

Assistance to Increase Accountability Practices. Research Question Number 4 was "What assistance do school counselors in the United States need to effectively collect and analyze accountability data?" This question was answered by three questions. Specific Question 9, which had seven subquestions and a Likert scale, answers this question. Specific Questions 12 and 13, which are qualitative in nature, also ask about what assistance is needed. On Specific Question 9, the item that school counselors believed would be most helpful was extra time to implement accountability practices, followed by examples of accountability measure implementation, a professional association conference session on accountability, having a peer mentor available for assistance/questions, a district training in accountability, supervision, and lastly a university course in accountability. The results for this question slightly differ than that of the two qualitative, open ended questions. When asked what assistance their counseling association or university could provide the highest coded themes were training (35.5%), other (18.3%), and manual/program (14.2%). When asked what assistance their school system could provide the highest coded themes were support (25.8%), training (24%), and time (18.3%). Although "time" would not be an assistance typically thought of when asked what their professional association could do to help them, it would be a type of help the school system could provide, yet it was only the third most frequent theme. The participants may have meant that they wanted their professional associations to advocate for them to have more time. From these results school counselors believe that training is needed to increase their accountability practices. It is unfortunate to note that a large

percentage of the school counselors who indicated needing "support" from their school system in this study seemed to feel very unimportant as a school counselor in their schools, mentioning feeling unvalued, expendable, or being frequently used for tasks that were unrelated to school counseling. This was a disheartening finding and is another reason why school counselors should prioritize the need for implementing accountability practices into their school counseling programs.

Barriers to Accountability Practices. Research Question Number 5 was "What are the barriers that may prevent school counselors in the United States from using accountability practices?" The item indicated as the most frequent barrier was that it is too time consuming, followed by unfamiliar with accountability procedures, do not like research, have not given it much thought, concern about potential negative consequences, and perceive accountability information as unnecessary. The top three barriers reported in Edwards (2009) study were "too time consuming," "concern about potential negative consequences," and "do not like research." Both studies indicate that the most prevalent barrier is that accountability is seen as too time consuming. This is not surprising given the need for more time mentioned in the results for Research Question 4 regarding assistance needed.

This finding also relates to that of Baggerly and Osborn (2006). In their study school counselors whose programs were aligned with the ASCA National Model (which accountability is a part of) had higher job satisfaction. Performing appropriate and inappropriate duties influenced their job satisfaction and commitment. Not being able to implement appropriate duties increased school counselors' dissatisfaction. If accountability is seen as "too time consuming" possibly because of inappropriate duties

then school counselors job satisfaction and commitment is at risk. Their study also showed that district and peer supervision correlated with job satisfaction.

The figure below indicates the strategies suggested in this study to overcome the most reported barrier of "too time consuming." The * denotes those which have research to support them.

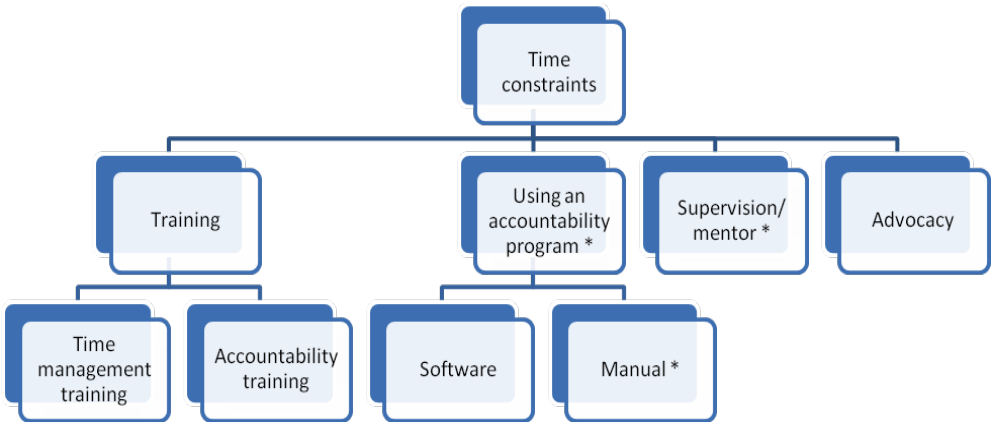

Figure 1. Time constraints

How accountability practices were learned. Research Question Number 6 was "What are the ways in which school counselors in the United States learned about accountability methods?" The most common way reported was through a professional conference, followed by developed on own/collaborated with colleagues, reading professional literature, a university course, district training, and lastly through the state department of education. The three most frequently reported on Edwards (2009) were professional conference, reading professional literature, and developed on

own/collaborated with colleagues. The sample should again be taken into consideration with these results. Both samples were from school counseling associations. Most likely members of these associations would be attending professional conferences and reading professional literature more often than school counselors who are not in these associations. It is interesting to note that "district training" had the second lowest mean. If approximately half of the participants in this survey are being required to implement accountability practices, then why are their districts not training them to the level 1 would expect? This again reiterates the need for training in accountability practices.

School Counselor beliefs. Research Question Number 10 was "To what extent do school counselors in the United States believe that they have the ability to implement accountability practices?" The highest percentage of school counselors reported that they "frequently" believed they had the ability to effectively implement accountability practices (see Table 16). It is encouraging to see that very few school counselors (2.4%) responded "not at all." According to Bandura (1992) people tend to avoid activities that they believe exceed their abilities. This tenet is part of Bandura's reciprocal causation, that the environment, one's beliefs, and behavior all have an effect on each other. School counselors' beliefs/perceptions toward accountability practices may influence their behavior. If school counselors believe they have the ability to implement accountability practices then one would assume that they would be open to new learning about it (training). If the participants' perceptions of their abilities are seen as positive towards accountability then it would be safe to assume that they would be more open to learning more or using accountability practices in the future. Holcomb-McCoy, Gonzalez, and Johnston (2009) found that 25% of the variance related to school counselor data usage

was due to self-efficacy. If school counselors are appropriately trained in accountability practices that may increase their feelings of self-efficacy and in turn increase their accountability practices.

Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action (1974), however, asserts that attitudes influence behavior intentions which in turn influence actual behavior According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1974) attitudes are revised based on one's assessments about their beliefs and values. The gap between an individual's beliefs and their behavior proposed by this theory would be an interesting theoretical basis to look at school counselors' beliefs and actual practices in future studies. Behavior intentions include the person's attitude towards performing the behavior and the influence of the social environment (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974). However, intentions do not always lead to actual behavior. Do the intentions or perceptions of school counselors, in regard to accountability practices, actually translate to their behavior (practices)?

This study focused on school counselors' perceptions about accountability and their accountability usage. School counselors' perceptions or beliefs about accountability are important to study because according to Bandura (1992), one's perceptions of their abilities lead to new learning and could possibly lead to learning or usage of accountability measures. From this perspective the participants' beliefs about their ability to effectively implement accountability practices may have affected their accountability practices. Future research in this area would help to clarify if this holds true.

Group comparisons. Research Question 11 was "For Research Questions 1-9, is there a variance in their answers between each of these groups- work setting (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12), years of experience, whether their state or district

mandates accountability practices or reports, and whether they are currently participating in accountability practices?" One way ANOVA's were conducted for all of the specific questions. The group variables were work setting, years of experience, whether they are mandated to implement accountability practices, and whether they are currently participating in accountability practices. One of the hypotheses of this study was that there would be a significant difference among these groups. There was partial support of group differences for variables of school level, whether their state or district mandates accountability, and whether they were currently participating in accountability practices. Limited support was found for the variable of years of experience.

For the variable of school level (elementary, middle, high school, or K-12) there were group differences found in 21 of the 55 items (see Appendix D). After a lower *p* value was used to control for type 1 errors, 12 items still show significant differences (see Table 17). The majority of these significant group differences were found in the subquestions for Questions 5 and 6. Both of these questions related to using data, student achievement data and background data. This is not surprising given that school counselors at different school levels would typically be looking at different types of student achievement and background data. These differences which seem based on school level should be seen primarily as differences based on the school counselor's role at the various level and not that any specific level is not up to par on their accountability practices. All levels were collecting data, just different types and at different rates.

For the variable of years of experience (1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16+) there were group differences found in 8 of the 54 items (see Appendix E). After a lower *p* value was used to control for Type 1 errors, only one item still showed significant group differences (see

Table 18). This was the item asking to what extent the participant learned about accountability methods from a university course. There were differences between all of the groups and group number 1 (1-5 years of experience). This item was one the researcher thought would show significant differences; but it was hypothesized that there would be more significant group differences found given that most "newer" school counselors are now learning about accountability during their university training. This was not a topic most seasoned school counselors were exposed to while in their graduate programs only a few years ago. One explanation for this could be that there were possibly too many groups. If the groups have been for example, 1-5 and 6+ more group differences may have been seen. This is an area for future research in accountability and with this instrument.

Though the results may have been surprising that there was not a significant difference in accountability practices based on years of experience, this is an encouraging finding for the field. All groups based on years of experience are basically the same regarding accountability usage, needs, and barriers. It is easy to think that those who have been in the field for numerous years may be "stuck in their ways"; but this was not the case with this sample. It is a positive finding to see that there is not a specific group that is lacking in accountability usage and that there is not a specific group with different beliefs about accountability. This study's results differed from previous research investigating teacher self-efficacy and years of experience. Klassen and Chiu's (2010) research found teachers' self-esteem varied as a function of years of experience. While their research focused on a different domain of self-efficacy (instructional strategies, classroom management, and student engagement), they found the category of "mid

career" to have the highest self-efficacy level for all three of their domains. This study as well as Klassen and Chiu's (2010) were both cross sectional designs only research self-efficacy at one point in time. Future research involving school counselors' accountability practices could investigate whether the same results would be found over time.

For the variable of requirement there were group differences found in 28 of the 54 questions (see Table 19). All domains had some of the subquestions showing significant group differences except for Specific Question 9, "To what extent do you feel the following would be helpful in increasing your accountability practices?" The subquestions for this domain one would think would show group differences between those who are and are not required to use accountability practices. It would make sense to think that those who are not using accountability would want things such as training, a mentor, examples of measures, etc. more than those who are required to use accountability. One possible conclusion could be that those who are required to use accountability still need assistance and may not have been given adequate training etc…

For the variable of participating there were group difference found in 35 of the 54 questions (see Table 20). Specific Questions two (types of data collected), three (reasons for data collection), and seven (categories that data is viewed by) showed significant differences for all of its subquestions. Specific Questions 1 (barriers), 4 (methods of learning about accountability), 6 (background data use), and 8 (methods of sharing data) had 50% or more of its subquestions showing significant differences. Specific Question five (student achievement data use) had two of its seven subquestions showing differences. Only Specific Question 9 (methods of help) did not have any subquestions with significant group differences. The number of differences found between the two

groups is quite significant. It shows how vast the differences are between school counselors who do and do not participate in accountability practices.

Those participants in Group 1, those who were currently using accountability practices, had higher group means for all domains and subquestions except for feeling barriers preventing them from practicing accountability. On paper, the differences between these school counselors who do and do not use accountability practices are extensive. Looking at the group differences in this variable alone is quite a call for action for the field of school counseling. The practices of school counselors dependent on this variable truly seem to separate what type of school counselor they are. Those school counselors using accountability practices reported using all types of data more frequently, felt stronger reasons for using accountability, had learned more about accountability, used student achievement data and background data more often, viewed data by category more often, and shared their data more often. Many of these domains are presented in the ASCA National Model (2005) and are seen as "best practices" in the field. Higher means in many of these domains would enable a school counselor to be viewed as a more effective school counselor. For example, using data at a higher reported rate, sharing accountability data with shareholders, looking at data by subgroups (categories), and collecting various types of data would enable a school counselor to be viewed as a more effective school counselor by many in the field.

Correlations. Pearson r correlations were conducted for the purpose of item and survey development. Given that this was the first time this survey was used in this exact format, correlations were done to see if there was a significant relationship between the domain (global question) and each specific event (specific question). Seven of the nine

global questions showed a significant positive correlation at the $p <$. .01 level for all of the specific questions within their domain. This shows that the global questions used were accurately assessing the construct they were supposed to measure.

Two global questions did not show a significant correlation with all of their specific questions. These were the global questions about barriers and about help needed to increase accountability practices. There may be issues with the way these two global questions or their specific questions were worded. Future research with this instrument may want to consider revising these domains to hopefully reach significant correlations as well.

Qualitative analyses. The first qualitative question, Specific Question 11, asked the participants to describe a recent accountability practice that they had implemented. The breakdown by number and percentage of comments in each category was as follows: Other (22.8%), grades (15.2%), test scores (14.3%), guidance unit (11.2%), behavior (10.3%), group (8.5%), success skills (6.7%), attendance (6.3%), and graduation (4.5%). The most reported specific type of accountability practice was those aimed at raising students' grades (15.2%). The "other" category included various themes with very few responses. Many respondents included information as to the reasons or needs for this particular intervention at their schools. It is interesting to see the diversity in the types of accountability practices being implemented and that accountability practices are based on the individual schools' needs. Many respondents indicated the great pride they felt when looking at or sharing their results. One participant described in detail how a program he or she created helped to identify eight students with a plan to commit suicide and that her work helped to save eight lives. Although most school counselors are implementing

programs that do significantly impact students lives, if they are not keeping track of that data and sharing it, they and their shareholders may not truly be seeing the impact and value of these school counseling programs.

Specific Question Number 12 asked the participants what assistance their professional organization or university training program could provide that would increase their accountability practices. The breakdown was as follows: training = (35.5%), other = (18.3%), manual/program = (14.2%), examples = (14.2%), support = (9.6%), and university course = (8.1%). Table 21 displays the results for this question. This item's results show the need that the participants are feeling in regard to being trained in accountability. The results of this question are somewhat contradictory to the results of the similar question, Specific Question 9, that is in a different format. In that question participants choose to what extent they felt particular methods would be helpful to increasing their accountability practices. On that question the items with the highest means were extra time, examples of accountability measures, and a professional association conference session. Obviously a professional association or university training program would not be able to give school counselors "extra time." It was interesting though that a conference session did not have a higher mean given the participants expressed need for training. Participants may be wanting training in the form of a district training. Examples were not mentioned as frequently on Specific Question 12 as compared to their high mean on Specific Question 9. This may have been due to participants not thinking of their professional organization or university as providers of this type of assistance.

When Specific Question 12 was analyzed by school level all levels reported wanting training most frequently followed by the "other" category being the second most frequent (see Table 23). With training being the most needed by all school levels this should be a call to action for professional organizations. School counselors should begin requesting this of their professional organizations.

Specific Question Number 13 asked the participants what their school system could provide that would increase their accountability practices. The resulting themes were as follows: support = (25.8%), training = (24%), time = (18.3%), other = (13.1%), manual/program = (10%), requirement = (4.8%), and examples = (4%). Table 22 displays the results to this question. It is disheartening to see that the most frequent responses had to do with not feeling supported by their administration or school system. In many of the responses participants "vented" about the lack of support felt at their school and occasionally even at the district level. This result goes back to the need for advocating for the profession and showing the difference that school counselors can make. School counselors must take responsibility for this. A strong way to be able to do this is through collecting, analyzing, and most importantly sharing accountability data. In turn this can justify and advance school counseling as a profession.

When Specific Question 13 was analyzed by school level some differences were found among school levels. Elementary school counselor reported most wanting training from their school districts, middle school counselors reported most wanting support from their school districts, and high school counselors reported equally wanting training, support, and time. Training and support were among the most reported for all levels. Time seemed to be more of a need at the high school level. Participants gave many

examples as to how they are not feeling supported by their administration or school districts. These included responses such as too many inappropriate duties, too much clerical work/no secretarial help, and school counseling positions being cut at their schools. School districts need to incorporate accountability training if they are not all ready since it was a high need at all levels. Sharing accountability practices and the impact the school counselor is making may be one piece towards gaining the support they are needing.

Edwards (2009). When the two qualitative questions from both studies were compared (see Tables 26 and 27) the percentage results in each category were very similar. It is clear from the results of both studies that school counselors do indeed want to be trained in accountability practices.

When comparing the barriers, reasons for accountability, and types of data used, the participants in both studies showed some similarities (Tables 28-30). Although the means were not the same, the rank orders were similar. With training opportunities, the highest perceived barrier in both studies of it being "too time consuming" may be overcome when accountability practices are learned and truly understood. School counselors in both studies most frequently reported using accountability for program planning and improvement and most frequently reported collecting process data. With increased training in accountability, hopefully, there will be a shift in the types of data collected as well. Process data had the highest mean in both studies. While it is good to collect process data, this type shows the least amount of impact on how a student has changed. It only provides evidence that an event (ex. small group counseling or a

guidance unit) has occurred. Perception data and results data both show more of an impact that the guidance program has had on the student/s.

Conclusion. The role of the school counselor is changing and the need to be more accountable is now here. Many recent articles in the field of school counseling provide a new paradigm or approach of how to be more accountable. Few articles though are actually research based or report on what's really going on in the field from the school counselor's perspective. This study attempted to do just that.

Much of this study's results were similar to those of Edwards (2009). This shows that the results were not particular to one sample. Future results will hopefully take these results and find ways to overcome the barriers to accountability school counselors are feeling and to initiate training and other methods of assistance to increase school counselors' accountability practices.

With the present education budget concerns affecting our schools, school counselors must continue to prove their worth to their schools and school districts. Because of NCLB, school counselors as well as all educators must be more accountable due to the fact that federal funding is tied to these practices and school-wide academic performance (Dollarhide & Lemberger, 2006). Incorporating accountability practices is not only a "best practice" for school counselors; but also a necessity for advocating for their profession and position. For school counselors to be seen as an imperative part of the educational team, accountability practices must be part of the school counseling program.

Limitations

This study does have limitations. One of the limitations would be the generalizability. The sample did not have a representative amount of participants from the West or Southwest. This study can also only be generalized to school counselors who are practicing in elementary school, middle school, high school, or K-12 settings and are members of their state school counseling associations. As mentioned earlier school counselors who are members in their state associations may have different experiences with accountability especially in regard to conferences, training, and familiarity with it. Accountability has been a popular topic at many of the professional associations' conferences and workshops. Members of these associations may be more involved in professional development or may be more knowledgeable about accountability practices in general.

Another possible limitation was relocation, for example, if a school counselor had previously been in a county that required accountability measures; but now they were in a county that does not. They may have been more similar to school counselors that are currently required to implement accountability practices even though they would have answered "no" to "Does your state or district require you to use accountability practices?" Future studies in this area should ask a clarifying question to those who are presently not required to use accountability measures by asking if they have ever been required to use accountability measures.

The accuracy of self-reporting may have also been a limitation in this study. For example specific Question Number 10, "To what extent do you believe you have the ability to effectively use accountability practices," participants may have reported higher

beliefs to safeguard their self-esteem. Any of the questions about accountability usage may have also had higher reporting due to the fact that most school counselors know or have heard that accountability measures are a good practice.

A final limitation includes the possibility that there may not a difference between many of the means in the descriptive statistics results. For many of the research questions, the means were very similar and may not truly be statistically different. A multivariate analysis would be a suggestion for future research to assess whether the means are in fact different from each other or not.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study's instrument was created specifically for this research. Parts of the survey were taken from Edwards (2009) research; but neither an item analysis nor any type of reliability had been conducted. This survey did show high reliability during the test-retest analysis and the Cronbach's alpha. When correlations were conducted however not all of the global items correlated significantly with the specific items. Future research with this survey may want to design better global questions or specific events for the two that did not show significant correlations (barriers and help needed).

Research has suggested that counselor education programs begin to train school counselors in accountability practices; but little has been written about how to do so (Brott, 2006). This is an area definitely needs future research. This survey's results show that school counselors do want and need accountability training. Training programs and courses in accountability need to be established and researched so that all school counselors have an opportunity to learn about accountability practices. Training should focus on using the specific types of data each school level is using. Future research

should address whether an accountability training impacts school counselors' accountability practices and their beliefs in being able to effectively implement them. It would also be interesting for future research to investigate if school counselors are perceived differently by their administrators based on whether they are using accountability practices or not.

Research should also address the needs and beliefs of school counselors who are not members of their state counseling association. This study and Edwards (2009) both had samples from state school counseling associations. An even larger percentage of school counselors are not members of their professional organizations and their needs and beliefs may be somewhat different, especially in regard to professional development.

Implications for the Field

This study answered several critical questions regarding school counselor accountability. The information gained from this study added to the literature in this area and provided greater awareness of the perceptions, beliefs, and activities of school counselors with regard to accountability.

The results of this study will be beneficial to university school counseling departments as well as district school counseling supervisors. Training school counselors in accountability practices is of utmost importance. The results of the study will be able to guide future trainings and coursework given the information in this study pertaining to the barriers school counselors are feeling and the assistance they are wanting specifically in regard to training and learning more about accountability. Brott (2006) suggests that during school counseling internships the main objective is to learn accountability practices. One example mentioned in her research would be to have school counselor

interns evaluate the effectiveness of one aspect of their counseling (individual, group, etc...) and then present the results of the services. This would not only provide school counseling interns with the real world practice of implementing an accountability measure but also experience in presenting the results.

It is necessary for school districts, administrators, and school counselors to find ways to resolve the barriers discussed in this study. The assistance the participants believed would be helpful should be researched by state school counseling associations as well as at the district and school level. If school counselors feel less barriers to practicing accountability and perceive that the assistance they need is being provided hopefully their accountability practices will increase. School district supervisors and administrators must be educated on the ASCA National Model. Not only would this hopefully increase the level of support school counselors feel but it would also provide these supervisors and administrators with information regarding accountability practices for school counselors. The figure below shows the reported barriers and the reported assistance needed. Lines are draw from the assistance requested and the barriers they would overcome. The barriers of "concern about negative consequences" and "do not like research" may be lessened the more a school counselor is involved in practicing and learning about accountability; but do not seem to have an immediate solution to overcoming.

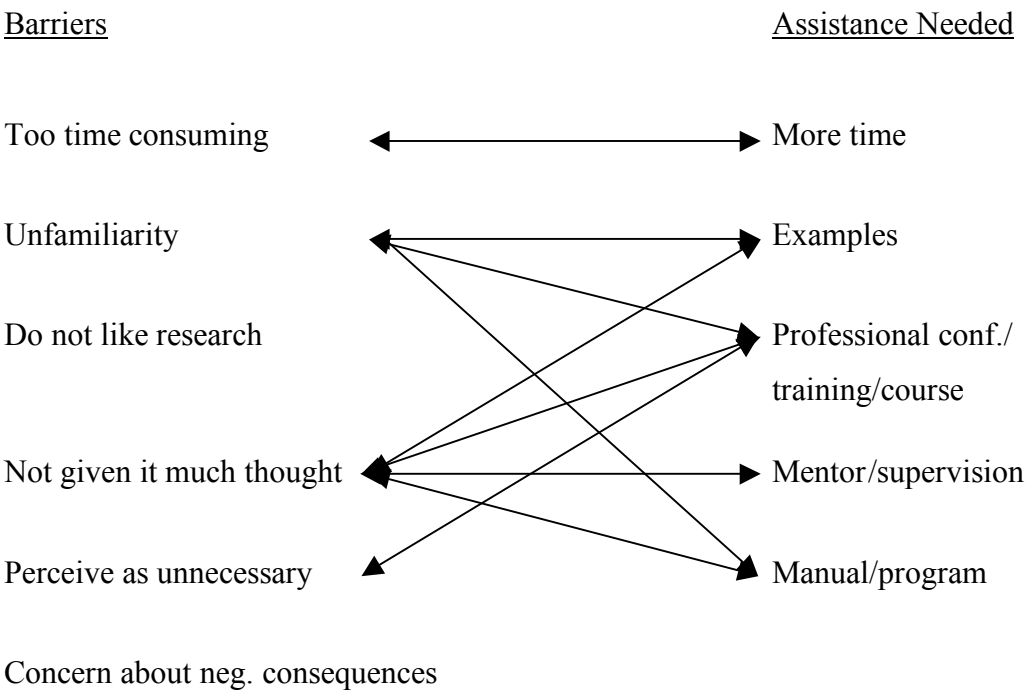

Figure 2. Barriers and Assistance

The results of this study show that school counselors are not sharing their data at the rate one would expect. Over 70% of the participants were using accountability practices yet when asked about specific ways they were sharing the data the majority of the subquestions had the highest means in the "not at all" category. The two that were not in that category were only in the "sometimes" category. Though accountability practices can be beneficial without being shared, by assisting with program planning for example, it can be much more powerful if shared with stakeholders. Sharing the impact that a school counselor made with a student/s would most likely strengthen their self-efficacy in accountability practices as well. School counselors must be encouraged or trained if

necessary in ways to present these data to be able to answer the question of, "how are students different because of the school counseling program."

If the option of training is not available to them within their school districts, school counselors must advocate for themselves to find the knowledge they seek. Many professional organizations have trainings or conferences with sessions on accountability practices. If their professional organization does not, it would implore them to request this from their professional organization. There are several programs available for school counselors to use that will assist them with their accountability practices or help them to learn about accountability. A few examples include: Stone and Dahir's *School Counselor Accountability: A Measure of Student Success*, Young and Kaffenberger's *Making Data Work 2nd Ed.,* or Sabella's *Data Boot Camp*. The figure below shows ways and options available to school counselors to learn about or increase their accountability.

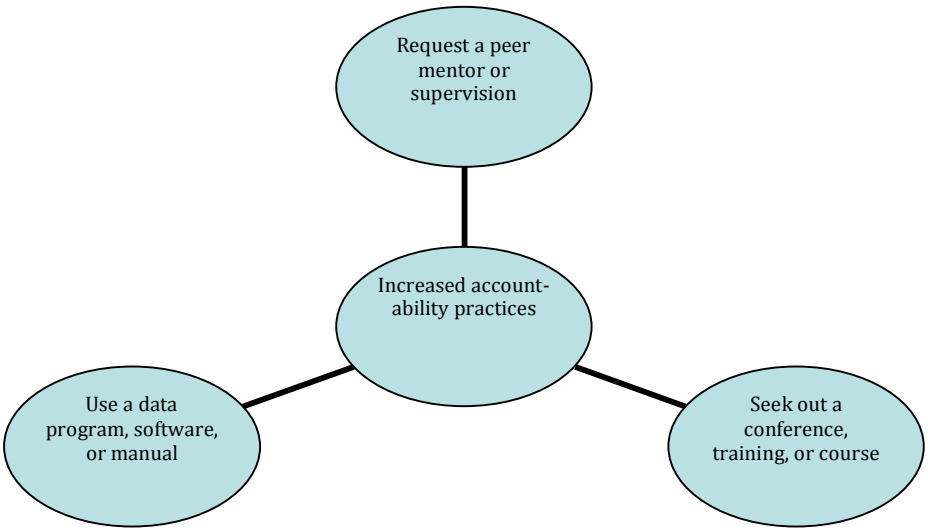

Figure 3. Ways for School Counselors to Increase Accountability Practices

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Appendices

Appendix A

Survey for School Counselor Accountability Practices

1. School Counselor Acountability Practices

You are invited to participate in this study, School Counselor Accountability Practices, #00001571 to determine to what extent school counselors are involved with accountability practices. This study is being conducted by Cindy Topdemir, a University of South Florida doctoral candidate, under the supervision of Dr. Debra Osborn.
If you decide to participate, please complete the questionnaire. It is 3 pages long should take no more than 10 minutes. Your answers will remain confidential and are anonymous. Information gained from this survey will be used to fulfill an educational requirement (doctoral degree), may be published in a journal article, or presented at a professional meeting. If you have any questions regarding this survey please contact me at ctopdemi@mail.usf.edu. You may also contact University of South Florida's IRB department at 813-974-9343 with questions.

1. Are you currently a practicing school counselor?

◯ yes ◯ no (If no, please stop here. You are not eligible for this survey).

2. What is your gender?

◯ Female ◯ Male

3. What is your ethnic background?

◯ Caucasian (non-hispanic) ◯ African American
◯ Hispanic ◯ Mixed racial background
◯ Asian ◯ Other

4. What state are you presently working in?

5. How would you describe the school setting in which you work?

◯ Urban ◯ Suburban ◯ Rural ◯ Other

Other (please specify)

6. Is your school Title I funded?

◯ Yes ◯ No

7. What is your current work setting?

◯ Elementary ◯ Middle/Jr. High ◯ High ◯ K-12 ◯ Other

Other (please specify)

8. How many years have you been a professional school counselor?

◯ 1-5 ◯ 6-10 ◯ 11-15 ◯ 16+

9. Does your state or district require you to use accountability practices?

◯ Yes ◯ No

10. Are you currently using or participating in accountability practices?

◯ Yes ◯ No

2. School Counselor Accountability Practices

Please answer the following global questions about accountability.

1. To what extent do you have a particular reason/s for collecting accountability data?

☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Often ☐ Always

2. To what extent do you use student achievement data for accountability purposes?

☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Often ☐ Always

3. To what extent do you use student background data (e.g. discipline referrals or absenteeism) for accountability purposes?

☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Often ☐ Always

4. To what extent do you categorize student data (e.g. race or gender) for review or analysis?

☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Often ☐ Always

5. To what extent do you collect data?

☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Often ☐ Always

6. To what extent do you find ways that would help you to increase your accountability practices? (e.g. training, extra time)

☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Often ☐ Always

7. To what extent do you feel that there are barriers preventing you from practicing accountability?

☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Often ☐ Always

8. To what extent did you learn about accountability practices from a particular way/s? (e.g. university course, conference)

☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Often ☐ Always

9. To what extent do you use a particular way/s to share your accountability data? (e.g. presentation, formal report)

☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Often ☐ Always

3. School Counselor Accountability Practices

Please answer the following specific questions about accountability.

1. To what extent do the following barriers prevent you from practicing accountability?

	Not at all	Sometimes	Frequently	Often	Always
Unfamiliar with accountability procedures	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Do not like to do research	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Too time consuming	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Have not given accountability much thought	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Concern about potential negative consequences	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Perceive accountability information as unnecessary	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other (specify below)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other

2. To what extent do you collect the following types of data?

	Not at all	Sometimes	Frequently	Often	Always
Process Data-what service was offered? Example:Conducted 5 eight-session counseling groups with eight students on study skills.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Perception Data-what are the attitudes skills, or knowledge acquired Example:85 percent of the students can identify the steps in conflict resolution.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Results Data-How have students changed as a result of your counseling program? Example:Attendance rates improved by 10 percent.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

3. To what extent do you collect accountability data for the following reasons?

	Not at all	Sometimes	Frequently	Often	Always
Personal choice for professional growth	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Program planning and improvement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Supervisor or principal requirement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
District /central office requirement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
State department of education requirement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other (specify below)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other

4. To what extent did you learn about accountability methods from the following?

	Not at all	Sometimes	Frequently	Often	Always
Reading professional literature	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Developed on own/collaboration with colleagues	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
University course	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Professional conference	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
State department of education	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
District training	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other (specify below)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other

5. To what extent do you use the following student achievement data for accountability practices?

	Not at all	Sometimes	Frequently	Often	Always
Standardized test scores	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Grade point averages	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Graduation rates	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Passing all classes	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Promotion and retention rates	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Dropout rates	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Completion of specific academic programs (i.e. honors, college prep, etc..)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other (specify below)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other

6. To what extent do you use background related data for accountability practices?

	Not at all	Sometimes	Frequently	Often	Always
Course enrollment patterns	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Discipline referrals	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Suspension rates	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Alcohol, tobacco, and other drug violations	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Excessive absenteeism	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Parent or guardian involvement	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Participation in extracurricular activities	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Homework completion rates	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other (specify below)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other

7. To what extent are you likely to use the following categories to view data?

	Not at all	Sometimes	Frequently	Often	Always
Race/ethnicity	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Gender	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Socioeconomic status	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Proficiency with English/ESOL	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Students retained in kindergarten or first grade	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Students who are overage for grade by two years or more	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

8. To what extent do you use the following to share data?

	Not at all	Sometimes	Frequently	Often	Always
Formal report to administrators	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Presentation to school board	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Presentation to school staff	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Presentation to parents or P.T.A.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
School website	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Local newspaper	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other (specify below)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other

9. To what extent do you feel the following would be helpful in increasing your accountability practices?

	Not at all	Sometimes	Frequently	Often	Always
A district training in accountability	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
A professional association conference session on accountability	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Having a peer mentor available for assistance/questions	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Supervision	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Extra time to implement accountability practices	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Examples of accountability measure implementation	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
University course in accountability	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Other (specify below)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other

10. To what extent do you believe you have the ability to effectively use accountability practices?

☐ Not at all ☐ Sometimes ☐ Frequently ☐ Often ☐ Always

11. Briefly describe the most recent accountability practice you implemented and how it contributed to student achievement.

12. What assistance could professional organizations or university training programs provide that would increase the likelihood that you collect, analyze, and present accountability data about your school counseling programs?

13. What assistance could your school system provide that would increase the likelihood that you collect, analyze, and present accountability data about your school counseling program?

Appendix B

Letter to State School Counseling Associations

To whom it may concern:

I am a Doctoral Candidate at the University of South Florida. Presently I am collecting my dissertation data. I would like to ask your members to participate in my study on School Counselor Accountability Practices. I have attached the actual survey in a PDF format for you to view, the letter from my university's IRB department approving my research, and a brief letter to your members. I would greatly appreciate it if you could either post my survey link below on your website or e-mail the link below to your members. This is an anonymous survey. I would like to collect these data for the entire month of August. Thank you for your consideration. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Cindy Topdemir

Doctoral Candidate

University of South Florida

e-mail link: http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CJWDVMH

website link: Click here to take survey

Appendix C

Letter to Participants

Dear School Counselor,

You are invited to participate in a study titled *School Counselor Accountability Practices,* PR00001571 to determine to what extent school counselors are involved with accountability practices. Your participation is optional. This study is being conducted by Cindy Topdemir, a University of South Florida doctoral candidate, under the supervision of Dr. Debra Osborn.
If you decide to participate, please click on the survey link below. It should take no more than 10 minutes and your answers will remain confidential and anonymous. Information gained from this survey will be used to fulfill an educational requirement (doctoral degree), may be published in a journal article, or presented at a professional meeting.
If you have any questions regarding this survey please contact me at ctopdemi@mail.usf.edu. You may also contact the University of South Florida's I.R.B. department at 813-974-9343 in reference to this survey #00001571.

Cindy Topdemir

Doctoral Candidate, University of South Florida

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/CJWDVMH

Appendix D

Coding for Question 11

Question 11

"Describe the most recent accountability practice you implemented and how it contributed to student achievement"....

Theme	**Definition**	**Examples**
Behavior	Student behavior and its consequences at school.	Behavior, referral, suspension
Test scores	*Students' test scores*	*Standardized test scores, class tests*
Graduation	Includes examples pertaining to high school graduation	Graduation credits, credit recovery
Success Skills	*Guidance unit or group including success skills*	*Organization, test taking skills*
Grades	Includes students' classroom or report card grades	Passing all classes, D's/F's
Attendance	*Students' rate of attending school and being on-time*	*Truancy, attendance rates*
Guidance unit	Classroom or larger lesson on a specific topic	Bullying, character education
Group	*Includes all group counseling*	*Anger management, friendship*
Other	Ideas that are not captured in any other theme	Career awareness, homework completion

Appendix E

Coding for Question 12

Question 12

"What assistance could professional organizations or university training programs provide that would increase the likelihood that you collect, analyze, and present accountability data about your school counseling program?"

Theme	**Definition**	**Examples**
Manual/Program	Something tangible guiding counselors through the process	Template, program
Training	*A workshop or presentation*	*Training for school counselors, training for administrators*
University course	A university course designed to focus on accountability focus on accountability	University course, class during graduate school
Examples	*Concrete examples of other School counselors' measures*	*Examples, other school counselors' measures*
Support	Includes anything which will help school counselors increase their accountability practices	Creating an awareness of accountability, mentors
Other	*Ideas that are not captured in any other theme*	*Time, graduate students to collect our data*

Appendix F

Coding for Question 13

Question 13

"What assistance could your school system provide that would increase the likelihood that you collect, analyze, and present accountability data about your school counseling program?"

Theme	**Definition**	**Examples**
Time	An extra amount of time or period for accountability	Extra time, longer contract
Training	*A workshop or presentation*	*Training for school counselors, training for administrators*
Examples	Concrete examples of other school counselors' measures	Examples, other school counselors' measures
Support	*Includes anything which will help school counselors increase their accountability practices*	*Support from administration, extra staff, smaller ratios*
Manual/program	Something tangible guiding school counselors' through the process	Computer program, template
Requirement	*Making an accountability measure or other practice a requirement*	*Make it a requirement for all school counselors, "school counselors won't do it unless it's required"*

Other	Ideas that are not captured in any other theme	Access to more data, money

About the Author

Cindy Topdemir completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology, Master of Arts in Counselor Education, and her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction with an emphasis in Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Cindy has been a School Counselor in Pasco County, Florida for 13 years. Subsequently, she developed a passion for advocating for school counselors, accountability practices, and school counselor development.