

School counselors' role in creating a college-going culture via General Systems Theory

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ABSTRACT

School counselors have critical roles in enhancing college readiness, providing college admissions counseling, and fostering a college going culture in their schools. The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine school counselors' beliefs about their role in college admissions counseling and fostering a college going culture. Study participants identified four types of roles, including helping students with post-graduation planning activities, interpreting college admissions requirements, career counseling, and ensuring students are on track to graduate. Study findings provide insights on how utilizing a general systems theory framework can provide a helpful roadmap of action steps for school counselors' role in fostering college-going school culture.

Keywords: College Admissions Counseling, College Going Culture, School Counselor Roles

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INTRODUCTION

High school students, today, are struggling with the decision to go to college since the Covid-19 Pandemic began (Conley & Massa, 2022). Rising costs of college and the economic downturn experienced by many are expected to have significant impacts on the education pipeline (Bransberger, et al., 2020). Despite the increasing national high school graduation rate (Bransberger, et al., 2020; Robertson, et al., 2016), fewer students are attending post-secondary institutions, and the coming decline in birth rates will only exacerbate declining college enrollments (Bransberger, et al., 2020).

School counselors play a pivotal role in college admissions counseling. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA, 2016), “School counselors actively seek to assist students in preparing for postsecondary success” (para. 4). This preparation includes navigating the college admissions process, to include admissions requirements, financial aid, test registrations, etc. (ASCA, 2016, para. 4). In fact, the process of college admissions can be lengthy and require many components, and often students and parents do not know how to navigate the college admissions terrain.

Even though college admissions counseling is a part of the school counselor’s job description that has major impacts on society (Ma, et al., 2019; Book, 2021; Skrbinjek, 2020), some differences do exist between the duties and responsibilities of school counselors in different school settings. In a 2018-2019 report from the National Association for College Admissions Counseling (Clinedinst, 2019), school counselors in public schools spent about 19% of their time (on average) on postsecondary counseling and only 29% of public schools employed a school counselor whose primary responsibility was college counseling. The disparity between school functions may have lasting impacts on students.

Research does exist on the benefits of college attendance (Ma, et al, 2019; Carroll & Erkut, 2009; Murray, 2009; Skrbinjek, 2020) and an abundance of research exists on college admissions processes and their ramifications (Ornstein, 2019; Kang, 2020); however, a paucity of research exists on the school counselor’s perception of their role in college admissions counseling. The purpose of this research is to understand school counselor’s perceptions of their work in college admissions counseling. Specifically, this research study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. How do school counselors describe their work in college admissions counseling?
2. How do school counselors describe their role in fostering a college going culture?
3. What school counselor knowledge, skills, and abilities are most important in college admissions counseling?

LITERATURE REVIEW

College attendance produces many benefits that may fall in two categories: societal and individual. Even though a plethora of benefits can be traced back to the individual, higher education produces impacts that also benefit the society as a whole (Book, 2021; Cunningham, 2006; Murray, 2009; Skrbinjek, 2020). Those with more education beyond a high school diploma tend to have jobs that provide health insurance with access to preventative care, which reduces the costs of government in social programs such as Medicare and Medicaid (Ma et al., 2019). Additionally, college graduates are statistically more apt to have healthy children and less likely to have illegitimate births, thus reducing social programs such as welfare and food

programs (Cutler & Lleras-Muney, 2010). Incarceration rates are also lower for those with college degrees, which reduces government spending on prison costs as well (Baum et al., 2013). Lastly, college graduates are also more likely to get involved in community services, voting, and other forms of community engagement (Barrow, & Malamud, 2015) not to mention that college graduates pay more taxes (Carroll & Erkut, 2009).

Individual benefits of a college degree include an increased annual and life-time income (Carnevale et al., 2020; Carnevale et al., 2011) that affords additional opportunities such as higher job satisfaction (Oreopoulos & Salvanes, 2011) and lower unemployment rates (Oreopoulos & Petronijevic, 2013). In fact, unemployment rates for those with a college degree are 3.5% fewer than those without a degree. Additionally, those with a college degree typically find jobs with access to retirement plans (Ma, et al., 2019) so they are not solely reliant on a social program such as social security. Lastly, a college degree typically allows for the provision of better opportunities for the children of graduates (Chetty et al., 2017) as parents with college degrees are more likely to become involved in a child's education (Attewell, & Lavin, 2007).

School counselors often understand the benefits of college attendance for the individual and for society; however, college admissions counseling is a process that is not fully developed in many schools due to a lack of preparation (Gilfillan, 2017; McDonough, 2005). In order to change outcomes for students, college admissions counseling should be systemic and a part of a school's culture in order to be sustainable (Connolly, 2018; Sterling, 2005; Williams, et al., 2017). As ASCA's position (2017) is that school counselor's play a critical role in students' career development via collaboration with school and district personnel to create a college going culture, the work of developing a college going culture will be reviewed through a general systems theory framework.

General Systems Theory (GST)

GST was originally founded by the biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy (Bertalanffy, et al., 1968) as the theory was applied to science. The GST, however, has since been applied to multiple areas to include engineering (Lysheyski, 2012), leadership (Ramosaj, 2014), health services (Clancy, et al., 2008), psychology (Smith-Acuna, 2010; Straus, 1973), business management (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1972) and the like. GST's application to building a college going culture should be examined as the processes, or input, and should be systemic in order to create a sustainable culture.

GST provides a lens of "wholeness," meaning the determination of how the isolated parts of the system relate and integrate (Bertalanffy, 1972). This integration of parts not only recognizes the individual parts of the system but also the planned interaction among those parts. Systems thinking requires changing the way a college going culture is conceptualized in a school (Arnold & Wade, 2015; Cabrera, et al., 2008), and cultural norms must be considered as part of the system.

Culture, as defined by Ministry of National Education (2010) consists of the values that govern the school's progress. This definition can be expanded to include the informal aspects of an organization (Middlewood, 2010) or the pattern of values, norms, beliefs, and attitudes that shape the way people behave (Armstrong, 2006). School counselors are charged with creating this college going culture on school campuses, which requires a change in attitudes about college and the beliefs of parents and students. In order to create this change, GST provides three main

aspects to examine: systems science, systems technology, and a systems philosophy (Bertalanffy, 1968).

Systems Science

Systems science, according to Klir (2001) includes three domains: a domain of inquiry, existing knowledge regarding the domain, and a methodology. To begin with a domain of inquiry, school counselors in conjunction with school administration need to identify what they know about creating a college going culture and college admissions. What gaps need to be filled to create such a culture? What is the existing culture surrounding post-secondary options and college admissions? Answering these questions will inform the domain of inquiry.

Next, school counselors need to identify what currently exists within the school for post-secondary counseling, support for college admissions, as well as what is known about creating a college going culture. What strategies are employed? What is missing? Working with teachers, administrators, and higher education professionals will help collaboration since the job cannot rest on the shoulders of school counselors alone (Detweiler, 2018; Niebuhr, et al., 1999; McClafferty, et al., 2009). Lastly, a methodology for implementation of the identified strategies will work to create a system of post-secondary counseling towards college admissions.

Systems Technology

Systems technology refers to the problems that arise in modern society to include technological invention (Bertalanffy, 1968; Porra, et al., 2005). When considering college admissions and a college going culture, systems technology cannot be ignored. As the nation has been working to close the digital divide, more work is still to be done in this area (Lai & Widmar, 2021; Ramsetty & Adams, 2020; Van Dijk, 2020). Much of the college admissions process is online: college applications, preparatory classes for college entrance exams, college entrance exams, financial aid applications, etc. Knowing these elements require technological resources should inform school practices in order to remove obstacles for students and parents.

Problems in a modern society may be numerous, beyond the technological access. Consider the Covid-19 Pandemic and the stay-at-home orders. The pandemic created real obstacles for school counselors and teachers to include difficulty in contacting students (Boltz, et al., 2021; Francom, Lee, & Pinkney, 2021; Kaden, 2020). Students, during this time also dealt with family illness or death (Ingravallo, 2020), unemployment (Aucejo, et al., 2020; Kuhfeld, et al., 2020), and mental health concerns (Fitzpatrick, Harris, & Drawve, 2020; Prime, Wade, & Browne, 2020). All factors and obstacle have to be considered in designing a college going culture.

Systems Philosophy

The systems philosophy in this scenario refers to the reorientation of thought surrounding college admissions. In order to create this highly sought-after culture, school counselors must integrate college admissions processes as well as beliefs about college attendance with all students they encounter. Too often, the goal for high school students is high school graduation (DePaoli, et al., 2015; Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2013; Jacobson, 2006) and not what comes next. College and career readiness standards are implemented across the nation (Bhat & Stevens,

2021; Desimone, et al., 2019; Hackman, et al., 2018), which can create inconsistent messaging if the goal is not college admissions but instead high school graduation. Therefore, messaging matters in many fields (Ho & Huang, 2021; Kidd, et al, 2019; Stea & Pickering, 2019) and education is no different.

Integration

School counselors must consider the systems science, technology, and philosophy when creating a college going culture. All elements must be integrated in a system that provides checks and balances to determine if the desired effect is being produced. In essence, program evaluation is a necessary tool to gauge the effectiveness of a new college admissions system and its component parts as well as the implementation (Durlak, 2010; McDavid, et al., 2018). Additionally, program evaluations can also be deployed to measure the cultural impact that is created (McDavid, et al., 2018; Mertens & Wilson, 2018).

METHODOLOGY

A multitude of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methodology research designs have been utilized to investigate the role of school counselors. However, few research studies have focused on school counselors' beliefs about their role in constructing and fostering a college going culture. The complexity of college admissions counseling, as well as the myriad of challenges associated with fostering a college-going school culture, necessitate a thoughtful construction of the research design (Leavy, 2017). For these reasons, this study employs a basic qualitative research design, including qualitative semi-structured interviews to better understand school counselors' beliefs about their role.

A basic qualitative design was utilized in this research study because the research questions focused on school counselors' perceptions about their own role in college admissions counseling and fostering a college going culture. Leavy (2017) asserts that utilizing a basic qualitative research strategy with semi-structured interviews helps generate a more holistic view and understanding of participants' perceptions. This research strategy enabled school counselors' rich personal reflections on their college admissions counseling experiences and the beliefs they hold about fostering a college going culture to be compared with other study participants (Creswell, 2018; Strauss & Corbin, 2015; Leavy, 2017).

The interviews utilized four semi-structured questions which aligned to the study's overarching research questions and utilized an open-ended question structure to encourage research participants to elaborate on their own perceptions of fostering a college going culture. By purposefully constructing the interview questions to be open-ended, informed by research literature, and aligned with the study's overarching research question, the researchers ensured the interview questions were relevant and appropriate (Strauss & Corbin, 2015). Each interview was recorded and transcribed to further increase data trustworthiness (Creswell, 2018). The research interviews were conducted utilizing video conferencing software over a two-week period.

Research Participants

School counselors in a southeastern state in the United States were invited to participate in the research interviews. Eleven school counselors agreed to participate in the study. Percy,

Kostere, and Kostere (2015) assert that even a research sample that is small may provide great insight and information on the research topic. The research participants shared one critical characteristic which met the inclusion criteria for the research study – employment as a school counselor. The participants in this study were diverse in years of school counseling experience, school counseling grade level, gender, and race and ethnicity, increasing the likelihood of the representativeness of the sample. Additionally, the interview participants were geographically located throughout the state. Interview participant pseudonyms and demographics are provided as indicated in Table 1 (Appendix). Pseudonyms are used throughout the article to refer to the research participants.

Data Analysis

Creswell (2018) states, “The process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data” (p. 183). Following the conclusion of the first research interview, the researchers utilized a thematic, constant-comparison analysis (Merriam & Grenier, 2019). Using a thematic analytic strategy, the researchers engaged in multiple stages of coding, clustering, and classifying words to ensure saturation was reached and to gain insight about developing themes, categories, and trends associated with school counselors’ beliefs about the benefits associated with college attendance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This inductive analysis led to seven themes emerging from the data that answered the study’s overarching research questions. The analysis of published research literature was also a key component of the analytic process. Previous research literature on college admissions counseling and fostering a college going culture assisted in better understanding and recognizing emerging themes, categories, and patterns in the study’s data and helped in contextualizing the research findings.

The goals associated with rigor in basic qualitative research are to minimize researcher bias, increase accuracy, and convey the credibility of study findings (Johnson et al, 2020). Credibility, confirmability, and dependability are important considerations in the assessment of research rigor. The researchers employed several techniques to ensure credibility and guard against bias, including the utilization of a structured interview protocol where the same questions were posed to all participants, the recording and transcription of interviews to enhance accuracy, and the use of neutral language. Confirmability of the results were ensured by using a well-developed conceptual framework and use of continuous reflection by the researchers. The study ensured dependability through transparently reporting the methodology, including research participant recruitment and characteristics, geographic location of the study, data collection protocol, and time span of the data collection. Adhering to the foundational principles of qualitative research, the study also includes direct quotations from research participants which provides robust descriptive language and contextual data which can enhance readers’ ability to assess the credibility, confirmability, and dependability of the study’s findings (Johnson et al., 2020).

RESULTS

School counselors participating in this study answered a variety of interview questions designed to generate insight about the following overarching research questions: 1.) How do school counselors describe their work in college admissions counseling? 2.) How do school

counselors describe their role in fostering a college going culture? 3.) What school counselor knowledge, skills, and abilities are most important in college admissions counseling? Research participant responses were strikingly similar despite differences in years of experience, gender, race and ethnicity.

Role in Fostering a College Going Culture

School counselors identified four major roles associated with their work in college admissions counseling and fostering a college going culture, including helping students with post-graduation planning activities, communicating about and interpreting college requirements, career counseling, and ensuring students are on track to graduate. The following sections provide additional insights about each of these roles.

Helping Students with Post-Graduation Planning Activities

The majority of school counselors participating in this study (55%) described their role in college counseling and fostering a college going culture in terms of helping students with post-graduation planning activities. Amy, a high school counselor with over 20 years of experience shared,

I think a high school counselor is the person at a high school who does the college and career counseling for all students. It doesn't matter if they're heading to college or heading straight to into their career, heading to the military. Every student gets and deserves time with someone who's dedicated to helping them figure out what their next step is. And school counselors are the only person at a school who proactively serves every student. Except for the custodians. Think about that. A school counselor is the only person that's going to proactively go and work with every student.

Additionally, Brenda, a high school counselor with over 10 years of experience stated, I think that's a large part of our work as far as helping students make post-secondary plans. Whether that's military, or two or four-year college, or the workforce. We meet with students every year for their individual graduation planning meeting, where we talk about their plans after high school.

Similarly, Blake, a high school counselor with 15 years of experience stated, I don't sleep at night if a kid leaves our school and doesn't have a plan. It doesn't have to be college. It could be work. It could be technical schools. It's bringing kids into reality and helping them guide on track. However, we've got such big caseloads here, I wish we could do more.

Communicating and Interpreting College Requirements

Over a third of school counselors (36%) described they fostered a college going culture through communicating and interpreting college requirements for students and their parents. For example, Sofia, a first-year high school counselor commented,

My role is pretty much to advocate and gather information. Truly, we distribute the information by individual meetings. So, I gather a lot of information about colleges.

Likewise, Emily, a high school counselor with 22 years of experience confided,
 As a high school counselor, about 80% of our time is spent conducting individual graduation plan meetings annually with every student and their parent. And we utilize that 30 minutes really to try to help students determine, do they need to do the ACT, do they need to do the SAT, do they have the grade point average for those colleges that they're interested in? So, staying up to date with the scholarships and staying up to date with admission criteria for colleges, as well as the types of programs that are most popular at those schools, all of that really helps our parents and our students.

Sam, a middle school counselor with over 8 years of experience stated,
 We do try to open the door and open our students' minds to the fact that what they're doing now impacts whether they could be admitted into colleges. A lot of what we do is just the basics of communicating some of the things that colleges are going to look at, like resumes, your character, your social media, SAT, and ACT.

Career Counseling

A sizable percentage of school counselors (36%) shared they fostered a college going culture by providing career counseling. For example, Hanna, a high school counselor with 17 years of experience commented,

As a high school counselor, I think that is a major part of what we do, helping students to be exposed to various careers, as well as the future forecasts of those careers and matching those to what they project their lifestyles to be like.

Similarly, Sally, an experienced elementary school counselor with over 25 years of experience shared,

Career awareness. We do a month-long unit where we're actually talking about career exploration and really looking into the clusters and all of those things.

Likewise, Wendy, a high school counselor with over 20 years of experience confided,
 Our role as school counselors is to be able to do admission counseling and be able to talk about the college process, but that's not our focus. Our focus is to serve that whole child and make sure that they're getting what they need based on their interests. We don't send that many kids off to four-year colleges now, so it's a little different than it was years ago when I first started counseling. We are not sending as many kids to four-year college as we have in the past. Two year or workforce or youth apprentice or taking a gap year. I think with news and social media, kids are hearing people coming out of college \$120,000 in debt and they don't want that.

Ensure Students are on Track to Graduate

Slightly over a quarter of school counselors (27%) shared they believed their role in college admissions counseling and fostering a college going culture was to ensure students were taking appropriate courses and staying on track to graduate. For example, Scott, a second-year high school counselor stated,

My role as a counselor here is to make sure that students are on the right path towards graduation, also towards whatever career goals that they may have. I try to make sure I audit transcripts very carefully, just to make sure, because I know one wrong move or one wrong class can throw them off track. So, that's basically my job. Just to make sure that they're on track and they're taking the classes that they need to reach their goal.

Similarly, Wendy, a high school counselor with over 20 years of experience confided, We do individual graduation plans. And so, let's make sure you've got the right classes and all of that, but we are doing a lot more counseling where we're actually using some of the skills we learned in our counseling programs to work kids through anxiety and those kinds of things.

Required Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

Interview participants identified three distinct knowledge, skills, and abilities as central to being an effective college admissions counselor: 1) the ability to research and interpret information, 2) the capability to develop a supportive counseling relationship, and 3) skill in helping students understand college majors and admission requirements. The following sections present the data gained relating to each of the aforementioned areas to provide insight on school counselors' perceptions about the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to foster a college going culture.

Researching and Interpreting Information

The vast majority of school counselors (64%) reported the ability to research and interpret information as central to fostering a college going culture. For example, Amy, a high school counselor with over 20 years of experience shared,

The ability to find and understand and interpret information. And let me explain that. I'm a really good memorizer. But things change so quickly now, I think it's more important that if you're doing academic, career college advisement to know where to find the information. So, I think just knowing that things change so quickly and how to access that information is very important.

Similarly, Sabrina, a veteran high school counselor with over 28 years of experience stated, First off is being up to date on what colleges are looking for because that's changing. With the knowledge of what colleges are looking for, you have to be able to advise them the right steps to take in the right areas. Because most kids are not really sure what they want to do. They just know kind of a field. Providing students the resources to go and get that information. Not just feeding it to them, but making them go find it, and then again that empowers them to feel a little more comfortable in making their decision.

Likewise, Sofia, a first-year high school counselor commented,

Knowing what's available to the students. Knowing what's available. Not only do you need to know what's available, you need to make sure the student has what's required in order to reach their goals. A good counselor needs to always be researching and looking for information, looking for the latest.

Scott, a second-year high school counselor asserted,

Information. We need that information and data. I like data as well, because I like to show kids multiple options. So, when I have information and data, I can kind of help them decide or make informed decisions. And that's what my goal is, to help them be the better decision makers.

Developing a Supportive Counseling Relationship

A sizable percentage of school counselors (45%) reported the capability to develop a supportive counseling relationship, including applying strong listening skills and student development theory, as an important component of fostering a college going culture. For example, Hanna, a high school counselor with 17 years of experience shared her main concern was,

I would say first and foremost is the ability to establish a relationship with the student, letting them know that you're there and there and that they feel comfortable asking you any question via email, coming in to see you. So, first and foremost to me is establishing that relationship.

Similarly, Amy, a high school counselor with over 20 years of experience shared, I think that understanding a student holistically is very important because they all wanted to be veterinarians in the ninth grade, and then they took chemistry. But understanding that developmentally where that child is, and we start career counseling in kindergarten.

Furthermore, Wendy, an experienced high school counselor with over 20 years of experience confided,

Knowing how to communicate with the kids and probe them to get the information and help them look at their like personalities, things like that. So just using your good counseling skills.

Helping Students Understand College Majors and Requirements

Over a third of school counselors (36%) identified helping students understand college majors and college admission requirements as part of their core role in fostering a college going culture. For example, Brenda, a high school counselor with over 10 years of experience stated,

I think helping students a lot of times for navigating what the major actually means. A lot of students say, I want to be this, but may not also take into consideration labor market information, whether they're going to be able to get a job after they graduate, looking at the types of classes that they'd have to take. And then most importantly, what high school classes they need to take to get prepared for that college program.

Blake, a high school counselor with 15 years of experience reinforced the importance of helping students understand requirements in the following statement,

I think listening. If you're telling me you want to be a nurse, well, what are you doing? What courses are you taking and are you looking at AP bio? Are you taking anatomy? Oftentimes, kids are going to say what they want to do, but what they're doing doesn't match up. And it's our job to listen to what they're saying and kind of match it up.

DISCUSSION

School counselors serve important roles in career and post-secondary readiness. Since school counselors' beliefs about their roles likely influence how they structure their work in college admissions counseling, this study examined school counselors' perceptions about their role in fostering a college going culture. Study findings indicated school counselors viewed their role as providing direct service to individual students rather than broader roles in creating comprehensive college counseling programs or creating a college-going school culture.

For example, participants identified four major types of roles, including helping individual students with post-graduation planning activities, interpreting individual college admissions requirements, career counseling, and ensuring students are on track to graduate. Additionally, when asked about the knowledge, skills and abilities school counselors need to foster a college-going school culture, interview participants identified the ability to research and interpret information, the capability to develop a supportive individual counseling relationship, and skill in helping students understand college majors and admission requirements.

School counselors have a myriad of critically important job expectations, including their role in promoting college and career readiness. School counselors are expected to collaborate with administrators, teachers, parents, and communities to create and foster a college going culture in their schools (ASCA, 2017). This is a significant undertaking, as the ASCA School Counselor and Individual Student Planning for Postsecondary Preparation specifies school counselors must provide opportunities for all students to meet the following learning outcomes:

- Demonstrate skills needed for school success
- Demonstrate the connection between coursework and life experiences
- Make course selections that allow them the opportunity to choose from a wide range of postsecondary options
- Explore interests and abilities in relation to knowledge of self and the world of work
- Identify and apply strategies to achieve future academic and career success
- Demonstrate the skills for successful goal setting and attainment
- Develop a portfolio to highlight strengths and interests

(ASCA, 2017, para 4)

Developing this highly sought-after college going culture can appear to be a complex, time-consuming task. However, utilizing a general systems theory framework (GST) can greatly enhance school counselors' efforts in fostering this culture. This systemic approach is especially important given the numerous other job expectations of school counselors as well as the national school counselor-to-student ratio of 1:482, far exceeding the recommended ratio of 1:250 (NACAC, 2022).

The results of this study provide several key implications for practice in utilizing a GST framework to strengthen college-going school culture. Leveraging a GST framework not only necessitates changing the way a college going culture is conceptualized in a school (Arnold & Wade, 2015; Cabrera, et al., 2008), it also provides a helpful roadmap of action steps for school counselors in the areas of systems science, systems technology, and systems philosophy (Bertalanffy, 1968). For example, five recommended action steps for fostering a college going culture utilizing the GST framework are presented below.

Systems Science

- Step 1 (Domain of Inquiry): Examine the current college and career planning culture in the school through multiple methods, including surveys, focus groups, and interviews with multiple stakeholder groups.
- Step 2 (Existing Domain Knowledge): Create an inventory of the current college admissions counseling strategies used within the school and compare the inventory with ASCA's College Admissions Specialist competency areas.
- Step 3 (Methodology): Utilize findings from Steps 1 and 2 to create a strategic action plan for college admissions counseling, addressing any gaps found during the assessment process. Collaborate with stakeholders throughout the school and community to implement the strategic action plan.

Systems Technology

- Step 4 (Technological Resources): Ensure technological resources are prominently addressed in the strategic action plan to broaden access to college admissions counseling services. Conduct regular environmental scans of technological resources and community issues to identify potential access obstacles.

Systems Philosophy

- Step 5 (Message): Communicate both the individual and societal benefits of college attendance to align college admissions counseling processes with a college going culture.

Study Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

While this study found strong consistency in school counselors' beliefs about the role of school counselors in college admissions counseling, an analysis of the study's methodology indicates several potential limitations and recommendations for future research. The study was conducted within one southeastern state using a basic qualitative approach which may limit the extent to which the results can be generalized. Future research studies incorporating multiple states, a larger and more diverse sample of school counselors, and different methodological techniques may improve the generalizability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

Findings from this study provide helpful insights on school counselors' beliefs about their role in college admissions counseling and fostering a college-going school culture. Utilizing a general systems theory framework can provide a helpful roadmap of action steps for school counselors in the areas of systems science, systems technology, and systems philosophy (Bertalanffy, 1968). This roadmap may aid in expanding college access and help foster a stronger college-going culture.

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APPENDIX

Table 1 Participant Demographic Characteristics

Participants (n=11) Race	School Counseling Experience	Gender
1. Brenda Female	10 Years, High School Caucasian	
2. Amy Female	20 Years, High School Caucasian	
3. Blake Caucasian	15 Years, High School	Male
4. Emily Female	22 Years, High School African American	
5. Hanna Female	17 Years, High School African American	
6. Sabrina Female	28 Years, High School Caucasian	
7. Sofia Female	1 Year, High School African American	
8. Sally Female	25 Years, Elementary School Caucasian	
9. Sam Caucasian	8 Years, Middle School	Male
10. Scott African American	2 Years, High School	Male
11. Wendy Female	20 Years, High School Caucasian	

