

Characteristics of Students Who Receive School Counseling Services:

Implications for Practice and Research

Julia Bryan

The College of William and Mary

Cheryl Moore-Thomas

Loyola College in Maryland

Norma L. Day-Vines

The Virginia Polytechnic Institute

Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy

University of Maryland at College Park

Natasha Mitchell

Prince George's County Public Schools

Abstract

Data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988-2000 (NELS: 88) were used to examine the characteristics of students who see their school counselor about general, academic, career, and academic issues. Study results indicated that overall, school counselors were more likely to have contact with students who are identified as at-risk for school failure. Implications for future school counseling research are discussed.

Characteristics of Students Who Receive School Counseling Services:
Implications for Practice and Research

The purpose of this study was to use a national longitudinal study, the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988-2000 (NELS: 88), to examine the characteristics of students who receive school counseling services overall and for academic, career, and personal issues. Professional school counselors and school counseling programs serve *all* students regardless of achievement level, gender, sexual orientation, family structure, language or other aspects of diversity (Green & Keys, 2001; Gysbers, 2001; House & Martin, 1998). More specifically, *The ASCA National Model* (ASCA, 2005) asserted that every student should benefit from comprehensive school counseling programs. School counselors are valuable sources of guidance and support for all students and especially for those experiencing academic failure and risks of dropping out. Research data have suggested, however, that all students, especially those of color and those from low socioeconomic statuses, are not receiving adequate school counseling service (Lapan & Gysbers, 1997). These findings are particularly disturbing given research which suggests that students most at risk for academic failure and dropping out of school are typically from urban, low-income, and/or minority backgrounds with low levels of school-based parent involvement (Croninger & Lee, 2001; Fusick & Bordeau, 2004; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Furthermore, students who drop out may feel alienated from school, have less academic and social support, and less access to help and guidance from school personnel (Croninger & Lee, 2001). They also tend to have less parental involvement in their education (Bryan, 2005; Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

These findings, coupled with significant issues related to school reform, academic achievement, and increasing racial, cultural, and contextual diversity, lead to important questions regarding student contact with school counseling services. Contact with the professional counselor must be examined as a reasonable, initial step toward more fully understanding the school counselor/student relationship and furthering the movement of school counseling programs toward enhancing academic excellence for all students. It is reasonable therefore to ask questions such as: “Who are the students most likely to see the counselor?” “For what reasons are they most likely to see the professional school counselor?” and “Are school counselors seeing the students who are most at-risk for academic failure and school related problems?”

Regrettably, very few studies have specifically examined students’ contact with professional school counselors. Findings of such studies seem to suggest that different groups of students have varying levels of contact with the professional school counselor for a variety of reasons including personal and interpersonal concerns, testing, and academic progress and programming (Chapman & DeMasi, 1991; Wirth-Bond & Coyne, 1991). While answering important questions regarding student-counselor contact, these studies are limited by sample considerations. The school counseling profession could gain greater understanding of student-counselor interactions from studying broader, more inclusive student samples. The National Educational Longitudinal Study data provides one such opportunity.

The authors of the current study used the NELS: 88 to examine the characteristics of students who see school counselors overall as well as those who see

school counselors specifically about academic, career, and personal social concerns.

More specifically, we examined the following research questions:

1. Do school setting, student, race/ethnicity, gender, risk of school dropout, reading achievement, and parent involvement predict students' contact with professional school counselors?
2. Do these same factors predict students' contact with school counselors specifically for improving academic work?
3. Do these factors predict students' contact with school counselors for jobs and careers information? And finally,
4. Do these factors predict students' contact with school counselors about personal problems?

To date, researchers have not utilized NELS:88 to examine data regarding students' contact with school counselors. Yet, these data are significant and relevant. The NELS: 88 is a large, comprehensive database that contains an extensive amount of school counseling related information. The large scale investigation represented in this study will promote dialogue and research about which students school counselors contact most and the reasons for that contact. It is expected that as school counseling programs evolve during the 21st century, characteristics of student-counselor contact will evolve too. This study, therefore, promises to be significant in that it provides baseline data for comparisons of national trends in student-counselor contact subsequent to the implementation of the ASCA national model.

Method

Participants

In the spring of 1988, NELS: 88 began with a stratified sample of almost 25,000 eighth graders attending 1,052 public and private schools in a variety of communities. Over the next 12 years, the study conducted four follow-ups of respondents in 1990, 1992, 1994 and 2000. Data was collected from students and their student records, parents, teachers, and principals.

The participants in the study consisted of 8,395 middle school eighth grade students. Of the participants, 4,178 (49.8%) were males and 4,216 (50.2%) were females. Asian/Pacific Islanders comprised 3.4% of the sample, 9.9% were Hispanic, 12.2% were African-American/Black, 1.3% were Native American, and 73.3% were White. Almost a quarter (24.2%) attended school in urban areas, 43.9% in suburban areas, and 31.9% in rural areas. Of the 8,395 participants, 61% or 5,125 students saw the counselor for counseling and information about a range of situations including high school programs, jobs and career, improving school work, discipline problems, drugs and alcohol, and personal problems. Alternately, 39.0% did not see the counselor for any reason. Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations are shown in Table 1.

In the NELS: 88, Asian American and Latino American students were oversampled to obtain a better representation from these groups. NCES created sampling weights to correct for this oversampling and for nonresponse bias. Hence, it is important that researchers consult the NELS user manual (Curtin, Ingels, Wu, & Heuer, 2002) to determine the appropriate weight for the wave and type of data they are using.

Table 1

Frequencies, Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviations Comparing Students Who Saw the Counselor Overall With Those Who Did Not See the Counselor

Category	Did Not See the Counselor			Saw the Counselor		
	<i>N</i>	%/ <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	%/ <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
School setting*						
Urban	756	23.1		1278	24.9	
Suburban	1418	43.4		2264	44.2	
Rural	1096	33.5		1582	30.9	
Gender						
Male	1651	50.5		2527	49.3	
Female	1619	49.5		2597	50.7	
SES _a ***	3271	-.06	.75	5124	-.12	.77
Race/Ethnicity***						
White	2539	77.6		3616	70.6	
Asian/Pacific Islander	112	3.4		174	3.4	
Hispanic	307	9.4		520	10.1	
African American	280	8.6		741	14.5	
Native American	32	1.0		74	1.4	
Risk of Dropping Out***	3271	.62	.89	5124	.75	.99
Achievement _a ***						
Reading Achievement	3271	.07	.97	5124	-.12	.99
Parent Involvement Variables _a						
Volunteering and Fundraising***	2841	.05	1.06	4435	-.13	.88
Discussion with Parent about School***	3155	-.11	1.00	4893	.07	.98
Parent Contact with School***	2886	-.12	.93	4519	.06	1.03
Parent Talk about High School and the Future	3008	-.02	.98	4743	.02	.99
Parent Involvement in PTO***	2947	.01	1.02	4636	-.08	.96

_a Standardized variables ($M = 0, SD = 1$). *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

We used the base year sample weight to redistribute our sample to reflect our particular population of middle school students. Our sample, therefore, was a representative, longitudinal sample of eighth graders who attended middle school in the United States.

The NELS: 88 used a two-stage sampling design that sampled from a number of strata: schools as well as students within schools. This resulted in a complex sampling design rather than a simple random sampling design. SPSS and SAS assume simple random sampling when calculating standard errors for regression coefficients and other statistics. NCES suggests that researchers adjust for the artificially small standard errors and upward-bias in significance levels produced by the complex sample design in national longitudinal databases. In this study, we used design effects as recommended by the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES) to counteract the complex sampling design (see Curtin, Ingels, Wu, & Heuer, 2002, for information on the NELS: 88 sampling design). We used the mean design effect to create a new weight which we applied to the obtained sample size resulting in a deflated sample size. Using this procedure, statistics calculated by a statistical program such as SAS or SPSS reflect the reduction in sample size in the calculation of standard errors and degrees of freedom thus producing more accurate test statistics and significance levels.

Variables

Student contact variables. The dependent variables examined in this study were (a) overall student-counselor contact, (b) student-counselor contact about improving academic work, (c) student-counselor contact about jobs and careers, and (d) student-counselor contact about personal problems. Overall student contact with the professional school counselor was a composite of eight NELS: 88 categorical items

(bys51aa - by51ha) which asked whether students had seen the school counselor about high school programs, jobs and careers, improving academic work, courses at school, studies in class, discipline problems, drugs and alcohol abuse, and personal problems. The other student-counselor contact variables were each measured by one item: student-counselor contact about improving academic work (bys51ca), student-counselor contact regarding jobs and careers (bys51ba), student-counselor contact regarding personal problems (bys51ha). All of the student-counselor contact variables were coded 1 for contact and 0 for no contact.

Background variables. The background variables in this study were school setting, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), race, and risk of school drop out. School setting identified the school's location as urban, rural, or suburban. SES was a standardized composite score created by NCES to measure household socioeconomic status. Risk of school dropout was a composite variable created by NCES to measure students' risk of subsequent school dropout. Scores for this variable ranged from 0 to 6 indicating the number of risk factors students had out of a possible total of six (i.e., live in a single parent family, have a parent who did not complete high school, have a sibling who dropped out, spends 3 or more hours at home alone, from a family with limited English proficiency, and family income is below the poverty level).

Achievement. Reading achievement was selected as the proxy for academic achievement in this study because literacy is a strong predictor of overall academic success (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Porche, Ross, & Snow, 2004). Students' reading achievement scores were standardized.

Parent involvement variables. Five parent involvement components or variables were derived by conducting a principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation on 19 of the NELS: 88 survey items. The five parent involvement variables were a) volunteering and fundraising, b) discussion with parents about school, c) parent contact with school about academics, d) parent talk with child about high school and future plans, and e) parent involvement in parent-teacher organization activities (PTO). Desimone (1999) also derived these same five parent involvement variables when she used the NELS: 88 database to analyze the link between parent involvement and academic achievement.

Data Analysis

Preliminary analyses. Preliminary analyses were conducted to determine whether there were significant differences on the independent variables between students who had contact with the counselor and students who did not have any contact with the counselor. Specifically, the dependent variable, overall student contact with the counselor, was used to group the sample into two groups (did not see the counselor coded as “0”, saw the counselor coded as “1”). Chi-square tests for independent samples were conducted to examine differences on the categorical variables (i.e., school setting, gender, and race). Also, independent group t-tests were conducted to examine mean differences in SES, risk of school dropout, reading achievement, and the five parent involvement variables.

Logistic regression analyses. Four hierarchical logistic regression analyses were used to determine the characteristics of students who were more likely to see the school counselor (a) overall, (b) about improving academic work, (c) about jobs and careers,

and (d) about personal problems. Each of the four dependent variables was dichotomous (categorical). Therefore, this warranted the use of logistic regression, a mode of analysis used to determine the relationship between independent variables and a categorical dependent variable. The manner of interpretation is similar to linear multiple regression. However, logistic regression provides logged odds (B) and odds ratios (ORs) for each independent variable rather than beta coefficients. The ORs are easier to interpret than the logged odds. An odds ratio (OR) represents the increase or decrease in the likelihood of the criterion occurring (i.e., student contact with the school counselor) for every one unit increase in the independent variable. For standardized variables like reading achievement and SES, the OR indicates the increase or decrease in the odds of the criterion for one standard deviation change in the independent variable.

In each logistic regression model, the variables were entered in three steps or blocks. The first block consisted of the background variables (i.e., school setting, gender, race/ethnicity, and risk of dropping out). Reading achievement was added in the second block, and the five parent involvement variables in the third block. School setting, gender, and race/ethnicity were entered as dummy coded variables. Rural schools, females, and White students were the comparison groups in the logistic regression analyses. All other variables in the model (i.e., SES, risk of dropping out, achievement, parent involvement) were continuous standardized variables.

Results

Preliminary analyses. Significant differences resulted between eighth grade students who had contact with the counselor and those who did not. See Table 1 for

means and percentages comparing the two groups. There were significant differences in school setting, SES, race/ethnicity, school dropout, reading achievement, and all parent involvement variables except parent talk about high school and the future. When compared to eighth graders who did not see the counselor, those who had contact with the counselor had significantly lower SES, higher risks of dropping out of school, and lower reading achievement levels; additionally, they were significantly less likely to be White and more likely to be African American, and their parents were less likely to be involved in volunteering and fund-raising, more likely to be involved in PTO activities, more likely to have discussion with their children about school, and more likely to have contact with the school.

Logistic Regression Models Predicting Student-Counselor Contact

Overall student-counselor contact. Table 2 presents the logged odds and odds ratios (ORs) for the effects of school setting, gender, SES, race/ethnicity, risk of dropping out, reading achievement, and parent involvement on the probability of seeing the counselor overall. The ORs in the final step of the logistic regression model, indicated that among eighth graders, the odds of contacting the counselor varied significantly by school setting, gender, race/ethnicity, risk of dropping out, reading achievement, and parent involvement. Students attending suburban schools were more likely to see the counselor than students in rural schools (OR = 1.15, $p < .05$). The odds for seeing the counselor for those in urban schools were not significantly different from those in rural schools. In all three steps of the model, males were less likely to see the counselor than females (OR = 0.88, $p < .05$) and African American students were more likely to see the counselor than White students (OR = 1.65, $p < .001$).

Table 2
Logistic Regression Predicting Overall Student Contact with Counselor (N = 6,853)

Predictor variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Background Variables						
School setting						
Urban	.03	1.03	.03	1.03	.07	1.08
Suburban	.14*	1.15	.14*	1.15	.14*	1.15
Male	-.07	.94	-.11*	.90	-.12*	.885
SES	.01	1.01	.08	1.08	.02	1.02
Race/Ethnicity						
Asian/Pacific Islander	.09	1.10	.09	1.10	.15	1.16
Hispanic	.10	1.10	.06	1.06	.01	1.01
African American	.61***	1.84	.55***	1.73	.50***	1.65
Native American	.41	1.51	.34	1.40	.36	1.43
Risk of Dropping Out	.09**	1.09	.08*	1.08	.09*	1.09
Achievement						
Reading Achievement			-.17***	.85	-.18***	.84
Parent Involvement Variables						
Volunteering and Fundraising					-.25***	.782
Discussion with Parent about						
School					.29***	1.34
Parent Contact with School					.22***	1.25
Parent Talk about High						
School and the Future					.02	1.02
Parent Involvement in PTO					-.03	.97
Model Chi-square	75.16		110.08		338.94	
Nagelkerke R Square	.02		.02		.07	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Being African American increased the odds of seeing the counselor by 65% when compared to White students. In other words, 165 African American eighth students had contact with the counselor per 100 White students. There were no other significant race/ethnicity differences in any of the models. Student contact with the counselor did not vary by SES, although risk of school dropout had a very slight effect (OR = 1.09, $p < .05$) on student contact with the counselor. Reading achievement was inversely related to seeing the counselor after controlling for all the other variables in the model (OR = 0.84, $p < .05$). More specifically, a one standard deviation unit increase in reading achievement scores decreased the odds of seeing the counselor by 16%.

Some types of parent involvement affected the odds of eighth grade students having contact with the school counselor. Parent volunteering had a negative effect on student contact (OR = 0.78, $p < .001$), that is, as the level of parent involvement increased the likelihood of their children's contact with the school counselor decreased. Conversely, students who had discussions with their parents about school were more likely to see the school counselor than students whose parents did not (OR = 1.34, $p < .001$). Also, students whose parents made contact with the school were more likely to see the counselor (OR = 1.25, $p < .001$). The odds of eighth graders' contact with the counselor did not vary significantly based on parent talk about high school and the future or on parent involvement in PTO activities.

Student-counselor contact about improving academic work. Table 3 presents the logged odds and odds ratios (ORs) for the effects of school setting, gender, SES, race/ethnicity, risk of dropping out, reading achievement, and parent involvement on the probability of seeing the counselor about academic work.

Table 3

Logistic Regression Predicting Student Contact with Counselor about Improving Academic Work (N = 6,853)

Predictor variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Background Variables						
School setting						
Urban	.20*	1.23	.21*	1.23	.22*	1.25
Suburban	.26***	1.30	.27***	1.31	.26***	1.30
Male	.28***	1.33	.20**	1.22	.15*	1.16
SES	-.11*	.90	.06	1.06	-.01	.99
Race/Ethnicity						
Asian/Pacific Islander	.08	1.08	.08	1.08	.15	1.16
Hispanic	.17	1.18	.08	1.08	.03	1.04
African American	.64***	1.90	.50***	1.65	.47***	1.60
Native American	.72*	2.05	.55*	1.73	.56*	1.75
Risk of Dropping Out	.13**	1.14	.11***	1.11	.11**	1.11
Achievement						
Reading Achievement			-.40***	.67	-.39***	.70
Parent Involvement Variables						
Volunteering and Fundraising					-.21***	.81
Discussion with Parent about						
School					.23***	1.26
Parent Contact with School					.31***	1.36
Parent Talk about High						
School and the Future					-.02	.99
Parent Involvement in PTO					-.06	.94
Model Chi-square	143.69		275.20		437.19	
Nagelkerke R Square	.03		.06		.10	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Patterns of student counselor contact about improving academic work were similar to patterns of overall student counselor contact. Students attending both urban (OR = 1.25, $p < .05$) and suburban schools (OR = 1.30, $p < .001$) were significantly more likely to see the counselor about academic work than students attending rural schools.

Gender had a significant, but small effect on student contact with the counselor. As it relates to academic work, males were more likely to see the counselor than females (OR = 1.16, $p < .05$). Regarding race/ethnicity, there was a significant positive effect for African American (OR = 1.60, $p < .001$) and for Native American (OR = 1.75, $p < .05$) students when compared to White students. Given the small number of Native American students in the sample, this result should be interpreted with caution. Reading achievement was significantly negatively related to student contact with the counselor after controlling for all the other variables in the model (OR = 0.70, $p < .001$). A one standard deviation unit increase in students' reading achievement scores increased their likelihood of seeing the counselor about improving academic work decreased by 30%. On the other hand, students' risk of dropping out had a significant though slight positive effect (OR = 1.11, $p < .01$) on seeing the counselor.

The odds of eighth grade students having contact with the counselor about academic work varied with some of the parent involvement variables. Parent involvement in volunteering and fundraising was significantly and negatively related to student-counselor contact about academic work (OR = 0.81, $p < .001$). On the other hand, student-parent discussions about school (OR = 1.26, $p < .001$) and parent contact with the school (OR = 1.36, $p < .001$) led to significantly more likelihood that students had contact with the school counselor about improving academic work. Parent talk

about high school and the future and parent involvement in PTO activities were not significantly associated with eighth grade students' contact with the school counselor.

Student-counselor contact about jobs and careers. Table 4 presents the logged odds and odds ratios (ORs) for the effects of school setting, gender, SES, race/ethnicity, risk of dropping out, reading achievement, and parent involvement on the probability of seeing the counselor about jobs and careers. African American (OR = 1.98, $p < .001$) and Native American (OR = 1.93, $p < .001$) students were almost twice as likely to see the school counselor about jobs and careers when compared to White students. Both reading achievement (OR = 0.81, $p < .001$) and SES (OR = 0.87, $p < .05$) had significant, but small negative relationships to student-counselor contact about jobs and careers. Similar patterns of parent involvement were predictive of student contact with counselors about jobs and careers: parent involvement in volunteering and fundraising was significantly and negatively related to student-counselor contact about academic work (OR = 0.88, $p < .05$). On the other hand, student-parent discussions about school (OR = 1.33, $p < .001$) and parent contact with the school (OR = 1.12, $p < .001$) led to a significantly slightly greater likelihood that students had contact with the school counselor about improving academic work.

Student-counselor contact about personal problems. Concerning personal problems, risk of dropping out (OR = 1.14, $p < .01$), parent involvement in volunteering and fundraising (OR = 0.88, $p < .01$), student-parent discussions about school (OR = 1.08, $p < .05$), and parent contact with the school (OR = 1.28, $p < .001$) were the only predictors of student-counselor contact. These effects were small though significant.

Table 4

Logistic Regression Predicting Student Contact with Counselor about Jobs and Careers
 (N = 6,853)

Predictor variable	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	<i>B</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Odds Ratio</i>
Background Variables						
Urbanicity						
Urban	.00	1.00	.00	1.00	.02	1.16
Suburban	.03	1.03	.03	1.03	.03	1.03
Male	.18*	1.19	.14*	1.14	.15	1.16
SES	-.16*	.85	-.08	.92	-.14*	.87
Race/Ethnicity						
Asian/Pacific Islander	.19	1.21	.19	1.21	.24	1.27
Hispanic	.16	1.17	.12	1.12	.09	1.09
African American	.79***	2.20	.72***	2.05	.68***	1.98
Native American	.70*	2.02	.62*	1.86	.66*	1.93
Risk of Dropping Out	.02	1.02	.01	1.01	.02	1.02
Achievement						
Reading Achievement			-.19***	.83	-.22***	.81
Parent Involvement Variables						
Volunteering and Fundraising					-.13**	.88
Discussion with Parent about						
School					.29***	1.33
Parent Contact with School					.11***	1.12
Parent Talk about High						
School and the Future					.03	1.03
Parent Involvement in PTO					-.04	.96
Model Chi-square	114.02		142.05		233.74	
Nagelkerke R Square	.03		.03		.05	

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

All students had similar patterns of contact with the school counselor when it came to personal problems. No table is presented for this analysis.

With regard to effect sizes, the Nagelkerke R^2 for each analysis was small with the full model explaining only 7% of the variability in overall student-counselor contact, 10% of variability in student-counselor contact about improving academic work, 5% of variability in student-counselor contact about jobs and careers, and 7% of variability in student-counselor contact about personal problems. However, in models with binary response variables, the R^2 typically does not exceed .10 even when a substantial relationship exists (Cox & Wermuth, 1992). Menard (2000) emphasized that the R^2 is only one of the tools that should be used to evaluate a logistic regression model. Among them included tests of the overall model fit (e.g., the Model Chi-square) and coefficients for individual logistic regression coefficients.

Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this study was to examine the characteristics of students who see school counselors in general and for academic, career, and personal concerns. The results of this study suggest several important trends and patterns of student-counselor contact that existed in schools prior to the implementation of the ASCA national model. The results generate useful questions about potential trends in student-counselor contact that exist in school counseling today and suggest directions for future research. This initial examination seems to suggest that, in general, students were more likely to see than not see the school counselor. Interestingly the findings from the logistic regression models suggest somewhat similar profiles of student-counselor contact across a variety of concerns. For instance, when using ethnicity to examine student-

counselor contact, African American students were more likely than White students to see school counselors overall, and both African American and Native American students were more likely to see school counselors than White students about improving academic work and jobs and careers. However, results concerning Native American students must be interpreted with caution due to their small numbers in the sample. It will be important in future research to determine whether these trends in student-counselor contact still exist and if so, whether school counselors are seeing these students for the aforementioned reasons. Indeed, if this is a persistent trend, school counselors will need to pay more attention to providing culturally competent counseling services and interventions to the African American population (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy & Moore-Thomas, 2001).

Another significant finding of this study is that more “at risk” students are in contact with their school counselors. More specifically, the results suggest that African American and Native American students in suburban or urban schools with low reading achievement and low school-based parent involvement are more likely to have contact with school counselors. This pattern could reflect school policies that require school counselors to conference with students who are at risk of failure. Many school counselors are required by school policy to provide more extensive advising and counseling services to students who have failed a class or who exhibit signs of low motivation and poor academic performance. Or perhaps these results reflect at-risk students’ self-initiated requests for more assistance from school counselors.. Clearly, this is an area that warrants a closer examination in further research to determine whether this trend in student-counselor contact persists.

The preceding discussion raises important questions about whether the student-counselor contact is student or counselor initiated. Counselor-initiated contact could result from counselors' concerns, individual educational planning (IEP) requirements, school policies, parent requests, or administrator or teacher referrals. Student-initiated contact, on the other hand, results from students' referrals. High amounts of counselor-initiated student contact could reflect the disproportionate number of students of color that are referred for disciplinary problems, a situation which still exists today (Bireda, 2002; Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Townsend, 2000). These students are more likely to be severely punished for small offenses, stereotyped as unintelligent, and marginalized within schools (Noguera, 2003). Oftentimes, these students are referred to school counselors by teachers as a means of getting them out of the classroom. In the future, it will be important to explore not only student-counselor contact patterns, but the initiation of and reasons for those contacts with the counselor.

Finally, regarding parent involvement, students who talked to their parents about school had 34% greater odds of seeing the counselor in general and 26% greater odds of seeing the counselor about academic work than students who did not talk to their parents about school. Eighth graders whose parents contacted the school had a 25% increase in the odds of contact with the school counselor about general concerns, a 36% increase in the odds of contact with the counselor about academic issues, and a 28% increase in odds of contact with the counselor about personal problems than students whose parents did not contact the school at all. Surprisingly, parent volunteering was negatively associated with students' contact with school counselors. Substantial research has indicated that parent involvement in schools, such as through

volunteering, is related to positive academic outcomes for students (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). It also appears that students benefit when parents are meaningfully engaged in their child's education at home (Desimone, 1999; Henderson & Mapp). However, findings from the current study parallel previous findings which indicate that parent volunteering does not predict academic outcomes and school-related behaviors for some student groups, especially those from diverse backgrounds (Desimone). This may be because school level variables such as school culture and climate, and experiences of racism and discrimination may hinder the traditional types of parent involvement for minority students. Certainly, earlier research has indicated that parent involvement for minority students may be related to academic or behavior-related problems (Ho & Willms, 1996). Still, further research is needed to determine if and how parent involvement is related to current patterns of student-counselor contact. As an outgrowth of this research school counselors and counselor educators should continue to explore the best strategies for facilitating parent involvement that is not solely problem-focused (Bryan, 2005; Mitchell & Bryan, 2005).

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

While this study used a large, national sample to look explicitly at school counseling issues, some important limitations must be noted. The first, and perhaps most significant, is that the study uses a secondary data source. Although the data source is extensive, the current researchers were restricted to the data collected and to the constructs as defined by the original investigators. It is possible that omitted variables may be stronger predictors of student contact with the counselor than the included variables. It is also important to note that none of the included variables specify

quality or details of the student contact with the professional school counselor. This important missing information may have provided further insight on the findings of this study and future research.

The results of the current study suggest that students who have the most contact with school counselors are those students who are likely to be described as “at-risk.” Future school counseling research should further examine and illuminate profiles of students who see the counselor more or less frequently. Profiles of students should include demographic variables such as gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, immigrant status, grade, grade point average, and risk of drop out. Future researchers should also explore the quality and effectiveness of student-counselor contact. Given the mandate that school counselors have to meet the needs of all students, and to engage in practice that removes or reduces systemic barriers to the academic achievement of poor, minority, and other at-risk students, the profession would benefit from understanding such students’ perceptions of their contact with school counselors.

This current study’s findings indicated that students who had contact with their counselor had parents with low levels of parental involvement. Parent involvement (e.g., volunteering) is only one parent variable. Future research could examine various parent variables (e.g., parents’ education level, language spoken by parents, parent marital status) that could influence students’ contact with counselors. By including these other variables in research design models, future researchers will be able to predict the profiles of students and parents who are more likely to seek out school counseling services.

Conclusion

This study used a national longitudinal educational database to establish baseline information about middle school students' patterns of seeking support from school counselors for general concerns as well as those who see school counselors specifically for academic, career, and personal social concerns. Although these are three important contexts in which students routinely visit the school counselor, until now, very little empirical research existed which explored the profiles of students who used the services of school counselors. The study used a robust sample which was collected prior to the implementation of the National Model for School Counseling (ASCA, 2005). The findings presented herein provide baseline data for future researchers who wish to measure change in student-counselor interactions, examine the extent to which all students benefit from comprehensive school counseling programs, as well as study counselors' responsiveness to issues of school reform, academic achievement, and multicultural counseling competence.

References

- American School Counselor Association (2005). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author
- American School Counselor Association. (1999). *Position statement: Multicultural counseling*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Bireda, M. (2002). *Eliminating racial profiling in school discipline: Cultures in conflict*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.
- Bryan, J. (2005). Fostering educational resilience and academic achievement in urban schools through school-family-community partnerships. *Professional School Counseling, 8*, 219-227.
- Chapman, D., & DeMasi, M.(1991). Parent's perceptions of the effectiveness of public school counselors in college advising [Electronic Version]. *School Counselor, 38*, 268-278.
- Cox, D. R., & Wermuth, N. (1992). A comment on the coefficient of determination for binary responses. *The American Statistician, 46*, 1-4.
- Croninger, R. G., & Lee, V. E. (2001). Social capital and dropping out of high school: Benefits to at-risk students of teachers' support and guidance. *Teacher's College Record, 103*, 548-581.
- Curtin, T., Ingels, S., Wu, S., Heuer, R.. (2002). *National education longitudinal study of 1988: Base-year to fourth follow-up data file user's manual* (NCES 2002-323). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.

- Day-Vines, N., & Day-Hairston, B. (2005). Culturally congruent strategies for addressing the behavioral needs of urban African American male adolescents [Electronic Version]. *Professional School Counseling, 8*, 236-243.
- Desimone, L. (1999). Linking parent involvement with student achievement: Do race and income matter? *The Journal of Educational Research, 93*, 1-11.
- Fusick, L., & Bordeau, W. C. (2004). Counseling at-risk Afro-American youth: an examination of contemporary issues and effective school-based strategies. *Professional School counseling, 8*, 102-115.
- Green, A., & Keys, S. (2001). Expanding the developmental school counseling paradigm: Meeting the needs of the 21st century student school [Electronic Version]. *Professional School Counseling, 5*, 84-95.
- Gysbers, N. (2001). School guidance and counseling in the 21st century: Remember the past into the future [Electronic Version]. *Professional School Counseling, 5*, 96-105.
- Gysbers, N., & Henderson, P. (2000). *Developing and managing your school guidance program* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Henderson, A. T., & Mapp, K. L. (Eds.). (2002). *A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family, and community connections on student achievement* [Electronic Version]. Austin, TX: National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.
- Holcomb-McCoy, C. C., & Moore-Thomas, C. (2001). Empowering African-American adolescents females. *Professional School Counseling, 5*, 19-25.

- House, R., & Martin, P. (1998). Advocating for better futures for all students: A new vision for school counselors. *Education, 119*, 284-291.
- Ingels, S. J., Dowd, K. L., Baldrige, J. D., Stipe, J. L., Bartot, V. H., & Frankel, M. R. (1994). *NELS: 88 second follow-up: Student component data file user's manual* (NCES 93-344). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Jackson, A. W. & Davis, G. A. (2000). *Turning points 2000: Educating adolescents in the 21st century*. New York: Teachers College.
- Lapan, R. T., & Gysbers, N. C. (1997). The impact of more fully impacted guidance programs on the school experiences of high school students: A statewide evaluation study [Electronic Version]. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 75*, 292-302.
- Menard, S. (2000). Coefficients of determination for multiple logistic regression analysis. *The American Statistician, 54*, 17-24.
- Mitchell, N. A., & Bryan, J. (2007). School-family-community partnerships: Strategies for school counselors working with Caribbean immigrant families. *Professional School Counseling, 10*, 399-409.
- Noguera, P. (2003). The trouble with Black boys: The role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males. *Urban Education, 38*, 431-459.
- Porche, M. V., Ross, S. J., & Snow, C. E. (2004). From preschool to middle school: The role of masculinity in low-income urban adolescent boys' literacy skills and academic achievement. In N. Wade & J.Y. Chu (Eds.), *Adolescent boys:*

Exploring diverse cultures of boyhood (pp. 338-360). New York: New York University.

Townsend, B. (2000). The disproportionate discipline of African American learners: Reducing school suspensions and expulsions. *Exceptional Children, 66*, 381-391.

Wirth-Bond, S., & Coyne, A. (1991). A school counseling program that reduces dropout rate [Electronic Version]. *School Counselor, 39*, 131-137.

Author Note

Julia Bryan, Ph.D., College of William and Mary, Department of School Psychology and Counselor Education, P.O. Box 8795, Williamsburg, VA, 23187. Tel: 757-221-2419. E-mail: jabrya@wm.edu

Norma Day-Vines, Ph.D., Virginia Tech, Northern Virginia Center, Falls Church, VA, 22043. Tel: 703-538-8478. E-mail: ndayvine@vt.edu

Cheryl Moore-Thomas, Ph.D., Loyola College in Maryland, Timonium Graduate Center, 2034 Greenspring Drive, Timonium, MD 21093. Tel: 410-617-1511. E-mail: cmoore4@loyola.edu

Cheryl Holcomb-McCoy, Ph.D., Department of Counseling and Personnel Services, College of Education, University of Maryland at College Park, College Park, MD, 20742. Tel: 301-405-2864. E-mail: cholcomb@umd.edu