

---

Dissertations

---

Spring 5-13-2023

## A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for Middle School Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

Debbie Monroe  
debbiemonroe28@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.umassglobal.edu/edd\\_dissertations](https://digitalcommons.umassglobal.edu/edd_dissertations)



Part of the [Educational Leadership Commons](#), and the [Student Counseling and Personnel Services Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Monroe, Debbie, "A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for Middle School Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes" (2023). *Dissertations*. 515.  
[https://digitalcommons.umassglobal.edu/edd\\_dissertations/515](https://digitalcommons.umassglobal.edu/edd_dissertations/515)

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by UMass Global ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of UMass Global ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [christine.bombaro@umassglobal.edu](mailto:christine.bombaro@umassglobal.edu).

A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for Middle School  
Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

A Dissertation by

Debbie Monroe

University of Massachusetts Global

Irvine, California

School of Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

May 2023

Committee in charge:

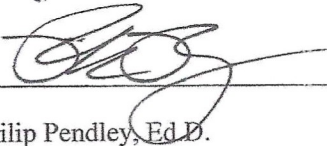
Philip Pendley, Ed.D., Committee Chair

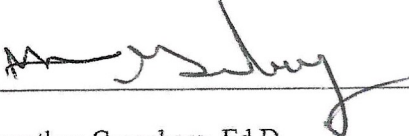
Lisbeth Johnson, Ed.D.

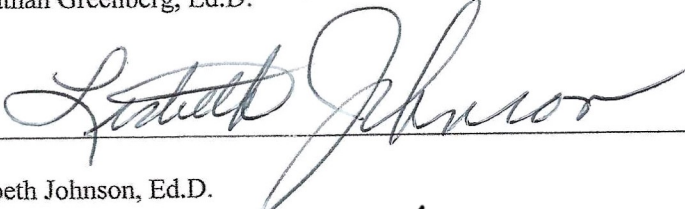
Jonathan Greenberg, Ed.D.


University of Massachusetts Global  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

The dissertation of Debbie Monroe is approved.

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Dissertation Chair  
Philip Pendley, Ed.D.

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Member  
Jonathan Greenberg, Ed.D.

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Committee Member  
Lisbeth Johnson, Ed.D.

  
\_\_\_\_\_, Associate Dean  
Patrick Ainsworth, Ed.D.

May 2022

---

A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for Middle School  
Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

copyright © 2023

by Debbie Monroe

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is dedicated to my amazing family, my loving husband John, and two beautiful children Bradley and Justin. Your unwavering support, patience, and encouragement have been a constant source of strength throughout my doctoral journey. You have made countless sacrifices to ensure I could pursue this doctoral degree and I am forever grateful. I know my boys are too young to fully understand the accomplishment that stands before us, but I hope one day they truly see they can change the world and that it is their existence that has inspired me to pursue more for myself than I ever thought possible. I want to ensure the world is a better place in which they can navigate without prejudice and with bold loving hearts. I hope to instill a passion and work ethic within each of them that allows them to pay it forward and make a positive impact on the world that only they can make.

I would also like to dedicate this work to my respected dissertation chair, Dr. Pendley. Your expertise, guidance, and mentorship have been invaluable, and I am deeply grateful for your commitment to my success. You walked with me hand and hand never letting me falter, yet ensuring my voice was bold and exacting to make the needed impact within the field of school counseling. Your only flaw Dr. Pendley is your unwavering commitment to the San Francisco Giants, but that imperfection just goes to show no one is perfect and we all still have a lot we can learn as we walk through life.

This journey was not done in isolation, and I am forever changed by the Timezone Bandits and the family that was created by 8 strangers from across the world that have grown to be some of my most trusted confidants. We all survived the early morning cohort meetings, and late-night classes. I am not sure how, but we all made it out of quantitative statistics unscathed and no worse for the wear. We supported one

another through mental health challenges, loss, job transitions, deployments, and illnesses. We navigated TCP projects through COVID-19 restrictions and both virtual and in-person immersions. We also celebrated new jobs, promotions, engagements, weddings, travel, baptisms, moves, and pregnancy announcements. Each one of us brought a special quality to the group and truthfully, we all pulled each other through at one time or another. We were under the guidance of the one and only Dr. Cheryl Marie Osborn whose guidance and advice have been instrumental in helping to navigate the doctoral program both through good times and in times of challenge and change. We are not done until we are all done.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this dissertation to the school counseling profession, which has been my passion and inspiration since I was in high school and had the guidance of a truly dedicated High School Counselor that changed the course of my life. Thank you Mrs. Ramos I appreciate you sitting with me during times of strife and helping me see there was hope for a future outside the current circumstances I found myself in. I hope that this dissertation will contribute to the ongoing dialogue around how we can best support and advocate for school counselors in all schools to ensure we can be positioned to best support our students, families, and communities.

## ABSTRACT

### A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for Middle School Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

by Debbie Monroe

**Purpose:** The purpose of this Delphi study is to identify, from the perspective of expert counselors, the roles that middle school counselors perform during their workday, to rate the importance of the roles identified, and to identify organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified. Additionally, this study seeks to gain feedback from expert middle school counselors on how to best align the necessary organizational supports with the identified most important roles.

**Methodology:** The Delphi method was utilized for this study through an electronic survey that asks participants a combination of open-ended research questions, a quantitative opportunity to rate the roles school counselors perform by level of importance, and finishes with an opportunity for alignment and feedback.

**Findings:** The expert panel identified 52 tasks a middle school counselor performs during a typical workday. The panel then ranked the tasks and determined the following six to be the most important (1) social-emotional counseling, (2) academic counseling, (3) college and career counseling, (4) serving as a member of school site teams, (5) educational tasks, and (6) registration tasks. The expert panel then recommended 19 organizational supports that support middle school counselors in performing the top six roles effectively and ultimately increasing positive student outcomes.

**Conclusion:** The school counseling profession has transformed over the years to encompass multiple roles and responsibilities culminating in the creation of comprehensive school counseling programs. Middle school counselors are used to provide administrative support at high levels which interferes with their focus on student service. To effectively align organizational supports, the roles and responsibilities of a middle school counselor must first be defined. The expert panel generated a list of 19 organizational supports that if provided would allow middle school counselors to perform the six most important roles.

**Recommendations for Action:** Based on the findings from this study, five recommendations were put forth for further research in the field of school counseling and to advance the understanding of the organizational supports needed to support a school counselor in positively impacting student outcomes.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	2
The School Counseling Profession: A Historical Overview.....	3
Role Identity of the Professional School Counselor.....	4
Role Ambiguity and Confusion.....	5
The Role of the Middle School Counselor.....	5
Role Stress and Role Conflict.....	6
Theoretical Foundations.....	6
Leadership in School Counseling.....	7
Role Theory.....	7
Organizational Role Theory.....	8
Activity Theory.....	8
Systems Theory and Organizational Learning Theory.....	9
School Counselor Supervision Model.....	9
American School Counselor Association National Model.....	9
Theoretical Framework.....	10
Organizational Supports Currently Available to School Counselors.....	11
Gap in the Literature.....	12
Summary.....	12
Statement of the Research Problem.....	13
Purpose Statement.....	15
Research Questions.....	15
Significance of the Problem.....	16
Definitions.....	18
Delimitations.....	21
Organization of the Study.....	21
CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	23
The School Counseling Profession: A Historical Overview.....	23
Role Identity of the Professional School Counselor.....	26
Academic Focus.....	27
Mental Health Needs of Students.....	28
Comprehensive School Counseling Programs.....	30
The American School Counselor Association National Model.....	32
The Role of the Middle School Counselor.....	34
Role Ambiguity and Role Stress.....	37
Theoretical Foundations.....	39
Leadership in School Counseling.....	40
Role Theory.....	40
Organizational Role Theory.....	41
Activity Theory.....	41
Systems Theory and Organizational Learning Theory.....	42
School Counselor Supervision Model.....	42
American School Counselor Association National Model.....	43
Theoretical Framework.....	43

Organizational Structure of the School Counseling Profession.....	44
Organizational Factors Influencing School Counseling .....	46
High Caseload .....	46
Appropriate Supervision.....	47
Role Ambiguity .....	49
Role Conflict .....	50
Assigning Non-Counseling Duties.....	50
Job Demands and Work Overload.....	51
Educational Training .....	52
Current Research on Organizational Factors and Decreased Student Outcomes .....	53
Summary .....	55
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY .....	57
Overview.....	57
Purpose Statement.....	57
Research Questions.....	57
Research Design.....	58
Population .....	59
Sampling Frame .....	60
Sample .....	61
Sample Selection Process.....	61
Instrumentation .....	62
Round 1 .....	62
Round 2 .....	63
Round 3 .....	63
Round 4 .....	63
Reliability .....	63
Field Test.....	64
Validity .....	65
Data Collection .....	65
Round 1 .....	66
Round 2 .....	66
Round 3 .....	67
Round 4 .....	67
Data Analysis .....	67
Round 1 .....	67
Round 2 .....	68
Round 3 .....	68
Round 4 .....	69
Limitations .....	69
Summary.....	70
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS.....	71
Overview.....	71
Purpose Statement.....	71
Research Questions.....	72
Population .....	72

Target Population.....	73
Sample .....	74
Presentation and Analysis of Data .....	74
Delphi Round 1 .....	74
Delphi Round 1, Research Question 1 .....	75
Delphi Round 2 .....	75
Delphi Round 3 .....	86
Delphi Round 3, Role 1: Social-Emotional Counseling .....	87
Delphi Round 3, Role 2: Academic Counseling .....	88
Delphi Round 3, Role 3: College and Career Counseling.....	90
Delphi Round 3, Role 4: Being a Member of the School Site Team .....	92
Delphi Round 3, Role 5: Educational Tasks .....	93
Delphi Round 3, Role 6: Registration Tasks.....	95
Delphi Round 4 .....	96
Summary .....	100
CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	102
Purpose Statement.....	104
Research Questions.....	104
Methodology .....	105
Population .....	106
Target Population.....	107
Sample .....	108
Major Findings.....	108
Delphi Round 1 .....	109
Delphi Round 1, Research Question 1 .....	109
Delphi Round 2 .....	113
Delphi Round 3 .....	115
Delphi Round 3, Role 1.....	115
Delphi Round 3, Role 2.....	116
Delphi Round 3, Role 3.....	116
Delphi Round 3, Role 4.....	116
Delphi Round 3, Role 5.....	116
Delphi Round 3, Role 6.....	117
Delphi Round 4 .....	118
Unexpected Findings .....	120
Conclusions.....	120
Conclusion 1 .....	121
Conclusion 2.....	121
Conclusion 3.....	122
Conclusion 4.....	123
Implications for Action .....	125
Recommendations for Further Research.....	128
Concluding Remarks and Reflection .....	130

REFERENCES .....	133
APPENDICES .....	151

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Identified Roles Middle School Counselors Perform During Their Workday . 75

Table 2. Identified Roles and Mean Scores ..... 76

Table 3. Social-Emotional Counseling ..... 77

Table 4. Academic Counseling ..... 78

Table 5. College and Career Counseling ..... 79

Table 6. Member of School Site Teams..... 80

Table 7. Educational Tasks ..... 81

Table 8. Registration Tasks..... 82

Table 9. Attendance and Discipline Tasks..... 83

Table 10. Supervision Tasks ..... 84

Table 11. Administrative Tasks ..... 85

Table 12. Coordination Tasks ..... 86

Table 13. The Six Most Important Roles..... 87

Table 14. Organizational Supports for Social-Emotional Counseling..... 88

Table 15. Organizational Supports for Academic Counseling ..... 90

Table 16. Organizational Supports for College and Career Counseling..... 92

Table 17. Organizational Supports to Serve as Site Team Members ..... 93

Table 18. Educational Supports for Educational Tasks ..... 94

Table 19. Organizational Supports for Registration Tasks ..... 96

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The success of professional school counselors (PSCs) is dependent not only on individual characteristics of the counselor themselves or educational training, but also on the environment in which the counselor resides, and the subsequent organizational supports put in place. The school counseling profession has transformed over the years from the 1900s as vocational guidance-based function, to 2022, in which comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCPs) are common practice. In a CSCP, counselors are responsible for academics, social-emotional development, and college and career planning. The role of a PSC varies from state to state, district to district, and site to site. This variance is due in large part to the lack of role clarity found within the school counseling profession. Numerous studies have examined the lack of role clarity and the competing roles and responsibilities expected of PSCs (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Lieberman, 2004).

Role ambiguity is even more prevalent for middle school counselors. The middle school level itself is a new and understudied concept within the literature (Huffman et al., 1993; Mayberry, 2005). The inclusion of school counselors at the middle school level is growing in acceptance; however, the role of the middle school counselor remains unclear (Huffman et al., 1993). This level of role ambiguity coupled with role incongruence, and role conflict, lead school counselors to experience role stress (Freeman & Coll, 1997). Role stress occurs when stakeholders have conflicting expectations of the school counselor's role, contradicting how school counselors were trained (Culbreth et al., 2005). Role stress significantly decreases a school counselor's ability to effectively deliver direct services to students (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Role stress also negatively

impacts a school counselors ability to successfully improve student outcomes. Increasing positive student outcomes is the goal for PSCs at all levels; however, what that looks like at each school site may vary greatly. Positive student outcomes include: (a) decreasing behavioral incidents, (b) reducing dropout rates, (c) improving attendance and graduation rates, and (d) increasing academic achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 2003).

Providing school counselors with quality training, ongoing professional development, supervision, and other organizational supports are essential in supporting the success of the PSC (Fye et al., 2020). The school counseling literature notes several organizational factors leading to increased job stress (Holman et al., 2019). The literature is unclear on how organizational supports directly affect student outcomes.

Organizational supports are factors such as: (a) decreasing caseloads, (b) providing consultation, (c) providing educational training, and (d) providing clear and consistent supervision. The specific organizational supports needed, and an agreement on the identified roles necessary to ensure middle school counselors are effectively serving their students is absent from the professional literature.

### **Background**

The following section describes the history of the school counseling profession, the role identity of the PSC, role ambiguity and role stress, theoretical foundations, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) national model, and current organizational supports available to school counselors. Research supports the fact that school counselors do not have enough time to develop rich relationships with all students due to exceeding high caseloads (Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Radford et al., 2016). However, Bidwell (2001) states that focusing only on the fact counselors have high

caseloads or perform many non-counseling duties minimizes the effect the work conditions and organizational structure of the school counseling profession itself has on student outcomes. The additional organizational supports that impact the school counselor's effectiveness will be discussed. High school counseling has been well researched, but middle school counseling and the specific organizational supports for counselors have not received the same attention in the literature.

### **The School Counseling Profession: A Historical Overview**

The school counseling profession began in the 1900s focused on vocational guidance or what is now called career counseling (Super, 1955). The purpose of the vocational counselor's role was to facilitate the transition between school and work to ensure success post-graduation (Super, 1955). The vocational guidance profession changed over time due to the cognitive development movement, the creation of guidance and counseling theory, and the shift to personal adjustment counseling (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). During the 1950s school counselors, health officers, school nurses, school psychologists, and attendance officers were a part of the pupil personnel services system within school districts (Cinotti, 2014).

In 1952, the creation of ASCA, previously known as the National Vocational Guidance Association, helped to provide an identity for the school counseling profession. In 1958, congress passed the National Defense Education Act which funded school counselors in all high schools to identify high achieving students and set them on a college trajectory (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The Vocational Education Act Amendments of 1968 expanded counseling services to elementary school students with an additional focus on specialized populations such as a student with disabilities or



disenfranchised youth (Erford, 2003). The development of comprehensive school counseling programs began in the 1970s when school counselors started measuring student outcomes based on developmentally appropriate goals, implementing intervention strategies, and evaluating their overall effectiveness (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). During the 1970s, the development of comprehensive school counseling programs began; however, there was also a significant decline in the need for school counselors due to a decrease in student enrollment, and reduced educational budgets (Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

### **Role Identity of the Professional School Counselor**

Previous school counseling literature indicates significant role ambiguity and conflict throughout the school counseling profession (Radford et al., 2016). Historically school counselors only handled vocational needs, but the profession has since expanded, and today the PSC is responsible for academic, college/career, and social-emotional development (Reiner et al., 2009). This is a positive shift in getting students what they need; however, it does leave some confusion regarding the specific job responsibilities of the school counselor. There is a duality in the role of the PSC, as school counselors within their school sites serve both as educational leaders and mental health support providers (DeKruyf et al., 2013). The school counseling literature is divided regarding which identity is more important, the educator or the mental health support provider (Perkins et al., 2010). The identity of the PSC has been minimized due to the divided focus on whether counselors should be educational leaders or mental health support providers. Research suggests PSC should embrace multiple roles if students are to truly benefit from a comprehensive school counseling program (Perkins et al., 2010).

## **Role Ambiguity and Confusion**

The historical overview helps to illustrate the progression of the school counseling profession; however, it also demonstrates the understandable lack of role clarity that exists. The historical literature features the role of the PSC as an educator who should focus solely on the goal of improving academic success for all students (Martin, 2002). In addition to the literature, The ASCA's national model, The Transforming School Counseling Initiative, and the MetLife Professional Development Module also were created to highlight the academic and career focus of the PSC (The Education Trust West, 2006). In contrast, a school counselor's focus on mental health support within the school is also a very well-researched and a vital component of many PSCs job identities (DeKruyf et al., 2013). The literature suggests the role of the school counselor should include a focus not only on the academic and college/career domains, but it needs to additionally include social-emotional development (Perkins et al., 2010).

## **The Role of the Middle School Counselor**

This ambiguity is even more prevalent for middle school counselors, as the creation of middle schools themselves is a rather new and understudied concept (Huffman et al., 1993). While the inclusion of school counselors at the middle school level is growing in acceptance, the role of the middle school counselor remains unclear (Huffman et al., 1993). The role of the middle school counselor aims to help students grow academically, personally, and in college/career planning during a time of both self-discovery and rapid physical and emotional growth (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2019). The training middle school counselors receive is not consistent, the role cannot be clearly defined, and the school sites have varying levels of

needs; therefore, the success of the middle school counselor is beyond the counselor's ability to control (Lambie & Williamson, 2004).

### **Role Stress and Role Conflict**

The school counselor engages in roles that are often in conflict with one another, and when this happens the counselor often experience role stress (Freeman & Coll, 1997). The professional identity of school counselors throughout the literature is ambiguous, creating role confusion for the school counseling profession. Having a professional identity that is constantly evolving and answering to so many stakeholder groups leads not only to role confusion from stakeholders, but also the school counselors themselves. Additionally, school counselors are in the middle of two stakeholder groups such as students and teachers, and the expectations for how information is handled from each group varies, which creates role incongruence (Freeman & Coll, 1997). School counselors also must battle other duties as assigned which prevents counselors from adhering to professional mandates and personal values related to roles and responsibilities (Holman et al., 2019).

### **Theoretical Foundations**

The fundamental theoretical foundations for this study are rooted in the topic of school counseling. There is extensive research on the topic of school counseling from seminal authors. The origin of the profession began in the early 1900s and as the profession evolved the literature continued to expand. This study examines the most important roles and responsibilities of middle school counselors. This study also aims to study the necessary organizational supports needed to perform the identified roles and responsibilities and to increase positive student outcomes. The theoretical foundations

are: (a) leadership in school counseling, (b) role theory, (c) organizational role theory, (d) activity theory, (e) system theory, and the (f) counselor supervision model.

### **Leadership in School Counseling**

Leadership is a critical element to improving student learning and in creating effective schools (Marzano et al., 2005). Leadership is an important element of school counseling. The ASCA's (2019) national model has created a framework outlining leadership as one of the foundational tenets. School counselors recognize the value of leadership skills within the profession and want to be viewed as educational leaders (Berry, 2006); however, many counselors do not implicitly utilize leadership practices (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). Research by Dollarhide et al. (2008) has found that in general, the reason school counselors do not naturally engage in leadership activities is a combination of the lack of preservice training, fear of failure, the unwillingness to take risks, and role ambiguity.

### **Role Theory**

This study looks at the roles and responsibilities of middle school counselors which are afflicted by role ambiguity, role stress, and role conflict experienced in the school counseling profession. Understanding the evolving role identity, role ambiguity, and varying expectations from a variety of stakeholder groups emphasizes the importance of role theory. The ambiguity of the school counselor's role identity leads to other duties being assigned which prevents counselors from adhering to professional mandates and personal values related to roles and responsibilities (Holman et al., 2019). These roles are not finalized as the school counselor's professional identity continues to shift and

therefore the established roles continue to shift (Turner, 2001). Biddle (1986) explains the role identity directly influences an individual's behavior within the organization.

### **Organizational Role Theory**

Organizational role theory focuses on the school counselor's ability to accept and navigate their multiple roles within the constraints of the education system (Biddle, 1986). The effective functioning of a role within an organization results from reoccurring behavior (Biddle, 1986). Focusing on the identified roles and responsibilities within an organization, the interaction between these varying roles, and the effect this all has on the organization's goal is the focus of organizational role theory (Katz & Kahn 1966). School counselors assigned to roles aligned with their values and professional training can support the school's organizational goals (Dahir et al., 2010).

### **Activity Theory**

Activity theory lends itself to this study as the relationship between the middle school counselors and the desire to increase positive student outcomes is examined in the context of the educational system. The theory helps explain complex systems that involve a variety of stakeholders. The theory as explained by Engeström (1999) examines the relationship between the subject, the desired outcome, and any underlying tensions that either positively or negatively influence each other and the overall process, subsequently creating an activity system. The four major components of activity theory help to define the school counselor's role and subsequently the desired outcome. These components include tools, rules, community, and division of labor (Engeström, 1999).

## **Systems Theory and Organizational Learning Theory**

Organizational role theory examines the role of the counselor and how that role impacts the organization. Systems theory looks at the school site as a system. Elmore (2004) discusses how pivotal it is for school sites to function as a system instead of individual silos and the need to work organically together in shared work. Senge (1990) discusses how complex systems such as school sites need to also include organizational learning theory, which states organizations will improve when learning has been facilitated across the organization.

## **School Counselor Supervision Model**

The counselor supervision model examines supervision itself, the supervisor's role, and the comprehensive school counseling domain in relation to one another (Luke & Bernard, 2006). The school counseling profession requires clinical supervision during preservice training (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2016). Clinical supervision is also recognized as a needed component of counseling after graduation, however, is not a well-known practice of employed school counselors outside of graduate school (Crespi, 2003). The majority of school counselors are not currently receiving clinical supervision once employed (Page et al., 2001).

## **American School Counselor Association National Model**

ASCA developed a national model in 2003 and a revised model in 2019 to ensure data-driven practices and identity for the school counseling profession. The ASCA national model was developed by a team of individuals from theorists to experts in the field that recognized a model was needed to ensure school counselors could achieve success (ASCA, 2019). The four themes that emerge in this framework are: (a)

leadership, (b) advocacy, (c) collaboration, and (d) systemic change. Each of these themes provides a vital component to the understanding of the framework itself and the role of the school counselor.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundation for this study is centered on the topic of school counseling. Typically, in a qualitative or quantitative study, the topic of school counseling would be analyzed and variables for the study would be identified utilizing a theoretical framework found within the literature. For example, a study on school counselor burnout might use the five domains of the counselor burnout inventory as variables to interview school counselors. Through the development of the counselor burnout inventory, the variables within the instrument have been shown to have validity. The validity of the instrument and subsequent variables can determine the quality of the study and the impact it has on the body of research (Golafshani, 2003).

For this study, the general theoretical topic is PSC. However, unlike other study types, Delphi studies do not use variables identified from the literature. The Delphi method gathers consensus from a panel of experts on the variables that emerge from the four-round process. Therefore, there is no theoretical framework identified from the literature in Delphi studies, but instead, the selection of the expert panelists provides the validity of the collected data and subsequent variables (Golafshani, 2003). The contribution of the expert panel members creates a unique theoretical framework for each Delphi process, in this case, due to the individual's unique and expert knowledge on the topic of PSC (Habibi et al., 2014; Mohamad et al., 2015). Additional validity is attained

by gathering consensus from the panel of experts as well as the systematic process utilized to gather feedback (Golafshani, 2003; Habibi et al., 2014).

### **Organizational Supports Currently Available to School Counselors**

Organizational supports for school counselors include factors such as: (a) decreasing caseloads, (b) providing consultation, (c) providing educational training, and (d) providing clear and consistent supervision. Organizational supports have shown to be challenging for the school counseling profession (Bardhoshi et al., 2014).

Research indicates lack of available organizational support impacts job stress (Dang, 2021). One area of concern for the school counseling profession is the lack of time available to develop rich relationships with all students, due to exceeding high caseloads (Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Radford et al., 2016). The caseloads across the United States have been trending downward but are still well above ASCA's recommended 250:1 ratio. In California, the average school counselor-to-student ratio is 626:1 (Population Reference Bureau, 2021).

In addition to high caseloads, counselors are supervised by administrators who often do not understand the role of the school counselor, or the time required to perform the non-counseling duties (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). Supervision and evaluation by individuals without knowledge of the school counselor's role create role stress. An individual's supervisor at work can directly influence the work experience of the employees they oversee (Leiter et al., 2010). In addition to lack of appropriate supervision, there are additional organizational variables that contribute to school counselors' burnout (Fye et al., 2020). The research fails to explain what the required



roles and responsibilities are for a middle school counselor and how the organizational supports provided ensure they are successful.

### **Gap in the Literature**

The PSC is responsible for academic, college/career, and social-emotional development (Reiner et al., 2009). Embracing multiple roles is a positive shift in getting students what they need; however, it leaves some confusion regarding the specific job responsibilities of the school counselor. The lack of organizational support available to school counselors contributes to this role conflict and stems from the unique way in which the profession is positioned within the school (Blake, 2020). School counselors are employed by educational leaders untrained or unfamiliar with counseling. The research links the lack of organizational supports to school counselor job satisfaction and ultimately burnout, however, research does not link this lack of organizational supports to student outcomes. This study aims to clearly identify the role and responsibilities of the middle school counselor and the organizational support necessary to improve student outcomes in all three domains.

### **Summary**

In summary, the exploration of the historical background of the school counseling profession leads to an understanding that role ambiguity, role stress, and role conflict factor into the lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities of the school counseling profession. The inclusion of school counselors at the middle school level has grown in acceptance, however, the middle school concept itself is understudied (Huffman et al., 1993). Foundational theories help illuminate this important topic examining leadership in school counseling, role theory, organizational role theory, systems theory, the counselor

supervision model, and finally the ASCA national model. Reviewing the organizational supports currently in place for school counselors indicates a need to identify those organizational supports that when implemented will increase positive student outcomes.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

The role of the PSC has evolved throughout the years. Originally, the sole focus of school counselors was on vocational guidance, and now it is the responsibility of the school counselor to develop a comprehensive program focused on academic, college/career, and social-emotional development (Reiner et al., 2009). CSCPs required an increased focus on evaluation methods and accountability (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). School counselors began measuring student outcomes based on developmentally appropriate goals, implementing intervention strategies, and evaluating their overall effectiveness (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). The development of CSCPs help provide structure to the school counseling profession, by expanding their reach beyond specific student populations to focus on the positive student outcomes of all students (Cinotti, 2014). Positive student outcomes include: (a) decreasing behavioral incidents, (b) reducing dropout rates, (c) improving attendance and graduation rates, and (d) increasing academic achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 2003).

Analyzing student outcomes and the specific role the school counselor plays to increase positive student outcomes becomes the underlying focus. The role of a PSC varies from state to state, district to district, and site to site. This variance is due in large part to the lack of role clarity found within the school counseling profession. Numerous studies have examined the lack of role clarity and the competing roles and responsibilities expected of PSCs (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Lieberman, 2004). Role ambiguity is even

more prevalent for middle school counselors. The inclusion of school counselors at the middle school level is growing in acceptance, however, the role of the middle school counselor remains unclear (Huffman et al., 1993). The middle school counselor aims to help students grow academically, personally, and in college/career planning during a time of both self-discovery and rapid physical and emotional growth (ASCA, 2019).

Having a professional identity that is constantly evolving and answering to so many stakeholder groups leads not only to role confusion from stakeholders, but also the school counselors themselves. This level of role ambiguity coupled with role incongruence, and role conflict, lead school counselors to experience role stress (Freeman & Coll, 1997). Role stress significantly decreases a school counselor's ability to effectively deliver direct services to students (Mullen & Gutierrez, 2016). Role stress also negatively impacts a school counselor's ability to successfully improve student outcomes. Organizational supports provided to the school counselor such as quality training, ongoing professional development, decreasing caseloads, and supervision, to name a few, are essential in supporting the success of the PSC (Fye et al., 2020).

The unique way the school counseling profession is positioned within the school contributes to the role stress and lack of organizational support available to PSCs (Blake, 2020). Organizational supports have shown to be challenging for the school counseling profession (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). Research indicates lack of available organizational support impacts job stress (Dang, 2021). The current literature links the lack of organizational supports to a decrease in school counselor job satisfaction and ultimately burnout. Bidwell (2001) ties the work conditions and organizational structure of the school counseling profession to student outcomes, however, it does not indicate the direct

effect it has on the school counselor's ability to improve positive student outcomes. This study aims to identify the role and responsibilities of the middle school counselor and the organizational support necessary to improve student outcomes in all three domains.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Delphi study was to identify, from the perspective of expert counselors, the roles that middle school counselors perform during their workday, to rate the importance of the roles identified, and to identify organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified. Additionally, this study seeks to gain feedback from expert middle school counselors on how to best align the necessary organizational supports with the identified most important roles.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What roles do expert counselors identify that middle school counselors perform during their workday?
2. How do expert middle school counselors rate the importance of the roles identified in Research Question 1?
3. What organizational supports do expert counselors identify that must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in Research Question 2?
4. What do expert middle school counselors perceive is essential to effectively align the necessary organizational supports with the roles identified as important?

## **Significance of the Problem**

The existence of the school counseling profession has been well established throughout the literature. Numerous studies have looked at the role identity of the PSC (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2012; Hepp, 2015; Perkins et al., 2010; Reiner et al., 2009). The historical evolution of the profession indicates school counseling is in desperate need of a uniform and well-established professional identity (Dahir, 2004). Establishing the National Standards for School Counseling Programs, the ASCA national model, and the push for a comprehensive evidence-based school counseling program is an effort to provide unity to the role of the PSC (Dahir, 2004). To further complicate matters, each state has a different set of roles and responsibilities outlined for the PSC (Hepp, 2015).

Establishing clear roles and responsibilities expected of a PSC is the first step; however, there is also a need to measure the influence school counselors have on positive student outcomes. Positive student outcomes include: (a) decreasing behavioral incidents, (b) reducing dropout rates, (c) improving attendance and graduation rates, and (d) increasing academic achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 2003). There is currently a lack of empirical data to support the significant positive influence school counselors have on student outcomes (Dahir, 2004). Empirical data is needed to convince policymakers that the school counseling profession adds value to the educational system. Amatea and Clark (2004) state PSCs have a unique ability to increase positive student outcomes. PSCs complete educational master's level coursework in addition to training and internship experiences making them uniquely qualified to address how to increase positive student outcomes from a multitude of perspectives (Alexander et al., 2003).

Despite the plethora of school counseling literature focused on roles and responsibilities, and the additional acknowledgment that the school counseling profession provides value, there is little empirical data outlining the effects of typical job duties or interventions provided by the PSC (Whiston, 2002). Due to the counseling profession being a small subset of the educational system or the inadequate understanding of the PSC role, policymakers typically ignore the profession during conversations about educational reform (Burtnett, 1993). Many professions moved to evidence-based practices and the school counseling profession is urged to follow suit (Whiston, 2002). Increasing accountability measures shifts the direction of the profession regarding educational reform (Johnson, 2000). Without strong empirical data, policymakers may not see the value in investing in the school counseling profession (Whiston, 2002).

This Delphi study will help define the role of the middle school counselor and the specific organizational supports needed by the middle school counselor to increase positive student outcomes. The data collected from expert middle school counselors is meant to confirm the current literature related to middle school counselor role ambiguity and further fill the gap in the literature related to the organizational supports necessary to improve student outcomes. The findings from this study will be useful for school counselor supervisors and district-level administration to develop further role clarity in the middle school counselor job descriptions and the organization supports needed to successfully fill the role at a middle school site throughout any California middle school.

Additionally, the findings from this study will benefit the counselor education programs in preparing and training school counselors in not only their role but in looking for jobs that provide the organizational supports necessary to successfully improve

student outcomes. Counselor education programs often do not provide specific direction related to field experience or internship and can utilize this study in suggesting effective systems of support to look for as a counselor starts in a graduate program field experience or as they enter the workforce for this first time in the field of school counseling.

### **Definitions**

*American School Counselor Association.* The national professional organization of school counselors. ASCA is the author of the *American School Counselor Association National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* (ASCA, 2019).

*American School Counselor Association National Model.* The framework provides a four theme and four component model to help school counselors design, implement, and evaluate their comprehensive school counseling programs focused on improving student outcomes (ASCA, 2005).

*American School Counselor Association National Standards.* ASCA published *Sharing the Vision: The National Standards for School Counseling Programs* to help school counselors better understand how to implement a comprehensive school counseling program that ensures equal access and opportunity for all students. These standards are what ASCA believes school counselors should be doing in the schools (ASCA, 1997).

*At-risk students.* Students who are at risk of failing in school or need special support. Students may be below grade level and at risk for dropping out of school or not graduating. Students may have additional factors requiring support such as being an English language learner, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, students who are homeless, students with mental health challenges, or students with disabilities.

*California Association of School Counselors.* The professional state-level organization of school counselors in California.

*Comprehensive school counseling programs.* Comprehensive school counseling programs are proactive in providing support for all students through the delivery of information, embedded lessons within the school's curriculum, consultation with other entities, and a variety of assessment data in the area of academics, college/career, and social-emotional development (ASCA, 2019). It is embedded within the school and is no longer a supplement service (Campbell & Dahir, 1997).

*Counselor caseload.* The number of students per counselor ratio. According to the ASCA, the recommended caseload for school counselors is 250:1 (ASCA, 2019).

*Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).* This is a set of counseling standards provided in a quality counselor preparation program. A CACREP counseling program ensures counselors are trained in how to support academic, career, and social-emotional development.

*Non-counseling duties.* Non-counseling duties refer to those duties identified as inappropriate by the ASCA. These duties may be maintaining student records, substitute teaching, discipline, supervising lunch duty, or coordinating standardized tests (ASCA, 2019).

*Organizational supports.* Organizational supports are factors such as decreasing caseloads, providing consultation, providing educational training, and providing clear and consistent supervision (Bardhoshi et al., 2014).



*Other duties as assigned.* Other duties as assigned are all the roles and responsibilities school counselors are asked and expected to do, but that are not listed in their job description or list of responsibilities (Cinotti, 2014).

*Professional school counselor.* The preferred term to refer to a school counselor. These individuals are professionals who hold state certification and licensure requirements which vary by state. In the state of California, PSCs hold a master's degree in school counseling with additional credential requirements.

*Roles.* The specific job expectations, requirements, and tasks expected to be completed by the PSC. These roles vary by state, district and often vary from site to site.

*Role ambiguity.* The uncertainty regarding the roles and responsibilities of a PSC. Characterized by vague, incomplete, or inconsistent information regarding the job requirements, which do not correspond to the understanding before employment. Unclear understanding of how to handle job responsibilities and how one will be evaluated (Biddle, 1986).

*Role conflict.* When school counselors must attend to two or more tasks or sets of expectations that are incompatible with one another (Biddle, 1986).

*Role stress.* Created when school counselors experience role ambiguity and role conflict within their profession (Freeman & Coll, 1997). When there are conflicting or uncertain job responsibilities, work overload, or too many conflicting roles.

*Social-emotional.* School counselors are responsible for ensuring students manage emotions and learn interpersonal skills to demonstrate the ability to practice healthy behaviors with others from diverse backgrounds (ASCA, 2014). The social-emotional

domain as defined by the ASCA national model has specific standards school counselors are expected to address.

*Supervision.* The act of overseeing a school counselor and providing both support and evaluation. There are different types of supervision ranging from an administrator who oversees the counselor at the school site. The oversight of the comprehensive school counseling program. The clinical supervision to aid counselors in making ethical decisions and improving their overall counseling skills.

### **Delimitations**

This Delphi study was delimited to expert middle school counselors in each of the three regions in California. Fifteen expert middle school counselors were purposively selected, five each from northern, central, and southern California. To be included as an expert middle school counselor for this study, the counselor had to meet the following criteria:

- Currently employed as a middle school counselor in California
- Three or more years of experience in a middle school counseling position
- Recommendation of their principal as an expert middle school counselor
- Graduated from a master's program certified by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and related educational programs

### **Organization of the Study**

This research study will consist of five chapters, a list of references, and appendices. Chapter I set the stage by introducing the study. This chapter included background information, a statement of the research problem, the purpose statement, the research questions, the significance of the problem, definitions, delimitations, and the

organization of the study overall. Chapter II is a literature review on the historical aspects of school counseling, the role of the school counselor, role ambiguity, and the need for organizational supports to improve student outcomes. Chapter III outlines the study methodology, discusses the Delphi method, population, sample, instrumentation, and process for data collection and analysis. Chapter IV discusses the results from each round of the Delphi study and will present and analyze the data. Chapter V examines major findings, unanticipated findings, general conclusions, implications for school counselors and those who employ school counselors, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This study explored the organizational support needed by middle school counselors to maximize their effectiveness and serve students successfully. The topic of school counseling is well studied; however, the literature is not clear on how the organizational supports of the school counselor affect student outcomes. Organizational supports are factors such as decreasing caseloads, providing consultation, providing educational training, and providing clear and consistent supervision. The purpose of this review of the literature is to explore the organizational supports needed by middle school counselors to maximize their effectiveness to serve students successfully.

A review of the literature was conducted to provide a historical overview of the school counseling profession and some context for understanding the roles and responsibilities of a middle school counselor. The role identity of school counselors has changed throughout history and the changes were discussed throughout the historical overview. The literature review utilized a synthesis matrix to identify themes and gaps in the current school counseling literature (see Appendix A). The concept of role ambiguity was explored, as well as how that role ambiguity leads to role stress. The role school counselors play as educational leaders is also addressed. Finally, the review discussed current organizational supports available to school counselors recognizing more research is needed to understand how those organizational supports directly influence student outcomes. The review finished with a concluding summary.

### **The School Counseling Profession: A Historical Overview**

The school counseling profession has evolved over the last 100 years. It has moved from the original focus of vocational guidance, through a period focused on

clinical counseling, and landing most recently in an accountability model focused on a comprehensive system. The school counselor started as a position within the school, it later shifted to a provided service, and has now turned into a comprehensive program (Gysbers, 2012). When the profession began in the early 1900s the sole focus was vocational guidance to ensure a successful transition from school to the workforce post-graduation (Super, 1955). The role of the vocational counselor was to address the negative fallout from the Industrial Revolution on the labor market and help facilitate work prospects to ensure smooth employment opportunities (Aubrey, 1977). When the profession first began the role was fulfilled by teachers and administrators. The earliest attempts at formal training began in 1911 at Harvard University focusing on vocational guidance (Gladding, 2013).

The vocational guidance profession has changed over time. There was a concentrated effort in the 1920s and 1930s toward expanding the role of the vocational counselor to include mental health support, especially for those dealing with the aftermath of World War II (Gladding, 2013). Due to the cognitive development movement, the creation of guidance and counseling theory, and the shift to personal adjustment counseling, the profession continued to evolve (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). During the 1950s school counselors, health officers, school nurses, school psychologists, and attendance officers all became a part of the pupil personnel services system (Cinotti, 2014). These services were referred to as ancillary services and were not embedded within the educational system often resulting in additional administrative duties being assigned (Stewart, 1959).

In 1952, the creation of the ASCA, previously known as the National Vocational Guidance Association, helped to provide an identity for the school counseling profession. ASCA provided resources, professional development opportunities, and a professional journal for data and research (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). In 1958, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act, which funded school counselors in all high schools to identify high achieving students and set them on a college trajectory (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The number of school counselors rapidly increased between 1958 and 1965 and nearly doubled the total number of school counselors employed (Shertzer & Stone, 1966). The Vocational Education Act Amendments of 1968 expanded counseling services to elementary school students with an additional focus on specialized populations such as a student with disabilities or disenfranchised youth (Erford, 2003). It was not until the 1960s that a more formalized professional training began for the profession focusing on standardization and professional identity (Gladding 2013).

The development of comprehensive school counseling programs began in the 1970s when school counselors started measuring student outcomes based on developmentally appropriate goals, implementing intervention strategies, and evaluating their overall effectiveness (Gysbers & Henderson, 2006). During the 1970s however, there was a significant decline in the need for school counselors due to a decrease in student enrollment, and reduced educational budgets (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). This resulted in school counselors assuming any and every job within the school out of necessity for job security, to increase school counselor visibility, and to advocate for the continued need for school counselors (Cinotti, 2014).

During this time there were several initiatives, one of which was the testing and accountability movement, that came out of the National Commission of Excellence in Education's 1983 "A Nation at Risk" report, which discussed the overall quality of education in the United States (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Another initiative was the School to Work Opportunity Act of 1994, which returned the focus to career counseling and preparing students for future employment (Erford, 2003). The ASCA also developed the CACREP and developed counseling education standards (Schweiger et al. 2011). The progression of the profession moved from what was originally supplemental services within a school site to what is now the development of a comprehensive school counseling program.

### **Role Identity of the Professional School Counselor**

According to ASCA (2019), a PSC is a licensed educator that is qualified to provide academic, social-emotional, and college and career counseling. Historically school counselors only handled vocational needs, but the profession has since expanded, and today the PSC is responsible for academic, college and career, and social-emotional development (Reiner et al., 2009). This is a positive shift in providing the necessary supports for students, however, leaves some confusion regarding the specific job responsibilities of the school counselor. The qualifications to become a PSC require an individual to have a master's degree in school counseling as well as meet state certification and licensure standards (ASCA, 2005). School counselors are required to take 48 semester hours of graduate-level coursework on topics such as human development, group work, career counseling, lifestyle development, cultural and social competence, relationships, testing, program evaluation, school counseling theory, and

supervised counseling experiences (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2016). Additionally, counselors must uphold ethical standards for the profession and adhere to state laws (ASCA, 2005).

The overall goal of a PSC is to provide advocacy, leadership, and collaboration (ASCA, 2005). The school counseling literature, however, remains ambiguous regarding the role of the PSC. There is a duality in the literature, as school counselors within their school sites serve both as educational leaders and mental health support providers (DeKruyf et al., 2013). In addition, the school counselor literature has adopted an understanding of the need for comprehensive school counseling programs aimed at improving student outcomes through prevention and intervention (ASCA, 2005). The identity of the PSC has been weakened, due to the divided focus on whether counselors should be educational leaders or mental health support providers. Research suggests PSC should embrace multiple roles if students are to truly benefit from a comprehensive school counseling program (Perkins et al., 2010).

### **Academic Focus**

The historical literature showcases the role of the PSC as an educator focused on vocational and academic success. Martin (2002) states PSC should only focus on one goal: improving academic success for all students. In addition to the literature, The ASCA national model, the transforming school counseling initiative, and the MetLife professional development module were also created to highlight the academic and vocational focus of the PSC (The Education Trust West, 2006). The capability of school counselors to positively influence the educational experience and ultimately the academic



outcomes of all students are why some believe the profession exists (Ziomiek-Daigle et al., 2008).

The academic focus of the profession is well-intentioned as school counselors are optimally positioned to help assess barriers that may impact a student's academic success (S. Sears, 1999). Educational reform demanded accountability and standards-based educational practices, changing the dynamics of modern education in the United States (Martin, 2002). As educational reform occurred the role of the school counselor drastically changed during this time (Kuhn, 2004). School counselors have the opportunity to recognize and eliminate barriers to student academic success (Kaplan & Evans, 1999). School counselors can provide interventions to help close the achievement gap, especially between minority and low-income students and their more affluent peers (Martin, 2002). Beale (2003) asserted that school counselors are an integral component of the educational system and help students achieve their maximum academic potential.

### **Mental Health Needs of Students**

The number of adolescents in need of mental health services is on the rise and can be seen through the increased admission of adolescents to inpatient psychiatric hospitals (Crespi & Hughes, 2004). While the need is on the rise, access to mental health support has many roadblocks. It has been speculated that since adolescents in the United States spend a large amount of time in school utilizing the school site to provide those needed mental health services would be advantageous (Eklund et al., 2017). The number of barriers that exist preventing adolescents from obtaining mental health services may be eliminated by simply providing these services as school-based mental health services

(Committee on School Health, 2004). Focusing on school-based mental health services is a vital component of many PSCs' job identities (DeKruyf et al., 2013).

School counselors are trained and able to provide short-term mental health counseling interventions to support students (Collins, 2014). The ASCA and CACREP validate the training and competencies school counselors have in providing mental health support services needed in the school setting (CACREP, 2016). ASCA does acknowledge it is inappropriate for a school counselor to provide long-term counseling to treat psychological disorders and that instead school counselors should only provide planned, short-term, goal-oriented mental health counseling services (ASCA, 2019). Research confirms that school counselors are uniquely positioned to provide this type of mental health support (Biolcati et al., 2018; DeKruyf et al., 2013).

The role of the school counselor is defined by a variety of stakeholders, one of which is school administrators. Amatea and Clark (2005) interviewed 26 administrators asking them to rate the most desired roles and responsibilities of a school counselor. While the answers varied, the need for direct services and one-on-one counseling rated high on their list of importance. Many roles and responsibilities done by school counselors could be fulfilled by other school personnel. The most individualized role of the school counselor that cannot be performed by other school employees is the direct counseling services to students (Astramovich et al., 2014). Knowing this role cannot be performed by other school personnel makes the task one of optimal importance for the school counselor to fulfill during their workday. School counselors report wanting to provide individual and group counseling to support the mental health needs of all

students (Agresta, 2004). However, this is not always possible due to the other non-counseling duties, or the academic focus required of the profession.

In addition to short-term mental health counseling, school counselors are positioned to provide social-emotional learning opportunities to all students. Implementing social-emotional learning activities school-wide has been shown to increase both academic and social-emotional development and additional increase positive school behaviors (Durlak et al., 2011; Sklad et al., 2012). School counselors instill social-emotional values and practices in their everyday work responsibilities, as they are trained to be responsive and accommodating to students who may need additional mental health support (Bowers et al., 2017). The school counselor is well equipped and willing to provide mental health support through direct one-on-one or group counseling as well as through teaching social-emotional learning objectives.

### **Comprehensive School Counseling Programs**

CSCPs started in the late 1970s but continued to grow and develop throughout the 1980s and 1990s with an increased focus on evaluation methods and accountability (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). CSCPs are proactive in providing support to facilitate the success of all students, not limiting their reach to only specific student populations (Cinotti, 2014). A comprehensive program includes the delivery of information, embedded lessons within the school's curriculum, consultation with other entities, and a variety of assessment data in academics, college and career, and social-emotional development (ASCA, 2019). The most critical characteristic of a CSCP is the fact it is embedded within the school and is no longer a supplement service as it was often viewed when it was under the pupil personnel services umbrella (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). For

CSCPs to be sustainable there is a call for school counselor leadership and a push for systemic change through advocacy (Curry & DeVoss, 2009).

CSCPs are comprised of the specialized work of school counselors. The tasks include individual student planning, group counseling, crisis counseling, delivery of classroom lessons, school-wide activities, and collaboration with other stakeholders (Rayle & Adams, 2007). Research shows the activities performed within a CSCP are how school counselors can best serve the interest of students (Beale, 2004; Johnson & Johnson, 2003; Sink, 2005a, 2005b). These CSCPs need to be accessible by all students and implemented by highly trained school counselors (Rayle & Adams, 2007). School counselors need non-counseling duties removed and caseloads lowered to focus on the tasks encompassed in a CSCP. School counselors are the only individuals capable of designing, implementing, and evaluating a CSCP (Vandegrift, 1999). The benefits associated with these CSCP include:

- Increased student achievement
- Improved attendance
- Higher graduation rates
- Higher retention rates
- Increased positive school climate
- Reduction in suspensions
- Decreased student discipline (Burkard et al., 2012; Carey et al., 2012; Sink et al., 2008)

CSCPs are not implemented in every school, however are considered professional best practice (Goodman-Scott et al., 2016). Through CSCPs the creation of safe school

climates and the emphasis on academic, social-emotional, and college and career readiness is possible (ASCA, 2019).

### **The American School Counselor Association National Model**

The role identity of the PSC is still evolving, however, there have been several initiatives that have provided structure and support for the profession. One of the most impactful supports is the creation of the ASCA and subsequently the creation of the national model for school counselors. The goal of the ASCA national model was to increase accountability and ensure school counselors could be successful (ASCA, 2019). Theorists, published research, and expert school counselors all contributed to the creation of the inaugural ASCA national model, which was developed in stages and presented at the national school counselor conference in 2002 (Hatch, 2004). The overall goal of the model was to move counseling from its pigeonholed focus with a select number of students to a comprehensive school-wide model that served all students (Hatch, 2004). The ASCA national model has been revamped over the years; the first model was published in 2003, a second edition in 2005, the third edition in 2012, and the most current fourth edition in 2019 (ASCA, 2019).

The first edition of the ASCA national model heavily focused on the academic role of PSC. The focus of the model was in response to the educational reform and accountability initiatives calling for more accountability and increased academic performance. The ASCA national model has undergone several revisions and the underlying components of the model are now aligned with the research on CSCP (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). The ASCA national model provides a framework for data-driven decision-making and program implementation (ASCA, 2019). The model has four

themes: (a) leadership, (b) advocacy, (c) collaboration, and (d) systemic change. In addition to the four themes, the model has four areas: (a) foundation, (b) delivery, (c) management, and (d) accountability. Each theme and portion of the model descriptively describes the framework as well as the roles and responsibilities of the PSC in an ideal world.

The themes of the ASCA national model assist PSCs in designing a CSCP rooted in the foundational tenants of leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. Leadership is a critical element in improving student learning and in creating effective schools (Marzano et al., 2005). Leadership fosters the school counselor's professional identity, supports students, and assists in the effective implementation of a CSCP (Camelford, 2014). Advocacy supports the role of the school counselor in removing barriers and ensuring equity (ASCA, 2019). Collaboration with stakeholders is a vital component of a CSCP to foster a shared understanding, develop a support network, and maximize resources to improve student outcomes (Gibbons et al., 2010). The final theme, systemic change, is possible due to the school counselor's access to achievement, attendance, and behavioral data that when analyzed allows barriers to be identified and fosters a desire to improve the system to ensure student success (ASCA, 2019).

In addition to the four themes, the ASCA (2019) national model has four core areas: (a) foundation, (b) delivery, (c) management, and (d) accountability. The first area, foundation, is based on student and professional competencies needed to design a CSCP that improves student development in academics, behavior, and social-emotionally (ASCA, 2019). The second area, delivery, is the direct and indirect services provided by the school counselor. ASCA has outlined appropriate and inappropriate activities for

school counselors to perform and these services are embedded into a CSCP to ensure all students have access to the school counselor. The third area, management, is the use of various assessments to identify, monitor, and evaluate the strategic implementation of CSCP initiatives that are based on well-established criteria (ASCA, 2019). The fourth area, accountability, is designed to demonstrate through data analysis and program evaluation the overall effectiveness of the CSCP (ASCA, 2019). The four areas of the ASCA national model provide a framework for designing CSCP and providing the school counseling profession with an identity that can be validated through accountability efforts.

### **The Role of the Middle School Counselor**

In the field of education, school counselors are employed at all levels: elementary, middle school, high school, and post-secondary. The role of a middle school counselor and the workday duties performed are very different than the role and duties of elementary, high school, or post-secondary counselors (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Nelson et al., 2008). The middle school counselor's job setting varies greatly depending on the state, the district, or the structure of the individual school site. For example, the role of a middle school counselor in an urban school district will differ from the role of a middle school counselor in a rural district (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Nelson et al., 2008). The role of a middle school counselor will also change based on the unique needs of the students in which the counselor serves (Nelson et al., 2008). During the 2018 to 2019 school year, there were approximately 4,185 middle school counselors employed throughout California (California Department of Education [CDE], 2019).

School counselors are vital members of the educational team at all educational levels (Berry, 2006). However, school counselors at the middle school level are of notable importance (Epstein & Voorhis, 2010). Students at the middle school level need support for both physical and psychological development, which the school counselor is particularly positioned and trained to provide (Kuhn, 2004). The role of the middle school counselor aims to help students grow academically, personally, and in college and career planning during a time of both self-discovery and rapid physical and emotional growth (ASCA, 2019). Middle school students need encouragement and guidance to begin developing a clear sense of identity (Gerler, 1991; Marcia, 1980). Discipline issues arise during the transition to middle school (Dimmitt & Carey, 2007). According to ASCA (2019), middle school counselors are well equipped and able to respond to the unique challenges of middle school students.

One of the unique aspects of middle schools is the two major transitions middle school students have to endure; one from elementary to middle school and one from middle school to high school. The transition to middle school is often one of difficulty (Elias et al., 2007). As students enter middle school there is often a sense of uneasiness and enthusiasm at the same time (Gerler, 1991). Students who also struggle with social adjustment or transitions experience additional challenges during this time due to their social maturity still developing and their inability to manage their time and prioritize (Hough, 1995; Mayberry, 2005). There is often a lack of parental supervision and assistance moving into the middle school level which may require additional support from the school (Mayberry, 2005). The students who have difficulty adjusting at the middle school level often continue to be immature and experience academic challenges



throughout their development (Hough, 1995). Students transitioning to middle school need support, and the school counselor is one of the main stakeholders responsible for implementing and supporting the process of students transitioning from elementary to middle school (Mayberry, 2005).

While it is clear middle school students benefit from the presence of school counselors this structure has not always been in place since the formation of middle schools, in general, are a relatively new and evolving concept. The term junior high school was the first attempt to focus on improving the academic performance of middle-grade students (Manning, 2000). The composition moved from four years of high school and eight years of elementary school to include a focus on three levels in the middle, grades seven through nine. During the 20th century, educational reform examined the middle-grade levels and determined while well-intended the junior high school model needed realigning to focus on social and emotional development (Beane, 2001). This realignment led to the creation of what is now referred to as middle school (Alexander, 1995). Research shows that many middle schools today are actually junior high schools for 11-year-olds (Davis, 2008). The research is convoluted in the identification of middle school counselors due to the different types of school compositions a middle-grade counselor may be employed. Often throughout the literature the terms middle school, junior high school, and intermediate school are interchanged without true differentiation. The National Middle School Association (1995) challenges middle schools to ensure students, families, and community stakeholders have an advocate within the school system. The role of the school counselor provides the advocacy and needed support for students at this level.

## **Role Ambiguity and Role Stress**

The historical overview helps to illustrate the progression of the school counseling profession; however, it also demonstrates the understandable lack of role clarity that exists. The historical literature features the role of the PSC as an educator who should focus solely on the goal of improving academic success for all students (Martin, 2002). In addition to the literature, The ASCA national model, the transforming school counseling initiative, and the MetLife professional development module also were created to highlight the academic and career focus of the PSC (The Education Trust West, 2006). In contrast, a school counselor's focus on mental health support within the school is also a very well-researched and a vital component of many PSCs job identities (DeKruyf et al., 2013). The literature suggests the role of the school counselor should include a focus not only on the academic and college and career domains, but it needs to additionally include social-emotional development (Perkins et al., 2010).

Amatea and Clark (2005) interviewed 26 school administrators on their perceived beliefs about the role of the school counselor and consequently came up with four very different definitions. Administrators often do not realize the effect of assigning roles and responsibilities not aligned with the profession, which ultimately limits the school counselors' effectiveness on student outcomes (Bruce & Bridgeland, 2012). Trying to establish a universal set of roles and responsibilities is a multifaceted procedure and has led to additional role ambiguity (Cinotti, 2014). Each state has a different set of roles and responsibilities outlined for the PSC (Hepp, 2015). Having a different set of roles and responsibilities throughout the United States contributes to the inability to create a universal job description or subsequently professional identity (Hepp, 2015).

Administrators and other stakeholders need to have a universal agreement on the roles and responsibilities of the profession.

The evolving role identity of school counselors significantly influences the role ambiguity seen within the profession (Bain, 2012). Additionally, school counselors work with a variety of stakeholders. The stakeholder groups include students, parents, site and district administration, and the community. Each stakeholder group has a different set of needs and expectations of the school counselor, which often conflict and lead to additional role ambiguity and ultimately role stress (Paisley & McMahon, 2001). During graduate school, counselors learned the roles and responsibilities of the profession; therefore, when stakeholders' expectations conflict with the counselors' preconceived beliefs of their role, role stress is imminent (Culbreth et al., 2005).

There is a duality in the role of the PSC among school counselors themselves. Administrators and other stakeholders have varying interpretations of the school counselor's role, but so do the school counselors themselves. School counselors serve both as educational leaders and mental health support providers (DeKruyf et al., 2013). The school counseling literature is divided regarding which identity is more important: the educator or the mental health support provider (Perkins et al., 2010). This dichotomy within the literature is creating role confusion for the school counseling profession as it tries to determine which identity is more aligned with the core values and school site expectations. The identity of the PSC has been minimized due to the divided focus on whether counselors should be educational leaders or mental health support providers. Research suggests PSC should embrace multiple roles if students are to truly benefit from a comprehensive school counseling program (Perkins et al., 2010).

The roles of the school counselor are often in conflict with one another which leads to role stress (Freeman & Coll, 1997). The role ambiguity within the literature is creating role confusion for the school counseling profession. Having a professional identity that is constantly evolving and answering to so many stakeholder groups lead not only to role confusion among stakeholders but also to the school counselors themselves. In addition, there is role incongruence within the profession being placed in the middle of two stakeholder groups with different expectations for how information is handled (Freeman & Coll, 1997). School counselors also must battle other duties as assigned which prevents counselors from adhering to professional mandates and personal values related to roles and responsibilities (Holman et al., 2019).

### **Theoretical Foundations**

This study examines the roles and responsibilities of middle school counselors. This study also aims to study the necessary organizational supports needed to perform the identified roles and responsibilities and to increase positive student outcomes. The study itself is a Delphi study, which differs in the way in which variables are identified. This Delphi study relies on the collective knowledge of a panel of expert middle school counselors through a four-round process. The selection process of the identified experts on the panel is crucial in ensuring the validity of the data collected (Golafshani, 2003). Due to the knowledge and expertise of the expert panel, the responses generated throughout the four-round process create a unique theoretical framework (Habibi et al., 2014). The study does however rely on some theoretical foundations that provide a depth of understanding to the topic and provide a basis for the study to be conducted. The theoretical foundations are: (a) leadership in school counseling, (b) role theory, (c)

organizational role theory, (d) activity theory, (e) system theory, and the (f) counselor supervision model.

### ***Leadership in School Counseling***

Leadership is a critical element to improving student learning and in creating effective schools (Marzano et al., 2005). Leadership is an important element of school counseling. The ASCA's (2019) national model has created a framework outlining leadership as one of the foundational tenets. School counselors recognize the value of leadership skills within the profession and want to be viewed as educational leaders (Berry, 2006); however, many counselors do not implicitly utilize leadership practices (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). Research by Dollarhide et al. (2008) has found that in general, the reason school counselors do not naturally engage in leadership activities is a combination of the lack of preservice training, fear of failure, the unwillingness to take risks, and role ambiguity.

### ***Role Theory***

This study looks at the roles and responsibilities of middle school counselors which are afflicted by role ambiguity, role stress, and role conflict experienced in the school counseling profession. Understanding the evolving role identity, role ambiguity, and varying expectations from a variety of stakeholder groups emphasizes the importance of role theory. The ambiguity of the school counselor's role identity leads to other duties being assigned which prevents counselors from adhering to professional mandates and personal values related to roles and responsibilities (Holman et al., 2019). These roles are not finalized as the school counselor's professional identity continues to shift and

therefore the established roles continue to shift (Turner, 2001). Biddle (1986) explains the role identity directly influences an individual's behavior within the organization.

### ***Organizational Role Theory***

Organizational role theory focuses on the school counselor's ability to accept and navigate their multiple roles within the constraints of the education system (Biddle, 1986). The effective functioning of a role within an organization results from reoccurring behavior (Biddle, 1986). Focusing on the identified roles and responsibilities within an organization, the interaction between these varying roles, and the effect this all has on the organization's goal is the focus of organizational role theory (Katz & Kahn 1966). School counselors assigned to roles aligned with their values and professional training can support the school's organizational goals (Dahir et al., 2010). Utilizing organizational role theory to better understand the work environment of the school counselor and how that work environment directly affects student outcomes is needed within the research (Meyer & Rowan, 2006).

### ***Activity Theory***

Activity theory lends itself to this study as the relationship between the middle school counselors and the desire to increase positive student outcomes is examined in the context of the educational system. The theory helps explain complex systems that involve a variety of stakeholders. The theory as explained by Engeström (1999) examines the relationship between the subject, the desired outcome, and any underlying tensions that either positively or negatively influence each other and the overall process, subsequently creating an activity system. The four major components of activity theory help to define the school counselor's role and subsequently the desired outcome. These components

include: (a) tools, (b) rules, (c) community, and (d) division of labor (Engeström, 1999). The theory acknowledges the four components either work to help or impede the school counselor's ability to increase positive student outcomes.

### ***Systems Theory and Organizational Learning Theory***

There is a need to include systems theory and organizational learning theory in the theoretical foundations, as school sites utilize a systems approach, and are a type of organization in which middle school counselors are employed. Organizational role theory examines the role of the counselor and how that role impacts the organization. Systems theory looks at the school site as a system. Elmore (2004) discusses how pivotal it is for school sites to function as a system instead of individual silos and the need to work organically together in shared work. Senge (1990) discusses how complex systems such as school sites need to also include organizational learning theory, which states organizations will improve when learning has been facilitated across the organization.

### ***School Counselor Supervision Model***

The counselor supervision model takes the work of the middle school counselor and tries to create a system in which to best supervise and provide organizational support. The specific model examines supervision itself, the supervisor's role, and the comprehensive school counseling domain in relation to one another (Luke & Bernard, 2006). The school counseling profession requires clinical supervision during preservice training (CACREP, 2016). Clinical supervision is also recognized as a needed component of counseling after graduation, however, is not a well-known practice of employed school counselors outside of graduate school (Crespi, 2003). The majority of school counselors are not currently receiving clinical supervision once employed (Page et al., 2001). The

counselor supervision model aids to provide a system in which this required clinical supervision can effectively be put in place for school counselors in the field.

### **American School Counselor Association National Model**

The ASCA national model was developed by a team of individuals from theorists to experts in the field that recognized a model was needed to ensure school counselors could achieve success (ASCA, 2019). According to Janson and Stone (2009), the ASCA national model includes underlying components of the comprehensive school counseling model from Gysbers and Henderson (2012), the competency-based model of Johnson and Johnson (2003), and the developmental model of Myrick (2003) in addition to research by The Education Trust (1997). The ASCA national model allows school counselors to be data-driven when making decisions on program implementation and helps more clearly define the role of the school counselor (ASCA, 2019). There are four underlying themes and four components of the ASCA national model.

The four themes that emerge in this framework are: (a) leadership, (b) advocacy, (c) collaboration, and (d) systemic change. Each of these themes provides a vital component to the understanding of the framework itself and the role of the school counselor. Additionally, there are four components to the model: (a) foundation, (b) management, (c) delivery, and (d) accountability. Addressing all four components is essential to understand the framework and the overall charge it instills within the school counseling profession.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundation for this study is centered on the topic of school counseling. Typically, in a qualitative or quantitative study, the topic of school



counseling would be analyzed and variables for the study would be identified utilizing a theoretical framework found within the literature. For example, a study on school counselor burnout might use the five domains of the counselor burnout inventory as variables to interview school counselors. Through the development of the counselor burnout inventory, the variables within the instrument have been shown to have validity. The validity of the instrument and subsequent variables can determine the quality of the study and the impact it has on the body of research (Golafshani, 2003).

For this study, the general theoretical topic is PSC. However, unlike other study types, Delphi studies do not use variables identified from the literature. The Delphi method gathers consensus from a panel of experts on the variables that emerge from the four-round process. Therefore, there is no theoretical framework identified from the literature in Delphi studies, but instead, the selection of the expert panelists provides the validity of the collected data and subsequent variables (Golafshani, 2003). The contribution of the expert panel members creates a unique theoretical framework for each Delphi process, in this case, due to the individual's unique and expert knowledge on the topic of professional school counseling (Habibi et al., 2014; Mohamad et al., 2015). Additional validity is attained by gathering consensus from the panel of experts as well as the systematic process utilized to gather feedback (Golafshani, 2003; Habibi et al., 2014).

### **Organizational Structure of the School Counseling Profession**

The organizational structure of the school counseling profession is an important component to study. A school is a type of organization in which school counselors are employed; however, the structure of each school is complex, varied, has individualized goals, and a multitude of stakeholders (Donaghue, 1996). One aspect of educational

organizations is the systems approach embedded into most schools. Senge (1990) discusses how school sites are complex systems that will improve when learning has been facilitated across the organization. Elmore (2014) discusses how pivotal it is for school sites to function as a system and work organically together in shared work instead of individually. Organizational role theory and systems theory both focus on the school counselor's ability to accept and navigate their multiple roles within the constraints of the education system (Biddle, 1986). Organizational role theory focuses on the identified roles and responsibilities within an organization, the interaction between these varying roles, and the effect this all has on the organization's goal (Katz & Kahn 1966).

The unique way school counselors are arranged within their organizations contributes to role ambiguity, role conflict, lack of clinical supervision, and work overload (Blake, 2020). The school counselor's job setting varies greatly depending on the state, the district, or the individual school site. The requirements to be employed as a school counselor also varies throughout the United States. ASCA (2019) encourages the utilization of CSCP. The number of schools implementing CSCP is unclear, and therefore counselors may find themselves employed at a site without any counseling program structure or support. Role identity can only be done in the context of the organization. The role of a PSC directly impacts the organization, and the structure of the organization directly impacts the role of the school counselor. Meyer and Rowan (2006) state more research is needed to understand the organizations in which school counselors work and how that work environment directly affects student outcomes. Several organizational factors have been identified as having an impact on the work of school counselors, but

further research is needed to better understand the relationship between organizational factors and the school counselor's success.

### **Organizational Factors Influencing School Counseling**

Organizational factors include: (a) caseload size, (b) consultation, (c) educational training, and (d) clear and consistent supervision. Organizational support has shown to be challenging for the school counseling profession (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). Research indicates lack of available organizational support impacts job stress (Dang, 2021). Job stress will only occur when the organizational demands cannot be ignored without fear of fallout or when the PSC doubts the demands can be fulfilled adequately (S. J. Sears & Navin, 2001). Throughout the literature, several organizational factors greatly impact the job stress of PSC including role ambiguity, role conflict, and work overload (S. J. Sears & Navin, 2001). Additional areas of concern include lack of (a) available time, (b) high caseloads, (c) assignment of non-counseling duties, (d) educational training, and (e) lack of supervision. Examining each of these areas allows for a better understanding of how organizational factors directly impact the school counselor and the impact that may have on their success.

#### **High Caseload**

The school counselor navigates many demands, one of which is the exceeding high caseloads often experienced in K-12 schools throughout the United States. School counselors lack the available time to develop rich relationships with all students, due to these exceeding high caseloads (Paisley & McMahon, 2001; Radford et al., 2016). According to ASCA, the recommended caseload for school counselors is 250:1 (ASCA, 2015b). The caseloads across the United States have been trending downward

but are still well above the recommended 250:1 ratio. In California, the average school counselor-to-student ratio is 626:1 (Population Reference Bureau, 2021). School counselors navigating caseloads above a 400:1 counselor-to-student ratio have been found to have increased emotional exhaustion (Bardhoshi et al., 2014).

McCarthy et al. (2010) determined school counselors felt having large caseloads was one of the most frustrating aspects of the school counseling profession. When caseloads are exceedingly high, school counselors are unable to meet the needs of all students. The study found some evidence indicating high caseloads may negatively impact the success of the PSC (McCarthy et al., 2010). More research is needed to determine the amount of impact high caseloads have on the school counselor's success, and if a certain threshold exists for how high a caseload can be before it negatively impacts the school counselor. Bidwell (2001) states, however, that focusing only on the fact counselors have high caseloads minimizes the effect the work conditions and organizational structure of the school counseling profession itself has on student outcomes.

### **Appropriate Supervision**

Before becoming a school counselor, one must undergo graduate-level training which requires school counselors to engage in clinical supervision. CACREP (2021) states the most critical element of school counseling training is the field experience which requires supervised internship hours. Research shows supervision is essential in ensuring school counselors are growing personally and professionally (Lambie, 2007). Specifically, supervision improves a school counselor's overall effectiveness, confidence, accountability, and enhances job performance (Wood & Rayle, 2006). However, once

school counselors are employed clinical supervision is not typically experienced (Page et al., 2001). Specifically, in a study by Moyer (2011), 77% of school counselors received zero to one hour of monthly supervision, and 12.4% received two to three hours of monthly supervision. This study clearly shows there is minimal supervision provided regularly to school counselors after graduate school. Some benefits of regular supervision allow school counselors to refine their counseling skills, brainstorm how to deal with challenging scenarios, and consult regarding legal or ethical matters (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Additionally, school counselors who have a clinical supervisor or mentor felt more valued within the profession (Curry & Bickmore, 2012).

The school counseling professional is uniquely structured within the school site, leading to supervision by school site principals or administrators. Therefore, in addition to the lack of clinical supervision provided, school counselors are frequently supervised by administrators who often do not understand the role of the school counselor, or the time required to perform the non-counseling duties (Bardhoshi et al., 2014). Supervision and evaluation by individuals without knowledge of the school counselor's role create role stress. Supervisors often do not have experience working with school counselors yet have been awarded authority and influence to determine the school counselor's role and trajectory within the organization (Blake, 2020). According to Lambie and Williamson (2004) to implement and maintain a CSCP support from administration and specifically one's supervisor is critical. An individual's supervisor at work can directly influence the work experience of the employees they oversee (Leiter et al., 2010). Establishing positive professional relationships, especially with one's supervisor can decrease stress and improve work conditions (McCarthy et al., 2010). Clinical supervision, as well as

supervision by administrators with knowledge of the role of a school counselor, are both organizational factors that impact the overall success of a school counselor once employed at a school site.

### **Role Ambiguity**

Occupational stress brought on by role ambiguity is an organizational factor that negatively impacts the school counseling profession (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011). The lack of identity for the school counseling profession is magnified by role ambiguity that exists from stakeholders within the organization in which school counselors are employed. Role ambiguity can be defined as the absence of clear roles and responsibilities for the PSC. The evolution of the school counseling profession and its changing identity has contributed greatly to the role ambiguity that remains (Bain, 2012). Developing a professional identity free from role ambiguity is an idealized concept for any PSC. Role ambiguity has been discussed throughout the literature as an ongoing frustration for the school counseling profession.

In addition to the role ambiguity experienced by the school counselors themselves, there is role ambiguity in the creation of CSCPs within a school site. Implementing a CSCP without clear guidelines, or established roles create role ambiguity at the site level. Role ambiguity at the site level negatively impacts the school counseling profession and the school counselor's overall effectiveness (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011). The school counselor often has an idea of what is needed to implement a CSCP; however, the assigned tasks by site administration do not align and therefore exacerbates the role ambiguity that is experienced (Culbreth et al., 2005). This ongoing role

ambiguity is both an individual and organizational construct that negatively impacts the school counselor's ability to serve students effectively.

### **Role Conflict**

Similar to role ambiguity, the concept of role conflict is another organizational factor that negatively impacts the school counseling profession. Role conflict occurs when a school counselor attempts to perform multiple roles within the profession that clash with one another (Bryant & Constantine, 2006). School counselors are accountable to a variety of stakeholder groups including students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members. When the stakeholder groups have different needs or expectations for the school counselor, role conflict and role stress ensue (Culbreth et al., 2005). It is extremely challenging for school counselors to deal with competing demands and the need to prioritize stakeholder groups to determine the best course of action moving forward (Cervoni & DeLucia-Waack, 2011; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Additionally, role conflict may occur when the PSC have idealized ideas of their role but the actual job requirements or assigned tasks do not align (Falls & Nichter, 2007). These examples of role conflict are a major organizational factor contributing to a negative work environment in the school counseling profession.

### **Assigning Non-Counseling Duties**

When role ambiguity and role conflict exist, the tendency to take on non-counseling duties is not far behind. ASCA (2019) outlined inappropriate duties of the PSC which include test administration, discipline, administrative tasks, scheduling, and student supervision. School counselors performing non-counseling duties add to the role ambiguity of the profession as well as diminish the role of the school counselor and the

impact school counselors can have within the organization (Falls & Nichter, 2007). These non-counseling duties prevent school counselors from spending time in direct support of students. Additionally, school counselors were found to have a greater level of commitment and job satisfaction when performing appropriate counseling duties (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006).

Moyer (2011) found the more time school counselors spent on non-counseling duties the higher the likelihood they would experience exhaustion, feel incompetent, or attribute working in a negative environment. Spending time on non-counseling duties increased frustration within the school counseling profession and decreased overall job satisfaction (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). It is common for school counselors to spend a majority of their time engaged in non-counseling duties. Specifically, Moyer (2011) conducted a study showing that 74% of school counselors in the study spent more than five hours a week on non-counseling duties and more than 50% spent more than 10 hours a week on non-counseling duties. The time spent on non-counseling duties is an organizational factor that impacts the ability of the school counselor to serve students effectively.

### **Job Demands and Work Overload**

The job demands of PSC are not only ambiguous but are increasing. Lambie and Williamson (2004) discussed the rising demands of school counselors and how those rising demands have led to feelings of overwhelm and a sense of exhaustion. The unique way school counselors are arranged within their organizations contributes to work overload (Blake, 2020). The number of counseling duties that conflict with one another is one factor of work overload (Freeman & Coll, 1994). Another factor is the inability of



school counselors to navigate the overabundance of required duties assigned to them (Bryant & Constantine, 2006). Lastly, the simple act of performing the non-counseling duties themselves is a major contributor to work overload (Kendrick et al., 1994). The reason ASCA had established roles and responsibilities that were inappropriate for school counselors was to reduce the extraneous demands being placed on the profession and allow for more time in direct service of students.

Kolodinsky et al. (2009) conducted a study indicating school counselors were most frustrated by the work overload within the profession. Work overload is defined as more work than school counselors have the time or resources to complete (Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). A study by Lee and Ashforth (1996) indicated work overload and time pressure frequently lead to the experience of emotional exhaustion and often burnout. Furthermore, Ilies et al. (2010) stated work overload leads to daily stress and an overall decrease in employee wellbeing. It is unclear why the school counseling profession experiences work overload, whether it is due to high caseloads, role ambiguity, or non-counseling duties being assigned; however, what is clear is the rising demands placed on school counselors decrease their effectiveness and time spent in direct service of students.

### **Educational Training**

Once school counselors graduate and are employed at a school site it is often their individual responsibility to pursue additional educational training opportunities. ASCA (2019) recognizes the importance of continued educational training as it allows school counselors to strengthen their knowledge and skills in the field of school counseling. Educational training related specifically to the school counseling profession increased job satisfaction and improved the school counselor's ability to serve students (Kirk-Brown &

Wallace, 2004). Educational training, while valuable, is not readily available or required for school counselors (Lowel et al., 2018). Dahir et al. (2009) reported a limited number of professional development opportunities available to school counselors. School counselors not only have to have an individualized desire to continue their educational training, but also locate, and pay for professional development opportunities. Having more professional development opportunities and organizations that require school counselors to continue educational training is an organizational factor that needs further explored as a mitigating factor to school counselors' success.

### **Current Research on Organizational Factors and Decreased Student Outcomes**

School counselors are employed throughout the United States in K-12 schools with varying job requirements, unique structures, and differing hierarchical arrangements. Determining what makes some school counselors effective while others struggle is an important question within the literature. While many studies examined the school counselor's personality, coping strategies, and individual demographics, Maslach and Leiter (1997) stated the research needs to focus on organizational variables and the work environment of the PSC. Without a full understanding of the work environment and organizational variables impacting the school counseling profession, the ability to determine how to improve student outcomes remains evasive.

The literature has identified several organizational factors that impact the school counseling profession including role ambiguity, role conflict, and work overload (Blake, 2020; Fye et al., 2020). Additionally, school counselors experiencing confusion regarding their role identity or professional competencies indicate diminished effectiveness (Bardhoshi et al., 2014; Lieberman, 2004; Moyer, 2011). The impact organizational

factors have on student outcomes is absent from the research; instead, the literature focuses on the impact organizational factors have on job stress and ultimately burnout (Dang, 2021; Fye et al., 2020; Holman et al., 2019; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Wilkerson & Bellini, 2006). Dang (2021) states when organizational support is missing there is an increase in job-related stress. A study by Pierson-Hubeny and Archambault (1987) indicated school counselors scored higher than school psychologists, teachers, reading specialists, and social workers in areas of role ambiguity and conflict and second highest in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment scores.

Researchers have determined organizational factors are important indicators of burnout and account for the greatest amount of variance within the literature (Lee et al., 2003). The literature examines several organizational factors distinctive to the school counseling profession (Blake, 2020). Burnout symptoms include irritability, headaches, sleep challenges, lower energy, job dissatisfaction, feeling hopeless, and depersonalization (Moyer, 2011). These symptoms of burnout negatively impact the role of a PSC and their ability to provide support to the students they serve. The research has indicated school counselors experiencing burnout may inadvertently cause harm due to their lack of empathy or presence (Florio, 2010). While the potential to cause inadvertent harm is significant, the research does not go on to explain the direct effect these organizational factors have on student outcomes.

School counselors need to mitigate against burnout and prevent inadvertent harm by utilizing organizational support. Perceived organizational support provides school counselors with protective factors against emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and

personal accomplishment (Lambie, 2002). Perceived organizational support can be defined as a school counselor's perception of their value to the organization, assistance in dealing with stressful scenarios, and support in handling everyday work requirements (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Organizational support is essential in mitigating school counselor stress and ultimately burnout. One of the key findings shows a positive supervisor relationship is key to alleviating work overload and emotional exhaustion (Bakker et al., 2005). Additionally, Rayle (2006) found that if school counselors believe they are valued by the organization there was an increase in job satisfaction and a reduction in job stress. The research fails to specifically connect organizational factors to school counselor success. The goal of this study is to examine the agreed-upon roles and responsibilities of a middle school counselor and determine what organizational supports are needed to ensure the middle school counselor is successful.

### **Summary**

In summary, the PSC is responsible for academic, college and career, and social-emotional development (Reiner et al., 2009). Embracing multiple roles is a positive shift in getting students what they need, however, it leaves some confusion regarding the specific job responsibilities of the school counselor. The lack of organizational support available to school counselors contributes to this role conflict and stems from the unique way in which the profession is positioned within the school (Blake, 2020). School counselors are employed by educational leaders untrained or unfamiliar with counseling. The research links the lack of organizational support to school counselor job satisfaction and ultimately burnout, however, it does not link this lack of organizational support to student outcomes. This study aims to clearly identify the role and responsibilities of the

middle school counselor and the organizational support necessary to improve student outcomes in all three domains.

## CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

### **Overview**

Chapter III addresses the methodology for the study. This chapter includes a purpose statement, outlines the four research questions, and explains the research design. Additionally, this chapter discusses the population, target population, and the specific sample used in this study. The chapter also discusses the needed instruments, the data collection, and data analysis procedures to ensure the study could be replicated. This chapter concludes with a description of the study's limitations and a summary of the overall chapter.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Delphi study is to identify, from the perspective of expert counselors, the roles that middle school counselors perform during their workday, to rate the importance of the roles identified, and to identify organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified. Additionally, this study seeks to gain feedback from expert middle school counselors on how to best align the necessary organizational supports with the identified most important roles.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What roles do expert counselors identify that middle school counselors perform during their workday?
2. How do expert middle school counselors rate the importance of the roles identified in Research Question 1?

3. What organizational supports do expert counselors identify that must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in Research Question 2?
4. What do expert middle school counselors perceive is essential to effectively align the necessary organizational supports with the roles identified as important?

### **Research Design**

The Delphi method was utilized for this study, which provides a systematic process of gathering, consolidating, and evaluating expert opinion. The Delphi approach utilizes a systematic electronic survey method that begins by asking participants an open-ended research question, which for this study was asking expert counselors to identify the roles a middle school counselor would perform during their workday. Then the Delphi method required the researcher to compile the responses and send out a second survey asking participants to rate the level of importance of each identified. Once the responses were received, the researcher calculated the mean scores of the responses to identify the top six roles identified by respondents. The researcher then sent a third-round survey out asking participants to identify what organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in the previous survey. The final survey round was an opportunity for the expert panel to review the organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to perform the most important roles that were identified and offer suggestions on alignment.

The Delphi method is used to gather expert opinions on complex topics to provide consensus and aid in the development, planning, and implementation of necessary supports (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The Delphi method gathers data through a multi-round survey process, with each subsequent survey further clarifying the data. The Delphi process provided an opportunity through four surveys to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The purpose of this study was to gather a consensus from expert middle school counselors to determine the role and subsequently the organizational support necessary to support those roles in an effective comprehensive middle school counseling program.

The Delphi method was selected for this study to first establish consensus among experts and then rate and apply organizational support to the identified roles of the middle school counselor. The need for a population and sample of expert middle school counselors was also a consideration for the Delphi method. A strong benefit of using the Delphi process is the anonymity of respondents to one another which reduces the likelihood of certain respondents influencing one another (Yousuf, 2007). The multiple rounds allow respondents to reflect and provide relevant real-time feedback that develops more after reviewing other participants' responses (Yousuf, 2007).

### **Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) provide a framework stating a population is a group of people, objects, or events that when analyzed have generalizable results and from which a smaller subset or sample can be derived. The population for this study was all middle school counselors in the state of California. The term middle school is used interchangeably with intermediate school or junior high school, and it is important to note



not all middle schools throughout California have the same grade levels. During the 2018 to 2019 school year, there were approximately 10,461 school counselors employed in California (CDE, 2019).

### **Sampling Frame**

According to Taherdoost (2016), “A sampling frame is a list of the actual cases from which the sample will be drawn” (p. 20). The sampling frame for a research study is the collective group for which the study's data and findings can be generalized.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the target population is a chosen subset of the overall population with characteristics that focus the study on certain delimiting variables that can then be generalized to the population at large. The sampling frame is the entire subset of the population being studied and will be utilized to make inferences about the overall population. The sampling frame in this study is expert middle school counselors employed in California. There are three characteristics, or delimiting variables, being used to determine a middle school counselor as an expert. The delimiting variables for this sampling frame include:

- Currently employed as a middle school counselor in California
- Three or more years of experience in a middle school counseling position
- Recommendation of their principal as an expert middle school counselor
- Graduated from a master’s program certified by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and related educational programs

Of the 10,461 school counselors in California, about 40%, or 4,185, are middle school counselors. Of these 4185 middle school counselors, it is estimated that about 30%, or

1,256, meet the selection criteria for this study. The target population for this study is the 1,256 California middle school counselors that meet the selection criteria.

### **Sample**

A sample is a representative subset of the target population, which the researcher will use to collect data (McMillan & Schmacher, 2010). Studying every member of a large population is impractical, leading to the necessity to study a subset, or sample of the population (Patton, 2015). The Delphi method requires the selection of experts within the sample to be the first and most critical step of the process (Yousuf, 2007). A Delphi study lends itself to a purposeful sample. Purposeful sampling is the selection of participants from the overall population who have established expertise on the topic of study (McMillan & Schmacher, 2010). The study also utilized criterion-based sampling, which allows the selection of participants based on specific selection criteria (Patton, 2015). The sample in this study includes 13 purposefully chosen expert middle school counselors from across California who meet specific inclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria included:

- Currently employed middle school counselor in California
- Three or more years of experience in a middle school counseling position
- Recommendation of their principal as an expert middle school counselor
- Graduated from a master's program certified by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and related educational programs

### **Sample Selection Process**

1. Potential participants are identified by utilizing the California School Counseling Association database.

2. Potential participants who met the criteria were contacted via email (see Appendix B).
3. Those who responded were contacted via email with the demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C).
4. Of the individuals who met the criteria, 13 were selected to participate in the study.
5. Those who responded and met the demographic criteria were sent the informed consent material (see Appendix D and E).
6. Surveys were administered.

### **Instrumentation**

This Delphi study utilized Survey Monkey as an online survey tool and email to communicate with the identified sample of experts. This study utilized four rounds of surveys to have expert middle school counselors identify the roles a middle school counselor performs during their workday duties. The second survey asked participants to rate the level of importance of each identified role. The third survey asked participants to identify what organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in the previous survey. The fourth and final survey was an opportunity to review the organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to perform the most important roles that were identified and offer suggestions.

#### **Round 1**

The survey instrument used in Round 1 asked expert middle school counselors the following open-ended question: *What roles do you perform during your workday as a*

*middle school counselor?* (see Appendix F). The responses to Research Question 1 were coded and placed into a list that was used in Round 2.

## **Round 2**

The survey instrument used in Round 2 provided the list of roles middle school counselors perform in their workday duties, which were identified in Round 1. The survey instrument asked the participants to rate the importance of each identified role utilizing a Likert scale (see Appendix G). The ranges on the Likert scale were be: 6-*Very Important*, 5-*Important*, 4-*Slightly Important*, 3-*Slightly Unimportant*, 2-*Unimportant*, and 1-*Very Unimportant*.

## **Round 3**

The survey instrument used in Round 3 took the six most important roles identified and asked participants a second open-ended question (see Appendix H): *What organizational supports do you identify that must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in Research Question 2?*

## **Round 4**

The survey instrument used in Round 4 provided the participants the coded responses from Round 3 (see Appendix I) and asked: *What is essential to effectively align the necessary organizational supports with the roles identified as important?*

## **Reliability**

Reliability means the study can be replicated and identical or at least very similar results would be expected when utilizing a similar research procedure (Briggs et al., 2012). The Delphi method uses a panel of experts to gather consensus, which will

produce consistent results. A panel of 13 randomly selected expert middle school counselors across the state of California utilized for this study will produce the same results as another group of randomly selected expert middle school counselors across the state of California, when following the same research method and procedure. To ensure the reliability of the study's instrument, a field test was conducted before administering the survey instrument to the participants.

### **Field Test**

To confirm the reliability of the survey instrument, it underwent a field test. Two expert middle school counselors within the state of California who meet the selection criteria, but who will not participate in the actual study, were selected and field tested the survey instrument. The field test required participants to respond to all four rounds of the survey and provide feedback on the clarity of the questions, the directions provided, and the overall structure of the instrument.

The first-round survey was an open-ended question asking: *What roles do you do as a middle school counselor?* The field participants responded to the question and additionally provided feedback on the clarity of the question, directions provided, and instrument structure. The second-round survey took the responses from Round 1 and utilized a six-point Likert scale to ask field test participants to rate the importance of the roles. Field test participants provided feedback on the clarity of the question, directions provided, and instrument structure. The third survey round required the field test participants to respond to the question: *What organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in the previous round survey?* After responding to the question, field test

participants provided feedback on the clarity of the question, directions provided, and instrument structure. The final survey round provided an opportunity to review the organizational supports identified and respond with any suggestions and also provided additional feedback regarding the clarity of the question, directions provided, and instrument structure. Based on feedback from the field test participants, the instrument structure, wording of the questions, and directions provided can be adjusted to ensure reliability.

### **Validity**

A crucial component of any study is ensuring the validity of an instrument. Validity is when the instrument accurately gathers and evaluates the data producing results that are an accurate depiction of what the study is asking (Golafshani, 2003). The Delphi method seeks to obtain consensus from a panel of experts and provides the ability for controlled individualized feedback not influenced by groupthink, the Delphi approach alone helps to ensure validity (Habibi et al., 2014).

### **Data Collection**

No data was be collected for this study until permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University of Massachusetts Global Institutional Review Board (see Appendix J) and certification of completion issued by the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (see Appendix K). The first step in this study was identifying a panel of expert middle school counselors who meet the study criteria to be recognized as an expert. Once the panel of potential experts had been established, potential participants sorted into geographical locations to ensure representation from northern, central, and southern California. Participants were randomly selected and contacted through email to

inquire about participating in a four-round Delphi study. Participation in the study was voluntary, and the surveys will be completed anonymously. Each round of the study was administered through email, and the electronic survey platform is Survey Monkey due to ease of use and access.

It should be noted that the Delphi process is dependent upon the collective responses of the expert group and not dependent upon any one respondent. All responses were anonymous and are collated into collective groups and summaries for use in subsequent rounds. It is possible that some attrition of participants may occur over the course of the Delphi process. However, while attrition may be noted as a limitation to the study, it does not negate the collective nature of the responses (Golafshani, 2003).

### **Round 1**

The Round 1 survey was an open-ended question that was emailed to participants utilizing Survey Monkey. The survey question asked: *What roles do you perform during your workday as a middle school counselor?*

### **Round 2**

The Round 2 survey was contained a compiled a list of responses from Round 1 and place each identified middle school counselor role on a six-point Likert scale. The ranges on the Likert scale were a continuum from 1-*Very Unimportant* to 6-*Very Important*. The Round 2 survey was emailed to participants utilizing Survey Monkey. This round sought to find consensus among the expert panel regarding the important roles of a middle school counselor. The panelist had one week to respond to the survey.

### **Round 3**

The Round 3 survey took the six most important roles identified by the expert panel based on calculating and comparing mean scores. These top six roles were emailed back to participants asking a second open-ended question. The question for this round was: *What organizational supports do you identify that must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in Research Question 2?* Participants had one week to complete the survey once it was emailed to participants through Survey Monkey. Responses were compiled and coded to present back to participants.

### **Round 4**

The Round 4 survey was an opportunity for the panel of experts to review the coded responses from Round 3 and provide any suggestions to effectively align the necessary organizational supports with the roles identified as most important. This open-ended survey requesting feedback was emailed through Survey Monkey to participants who had one week to respond with feedback.

### **Data Analysis**

This Delphi study was comprised of four rounds of surveys that were administered using Survey Monkey. The panel of expert middle school counselors responded to each survey and the data was analyzed after each round, based on specific analysis descriptions.

### **Round 1**

The Round 1 survey was an open-ended question that was emailed to participants utilizing Survey Monkey. The survey question asked: *What roles do you perform during*



*your workday as a middle school counselor?* The data was gathered directly from the participants' responses, coded, and grouped to highlight all the roles the expert middle school counselors identified were done during their workday. The coded responses were utilized in the Round 2 survey.

## **Round 2**

The Round 2 survey compiled a list of responses from Round 1 and placed each identified middle school counselor role on a six-point Likert scale. The six-point Likert scale was labeled: 6-*Very Important*, 5-*Important*, 4-*Slightly Important*, 3-*Slightly Unimportant*, 2-*Unimportant*, and 1-*Very Unimportant*. This round sought to find consensus among the expert panel regarding the important roles of a middle school counselor, the top six roles were identified by calculating and comparing the mean scores of each rating. The top six roles were utilized to compose the Round 3 survey.

## **Round 3**

The Round 3 survey took the six most important roles identified by the expert panel based on calculating and comparing mean scores. For each of the six identified roles, the following open-ended question was asked of the participants: *What organizational supports do you identify that must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in Research Question 2?* The responses were coded and compiled to share results with the panel of experts in a final Round 4 survey.

## **Round 4**

The Round 4 survey was an opportunity for the panel of experts to review the coded responses from Round 3 and provide any suggestions to effectively align the necessary organizational supports with the roles identified as most important.

### **Limitations**

Study limitations are simply the inability to control all factors (Patton, 2015). The choice to use a Delphi method has a variety of limitations (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The Delphi study utilized a panel of experts and while selection criteria were applied the knowledge and expertise of each panel member was an approximation and may vary across participants. The researcher currently works as a school counselor which may present as bias. The instrument did undergo a field test; however, it was participant-generated. In addition, this study was limited to middle school counselors, therefore may not be generalizable to all school counselors. It is important to note the middle school level is not clearly defined and has variance as to what grade levels are included, the number of counselors and other staff employed at a site, as well as different demographics within each individualized school and district throughout the state of California. The study criteria requested site principals verify the middle school counselor met the criteria of an expert, however, site principals may not be clear on what an expert counselor is and there is subjectivity in each individual site principal's evaluation on the counselor's expertise. Finally, in a three or four round Delphi process some attrition of participants may occur which creates an impact on the final collective product.

## Summary

This chapter was a compilation of how the study was designed and the systematic implementation plan. The chapter began with an overview, a review of the purpose statement, and a clear outline of the research questions. The chapter described the Delphi method and the four survey rounds being utilized for this study. The chapter summarized the generalized population of interest and then drilled down to the target population and specifically the study sample. The process for sample selection was reviewed and a detailed overview of the instrumentation was discussed. The instrument used in a Delphi study is participant-generated, however, this chapter discussed the reliability, validity, and the field test utilized in this study. The chapter specifically outlined the process for data collection and analysis after each survey round. Finally, this chapter discussed the study's limitations and gave a general summary of what was discussed.

The following chapter, Chapter IV, will review the results of data collection and analysis and present the findings. In Chapter V, a more complete summary of the results will be presented including implications, generalized conclusions, and recommendations for future studies.

## CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

This Delphi study sought to identify the most important roles and responsibilities of middle school counselors. Furthermore, once the most important roles and responsibilities were determined the study sought to identify the organizational supports needed to ensure middle school counselors could positively influence student outcomes. Thirteen expert middle school counselors from school districts across California participated in four rounds of surveys designed to build consensus on the research topic. Chapter IV of this study provides a thorough summary of the data collected and its findings.

### **Overview**

Chapter IV addresses the research, data collection, and findings. This chapter begins with a review of the study's purpose statement and four research questions. It then goes on to discuss the research methodology and data collection procedures. The population and target population are explained, followed by a breakdown of the sample criteria. The sample for this study was delimited to expert middle school counselors in California. The specific sample criterion used to qualify as an expert for the purposes of this study is delineated in this chapter. Additionally, a presentation and analysis of the data collected is presented. Chapter IV concludes with a summary in preparation for further discussing conclusions and unexpected findings in Chapter V.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Delphi study is to identify, from the perspective of expert counselors, the roles that middle school counselors perform during their workday, to rate the importance of the roles identified, and to identify organizational supports necessary

for middle school counselors to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified. Additionally, this study seeks to gain feedback from expert middle school counselors on how to best align the necessary organizational supports with the identified most important roles.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What roles do expert counselors identify that middle school counselors perform during their workday?
2. How do expert middle school counselors rate the importance of the roles identified in Research Question 1?
3. What organizational supports do expert counselors identify that must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in Research Question 2?
4. What do expert middle school counselors perceive is essential to effectively align the necessary organizational supports with the roles identified as important?

### **Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) provide a framework stating a population is a group of people, objects, or events that when analyzed have generalizable results and from which a smaller subset or sample can be derived. The population for this study was all middle school counselors in the state of California. The term middle school is used interchangeably with intermediate school or junior high school, and it is important to note not all middle schools throughout California have the same grade levels. During the

2018-2019 school year, there were approximately 10,461 school counselors employed in California (CDE, 2019).

### **Target Population**

According to Taherdoost (2016), "A sampling frame is a list of the actual cases from which the sample will be drawn" (p. 20). The sampling frame for a research study is the collective group for which the study's data and findings can be generalized.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the target population is a chosen subset of the overall population with characteristics that focus the study on certain delimiting variables that can then be generalized to the population at large. The sampling frame is the entire subset of the population being studied and will be utilized to make inferences about the overall population. The sampling frame in this study is expert middle school counselors employed in California. There are three characteristics, or delimiting variables, being used to determine a middle school counselor as an expert. The delimiting variables for this sampling frame include:

- Currently employed as a middle school counselor in California
- Three or more years of experience in a middle school counseling position
- Recommendation of their principal as an expert middle school counselor
- Graduated from a master's program certified by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and related educational programs

Of the 10,461 school counselors in California, about 40%, or 4,185, are middle school counselors. Of these 4185 middle school counselors, it is estimated that about 30%, or 1,256, meet the selection criteria for this study. The target population for this study is the 1,256 California middle school counselors that meet the selection criteria.

## **Sample**

A sample is a representative subset of the target population, which will be used to collect data (McMillan & Schmacher, 2010). Studying every member of a large population is impractical, leading to the necessity to study a subset, or sample of the population (Patton, 2015). The Delphi method requires the selection of experts within the sample to be the first and most critical step of the process (Yousuf, 2007). A Delphi study lends itself to a purposeful sample. Purposeful sampling is the selection of participants from the overall population who have established expertise on the topic of study (McMillan & Schmacher, 2010). The study also utilized criterion-based sampling which allows the selection of participants based on specific selection criteria (Patton, 2015). The sample in this study includes 13 purposefully chosen expert middle school counselors from across California who meet specific inclusion criteria. The following criteria needed to be met by the expert middle school counselors to be included in the sample:

- Currently employed as a middle school counselor in California
- Three or more years of experience in a middle school counseling position
- Recommendation of their principal as an expert middle school counselor.
- Graduated from a master's program certified by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and related educational programs

## **Presentation and Analysis of Data**

### **Delphi Round 1**

The first open-ended survey question was emailed to the panel of experts by way of the online survey company Survey Monkey. Responses to the first question were

compiled and maintained in the secure Survey Monkey cloud-based computing server. The following statement was provided to clarify what was meant by the term “role.” For the purposes of this study, roles can be defined as tasks, responsibilities, or daily job requirements of a middle school counselor.

***Delphi Round 1, Research Question 1***

The first survey question asked *What roles do you perform during your workday as a middle school counselor?* All 13 expert middle school counselors responded to the question. There were 53 individual responses that were then coded and categorized into 10 overarching categories. See Table 1 for identified roles middle school counselors perform during their workday.

**Table 1**

*Identified Roles Middle School Counselors Perform During Their Workday*

Role	Identified Roles
Role 1	Academic Counseling
Role 2	Social Emotional Counseling
Role 3	College and Career Counseling
Role 4	Supervision Tasks
Role 5	Registration Tasks
Role 6	Attendance and Discipline Tasks
Role 7	Member of School Site Team
Role 8	Administrative Tasks
Role 9	Educational Tasks
Role 10	Coordination Tasks

*Note.* Total respondents = 13.

**Delphi Round 2**

Based upon the first-round survey instrument, the 10 identified roles that the expert middle school counselors stated they perform during their workday were placed on a Likert scale style survey. In the second round, the expert middle school counselors were



asked to rank the importance of each identified role from the first survey. The rankings on the Likert scale were: 6-*Very Important*, 5-*Important*, 4-*Slightly Important*, 3-*Slightly Unimportant*, 2-*Unimportant*, and 1-*Very Unimportant*. The survey was emailed to expert panelists through the Survey Monkey platform.

Expert middle school counselors answered the Round 2 Likert scale survey by rating each of the 10 identified roles based on level of importance. The mean scores were calculated for each identified role and a ranking was provided. The range of rankings for the suggested roles ranged from mean scores of 1.54 to 5.92. See Table 2 for each identified role and mean score.

**Table 2**

*Identified Roles and Mean Scores*

Identified Roles	Mean Scores
Academic Counseling	5.85
Social Emotional Counseling	5.92
College and Career Counseling	5.15
Supervision Tasks	2.08
Registration Tasks	4.00
Attendance and Discipline Tasks	3.85
Member of School Site Team	5.15
Administrative Tasks	1.77
Educational Tasks	4.54
Coordination Tasks	1.54

*Note.* Total respondents = 13.

The most important role for middle school counselors to perform according to our expert panel was Social-Emotional Counseling. Social-Emotional Counseling was defined by our panel to include:

- Suicide risk assessment
- Behavioral threat assessments

- Creating and maintaining safety plans
- Connecting to on and off-campus mental health support and resources
- Conducting check-in and check-outs with students
- Coordinating with off-site therapists
- Facilitating small group counseling
- Home visits
- Short-term individual counseling

The mean score for this identified role was 5.92. There were 13 total respondents and 12 of the 13 rated this role as 6-*Very Important*, with only 1 panelist rating the role as 5-*Important*, and no panel members rated this role as 4-*Slightly Important*, 3-*Slightly Unimportant*, 2-*Unimportant*, or 1-*Very Unimportant*. This role was clearly identified as a very important role middle school counselors perform. See Table 3 for the ratings for Social-Emotional Counseling.

**Table 3**

*Social-Emotional Counseling*

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Very Important	12	92.30%
Important	1	0.08%
Slightly Important	0	0.00%
Slightly Unimportant	0	0.00%
Unimportant	0	0.00%
Very Unimportant	0	0.00%

*Note:* Total respondents = 13; Mean score = 5.92.

The next most important role for middle school counselors to perform according to our expert panel was Academic Counseling. Academic Counseling was defined by our panel to include:

- Monitoring grades
- Setting academic goals
- Completing individualized academic plans
- Tracking student academic progress
- Monitoring if students are academically on track or at risk
- Collaborating with teachers on academic progress
- Writing letters of recommendations
- Helping connect students to scholarship opportunities

The mean score for this identified role was 5.85. There were 13 total respondents and 12 of the 13 rated this role as 6-*Very Important*, with only 1 panelist rating the role as 4-*Slightly Important*, and no panel members rated this role as 5-*Important*, 4-*Slightly Unimportant*, 2-*Unimportant*, or 1-*Very Unimportant*. This role was clearly identified as a very important role middle school counselors perform. See Table 4 for the ratings for Academic Counseling.

**Table 4**

*Academic Counseling*

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Very Important	12	92.30%
Important	0	0.00%
Slightly Important	1	0.08%
Slightly Unimportant	0	0.00%
Unimportant	0	0.00%
Very Unimportant	0	0.00%

*Note.* Total respondents = 13; Mean score = 5.85.

The next role rated as most important for middle school counselors was a tie between the role of college and career counseling and being a member of school site

teams. The mean score for these two strategies was 5.15. The role of College and Career Counseling includes: (a) coordinating tasks for college and career exploration through in-class lessons, (b) individual or group counseling, (c) through outreach events like college and career fairs. The role of College and Career Counseling had seven panel members rate the role as 6-*Very Important*, three panel members rate the role as 5-*Important*, one panel members rate the role as 4-*Slightly Important*, two panel members rate the role as 3-*Slightly Unimportant*, and no panel members rated the role as 2-*Unimportant*, or 1-*Very Unimportant*. See Table 5 for the ratings for the role of College and Career Counseling.

**Table 5**

*College and Career Counseling*

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Very Important	7	53.85%
Important	3	23.08%
Slightly Important	1	0.08%
Slightly Unimportant	2	15.84%
Unimportant	0	0.00%
Very Unimportant	0	0.00%

*Note.* Total respondents = 13; Mean score = 5.15.

The role of middle school counselors serving as a member of school site teams was also scored with a mean score of 5.15. This role includes school counselors serving on teams such as:

- Student study teams (SST)
- Section 504 meetings
- Individualized education plan (IEP) meetings
- Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) site teams
- Positive behavior intervention and support (PBIS) teams

- Intervention teams
- School site safety team
- School climate teams such as no place for hate
- The school crisis team

The role of middle school counselor serving on school sites teams had seven panel members rate the role as *6-Very Important*, three panel members rate the role as *5-Important*, two panel members rate the role as *4-Slightly Important*, one panel member rated the role as *2-Unimportant*, and no panel members rated the role as *3-Slightly Unimportant*, or *1-Very Unimportant*. See Table 6 for the ratings for the role of middle school counselors serving on school site teams.

**Table 6**

*Member of School Site Teams*

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Very Important	7	53.85%
Important	3	23.08%
Slightly Important	2	15.84%
Slightly Unimportant	0	0.00%
Unimportant	1	0.08%
Very Unimportant	0	0.00%

*Note.* Total respondents = 13; Mean score = 5.15.

Another important role for middle school counselors to perform is the role of Educational Tasks. Educational Tasks include: (a) conducting classroom lessons, (b) parent nights, or (c) other events to educate students and families on various topics from academic guidance to behavior and social-emotional resources and support. The mean score for this role was 4.54. The role of middle school counselors performing educational tasks had 4 panel members rate the role as *6-Very Important*, three panel members rate

the role as *5-Important*, three panel members rate the role as *4-Slightly Important*, two panel members rate the role as *3-Slightly Unimportant*, one panel member rated the role *2-Unimportant*, and no panel members rated the role as *1-Very Unimportant*. See Table 7 for the ratings for the role of middle school counselors performing Educational Tasks.

**Table 7**

*Educational Tasks*

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Very Important	4	30.77%
Important	3	23.08%
Slightly Important	3	23.08%
Slightly Unimportant	2	15.84%
Unimportant	1	0.08%
Very Unimportant	0	0.00%

*Note.* Total respondents = 13; Mean score = 4.54.

The importance of middle school counselors performing tasks related to registration was given a mean score of 4.00. Registration tasks include: (a) enrolling new and continuing students, (b) creating schedules, (c) making schedule changes, (d) registering students from elementary school sites entering middle school, and (e) assisting in registering middle school students as they move to high school. The role of middle school counselors performing registration tasks had three panel members rate the role as *6-Very Important*, four panel members rate the role as *5-Important*, one panel members rate the role as *4-Slightly Important*, one panel members rate the role as *3-Slightly Unimportant*, three panel member rated the role *2-Unimportant*, and one panel member rate the role as *1-Very Unimportant*. See Table 8 for the ratings for the role of middle school counselors performing registration tasks.

**Table 8**

*Registration Tasks*

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Very Important	3	23.08%
Important	4	30.77%
Slightly Important	1	0.08%
Slightly Unimportant	1	0.08%
Unimportant	3	23.08%
Very Unimportant	1	0.08%

*Note.* Total respondents = 13; Mean score = 4.00.

Middle school counselors are often involved in Attendance and Discipline

Tasks. These tasks include:

- Attendance review meetings (ARM)
- School attendance review board (SARB) meetings
- Completing educational profiles for discipline and attendance review
- Conflict resolutions
- Behavior contracts
- Counseling students after discipline has occurred

This category of tasks earned a mean score of 3.85. The role of middle school counselors performing Attendance and Discipline Tasks had only one panel member rate the role as 6-*Very Important*, however, six panel members rated the role as 5-*Important*, one panel members rate the role as 4-*Slightly Important*, two panel members rate the role as 3-*Slightly Unimportant*, one panel member rated the role 2-*Unimportant*, and two panel members rate the role as 1-*Very Unimportant*. This role was still rated 5-*Important* by more than half of the study participants. See Table 9 for the ratings for the role of middle school counselors performing Attendance and Discipline Tasks.

**Table 9***Attendance and Discipline Tasks*

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Very Important	1	0.08%
Important	6	46.15%
Slightly Important	1	0.08%
Slightly Unimportant	2	15.84%
Unimportant	1	0.08%
Very Unimportant	2	15.84%

*Note.* Total respondents = 13; Mean score = 3.85.

The importance of middle school counselors performing tasks related to Supervision Tasks was clearly less important to panel participants with a mean score of 2.08. Supervision Tasks include: (a) before and after school supervision, (b) lunch supervision, (c) cocurricular events such as sports and dances, and (d) other school-wide events and activities requiring school site supervision or representation. The role of middle school counselors performing Supervision Tasks had no panel members rate the role as 6-*Very Important*, one panel member rate the role as 5-*Important*, one panel member rate the role as slightly 4-*Important*, three panel members rate the role as 3-*Slightly Unimportant*, one panel member rated the role 2-*Unimportant*, and seven panel members rated the role as 1-*Very Unimportant*. See Table 10 for the ratings for the role of middle school counselors performing Supervision Tasks.



**Table 10***Supervision Tasks*

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Very Important	0	0.00%
Important	1	0.08%
Slightly Important	1	0.08%
Slightly Unimportant	3	23.08%
Unimportant	1	0.08%
Very Unimportant	7	53.85%

*Note.* Total respondents = 13; Mean score = 2.08.

Similarly, participants agreed the importance of middle school counselors performing Administrative Tasks was noticeably less important as well, with a mean score of 1.77. Administrative Tasks include: (a) serving as an administrator at IEP and 504 meetings, (b) being the coordinator for SSTs, 504s, or EL testing, and (c) providing class coverage when teachers are absent. The role of middle school counselors performing Administrative Tasks had no panel members rate the role as 6-*Very Important*, one panel member rated the role as 5-*Important*, no panel members rated the role as 4-*Slightly Important*, two panel members rated the role as 3-*Slightly Unimportant*, two panel member rated the role 2-*Unimportant*, and 8 panel members rated the role as 1-*Very Unimportant*. See Table 11 for the ratings for the role of middle school counselors performing Administrative Tasks.

**Table 11***Administrative Tasks*

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Very Important	0	0.00%
Important	1	0.08%
Slightly Important	0	0.00%
Slightly Unimportant	2	15.84%
Unimportant	2	15.84%
Very Unimportant	8	61.54%

*Note.* Total respondents = 13; Mean score = 1.77.

The last category was looking at the importance of middle school counselors performing Coordination Tasks. Coordination Tasks include things counselors are often asked to take the lead on such as: (a) academic award ceremonies, (b) testing coordinator, (c) social media manager, or (d) website manager. The mean score for this role was 1.54. Coordination Tasks were viewed by the panel as the least important tasks middle school counselors perform. There were no panel members who rated the role as 6-*Very Important*, no panel members who rated the role as 5-*Important*, one panel members who rated the role as 4-*Slightly Important*, no panel members who rated the role as 3-*Slightly Unimportant*, four panel member who rated the role 2-*Unimportant*, and eight panel member who rated the role as 1-*Very Unimportant*. See Table 12 for the ratings for the role of middle school counselors performing Coordination Tasks.

**Table 12***Coordination Tasks*

Response	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Respondents
Very Important	0	0.00%
Important	0	0.00%
Slightly Important	1	0.08%
Slightly Unimportant	0	0.00%
Unimportant	4	30.77%
Very Unimportant	8	61.54%

*Note.* Total respondents = 13; Mean score = 1.54.

**Delphi Round 3**

Respondents rated the most important roles middle school counselors perform during their workday; the top six roles that were identified as most important were moved into the third round of the Delphi research study. The roles were evaluated utilizing a 6-point Likert scale and calculating the mean score for each of the 10 identified roles from round one.

In the third round of the study, expert panel members were asked to answer six open-ended questions. For each identified role, expert panel members were asked to identify what organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform this identified role. Table 13 outlines the six most important roles a school counselor performs and the corresponding mean scores for each role.

**Table 13**

*The Six Most Important Roles*

Identified Roles	Mean Score
Social Emotional Counseling	5.92
Academic Counseling	5.85
College and Career Counseling	5.15
Member of School Site Teams	5.15
Educational Tasks	4.54
Registration Tasks	4.00

*Note.* Total respondents = 13.

***Delphi Round 3, Role 1: Social-Emotional Counseling***

Role 1, Social-Emotional Counseling, was rated as the most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked:

*What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully perform Social-Emotional Counseling?* The recommendations from the expert panel members were coded, producing a list of 17 organizational supports that would aid middle school counselors in successfully supporting social-emotional health.

The most recommended organizational support to help aid middle school counselors in successfully performing Social-Emotional Counseling was decreasing counselor caseloads. Eleven of the 13 participants listed this organizational support as beneficial. Seven of the 13 participants suggested the need to reduce or eliminate non counseling duties from the counselor's caseload. Six of the participants recognized the need to have an established system for Social-Emotional Counseling, such as a referral process, clear risk assessment, and crisis protocols. Three participants agreed that protected time in the classrooms was essential to providing that necessary Tier 1 social-emotional support. Two participants highlighted the need for professional development

training provided to middle school counselors on social-emotional topics, such as suicide prevention training. All other recommended organizational supports were recommended by one expert panel member. See Table 14 for a complete list of organizational supports for Social-Emotional Counseling.

**Table 14**

*Organizational Supports for Social-Emotional Counseling*

Organizational Support	Number of Respondents
Decreasing counselor caseloads	11
Eliminate non-counseling duties	7
Established a system for social emotional support	6
Protected time in classrooms for social-emotional lessons	3
Professional development on social-emotional topics	2
Hiring an aid/clerk for non-counseling duties	1
District/site admin prioritizing social-emotional learning	1
Increased funding for social-emotional curriculum, events, materials	1
Integrate social-emotional curriculum into all content areas	1
Social emotional screener	1
Counselor professional learning communities	1
Protected time in office for students in need of support	1
Confidential meeting space	1
Collaboration with on and off-campus providers	1
Staff support for social-emotional counseling	1
Admin prioritizing students in crisis	1
Evidence-based curriculum	1

*Note.* Number of Respondents = 13.

***Delphi Round 3, Role 2: Academic Counseling***

Role 2, Academic Counseling, was rated as the second most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked: *What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully perform Academic Counseling?* The recommendations from the expert panel

members were coded, producing a list of 13 organizational supports that would aid middle school counselors in successfully supporting Academic Counseling.

The most recommended activity to support a middle school counselor in successfully performing academic counseling, was again to decrease counselor caseloads. Ten of the experts recognized reducing caseloads as the highest need for middle school counselors to be successful. The removal of non-counseling duties is also still recognized as important to five of the 13 participants. The creation of district and school-wide systems for identifying students who struggle academically and for assigning them to the appropriate site-based intervention was also recognized by five of the 13 participants. Additionally, five participants acknowledged the need for access to an online data information system and progress monitoring tools with real-time data and report options. Three participants identified the need for more professional development or educational training in Academic Counseling. Three participants recognized the benefit of a counseling collaborative to work together, pace out goals, and create an action plan. Three participants also noted staff buy-in, and support were key to getting time in the classroom as well as pulling students out for Academic Counseling. The remaining organizational supports were recommended by one panel member. See Table 15 for a complete list of organizational supports for Academic Counseling.

**Table 15***Organizational Supports for Academic Counseling*

Organizational Support	Number of Respondents
Decreasing counselor caseloads	10
Eliminate non-counseling duties	5
Creation of MTSS system to identify students struggling academically	5
Creation of clear protocols and systems for academic interventions (SSTs, 504s, IEPs, summer school, intervention classes)	5
Online data information system with real-time data and report options	5
Strong progress monitoring tools to track students learning and goals	5
Academic professional development and education training	3
Strong counselor PLC to collaborate, pace out goals, and create an action plan	3
Staff buy-in for classroom lessons, and academic counseling pull-outs	3
Professional development in ELA and math content	1
District provided evidence-based small group and individual academic curriculum	1
Hiring an aid/clerk for non-counseling duties	1
Clear district-wide expectations and on-site administrative support	1

*Note.* MTSS = Multi-tiered systems of support; SST = Student Study (also Success) Team; 504 = A plan developed to ensure that a student with intellectual or physical impairments receive accommodations to ensure academic success; IEP = Individualized Educational Plan; PLC = Professional Learning Community. ELA = English language arts; Total respondents = 13.

***Delphi Round 3, Role 3: College and Career Counseling***

Role 3, College and Career Counseling was rated as the third most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked: *What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully perform College and Career Counseling?* The recommendations from the expert panel members were coded, producing a list of eight organizational supports that

would aid middle school counselors in successfully supporting College and Career Counseling.

The most recommended activity to support a middle school counselor in successfully performing College and Career Counseling, was again to decrease counselor caseloads. This time five of the expert panel members reported the need to decrease counselor caseloads to allow more time for College and Career Counseling. Five expert panel members also reported the need for school-wide support regarding the necessity of college and career awareness, time in the classroom to provide lessons, and administrative support to allocate time and resources to these College and Career Counseling tasks. Five expert panel members stated the need for ongoing professional development training on the topic of college and career due to requirements consistently changing and updated opportunities becoming available. Additionally, four expert panel members state removing non-counseling duties would greatly increase their ability to perform college and career counseling. Four expert panel members also stated the need for a district-wide college and career plan, consistent throughout all sites with a system in place for implementation, pacing, and data analysis. All additional organizational supports were identified by one panel member. See Table 16 for a complete list of organizational supports for College and Career Counseling.



**Table 16***Organizational Supports for College and Career Counseling*

Organizational Support	Number of Respondents
Decreasing counselor caseloads	5
School-wide support for 7-12 college and career awareness	5
Professional development and educational training on college and career requirements and opportunities	5
Eliminate non-counseling duties	4
District-wide college and career plans consistent throughout all sites with a system in place for implementation, pacing, and data analysis	4
Evidence-based college and career classroom lessons	1
Collaboration and articulation between middle and high school counselors provide consistent and efficient college and career info	1
Collaboration with community agencies and resources to build college/career support and awareness opportunities	1

*Note.* Total respondents = 13.

***Delphi Round 3, Role 4: Being a Member of the School Site Team***

Role 4, being a member of the school site teams, was rated as one of the fourth most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked: *What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully serve as a Member of School Site Teams?* The recommendations from the expert panel members were coded, producing a list of 10 organizational supports that would aid middle school counselors in successfully supporting service as a site team member.

The most recommended activity to support a middle school counselor in successfully serving as a Member of the School Site Teams was to have staff be trained and fully aware of the role of the school counselor, with five of the expert panel members reporting this needed organizational support. Four expert panel members suggested

decreasing caseloads would aid in the counselor’s ability to serve as a site team member, with one panel member suggesting adding an additional counselor to the site would allow for more representation of counselors on all necessary site teams. Additionally, four expert panel members noted the need to remove non counseling duties which would increase the availability of school counselors to attend various site team meetings. The remaining organizational supports were noted by one panel member. See Table 17 for a complete list of organizational supports for service as a Member of School Site Teams.

**Table 17**

*Organizational Supports to Serve as Site Team Members*

Organizational Support	Number of Respondents
All stakeholders trained on the role of the school counselor role	5
Decreasing counselor caseloads	4
Eliminate non-counseling duties	4
Having a seat at the table when making site-wide decisions	1
School counselor having availability to attend meetings	1
Assigning other staff members to serve on various sites teams	1
Scheduling team meetings early and frequently	1
Creation of school-wide systems and plan for site priorities and goals	1
Clerical support to help with scheduling and paperwork for meetings	1
Increase the number of counselors that support each school site	1

*Note.* Total respondents = 13.

***Delphi Round 3, Role 5: Educational Tasks***

Role 5, Educational Tasks, was rated as the fifth most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked: *What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully perform Educational Tasks?* The recommendations from the expert panel

members were coded, producing a list of 10 organizational supports that would aid middle school counselors in successfully supporting service for Educational Tasks.

The most recommended activity to support a middle school counselor in successfully performing Educational Tasks was again to decrease counselor caseloads. This time six of the expert panel members reported the need to decrease counselor caseloads to allow more time for conducting Educational Tasks. Six expert panel members also stated the need for ongoing professional development and educational training. Additionally, four expert panel members state removing non-counseling duties would greatly increase their ability to perform Educational Tasks. All additional organizational supports were identified by one panel member. See Table 18 for a complete list of organizational supports for service of Educational Tasks.

**Table 18**

*Organizational Supports for Educational Tasks*

Organizational Support	Number of Respondents
Decreasing counselor caseloads	6
Professional development and educational training	6
Eliminate non-counseling duties	4
Hiring an aid/clerk for non-counseling duties	1
All stakeholders trained on the role of the school counselor role	1
Creation of a school counselor advisory committee	1
Clear and consistent supervision provided to school counselors	1
Administrative support for educational tasks during instructional time	1
Funding for events, parent night, and engagement opportunities	1
Dedicated time to plan and prepare for educational tasks and events	1

*Note.* Total respondents = 13.

### ***Delphi Round 3, Role 6: Registration Tasks***

Role 6, Registration Tasks, was rated as the sixth most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked: *What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully perform Registration Tasks?* The recommendations from the expert panel members were coded, producing a list of 10 organizational supports that would aid middle school counselors in successfully supporting service for Registration Tasks.

The most recommended activity to support a middle school counselor in successfully performing Registration Tasks, was the creation of clear systems and protocols for student placement in academic and elective classes, with six panel members noting this necessary organizational support. This time five of the expert panel members reported the need to decrease counselor caseloads to allow more time for conducting Registration Tasks. Additionally, four expert panel members state removing non-counseling duties would greatly increase their ability to perform Registration Tasks. Three panel members requested the ability to hire an aid or clerk for clerical support and help with non-essential registration tasks. All additional organizational supports were identified by one panel member. See Table 19 for a complete list of organizational supports for service Registration Tasks.

**Table 19***Organizational Supports for Registration Tasks*

Organizational Support	Number of Respondents
Clear protocols for student placement in academic and elective classes	6
Decreasing counselor caseloads	5
Eliminate non-counseling duties	4
Hiring an aid/clerk for non-counseling duties	3
Administrative support to devote the necessary time to registration	1
Increase the number of counselors that support each school site	1
Support from classroom teachers to allow registration during class	1
School counselor collaboration on the master schedule team	1
Educational training on student data information system	1
Having access to student data for appropriate course placement	1

*Note.* Total respondents = 13.

**Delphi Round 4**

Respondents identified the organizational supports necessary for each of the six most important roles middle school counselors perform during their workday. The organizational supports were coded and produced as a list to provide to expert panel members to review. The list of coded organizational supports include:

- Decreasing counselor caseloads
- Flexibility to push into classrooms to provide preventative Tier 1 lessons
- Reduction or removal of non-counseling-related duties
- Hiring an aid/clerk for time-consuming non-essential tasks
- Creation of clear counseling systems (referrals, protocols, intervention process)

- Clear district-wide expectations, and on-site administrative support
- Increased funding for curriculum, counseling activities, events, and engagement
- A district providing evidence-based counseling curriculum to all sites
- Academic and social emotional screening to occur at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year
- Professional development and educational training for school counselors
- Protected time in the office to be available for student's needs
- The need for a confidential meeting space
- Strong progress monitoring tools to track students learning and academic goals
- Clear protocol and systems for academic interventions like SSTs, 504s, IEPs, and summer school
- Access to an online data information system with real-time data and report options
- Increase the number of counselors that support a site to ensure a counseling perspective on all necessary site teams
- Clearly articulating the role of the school counselor to all stakeholders including staff, students, and parent.
- Creation of a school counselor advisory committee
- Clear and consistent supervision provided to support the school counselor

Respondents reviewed the list of organizational supports and had an opportunity to provide feedback or make changes or corrections to the information. The feedback was

reviewed and included in the study to ensure the information captured accurately reflects the expert panels' beliefs regarding organizational supports.

Eleven of the 13 panel members responded to Delphi Round 4 and provided feedback to the list of organizational supports. The respondents all agreed with the organizational supports listed and made comments along the lines of, “This looks great. School counselors need all the support we can get” (Respondent 2). Additionally, Respondent 3 stated,

It is essential that all stakeholders understand the role of a school counselor.

Moreover, we need representation at the state level to advocate for the role of school counselors when policies are being created and enforced. Until systems at the state level and federal level are transformed and our role as school counselors are deemed indispensable and irreplaceable like teachers will we be truly supported.

Additionally, the word choice and order of the list were important to many of our respondents. The need to clearly articulate the role of the school counselor to all stakeholders and to be provided an evidence-based counseling curriculum to all sites was suggested to be higher up on the list as these items were viewed as very crucial. One respondent stated the need to decrease caseloads, provide an evidence-based counseling curriculum, conduct academics and social-emotional screeners, access to an online data information system, with real-time data and report options, and clearly articulate the role of the school counselor to all stakeholders as essential for success within the district in which the panelist currently works.

One panelist requested the wording be changed to align more with the ASCA language by using words such as *appropriate* versus *inappropriate* roles. Also, suggested changing non-essential to non-counseling since if it's non-essential why is it being done at all? Understanding that the idea of increasing the number of school counselors at each school site was generated from the need to serve on a variety of site teams and conduct registration tasks across many schools; however, should not be qualified here as the only benefit of increasing the number of counselors. Instead, the need to recognize that increasing the number of counselors allows for more support to all students, which will allow middle school counselors to positively impact student outcomes. The use of the term *protected time in office* should be clearer, not to say counselors need to be in their offices but instead to reflect the need to spend 80% of the time on direct and indirect student services.

Additionally, counselors requested an emphasis on certain supports stating:

- Decreasing counselor caseloads
- Reduction of non-counseling duties
- Hiring an aid or clerk
- Creation of counseling systems
- Increased funding
- Academic and social-emotional screeners
- Professional development and educational training
- Protected time to provide direct services to students
- Have a confidential meeting space
- Clear protocols



- Access to an online data system
- Have a counselor advisory committee

all were vital in ensuring middle school counselors could successfully perform the six most important roles as identified by this panel.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, a description of the research methodology and data collection procedures was provided, as well as a summary of the data. In Round 1, 13 expert middle school counselors provided a list of roles performed during their workday. The responses by the expert panel members were then coded and categorized into 10 roles. These 10 roles were moved forward to Round 2. In Round 2, 13 expert panel members responded to the Likert scale survey asking them to rate the level of each role's importance. A mean score was calculated for each role to provide a ranking. The top six rated roles were moved forward into Round 3, where the expert panel members were asked to identify the specific organizational supports needed for them to perform the top six most important roles identified by the panel. After the organizational supports were identified they were coded and given back to the panel of experts in Round 4 for final review and a chance to provide any feedback or corrections.

For this Delphi research study, it was clear there are a lot of roles a middle school counselor performs daily. The lengthy list of tasks was sorted and categorized into 10 overall categories. Rating the level of importance solidified that school counselors generally agree on the tasks that are most important to positively influence student outcomes. After clarifying the most important roles, gathering consensus on the organizational supports that would allow middle school counselors to successfully

perform each of the six most important roles was conducted. The list of organizational supports necessary was extensive and often creatively specific to that school counselor's individual experiences. There was a consensus among the panel that decreasing caseloads, removing or reducing non-counseling duties, and the creation of district-wide systems and protocols would essentially be effective across all six of the identified roles. Other creative and effective organizational supports were also identified and would prove helpful in ensuring middle school counselors can successfully perform the necessary roles and positively influence student outcomes. Additionally, findings, conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for future studies are considered in Chapter V.

## CHAPTER V: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

School counselors historically began with a focus exclusively on vocational guidance, however now it is the responsibility of a PSC to develop a comprehensive program focused on academic, college/career, and social-emotional development (Reiner et al., 2009). The goal of a comprehensive school counseling programs is to improve positive student outcomes for all students (Cinotti, 2014). Positive student outcomes include: (a) decreasing behavioral incidents, (b) reducing dropout rates, (c) improving attendance and graduation rates, and (d) increasing academic achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 2003). For school counselors to provide positive student outcomes it is essential that organizational supports such as quality training, ongoing professional development, decreasing caseloads, and supervision, to name a few, are provided (Fye et al., 2020).

The unique way the school counseling profession is positioned within the school contributes to the lack of organizational support available to PSC (Blake, 2020). Research indicates that the lack of available organizational support impacts job stress (Dang, 2021). The current literature links the lack of organizational supports to a decrease in school counselor job satisfaction and ultimately burnout. Bidwell (2001) ties the work conditions and organizational structure of the school counseling profession to student outcomes; however, it does not indicate the direct effect it has on the school counselor's ability to improve positive student outcomes. This study aimed to gain an understanding of the role and responsibilities of the middle school counselor and the organizational support necessary to improve student outcomes in all three domains.

Chapter I of this study represented the introduction to the Delphi study. Chapter I began with a presentation of relevant background information regarding the role of the

PSC. Also in Chapter I, the research problem and purpose statement were introduced, followed by a presentation of the research questions. Lastly, the significance of the study, definitions, delimitations, and the organization of the study was presented.

Chapter II of this research study is a review of the literature. Chapter II began with a historical overview of the school counseling profession and some context for understanding the roles and responsibilities of a middle school counselor. The concept of role ambiguity, school counselors as educational leaders, and current organizational supports available to school counselors were discussed. The literature review concluded with an understanding that more research is needed to understand how those organizational supports directly influence student outcomes.

Chapter III presented the methodology of the study. It is in this chapter that the Delphi research design was introduced, the benefits of the Delphi approach discussed, and why this research design was chosen for this study. Next, a description of the population, target population, and sample used for the research study were presented. The instrumentation, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures for the study were also presented in Chapter III. Chapter III concluded with the study's limitations.

Chapter IV of this Delphi study presented a summary of the research findings and an analysis of the data. The sample for this study was delimited to expert middle school counselors from public schools within California. The criterion used to qualify as an expert for this study was also described in Chapter IV. There were four rounds of surveys used in the data collection process. The first round involved the collection of qualitative data, the second round collected quantitative data, the third round collected qualitative data, and the final round collected qualitative data.

Chapter V concludes this Delphi research study. The purpose statement, research questions, and methodology are reviewed. Additionally, the major findings, unexpected findings, conclusions, recommendations for action, and recommendations for further research are presented in this chapter. Chapter V ends with concluding remarks and overall reflections.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this Delphi study was to identify, from the perspective of expert counselors, the roles that middle school counselors perform during their workday, to rate the importance of the roles identified, and to identify organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified. Additionally, this study sought to gain feedback from expert middle school counselors on how to best align the necessary organizational supports with the identified most important roles.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What roles do expert counselors identify that middle school counselors perform during their workday?
2. How do expert middle school counselors rate the importance of the roles identified in Research Question 1?
3. What organizational supports do expert counselors identify that must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in Research Question 2?

4. What do expert middle school counselors perceive is essential to effectively align the necessary organizational supports with the roles identified as important?

### **Methodology**

The Delphi method was utilized for this study, which provides a systematic process of gathering, consolidating, and evaluating expert opinion. The Delphi approach utilizes a systematic electronic survey method that begins by asking participants an open-ended research question, which for this study was asking expert counselors to identify the roles a middle school counselor would perform during their workday. The Delphi method then required the researcher to compile the responses and send out a second survey asking participants to rate the level of importance of each identified. Once the responses were received, the researcher calculated the mean scores of the responses to identify the top six roles identified by respondents. The researcher then sent a third-round survey asking participants to identify what organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified in the previous survey. The final survey round was an opportunity for the expert panel to review the organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to perform the most important roles that were identified and offer suggestions on alignment.

The Delphi method is used to gather expert opinions on complex topics to provide consensus and aid in the development, planning, and implementation of necessary supports (Hsu & Sandford, 2007). The Delphi method gathers data through a multi-round survey process, with each subsequent survey further clarifying the data. The Delphi

process provided an opportunity through four surveys to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. The purpose of this study was to gather a consensus from expert middle school counselors to determine the role and subsequently the organizational support necessary to support those roles in an effective comprehensive middle school counseling program.

The Delphi method was selected for this study to first establish consensus among experts and then rate and apply organizational support to the identified roles of the middle school counselor. The need for a population and sample of expert middle school counselors was also a consideration for the Delphi method. A strong benefit of using the Delphi process is the anonymity of respondents to one another which reduces the likelihood of certain respondents influencing one another (Yousuf, 2007). The multiple rounds allow respondents to reflect and provide relevant real-time feedback that develops more after reviewing other participants' responses (Yousuf, 2007).

### **Population**

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) provide a framework stating a population is a group of people, objects, or events that when analyzed have generalizable results and from which a smaller subset or sample can be derived. The population for this study was all middle school counselors in the state of California. The term middle school is used interchangeably with intermediate school or junior high school, and it is important to note not all middle schools throughout California have the same grade levels. During the 2018-2019 school year, there were approximately 10,461 school counselors employed in California (CDE, 2019).

## **Target Population**

According to Taherdoost (2016), “A sampling frame is a list of the actual cases from which the sample will be drawn” (p. 20). The sampling frame for a research study is the collective group for which the study's data and findings can be generalized.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), the target population is a chosen subset of the overall population with characteristics that focus the study on certain delimiting variables that can then be generalized to the population at large. The sampling frame is the entire subset of the population being studied and will be utilized to make inferences about the overall population. The sampling frame in this study is expert middle school counselors employed in California. There are three characteristics, or delimiting variables, being used to determine a middle school counselor as an expert. The delimiting variables for this sampling frame include:

- Currently employed as a middle school counselor in California
- Three or more years of experience in a middle school counseling position
- Recommendation of their principal as an expert middle school counselor
- Graduated from a master’s program certified by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and related educational programs

Of the 10, 461 school counselors in California, about 40%, or 4,185, are middle school counselors. Of these 4185 middle school counselors, it is estimated that about 30%, or 1,256, meet the selection criteria for this study. The target population for this study is the 1,256 California middle school counselors that meet the selection criteria.



## **Sample**

A sample is a representative subset of the target population, which the researcher uses to collect data (McMillan & Schmacher, 2010). Studying every member of a large population is impractical, leading to the necessity to study a subset, or sample of the population (Patton, 2015). The Delphi method requires the selection of experts within the sample to be the first and most critical step of the process (Yousuf, 2007). A Delphi study lends itself to a purposeful sample. Purposeful sampling is the selection of participants from the overall population who have established expertise on the topic of study (McMillan & Schmacher, 2010). The study also utilized criterion-based sampling which allows the selection of participants based on specific selection criteria (Patton, 2015). The sample in this study includes 13 purposefully chosen expert middle school counselors from across California who meet specific inclusion criteria. The following criteria needed to be met by the expert middle school counselors to be included in the sample:

- Currently employed as a middle school counselor in California
- Three or more years of experience in a middle school counseling position
- Recommendation of their principal as an expert middle school counselor
- Graduated from a master's program certified by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and related educational programs

## **Major Findings**

The major findings derived during data collection will be discussed in this section of Chapter V. These findings were discovered through the analysis of expert panel members' responses to open-ended questions in Rounds 1, 3, and 4, and a Likert scale

style survey in Round 2. The findings offer valuable insights as to what expert middle school counselors recommend as the organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to effectively perform the top six most important roles. The alignment of these organizational supports allows middle school counselors to positively impact student outcomes.

### **Delphi Round 1**

Round 1 of the Delphi study was distributed to 13 expert panel members via Survey Monkey. Before sending the Round 1 survey a demographic survey was administered to all potential participants to determine eligibility based on the established study criterion. Thirteen expert panel members met the determined criterion. The Round 1 survey was an open-ended question requesting the panel members to list out the various roles middle school counselors perform. For this study, roles were defined as tasks, responsibilities, or daily job requirements.

#### ***Delphi Round 1, Research Question 1***

The first survey question asked the following: *What roles do you perform during your workday as a middle school counselor?*

All 13 expert middle school counselors responded to the question. Fifty-three individual responses were then coded and categorized into 10 overarching categories. The 10 categories that were created based on the 53 responses from Round 1, Research Question 1 which identified the roles middle school counselors perform during their workday are:

- Academic Counseling
- Social Emotional Counseling

- College and Career Counseling
- Supervision Tasks
- Registration Tasks
- Attendance and Discipline Tasks
- Member of School Site Team
- Administrative Tasks
- Educational Tasks
- Coordination Tasks

The 10 identified roles were comprised of all 53 individual responses. Therefore, Role 1 was labeled Academic Counseling however, the full description of Role 1 was as follows:

- Monitoring grades and connecting students to available on-site resources
- Setting goals
- Completing individualized academic plans to ensure students are on track, and encouraging students to focus on their grades
- Collaborating with teachers to ensure academic success
- Writing letters of recommendation and helping connect to scholarship opportunities
- Reviewing and analyzing student data

Role 2 was labeled Social-Emotional Counseling and the full description included:

- Social-Emotional Counseling including suicide risk and behavioral threat assessments creating and maintaining safety plans
- Connecting to on-campus or off-campus mental health supports and resources

- Conducting a check-in check-out program with students
- Connecting with off-site therapists to develop a plan of support
- Facilitating small group counseling or short-term individualized counseling
- Conducting home visits when needed

Role 3 was labeled College and Career Counseling and the full description included: Coordinating tasks for college and career exploration through in-class lessons or outreach events like a career or college fair. Role 4 was labeled supervision tasks and the full description included: Supervision includes before-school, after-school, lunch, and cocurricular events such as sports, dances, and other school-wide events/activities. Role 5 was labeled Registration Tasks and the full description included:

- Enrolling new and continuing students
- Creating schedules
- Making schedule changes
- Registering students from elementary sites entering middle school
- Assisting in registering middle school students to high school

Role 6 was labeled Attendance and Discipline Tasks and the full description included:

- Attendance review meetings
- School attendance review boards (SARBs)
- Completing educational profiles for discipline review
- Conflict resolutions
- Behavior contracts
- Counseling students after discipline has occurred

Role 7 was labeled Member of School Site Teams and the full description included:

- SSTs
- 504s
- IEPs
- AVID site team
- PBIS team
- School site safety team
- No Place for Hate program
- School crisis team

Role 8 was labeled Administrative Tasks and the full description included: (a) serving as an administrator at IEP and 504 meetings, (b) being the coordinator for SSTs, 504s, or EL testing, and (c) providing class coverage when teachers are absent. Role 9 was labeled Educational Tasks and the full description included: (a) conducting classroom lessons, (b) parent nights, and (c) other events to educate students and families on various topics including academic guidance as well as behavior and social-emotional resources.

Role 10 was labeled Coordination Tasks and the full description included: (a) social media manager, (b) website manager, (c) school-wide academic award ceremonies, (d) testing coordinator.

A major finding within Round 1 was the lengthy list of roles and responsibilities performed by middle school counselors during their typical workday. The variation of the tasks highlights the constantly evolving professional identity of school counselors.

Previous school counseling literature indicates significant role ambiguity and conflict throughout the school counseling profession (Radford et al., 2016). Role ambiguity is even more prevalent for middle school counselors. The middle school counselor aims to help students grow academically, personally, and in college/career planning during a time of both self-discovery and rapid physical and emotional growth (ASCA, 2019). This role ambiguity is evident in Round 1 as school counselors listed 53 individualized responses that could be categorized into 10 overarching groups. This round indicates that these roles are typical for middle school counselors to perform but at this stage of the study does not clearly indicate the level of each role's importance.

### **Delphi Round 2**

In this round, all 10 roles indicated by the panel were placed on a Likert scale style survey. The expert middle school counselors were asked to rank the importance of each identified role from Round 1. The rankings on the Likert scale were: 6-*Very Important*; 5-*Important*; 4-*Slightly Important*; 3-*Slightly Unimportant*; 2-*Unimportant*; and 1-*Very Unimportant*. The survey was emailed to expert panelists through the Survey Monkey platform. Expert middle school counselors answered the Round 2 Likert scale survey by rating each of the 10 identified roles based on level of importance. The mean scores were calculated for each identified role and a ranking was provided. The range of rankings for the suggested roles ranged from mean scores of 1.54 to 5.92.

A major finding in Round 2 was the agreement between expert middle school counselors on the importance of social-emotional counseling. Twelve of the 13 respondents rated this role as 6-*Very Important*, while one panelist rated the role as 5-*Important*. This role was clearly identified as a very important role middle school

counselors perform. School counselors are trained and able to provide short-term mental health counseling interventions to support students (Collins, 2014). This has been validated by ASCA and CACREP (CACREP, 2016). Research confirms that school counselors are uniquely positioned to provide this type of mental health support (Biolcati et al., 2018; DeKruyf et al., 2013). School counselors rate social-emotional counseling as important, however, they state it is not always possible due to the other non-counseling duties, or the academic focus required of the profession (Agregta, 2004).

Another major finding was the agreement between expert middle school counselors on the importance of Academic Counseling. Again, 12 of the 13 respondents rated this role as 6-*Very Important*, while one panelist rated the role as 4-*Slightly Important*. This was confirmed in the research by Beale (2003) asserting that school counselors are an integral component of the educational system and help students achieve their maximum academic potential. The expert panel members agree this is a very important role for middle school counselors.

The next two identified roles, College and Career Counseling and being a Member of School Site Teams, were tied for the level of importance with a mean score of 5.15. On both roles, seven of the 13-panel members rated the role as 6-*Very Important* and three rated the role as 5-*Important*. There was some variation in the three additional scores received but there was a consensus that these two roles are important for middle school counselors to perform. College and Career Counseling is one of the three domains identified by the ASCA as a required responsibility of a PSC (ASCA, 2019). Serving as a member of a school site team is confirmed through research that school counselors are vital members of the educational team (Berry, 2006). School counselors are uniquely

qualified to address how to increase positive student outcomes from a multitude of perspectives (Alexander et al., 2003).

Two additional roles fell within the top six roles as rated by the expert panel. Those roles included Educational Tasks and Registration Tasks. Both of these roles were identified as important roles for middle school counselors. The four remaining roles were identified as tasks middle school counselors typically perform but not valued as important roles according to the expert panel. These roles included: (a) Attendance and Discipline Tasks, (b) Supervision Tasks, (c) Administrative Tasks, and (d) Coordination Tasks. The major finding here was the consensus from the expert panel on the unimportance of these identified tasks. For example, on Coordination Tasks eight of the 13-panel members rated this role as 1-*Very Unimportant* and four rated the role as 2-*Unimportant* with one remaining panelist who stated it slightly important. The expert panel was clear these roles were less important and many could be performed by other personnel other than school counselors.

### **Delphi Round 3**

In Round 3 of the Delphi study, expert panel members were asked six open-ended questions. The questions were designed to produce a list of organizational supports needed for middle school counselors to perform each of the six most important roles. The organizational supports were coded and placed into a bulleted list.

#### ***Delphi Round 3, Role 1***

Role 1, Social-Emotional Counseling, was rated as the most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked: *What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to*



*successfully perform Social-Emotional Counseling?* The recommendations from the expert panel members were then coded.

### ***Delphi Round 3, Role 2***

Role 2, Academic Counseling, was rated as the second most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked: *What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully perform Academic Counseling?* The recommendations from the expert panel members were then coded

### ***Delphi Round 3, Role 3***

Role 3, College and Career Counseling was rated as the third most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked: *What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully perform College and Career Counseling?* The recommendations from the expert panel members were then coded.

### ***Delphi Round 3, Role 4***

Role 4, Being a Member of the School Site Teams, was rated as one of the fourth most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked: *What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully serve as a Member of School Site Teams?* The recommendations from the expert panel members were then coded.

### ***Delphi Round 3, Role 5***

Role 5, Educational Tasks, was rated as the fifth most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked:

*What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully perform Educational Tasks?* The recommendations from the expert panel members were then coded.

### ***Delphi Round 3, Role 6***

Role 6, Registration Tasks, was rated as the sixth most important role middle school counselors perform during their workday duties. Participants were then asked: *What organizational supports must be provided for middle school counselors to successfully perform Registration Tasks?* The recommendations from the expert panel members were then coded.

Major findings for Round 3 acknowledged that while each role has some variation a list of beneficial organizational supports could be generated by the expert panel that would allow middle school counselors to successfully perform each of the six roles identified and ultimately positively impacts student outcomes. These organizational supports were as follows:

- Decreasing counselor caseloads
- Flexibility to push into classrooms to provide preventative Tier 1 lessons
- Reduction or removal of non-counseling-related duties
- Hiring an aid/clerk for time-consuming non-essential tasks
- Creation of clear counseling systems (referrals, protocols, intervention process)
- Clear district-wide expectations, and on-site administrative support
- Increased funding for curriculum, counseling activities, events, and engagement

- A district providing evidence-based counseling curriculum to all sites
- Academic and social emotional screening to occur at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year
- Professional development and educational training for school counselors
- Protected time in the office to be available for student's needs
- The need for a confidential meeting space
- Strong progress monitoring tools to track students learning and academic goals
- Clear protocol and systems for academic interventions like SSTs, 504s, IEPs, and summer school
- Access to an online data information system, with real-time data and report options
- Increase the number of counselors that support a site to ensure a counseling perspective on all necessary site teams
- Clearly articulating the role of the school counselor to all stakeholders including staff, students, and parents
- Creation of a school counselor advisory committee
- Clear and consistent supervision provided to support the school counselor

#### **Delphi Round 4**

In Round 4 of the Delphi study, the organizational supports were coded and produced as a list to provide to expert panel members to review. Respondents had an opportunity to provide feedback or make changes or corrections to the information. The

feedback was reviewed and included in the study to ensure the information captured accurately reflects the expert panels' beliefs regarding organizational supports.

Major findings for Round 4 include all respondents agreeing with the organizational supports listed. Respondents indicated that word choice and order of the list were important. One panelist requested the wording be changed to align more with the ASCA language, by using words such as appropriate versus inappropriate roles. Also suggested was changing non-essential to non-counseling since if it's non-essential why is it being done at all? Additionally, organizational supports should not be limited to only applying to the role it was generated from and instead be recognized as being an overarching support that would benefit middle school counselors in their ability to support students.

The expert panel stated the most important organizational supports are:

- Decreasing counselor caseloads
- Reduction of non-counseling duties
- Hiring an aid or clerk
- Creating counseling systems
- Increasing funding
- Academic and social-emotional screeners
- Professional development and educational training
- Protecting time to provide direct services to students
- A confidential meeting space
- Clear protocols

- Access to an online data system
- The creation of a counselor advisory committee

While there were additional organizational supports identified in Round 4 counselors rated these as the most essential.

### **Unexpected Findings**

An unexpected finding was while the majority of the expert panel members showed consensus, there was an outlier on several of the roles and responsibility rating scales showing that while most counselors deemed that role as important, one counselor did not agree. Additionally, despite the fact the panel members were experts in Round 4 some did not respond and/or did not have any additional feedback on alignment. Additionally, the list of organizational supports was generated independently however when sent back out for Round 4 all listed supports were deemed valuable. Some organizational supports were new ideas that had not previously been considered by the researcher. These additional supports included ideas such as the creation of a school counselor advisory committee and the creation of a professional learning team which had not been previously considered by the researcher or seen described within the literature.

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this Delphi study was to identify, from the perspective of expert counselors, the roles that middle school counselors perform during their workday, to rate the importance of the roles identified, and to identify organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified. Additionally, this study sought to gain feedback from expert middle school

counselors on how to best align the necessary organizational supports with the identified most important roles.

### **Conclusion 1**

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that to effectively align organizational supports, the roles and responsibilities of a middle school counselor must first be defined. The school counseling profession has struggled with role identity since its inception back in the 1900s. The role of a PSC varies from state to state, district to district, and site to site. This variance is due in large part to the lack of role clarity found within the school counseling profession. This study mirrors the current research that school counselors lack role clarity and often experience competing roles and responsibilities expected of PSCs (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Lieberman, 2004).

### **Conclusion 2**

Another conclusion found within this study is the transformation of the school counseling profession, which originally started as only vocational guidance and has since expanded to encompass multiple roles and responsibilities culminating in the creation of CSCPs. The development of CSCPs helps provide structure to the school counseling profession, by expanding the reach beyond specific student populations to focus on the positive student outcomes of all students (Cinotti, 2014). This study confirms the research suggesting PSCs should embrace multiple roles if students are to truly benefit from a CSCP (Perkins et al., 2010). In a CSCP, counselors are responsible for academics, social-emotional development, and college and career planning. These three overarching domains were reflected in this study as the expert panel acknowledged these as the top three roles of importance for middle school counselors. The ASCA echoes the need to

embrace CSCPs to create safe school environments and place an emphasis on academic, social-emotional, and college and career readiness (ASCA, 2019).

### **Conclusion 3**

Based upon the findings of this study, it is concluded that counselors are used to provide administrative support at high levels that interferes with their focus on student service. Findings of this study looks beyond establishing clear roles and responsibilities and focuses on the influence school counselors have on positive student outcomes.

Positive student outcomes include: (a) decreasing behavioral incidents, (b) reducing dropout rates, (c) improving attendance and graduation rates, and (d) increasing academic achievement (Johnson & Johnson, 2003). Amatea and Clark (2004) state PSCs have a unique ability to increase positive student outcomes. PSCs complete educational master's level coursework in addition to training and internship experiences making them uniquely qualified to address how to increase positive student outcomes from a multitude of perspectives (Alexander et al., 2003). This study addresses this area by requesting the expert panel rate the roles and responsibilities by the level of importance. While school counselors may or may not personally enjoy managing social media or the school website this role and responsibility was rated as the least important role middle school counselors perform. Instead, roles such as Social-Emotional Counseling, Academic Counseling, College and Career Counseling, Serving as a Member of School Sites Teams, Educational Tasks, and Registration Tasks were rated as highly important roles for middle school counselors to perform. These roles were measured utilizing a mean score and are directly tied to increasing positive student outcomes.

#### **Conclusion 4**

The findings of this study lead to the conclusion that the organizational supports, if provided, would allow middle school counselors to perform the six most important roles:

- Social-Emotional Counseling
- Academic Counseling
- College and Career Counseling
- Serving as a Member of School Site Teams
- Educational Tasks
- Registration Tasks

The expert panel confirmed through this study the need for a long list of organizational supports which include:

- Decreasing counselor caseloads
- Flexibility to push into classrooms to provide preventative Tier 1 lessons
- Reduction or removal of non-counseling-related duties
- Hiring an aid/clerk for time-consuming non-essential tasks
- Creation of clear counseling systems (referrals, protocols, intervention process)
- Clear district-wide expectations, and on-site administrative support
- Increased funding for curriculum, counseling activities, events, and engagement



- A district providing evidence-based counseling curriculum to all sites
- Academic and social emotional screening to occur at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year
- Professional development and educational training for school counselors
- Protected time in the office to be available for student's needs
- The need for a confidential meeting space
- Strong progress monitoring tools to track students learning and academic goals
- Clear protocol and systems for academic interventions like SSTs, 504s, IEPs, and summer school
- Access to an online data information system, with real-time data and report options
- Increase the number of counselors that support a site to ensure a counseling perspective on all necessary site teams
- Clearly articulating the role of the school counselor to all stakeholders including staff, students, and parents
- Creation of a school counselor advisory committee
- Clear and consistent supervision provided to support the school counselor

The panel clarified the language in the study to ensure the outcomes were clear.

For example, recognizing the need to increase the number of counselors allows for more support to all students, which will allow middle school counselors to positively impact student outcomes. Additionally, the need for protected time to support students states

middle school counselors need to spend 80% of the time on direct and indirect student services versus other less important roles.

### **Implications for Action**

School counselors are employed throughout the United States in K-12 schools with varying job requirements, unique structures, and differing hierarchical arrangements. Determining what makes some school counselors effective while others struggle is an important question within the literature. Maslach and Leiter (1997) stated the research needs to focus on organizational variables and the work environment of the PSC. Without a full understanding of the work environment and organizational variables impacting the school counseling profession, the ability to determine how to improve student outcomes remains evasive. The literature examines several organizational factors distinctive to the school counseling profession (Blake, 2020). Organizational support is essential in mitigating school counselor stress and ultimately burnout, which in turn may negatively impact student outcomes.

The data collected from expert middle school counselors confirmed the role ambiguity that is still present in the school counseling profession. The need to define the role of a middle school counselor is the first and most important step in better understanding the necessary supports needed to positively impact student outcomes. The ASCA (2019) outlines a detailed role description that could prove to be beneficial in the foundational need to better understand the role of the middle school counselor. Utilizing the ASCA National Model and the Framework for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs the role of a middle school counselor can begin to take shape and encompass

the roles and responsibilities identified as the most valuable, according to the school counselors themselves as well as several professional organizations.

Additionally, the findings from this study acknowledge expert middle school counselors recommend specific organizational supports to aid in the ability of middle school counselors to perform the six most important roles of a middle school counselor. These organizational supports were generated by an expert panel with an emphasis on the ones that would make the biggest impact and could be applied across all six roles instead of being singularly effective only with one of the six roles. Based on these findings, the results from this study can be applied as follows:

- School counselor supervisors and district-level administrators need to develop a job description for the PSC that aligns with the most important roles and responsibilities of the profession. These job descriptions need to be clear to eliminate role ambiguity for all stakeholders, including the middle school counselors themselves.
- School counselor education programs need to further define and outline the roles and responsibilities of middle school counselors. Therefore, during graduate school, the school counselor is aware and can advocate for the role as defined by ASCA.
- School counselor education programs could utilize this study to better understand organizational supports and aid school counselors to find internships and future employment that provide organizational supports that'd aid in the middle school counselor's success.
- School districts need to invest in school counselor directors or supervisors

who can oversee school counselors throughout the district. The need for an organized level of support will ensure school counselors receive consultation, collaboration, and other organizational support that will directly improve student outcomes.

- The organizational supports agreed upon by all expert panel members was a need to decrease counselor caseloads and remove non-counseling duties from the daily work of middle school counselors. This can be done by clearly defining the role of the PSC and advocating for a 250:1 ratio as recommended by ASCA (2019). This may also include a need to increase the number of school counselors.
- There is a need to create clear counseling systems for referrals, protocols, and intervention processes that are consistent throughout the district, state, and ultimately profession.
- Increase the use of evidence-based and data-driven practices to create empirical data to better track the impact of school counselors on positive student outcomes.
- School counselors need to be provided with professional development and educational training to support their work across all six major roles.
- Provide access to an online data information system, with real-time data and report options, and progress monitoring tools to track students' learning and academic goals.
- The use of academic and social-emotional screeners to occur at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year, allowing for data-driven intervention.

- The need to create opportunities for consultation and collaboration through a school counseling advisory committee, mentorship, and positive relationship with a school counselor's supervisor.
- Creation of a dedicated budget for the school counseling department to aid in funding counseling activities, events, engagement opportunities, and evidence-based curriculum.
- School counselors need to be able to spend 80% of their overall workday on direct and indirect services for students through one on one counseling, group counseling, classroom presentations, or additional Tier 1 supports.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In the field of education, school counselors are employed at all levels: Elementary school, middle school, high school, and post-secondary. School counselors are vital members of the educational team at all educational levels (Berry, 2006). During the 2018 to 2019 school year, there were approximately 4,185 middle school counselors employed throughout California (CDE, 2019). The role of a middle school counselor and the workday duties performed are very different than the role and duties of elementary, high school, or post-secondary counselors (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Nelson et al., 2008). The middle school counselor's job setting varies greatly depending on the state, the district, or the structure of the individual school site. For example, the role of a middle school counselor in an urban school district will differ from the role of a middle school counselor in a rural district (Butler & Constantine, 2005; Nelson et al., 2008). The role of

a middle school counselor will also change based on the unique needs of the students which the counselor serves (Nelson et al., 2008). Therefore, the following recommendations are made for further research:

- Replicate this study in a different state using expert middle school counselors. This study was limited to expert middle school counselors within California. Expert middle school counselors from other states may determine different organizational supports that would benefit the school counseling profession.
- Replicate this study in California using expert high school counselors. This study was limited to expert middle school counselors within California. Expert high school counselors may determine different organizational supports that would benefit the school counseling profession.
- Replicate this study in California using expert bilingual counselors. The need in California for school personnel to be bilingual is expanding and therefore is a population of counselors who may be able to provide a different list of organizational supports that would benefit the school counseling profession.
- Examine the organizational supports generated from this study and have expert counselors rate the level of importance to help quantify the most impactful organizational supports need to perform the top six most important roles of middle school counselors.
- Replicate this study utilizing expert school site principals or superintendents and have them rate the most important roles middle school counselors perform and subsequently a list of organizational supports to assist middle school counselors in successfully performing the most important roles identified.

- Address the individual organizational supports generated from this study and directly examine the impact on positive student outcomes. For example, examine the direct impact of providing professional development to middle school counselors and the academic achievement of the students served.
- It is recommended when conducting future research to be mindful of the school counselor's years of experience. Many veteran school counselors went through counseling education programs and internships prior to the revised guidelines and standards of the school counseling profession; not being privy to mental health training or the comprehensive school counseling model. The recommendation is all future studies utilize counselors with 3 to 10 years of experience. The need for 3 years of experience to demonstrate expertise but not to exceed 10 years in the profession to ensure the training was based on the current state of the profession.

### **Concluding Remarks and Reflection**

The school counseling profession has existed since the 1900s and has evolved from vocational guidance alone to an emphasis on comprehensive counseling support in the areas of social-emotional, academic, and college and career. The identity crisis experienced by the profession coupled with the lack of empirical data to support the direct positive impacts a PSC has on student outcomes leads to policymakers being unable to see the value in investing in the school counseling profession (Whiston, 2002). Empirical data is needed to convince policymakers that the school counseling profession adds value to the educational system. There is little empirical data outlining the effects of typical job duties or interventions provided by the PSC (Whiston, 2002). Increasing the body of research on the topic of school counseling is essential to not only cement the

value of the profession but to ensure students in grades K-12 have mandated access to school counselors.

In the United States today only 30 states mandate schools to hire school counselors. Out of those 30 states, only 16 of them mandate a specific counselor-to-student ratio which ranges from 250:1 to 750:1. The state of California does not mandate schools to hire school counselors, nor does it have a state mandate as to the appropriate counselor-to-student ratio. The California State Budget Act of 2006 amended the California Education Code to ensure students in grades 7-12 receive counseling services, however, it does not require those services be provided by school counselors. The impact of school counselors on students' academic achievement, social-emotional well-being, and post-secondary enrollment is undisputable, however, the profession is still not required nor supported consistently within the educational system across the United States.

In addition to supporting the school counseling profession and its need to be included in educational reform efforts, the school counselors themselves also need access to organizational supports that will enable their personal and professional success. School counselors may serve multiple school sites or there may only be one counselor at a given school site, therefore having no built-in peer collaboration or support. School counselors have an ethical obligation to focus on their own wellness. However, many job demands and other organizational factors prohibit school counselors from effectively engaging in self-care and wellness activities. School districts need to invest in school counselor directors or supervisors who can oversee school counselors throughout the district. The need for an organized level of support will ensure school counselors receive consultation,



collaboration, and other organizational support that will directly improve student outcomes and decrease the likelihood of burnout. Burnout is prevalent for new school counselors which is mitigated by the number of years served in the school counseling profession. School counselors should be supported, advocated for, and celebrated for the work they do to ensure positive student outcomes.

## REFERENCES

- Agresta, J. (2004). Professional role perceptions of school social workers, psychologists, and counselors. *Children & Schools, 26*, 151-163.
- Alexander, C. M., Kruczek, T., Zigelbaum, A., & Ramirez, M. C. (2003). A review of the school counseling literature for themes evolving from The Education Trust initiative. *Professional School Counseling, 7*(1), 29. url =<https://brandman.idm.oclc.org/login?//search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgao&AN=edsgcl.110962188&site=eds-live&scope=site>
- Alexander, W. M. (1995). The junior high school: A changing view. *Middle School Journal, 26*(3), 21. <https://doi.org.umassglobal.idm.oclc.org/10.1080/00940771.1995.11494421>
- Amatea, E. S., & Clark, M. A. (2005). Changing schools, changing counselors: A qualitative study of school administrators' conceptions of the school counselor role. *Professional School Counseling, 9*(1), 16.
- American School Counselor Association. (1997). *The national standards for school counseling programs*. Author.
- American School Counselor Association. (2019). *The essential role of middle school counselors*. <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>
- American School Counselor Association. (2019). *The national model: A framework for school counseling programs* (4th ed.). Author.
- Astramovich, R. L., Hoskins, W. J., Gutierrez, A. P., & Bartlett, K. A. (2014). Identifying role diffusion in school counseling. *The Professional Counselor, 3*, 175–184.

- Aubrey, R. F. (1977). Historical development of guidance and counseling and implications for the future. *Personnel & Guidance Journal*, 55(6), 288.
- Baggerly, J., & Osborn, D. (2006). School counselors' career satisfaction and commitment: Correlates and predictors. *Professional School Counseling*, 197-205.
- Bain, S. F. (2012). School Counselors: A Review of Contemporary Issues. *Research in Higher Education Journal*, 18.
- Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Euwema, M. C. (2005). Job resources buffer the impact of job demands on burnout. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 10(2), 170.
- Bardhoshi, G., Schweinle, A., & Duncan, K. (2014). Understanding the impact of school factors on school counselor burnout: A mixed-methods study. *The Professional Counselor*, 4(5), 426. <https://doi.org/10.15241/gb.4.5.426>
- Beale, A. V. (2004). Questioning whether you have a contemporary school counseling program. *The Clearinghouse*, 73-76.
- Beane, J. (2001). Introduction: Reform and reinvention. In T. Dickinson (Ed.), *Reinventing the middle school*. Roundedge.
- Berry, E. L. (2006). Counselor as leaders: Investigating school counselor activities. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 67.
- Biddle, B. J. (1986) Recent developments in role theory. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 12, 67-92. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.so.12.080186.000435>

- Bidwell, C. E. (2001). Analyzing schools as organizations: Long-term permanence and short-term change: A magazine of theory and practice. *Sociology of Education*, 100-114. <https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2673256>
- Biolcati, R., Palareti, L., & Mameli, C. (2017). What adolescents seeking help teach us about a school-based counseling service. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 35(1), 45-56. <https://doi:10.1007/s10560-017-0503-7>
- Blake, M. K. (2020). Other duties as assigned: The ambiguous role of the high school counselor. *Sociology of Education*, 93(4), 315-330. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040720932563>
- Bowers, H., Lemberger-Truelove, M. E., & Brigman, G. (2017). A social-emotional leadership framework for school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 21(1b), 2156759X18773004.
- Briggs, A. R., Coleman, M., & Morrison, M. (2012). *Research methods in educational leadership & management* (3rd ed.). <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957695>
- Bruce, M., & Bridgeland, J. (2012). *2012 national survey of school counselors: True north-charting the course to college and career readiness*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED537913.pdf>
- Bryant, R. M., & Constantine, M. G. (2006). Multiple role balance, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction in women school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 265-271.
- Burkard, A. W., Gillen, M., Martinez, M. J., & Skytte, S. L. (2012). Implementation challenges and training needs for comprehensive school counseling programs in

- Wisconsin high schools. *Professional School Counseling*, 16, 136-145.  
<https://doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2012-16.136>
- Burnett, F. (1993). Move counseling off the back burner of reform. *Education Week*, 32(22).
- Butler, S. K., & Constantine, M. G. (2005). Collective self-esteem and burnout in professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 9, 55-62
- California Department of Education. (2019). *Pupil services staff by type*. <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/PupilSvs1.asp?cYear=2018-19&cChoice=PupilSvcs>
- Camelford, K. (2014). *The relationship between implementation of the American School Counselor Association national model and professional secondary school counselor burnout*. University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations. 1857.  
<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/1857>
- Campbell, C. A., & Dahir, C. A. (1997). Sharing the vision: The national standards for school counseling programs. *American School Counselor Association*.
- Carey, J., & Dimmitt, C. (2012). School counseling and student outcomes: Summary of six statewide studies. *Professional School Counseling*, 16(2).
- Carey, J., Harrington, K., Martin, I., & Stevenson, D. (2012). A statewide evaluation of the outcomes of the implementation of ASCA National Model school counseling programs in Utah high schools. *Professional School Counseling*, 16, 89-99.  
<https://doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2012->
- Cervoni, A., & DeLucia-Waack, J. (2011). Role conflict and ambiguity as predictors of job satisfaction in high school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling*, 9(1), 30.

- Cinotti, D. (2014). Competing professional identity models in school counseling: A historical perspective and commentary. *Professional Counselor, 4*(5), 417-425.
- Collins, T. P. (2014). Addressing mental health needs in our schools: Supporting the role of school counselors. *The Professional Counselor, 4*(5), 413-416.
- Committee on School Health. (2004). School-based mental health services. *Pediatrics, 113*(6), 1839-1845. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.113.6.1839>
- Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2016). *2016 CACREP standards*. Retrieved from <http://www.cacrep.org/for-programs/2016-cacrep-standards/>
- Crespi, T. D. (2003). Special section--Clinical supervision in the schools: Challenges, opportunities, and lost horizons. *The Clinical Supervisor, 22*(1), 59-73. [https://doi.org/10.1300/J001v22n01\\_05](https://doi.org/10.1300/J001v22n01_05)
- Crespi, T. D., & Hughes, T. L. (2004). School-based mental health services for adolescents: School psychology in contemporary society. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 20*(1), 67-78.
- Culbreth, J. R., Scarborough, J. L., Banks-Johnson, A., & Solomon, S. (2005). Role stress among practicing school counselors. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 45*(1), 58-71. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2005.tb00130.x>
- Curry, J. R., & Bickmore, D. (2012). School counselor induction and the importance of mattering. *Professional School Counseling, 15*(3), 110-122. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X1201500301>

- Curry, J. R., & DeVoss, J. A. (2009). Introduction to special issue: The school counselor as leader. *Professional School Counseling, 13*(2), 64.  
<https://doi.org/10.5330/PSC.n.2010-13.64>
- Dahir, C. A. (2004). Supporting a nation of learners: The role of school counseling in educational reform. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 82*(3), 344.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6678.2004.tb00320.x>
- Dahir, C. A., Burnham, J. J., & Stone, C. (2009). Listen to the voices: School counselors and comprehensive school counseling programs. *Professional School Counseling, 12*(3).
- Dahir, C. A., Burnham, J. J., Stone, C. B., & Cobb, N. (2010). Principals as partners: Counselors as collaborators. *NASSP Bulletin, 94*(4), 286-305.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0192636511399899>
- Dang, T. G. (2021). The effects of the work environment on California community college counselors' professional self-care *APA PsycInfo*.
- Davis, M. L. (2008). *The effect of the middle school concept on student achievement in coastal Mississippi middle level schools*. Dissertations. 1174.
- DeKruyf, L., Auger Richard, W., & Trice-Black, S. (2013). The role of school counselors in meeting students' mental health needs: Examining issues of professional identity. *Professional School Counseling, 16*(5), 271.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0001600502>
- Dimmitt, C. & Carey, J. (2007). Using the ASCA national model to facilitate school transitions. *Professional School Counseling, 10*(3).  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X0701000302>

- Dollarhide, C. T., Gibson, D., M., & Saginak, K., A. . (2008). New counselors' leadership efforts in school counseling: Themes from a year-long qualitative study. *Professional School Counseling, 11*(4), 262. <https://doi.org/10.5330/PSC.n.2010-11.262>
- Donaghue, E. M. (1996). *A study of organizational influences on counselor perception of self-efficacy and behavior*. The Catholic University of America.
- Durlak, J. A., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, A. B., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child Development, 82*, 405–432. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2010.01564.x>
- Education Trust. (1997). *Working definition of school counseling*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Eklund, K., Meyer, L., Way, S., & McLean, D. (2017). School psychologists as mental health providers: The impact of staffing ratios and Medicaid on service provisions. *Psychology in the Schools, 54*(3), 279-293. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21996>
- Elias, M. J., Patrikakou, E. N., & Weissberg, R. P. (2007). A competence-based framework for parent—school—community partnerships in secondary schools. *School Psychology International, 28*(5), 540-554. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034307085657>
- Elmore, R. F. (2004). *School reform from the inside out: Policy, practice, and performance*. Harvard Education Press.
- Engeström, Y. (1999). *Perspectives on activity theory*. Cambridge University Press.



- Epstein, J. L., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2010). School counselors' roles in developing partnerships with families and communities for student success. *Professional School Counseling, 14* (1).
- Erford, B. T. (2003). *Transforming the school counseling profession*. Merrill Prentice Hall.
- Falls, L., & Nichter, M. (2007). The voices of high school counselors: Lived experience of job stress. *Journal of School Counseling, 5*(13), 32.
- Florio, C. (2010). *Burnout & compassion fatigue: A guide for mental health professionals and care givers*. CreateSpace.
- Freeman, B., & Coll, K. M. (1997). Factor structure of the role questionnaire (RQ): A study of high school counselors. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling Development, 30*(1), 32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07481756.1997.12068915>
- Fye, H. J., Cook, R. M., Baltrinic, E. R., & Baylin, A. (2020). Examining individual and organizational factors of school counselor burnout. *The Professional Counselor, 10*(2), 235-250. <https://doi.org/10.15241/hjf.10.2.235>
- Gerler Jr, E. R. (1991). *The challenge of counseling in middle schools*. ERIC Digest.
- Gibbons, M. M., Diambra, J. F., & Buchanan, D. K. (2010). School counselor perceptions and attitudes about collaboration. *Journal of School Counseling, 8*(34).
- Gladding, S. T. (2013). *Historical and professional foundations of counseling* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report, 8*(4), 597.

- Goodman-Scott, E., Betters-Bubon, J., & Donohue, P. (2016). Aligning comprehensive school counseling programs and positive behavioral interventions and supports to maximize school counselors' efforts. *Professional School Counseling, 19*(1), 57. <https://doi.org.umassglobal.idm.oclc.org/10.5330/1096-2409-19.1.57>
- Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (2001). Comprehensive Guidance and counseling programs: A rich history and a bright future. *Professional School Counseling, 4*(4), 246.
- Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (2006). *Developing and managing your school guidance and counseling program* (4th ed.). America Counseling Association.
- Gysbers, N. C., & Henderson, P. (2012). *Developing and managing your school guidance and counseling program* (5th ed.). American School Counselor Association.
- Habibi, A., Sarafrazi, A., & Izadyar, S. (2014). Delphi technique theoretical framework in qualitative research. *The International Journal of Engineering and Science, 3*(4), 8-13. <https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.1016934.v1>
- Hatch, T. (2004). The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs, one vision, one voice for the profession. In B. T. Erford (Ed.), *Professional school counseling: A handbook of theories, programs, & practices* (pp. 235-248). Austin, TX: CAPS Press.
- Hepp, E. C. (2015). Secondary school counselor and principal preferences regarding key school counselor roles. *APA PsycInfo*.
- Holman, L. F., Nelson, J., & Watts, R. (2019). Organizational variables contributing to school counselor burnout: An opportunity for leadership, advocacy, collaboration,

- and systemic change. *The Professional Counselor*, 9(2), 126-141.  
<https://doi.org/10.15241/lfh.9.2.126>
- Hough, D. L. (1995). The Elemiddle School: A Model for Middle Grade Reform. *Principal*, 74(3), 6-9.
- Hsu, C.-C., & Sandford, B. A. (2007). The Delphi technique: Making sense of consensus. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 12(10).
- Huffman, J. L., Fasko, D., Weikel, W., & Owen, D. (1993). *Perceptions of the role of middle school counselors*. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED360586.pdf>
- Ilies, R., Dimotakis, N., & De Pater, I. E. (2010). Psychological and physiological reactions to high workloads: Implications for wellbeing. *Personnel Psychology*, 63(2), 407-436.
- Ivey, A. E., & Robin, S. S. (1966). Role theory, role conflict, and counseling: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 13(1), 29.
- Janson, C., & Stone, C. B. (2009). What works in the field: Comprehensive school counseling program. In F. Connolly & N. Protheroe (Eds.). *Principals and Counselors Partnering for Student Success* (pp. 139-157). Educational Research Service and Naviance Inc.
- Johnson, L. S. (2000). Promoting professional identity in an era of educational reform. *Professional School Counseling*, 4(1), 31-40.
- Johnson, S., & Johnson, C. D. (2003). Results-based guidance: A systems approach to student support programs. *Professional School Counseling*, 6(3), 180.
- Kaplan, L., & Evans, M. W. (1999). *Hiring the best school counseling candidates to promote students' achievement*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019263659908360306>

- Katz, D., & Kahn, R. L. (1966). *The social psychology of organizations*. Wiley.
- Kendrick, R., Chandler, J., & Hatcher, W. (1994). Job demands, stressors, and the school counselor. *The School Counselor, 41*, 365–369.
- Kirchner, G. L., & Setchfield, M. S. (2005). School counselors' and school principals' perceptions of the school counselor's role. *Education, 126*, 10-16.
- Kirk-Brown, A., & Wallace, D. (2004). Predicting burnout and job satisfaction in workplace counselors: The influence of role stressors, job challenge, and organizational knowledge. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 41*(1), 29-37.
- Kolodinsky, P., Draves, P., Schroder, V., Lindsey, C., & Zlatev, M. (2009). Reported levels of satisfaction and frustration by Arizona school counselors: A desire for greater connections with students in a data-driven era. *Professional School Counseling, 12*(3), 193-199.
- Kuhn, L. A. (2004). *Student perceptions of school counselor roles and functions*. Dissertations & Theses Global. (305178012).
- Lambie, G. W. (2002). The contribution of ego development level to degree of burnout in school counselors. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 63*, 508.
- Lambie, G. W. (2007). The contribution of ego development level to burnout in school counselors: Implications for professional school counseling. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 85*, 82-88.
- Lambie, G. W., & Williamson, L. L. (2004). The challenge to change from guidance counseling to professional school counseling: A historical proposition. *Professional School Counseling, 8*(2), 124.

- LeBlanc, I. V., & Joseph, J. (2019). Preparing school counselor leaders: An intervention study with first-year school counseling students. *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global*.
- Lee, H., Song, R., Cho, Y. S., Lee, G. Z., & Daly, B. (2003). A comprehensive model for predicting burnout in Korean nurses. *Journal of advanced nursing, 44*(5), 534-545.
- Lee, R. T., & Ashforth, B. E. (1996). A meta-analytic examination of the correlates of the three dimensions of job burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 81*(2), 123.
- Leiter, M. P., Gascon, S., & Martinez-Jarreta, B. (2010). Making sense of work life: A structural model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 40*(1), 57-75.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2009.00563.x>
- Lewis, R. E., & Borunda, R. (2006). Lived stories: participatory leadership in school counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 84*(4), 406.
- Lieberman, A. (2004). Confusion regarding school counselor functions: school leadership impacts role clarity. *Education, 124*(3), 552.
- Lowe, C., Gibson, D. M., & Carlson, R. G. (2018). Examining the relationship between school counselors' age, years of experience, school setting, and self-perceived transformational leadership skills. *Professional School Counseling, 21*(1b), 1-7.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X18773580>
- Luke, M., & Bernard, J. M. (2006). The school counseling supervision model: An extension of the discrimination model. *Counselor Education & Supervision, 45*(4), 282-295. <https://doi.org/10.1002/j.1556-6978.2006.tb00004.x>

- Manning, M. L. (2000). A brief history of the middle school. *The Clearing House*, 73(4), 192-192.
- Marcia, J. E. (1980). Identity in adolescence. In J. Adelson (Ed.), *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*, 159-181. New York: Wiley.
- Martin, P. J. (2002). Transforming school counseling: A national perspective. *Theory Into Practice*, 41(3), 148.
- Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum
- Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (1997). *The truth about burnout: How organizations cause personal stress and what to do about it*.
- Mason, E. C. M., & McMahon, G. H. (2009). Leadership practices of school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, 13(2), 107.
- Mayberry, M. (2005). *The school counselor's role in easing students' transition from elementary to middle school*. Counseling Outfitters.
- McCarthy, C., Van Horn Kerne, V., Calfa, N. A., Lamber, R. G., & Guzman, M. (2010). An exploration of school counselors' demands and resources: Relationship to stress, biographic, and caseload characteristics. *Professional School Counseling*, 13(3), 146-158.
- McMillan, J. H., & Schmacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry* (7th ed.). Pearson Education Inc.
- Meyer, H.-D., & Rowan, B. (2006). *Institutional analysis and the study of education*. State University of New York Press.

- Mohamad, S. N. A., Embi, M. A., & Nordin, N. (2015). Determining e-portfolio elements in learning process using fuzzy Delphi analysis. *International Education Studies*, 8(9), 171- 176.
- Moyer, M. (2011). Effects of non-guidance activities, supervision, and student-to-counselor ratios on school counselor burnout. *Journal of School Counseling*, 9(5), 31.
- Mullen, P. R., & Gutierrez, D. (2016). Burnout, stress and direct student services among school counselors. *Professional Counselor*, 6(4), 344-359.
- Myrick, R. D. (2003). Accountability: counselors count. *Professional School Counseling*, 6(3), 174-179.
- National Middle School Association. (1995). *This we believe: Developmentally responsive middle level schools: A position paper of National Middle School Association*. National Middle School Association.
- Nelson, J. A., Robles-Pina, R., & Nichter, M. (2008). An analysis of Texas high school counselors' roles: Actual and preferred counseling activities. *Journal of Professional Counseling, Practice, Theory, & Research*, 36(1), 30-46.
- Page, B. J., Pietrzak, D. R., & Sutton, J. M. (2001). National survey of school counselor supervision. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, 41, 142–149.
- Paisley, P. O., & McMahon, G. (2001). School counseling for the 21st century: challenges and opportunities. *Professional School Counseling*, 5(2), 106-115.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluations* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Perkins, G., Oescher, J., & Ballard, M. B. (2010). The evolving identity of school counselors as defined by the stakeholders. *Journal of School Counseling*, 8(31).

- Pierson-Hubeny, D., & Archambault, F. X. (1987). Role stress and perceived intensity of burnout among school psychologists. *Psychology in the Schools*, 24(3), 244-253.
- Population Reference Bureau. (2022). *Kidsdata*. Retrieved July 3, 2022, from <https://www.kidsdata.org/>
- Radford, A. W., Ifill, N., & Lew, T. (2016). *A national look at the high school counseling office: What is it doing and what role can it play in facilitating students' paths to college?* <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED578183.pdf>
- Rayle, A. D. (2006). Do school counselors matter? Mattering as a moderator between job stress and job satisfaction. *Professional School Counseling*, 9, 206–215.
- Rayle, A. D., & Adams, J. R. (2007). An exploration of 21st century school counselors' daily work activities. *Journal of School Counseling*, 5(8), n8.
- Reiner, S. M., Colbert, R., D., & Pérusse, R. (2009). Teacher perceptions of the professional school counselor role: A national study. *Professional School Counseling*, 12(5), 324-332.
- Rhoades, L., & Eisenberger, R. (2002). Perceived organizational support: A review of the literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(4), 698.
- Schweiger, W. K., Henderson, D. A., McCaskill, K., Clawson, T. W., & Collins, D. R. eds. (2011). *Counselor preparation: Programs, faculty, trends* (13th ed.). New York: Routledge
- Sears, S. (1999). Transforming school counseling: Making a difference for students. *NASSP Bulletin*, 83(603), 47-53.
- Sears, S. J., & Navin, S. L. (2001). Stressors in school counseling. *Education*, 103, 333–337.



- Senge, P. M. (1990). *The art and practice of the learning organization* (Vol. 1). New York: Doubleday.
- Shertzer, B., Stone, S. C. (1971). *Fundamentals of guidance*. Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Shillingford, A. M., & Lambie, G., W. (2010). Contribution of professional school counselors' values and leadership Practices to their programmatic service delivery. *Professional School Counseling, 13*(4), 208.
- Sink, C. A. (2005a). Fostering academic development and learning: Implications and recommendations for middle school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 9*, 128-132.
- Sink, C. (2005b). Comprehensive school counseling programs and academic achievement: A rejoinder to Brown and Trusty. *Professional School Counseling, 9*, 9-12.
- Sink, C. A., Akos, P., Turnbull, R. J., & Mvududu, M. (2008). An investigation of comprehensive school counseling programs and academic achievement in Washington state middle schools. *Professional School Counseling, 12*, 43-53.  
<https://doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2010-12.43>
- Sklad, M., Diekstra, R., Ritter, M. D., Ben, J., & Gravesteyn, C. (2012). Effectiveness of school-based universal social, emotional, and behavioral programs: Do they enhance students' development in the area of skill, behavior, and adjustment? *Psychology in the Schools, 49*, 892–909. <https://doi:10.1002/pits.21641>
- Stewart, C. C. (1959). A bill of rights for school counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 37*(7), 500–503.

- Super, D. E. (1955). Transition: From vocational guidance to counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 2(1), 3-9. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0041630>
- Taherdoost, H. (2016). Sampling methods in research methodology: How to choose a sampling technique for research. *International Journal of Academic Research in Management*, 5, 18-27.
- The Education Trust West. (2006). *Building a movement: Closing achievement gaps in California. What, why and how?* Retrieved October 1, 2020, from <http://www2.edtrust.org/NR/rdonlyres/5F0208B6-34F3-J4F81>
- Turner, R. H. (2001). Role theory. In *Handbook of sociological theory* (pp. 233-254). Springer, Boston, MA.
- Yousuf, M. I. (2007). Using experts' opinions through Delphi technique. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 12(4), 1-8.
- Vandegrift, J. A. (1999). *Are Arizona public schools making the best use of school counselors?* Results of a three-year study of counselors' time use. Arizona School to Work Briefing Paper #16, Office of Educational Research and Improvement.
- Whiston, S. C. (2002). Response to the past, present, and future of school counseling: raising some issue. *Professional School Counseling*, 5(3), 148.
- Wilkerson, K., & Bellini, J. (2006). Intrapersonal and organizational factors associated with burnout among school counselors. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 84, 440-450.

Wood, C., & Rayle, A. D. (2006). A model of school counseling supervision: The goals, functions, roles, and systems model. *Counselor Education and Supervision, 45*, 253-266.

Ziomek-Daigle, J., McMahon, H. G., & Paisley, P. O. (2008). Adlerian Based Interventions for Professional School Counselors: Serving as Both Counselors and Educational Leaders. *Journal of Individual Psychology, 4(64)*, 450.

## APPENDICES

# APPENDIX A

## Synthesis Matrix

Reference	Themes	Role/Identity	Leadership	Role Stress	Middle School	Org Theory	Org Factors	CSQP	Self-Reflection	SDG	School	Mental-Health	Students	Methods
Agrusa, J. (2008). Professional role perceptions of school social workers, psychologists, and counselors.		X		X			X							
Alexander, W. H. (1992). The junior high school.		X			X									
Alexander, C. H., Knudsen, T., Zepkebaum, J., & Ramirez, M. C. (2022). A review of the school counseling literature for themes evolving from The Education Trust.		X											X	
Amara, E. S., & Clark, M. J. (2002). School administrators' conceptions of the school counselor role.		X												
American School Counseling Association. (2019). The Essential Role of Middle School Counselors.		X			X					X				
American School Counselor Association. (2019). The National Model: A framework for school counseling programs (4th ed.). Author.		X						X		X				
Ammonovich, R. L., Hopkins, W. J., Gutierrez, J. P., & Bartlett, K. J. (2014). Identifying role diffusion in school counseling. The Professional Counselor, 3, 175-184.		X		X										
Aubrey, Roger F. 1977. Historical Development of Guidance and Counseling and Implications for the Future.														
Bain, S. F. (2013). School Counselors: A Review of Contemporary Issues.		X		X			X	X						
Bardoch, G., Schwaible, J., & Duncan, K. (2014). Understanding the Impact of School Factors on School Counselor Burnout.		X					X	X			X			
Baskin, J. V. (2000). Questioning whether you have a contemporary school counseling program.		X	X	X			X	X						
Berry, E. L. (2006). Counselors as leaders: Investigating school counselor activities.		X	X											
Biddle, B. J. (1988). Recent developments in role theory.		X					X		X					
Birkwell, C. E. (2001). Analyzing schools as organizations: Long-term persistence and organizational change.						X	X							
Bolton, R., Palanski, L., & Murnighan, C. (2017). What adolescents seeking help teach us about a school-based counseling service.		X										X		
Borke, M. K. (2000). Other roles as assigned: The ambiguous role of the high school counselor.		X					X							
Bowers, H., Lemberger-Truitt, M. E., & Briggman, G. (2017). A social-emotional leadership framework for school counselors.		X	X				X	X		X		X		
Bruce, M., & Briggwald, J. (2012). 2012 national survey of school counselors: true north—charting the course to college and career readiness.		X											X	
Burham, J. W., Gillen, M., Martinez, M. J., & Sierra, S. L. (2012). Implementation challenges and training needs for CSQP.							X	X						
Burnes, F. (1992). More Counseling off the back burner of reform.		X											X	

Carnellford, Kellie, The Relationship Between Implementation of the ASCA National Model and Professional Secondary School Counselor	X					X	X		X				
Campbell, C. J., & Dahn, C. J. (1987). Sharing the Vision: the national standards for school counseling programs.	X					X			X				
Carey, J., & Dimmitt, C. (2007). Using the ASCA national model to facilitate school transitions	X			X		X			X				
Carey, J., & Dimmitt, C. (2012). School counseling and student outcomes:						X	X		X			X	
Carey, J., Harrington, K., Martin, I., & Stevenson, D. (2012). A statewide evaluation of the outcomes of the implementation of ASCA National Model school counseling programs	X					X			X				
Carson, D., & DeLuca-Waack, J. (2011). Role conflict and ambiguity as predictors of job satisfaction in high school counselors	X		X			X			X				
Chubb, D. (2016). Comparing professional identity models in school counseling: a historical perspective and commentary.	X					X					X		
Collins, T. S. (2014). Addressing mental health needs in our schools: Supporting the role of school counselors	X										X		
Committee on School Health. (2004). School-based mental health services.	X										X		
Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2016).	X										X	X	
Craig, T. D. (2002). Special education—Clinical supervision in the schools						X							
Cularen, J. R., Scarborough, J. L., Banks-Johnson, J., & Solomon, S. (2002). Role stress among practicing school counselors.	X		X			X							
Curry, J. R., & Giesmons, D. (2012). School counselor induction and the importance of						X							
Curry, J. R., & DeVoss, J. S. (2009). Introduction to Special Issue: The School Counselor as Leader.	X	X											
Dahn, C. J. (2006). Supporting a nation of learners: the role of school counseling in educational reform													
Dahn, C. J., Burnham, J. J., Stone, C. B., & Cobb, N. (2010). Principals as partners: counselors as collaborators						X			X				
Dang, T. G. (2002). The effects of the work environment on California community college counselors' professional self-care						X			X				
Davis, Mary Lee, The Effect of the Middle School Concept on Student Achievement			X									X	
DeKruyf, L., Jugar, Richard, W., & Trice-Black, S. (2012). The Role of School Counselors in Meeting Students' Mental Health Needs: Examining Issues of Professional Identity.	X										X		
Dolan-Hicks, C. T., Gibson, D. M., & Raginak, K. A., Jr. (2008). New Counselors' Leadership Efforts in School Counseling	X	X				X							
Donoghue, E. M. (1988). A study of organizational influences on counselor perception of self-efficacy and behavior.					X	X							
Dunkel, J. S., Weissberg, R. P., Dymnicki, J. E., Taylor, R. D., & Schellinger, K. B. (2011). The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions						X					X		
Sikund, K., Mayer, L., Way, S., & McLean, D. (2017). School Psychologists as Mental Health Providers						X					X		

Blas, M. J., Parnell, E. N., & Walsberg, R. P. (2007). A competence-based framework for parent-school-community partnerships in secondary schools								X	X										
Engstrom, V. (1999). Perspectives on activity theory												X							
Sperry, J. V., & Van Voorhis, F. L. (2010). School counselor roles in developing partnerships with families and communities for student success								X	X										
Reid, E. T. (2005). Transforming the school counseling profession	X																		
Falk, L., & Nicker, M. (2007). The voices of high school counselors: Lived experience of job	X		X					X											
Freeman, B., & Coll, K. M. (1987). Factor Structure of the Role Questionnaire	X		X																
Fye, M. J., Cook, R. M., Sattler, R. S., & Baylin, S. (2022). Examining individual and organizational factors of school counselor burnout								X					X						
Garter, P. S. R. (1981). The Challenge of Counseling in Middle Schools. ERIC Digest						X													
Gibbons, M. M., Daniels, J. C., & Buchanan, D. M. (2010). School counselor perceptions and attitudes about collaboration	X							X											
Solomon, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research																			X
Goodman-Kee, S., Sanders-Robson, J., & Conohue, P. (2016). Aligning comprehensive school counseling programs and positive behavioral interventions and supports to maximize school counseling efforts								X	X				X						
Gyabers, N. C., & Henderson, D. (2001). Comprehensive Guidance and Counseling Programs: A Rich History and a Bright Future	X							X	X										
Gyabers, N. C., & Henderson, D. (2009). Developing and managing your school guidance and counseling program	X							X	X			X							
Haski-Lenz, S., Benstead, S., & Isadyar, S. (2014). Delphi Technique Theoretical Framework in Qualitative Research																			X
Hatch, T. (2004). The ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs, one vision, one voice for the profession	X		X										X						
Hagg, E. C. (2015). Secondary school counselor and principal preferences regarding key school counselor roles	X		X					X											
Holman, L. F., Nelson, J., & Waza, R. (2019). Organizational variables contributing to school counselor burnout								X						X					
Hough, D. L. (1988). The Elem Middle School: A Model for Middle Grade Reform						X													
Huffman, J. L., Fasco, D., Walker, W., & Owen, D. (1999). Perceptions of the Role of Middle School Counselors	X					X													
Isa, R., Dimotaki, N., & De Paer, J. G. (2010). Psychological and physiological reactions to high workload: Implications for well-being								X						X					
Ivey, S. E., & Robin, S. S. (1989). Role theory, role conflict, and counseling													X						
Johnson, L. S. (2000). Promoting professional identity in an era of educational reform	X																		
Johnson, S., & Johnson, C. D. (2009). Results-based guidance: A systems approach to student support programs																			
Kaplan & Crane, (1999). Hiring the Best: School Counseling Candidates To Promote Student Achievement																			X

Kirchner, G. L., & Beorffed, M. S. (2005). School counselors and school principals' perceptions of school counselors' role.	X						X									
Kolodny, P., Dreves, R., Schrader, V., Linsey, C., & Zoran, M. (2008). Reported levels of satisfaction with burnout.			X				X				X					
Kuhn, L. J. (2006). Student perceptions of school counselor roles and functions.	X															
Lambie, G. W. (2007). The contribution of age development level to burnout in school counselors: Implications for professional school counseling.												X				
Lambie, G. W., & Williamson, L. L. (2004). The challenge to change from guidance counseling to professional school counseling: A historical perspective.	X		X				X	X			X					
LeBlanc, T. V., & Joseph, J. (2016). Preparing School Counselor Leaders: An Intervention Study with First-Year School Counseling Students.	X						X									
Lee, R. T., & Johnson, B. E. (1988). A meta-analytic examination of the correlates of the three dimensions of job burnout.												X				
Leiter, M. P., Geason, G., & Manthorpe-James, B. (2010). Making Sense of Work Life: A Structural Model of Burnout.												X				
Lewis, R. G., & Scoville, R. (2006). Using stories: Participatory leadership in school counseling.		X														
Lidzerman, J. (2004). Confusion regarding school counselor functions.	X	X														
Luke, M., & Berman, J. M. (2006). The School Counseling Supervision Model: An Extension of the Discrimination Model.	X						X									
Marcia, J. E. (1980). Identity in adolescence.					X											
Martin, P. J. (2005). Transforming School Counseling: A National Perspective.	X						X	X								
Martens, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, G. J. (2005). School leadership characteristics.		X														
Mason, S. C. M., & McLellan, G. H. (2006). Leadership practices of school counselors.		X														
Masberry, M. (2005). The school counselor's role in easing students' transition from elementary to middle school.	X			X												
Meyer, H.-D., & Rowan, B. (2006). Institutional Analysis and the Study of Education.							X									
Moyer, M. (2011). Effects of non-guidance activities, supervision, and students' counselor ratios on school counselor burnout.			X									X				
Mullan, P. R., & Guzman, D. (2016). Burnout, Stress and Direct Student Services among School Counselors.			X										X			
Nelson, J. J., Robles-Pino, R., & Walker, M. (2006). High school counselors' roles: Actual and preferred counseling activities.	X							X	X							
Raisley, P. C., & McLellan, G. (2001). School counseling for the 21st century.	X															
Reinke, G., Gascher, J., & Ballard, M. S. (2010). The evolving identity of school counselors.	X															
Population Reference Bureau. (2014). <i>Worlddata.org</i> .								X								
Radford, G. W., III, N., & Lee, T. (2016). A National Look at the High School Counseling.	X		X													
Rayle, J. D. (2006). Do school counselors matter? Measuring job stress and job satisfaction.								X				X				



Rajic, D. D., & Adams, J. R. (2007). An Exploration of 21st Century School Counselors' Daily Work Schedules.	X						X										
Rainer, S. M., Colson, R. D., & Penuela, R. (2006). Teacher perceptions of the professional school counselor role.	X																
Schweiger, Wendell, Donna J. Henderson, Kristi McCaskill, Thomas W. Clawson, and Donald R. Collins, eds. (2011). Counselor Preparation: Programs, Faculty, Trends							X										
Sears, S. (1999). Transforming school counseling: Making a difference for students.																X	
Sears, S. J., & Naim, S. L. (2007). <i>Strategies in school counseling</i> . Education			X				X					X					
Shertzer, S. (1977). <i>Fundamentals of guidance</i>	X																
Shillingford, S. M., & Lambie, G. W. (2010). Contribution of professional school counselors' values and Leadership Practices	X	X															
Shih, C. S. (2004). Fostering academic development and learning: Implications and recommendations for middle school counselors					X											X	
Shih, C. (2002b). Comprehensive school counseling programs and academic achievement								X								X	
Shih, C. J., Joss, P., Turnbull, R. J., & Mvududu, M. (2004). An investigation of comprehensive school counseling programs and academic achievement								X								X	
Sklad, M., Diavara, R., Ritar, M. D., Ben, J., & Groveselle, C. (2012). Effectiveness of school-based universal social, emotional, and behavioral programs: Do they enhance students' development in the area of skill, behavior, and adjustment?														X			
Super, D. E. (1952). Transition from vocational guidance to counseling psychology	X																
Suzman, Cecil C. 1999. A Bill of Rights for School Counselors	X																
Super, D. E. (1952). Transition from vocational guidance to counseling psychology	X																
The Education Trust West (2006). Closing achievement gaps in California	X																
Vandegraft, J. D. (1999). Are Arizona public schools making the best use of school counselors? Results of a three-year study of counselors' time use							X										
Whison, S. C. (2002). Response to the past, present, and future of school counseling	X																
Whitson, K., & Salimi, J. (2006). Intrapersonal and organizational factors associated with burnout among school counselors							X					X					
Wood, C., & Rayle, G. D. (2009). A model of school counseling supervision: The goals, functions, roles, and systems model							X										
Zornow-Dalgle, J., McFate, H. G., & Paley, P. O. (2004). <i>Jolietian Based Interventions for Professional School Counselors: Serving as Both Counselors and Educational Leaders</i>	X	X											X	X			

## APPENDIX B

### Invitation to Participate

**STUDY:** A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for middle School Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

July 7, 2022

Dear Prospective Study Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study to recognize the most important roles and responsibilities of middle school counselors. Furthermore, once roles and responsibilities are determined you will be asked to identify the organizational supports needed to ensure middle school counselors can positively influence student outcomes.

The main investigator for this study is Debbie Monroe, Doctoral Candidate at the University of Massachusetts, Global (UMass Global) Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were selected to participate in this study because of your expertise and experience in middle school counseling.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this Delphi study was to identify, from the perspective of expert counselors, the roles that middle school counselors perform during their workday, to rate the importance of the roles identified, and to identify organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to successfully perform each of the most important roles identified. Additionally, this study seeks to gain feedback from expert middle school counselors on how to best align the necessary organizational supports with the identified most important roles.

**PROCEDURES:** If you decide to participate in this study, you will receive four rounds of an electronic survey via Survey Monkey, with each survey taking approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The first-round survey will contain an open-ended question asking what roles middle school counselors perform. The second-round survey will utilize a Likert scale and ask participants to rank the importance of each identified role generated from the first round. The third-round survey will take the most important roles identified and ask a second open-ended question about the needed organizational supports to ensure the counselors success with the identified most important roles. The fourth round will provide participants with coded responses from the third round and ask for suggestions on alignment.

**RISKS, INCONVENIENCES, AND DISCOMFORTS:** This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in everyday life. There is no cost to you for participating, and you will not be compensated in any way for your participation. The survey will be completed anonymously, and the researchers will not know your identity.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS:** Your participation in this study does not yield any direct benefits to you. However, analysis of the data generated from your participation in this study is intended to provide current information on the most important roles middle school counselors can perform and what organizational supports are needed to support middle school counselors in being successful. Ultimately the goal is to help middle school counselors positively affect student outcomes due to providing the needed organizational support.

**ANONYMITY:** All surveys and research data collected will be stored securely and confidentially on a password-protected server. Records of information that you provide for the research study, and any personal information you provide, will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study. Because you will complete the survey anonymously, your name or other identifying information will not be used in reports or publications. Only the research team may have access to study records to protect participants' safety and welfare.

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding this study, you may contact me at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]. You can also contact the study's Dissertation Chairperson, Dr. Phil Pendley, by email at [pendley@umassglobal.edu](mailto:pendley@umassglobal.edu). If you have any further questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact UMass Global's Office of Institutional Research, UMass Global, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618. [BUIRB@umassglobal.edu](mailto:BUIRB@umassglobal.edu).

Respectfully,

Debbie Monroe  
Doctoral Candidate, UMass Global

## APPENDIX C

### Demographic Survey

**RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:** A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for middle School Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

Lead Researcher:

Debbie Monroe, Doctoral Candidate  
UMass Global  
Department of Education  
[redacted]

Faculty Sponsor:

Dr. Philip Pendley  
UMass Global  
Department of Education  
951-712-2065, pendley@umassglobal.edu

- You are invited to participate in a research study to identify the most desirable qualifications a candidate could possess to obtain an entry-level school site administrative position. Furthermore, you will be asked to describe in detail each of the top-rated qualifications. The main investigator for this study is Debbie Monroe, Doctoral Candidate at the University of Massachusetts, Global (UMass Global) Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program. You were selected to participate in this study because of your expertise and experience in middle school counseling.
- Middle school counselors in the state of California in three geographical locations northern California, central California, and southern California were targeted. Participation should require 40 to 60 minutes in total, which will be broken up into four 10 to 15-minute intervals spread over four weeks. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may discontinue your involvement in this study at any time without any consequences.
- The purpose of this Delphi study is to identify, from the perspective of expert counselors, the roles that middle school counselors perform during their workday, to rate the importance of the roles identified, and to identify organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified. Additionally, this study seeks to gain feedback from expert middle school counselors on how to best align the necessary organizational supports with the identified most important roles.

- If you decide to participate in this study, you will receive four rounds of an electronic surveys via Survey Monkey, with each survey taking approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The first-round survey will contain an open-ended question asking what roles middle school counselors perform. The second-round survey will utilize a Likert scale and ask participants to rank the importance of each identified role generated from the first round. The third-round survey will take the most important roles identified and ask a second open-ended question about the needed organizational supports to ensure the counselors success with the identified most important roles. The fourth round will provide participants with coded responses from the third round and ask for suggestions on alignment.
- This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life. There is no cost to you for participating, and you will not be compensated in any way for your participation. The survey will be completed anonymously, and the researchers will not know your identity.
- Your participation in this study does not yield any direct benefits to you. However, analysis of the data generated from your participation in this study is intended to provide current information on the most important roles of middle school counselors and the organizational supports needed to desirable qualifications an entry-level school administrator
- All surveys and research data collected will be stored securely and confidentially on a password-protected server. Records of information that you provide for the research study, and any personal information you provide, will not be linked in any way. It will not be possible to identify you as the person who provided any specific information for the study. Because you will complete the survey anonymously, your name or other identifying information will not be used in reports or publications. Only the research team may have access to study records to protect participants' safety and welfare.
- If you have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding this study, you may contact me at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]. You can also contact the study's Dissertation Chairperson, Dr. Phil Pendley, by email at [pendley@umassglobal.edu](mailto:pendley@umassglobal.edu). If you have any further questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact UMass Global's Office of Institutional Research, UMass Global, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618. [BUIRB@umassglobal.edu](mailto:BUIRB@umassglobal.edu).

Do you agree to participate in this study? ( ) Yes ( ) No

## Experience / Demographic Information

1. Are you currently employed as a middle school counselor?
  - a.  Yes  No
  
2. Please indicate your years of experience as a school counselor at any grade level.
  - a.  Less than one year
  - b.  At least one year, but less than two years
  - c.  At least two years, but less than five years
  - d.  Five years or more
  
3. Please indicate your years of experience as a middle school counselor.
  - a.  Less than one year
  - b.  At least one year, but less than two years
  - c.  At least two years, but less than five years
  - d.  Five years or more
  
4. Please indicate if you've presented at an ASCA National Conference on a Topic related to Middle School Counseling
  - a.  Yes  No
  
5. Please indicate if you've received any district, county, or state recognition for excellent service as a middle school counselor
  - a.  Yes  No
  
6. Please indicate the region in California that your school district is located.
  - a.  Northern California
  - b.  Central California
  - c.  Southern California

## APPENDIX D

### **Informed Consent and Confidentiality**

**RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:** A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for middle School Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

**UMASS GLOBAL  
16355 LAGUNA CANYON ROAD  
IRVINE, CA 92618**

**RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR:** Debbie Monroe, Doctoral Candidate

**TITLE OF CONSENT FORM:** Consent to Participate in Research

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:** This study is being conducted for a dissertation for the Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program at the University of Massachusetts Global (UMass Global). The purpose of this Delphi study is to identify, from the perspective of expert counselors, the roles that middle school counselors perform during their workday, to rate the importance of the roles identified, and to identify organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to successfully perform each of the six most important roles identified. Additionally, this study seeks to gain feedback from expert middle school counselors on how to best align the necessary organizational supports with the identified most important roles.

**PROCEDURES:** In participating in this research study, I agree to either partake in four rounds of electronic surveys via Survey Monkey. If you decide to participate in this study, you will receive four rounds of an electronic surveys via Survey Monkey, with each survey taking approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. The first-round survey will contain an open-ended question asking what roles middle school counselors perform. The second-round survey will utilize a Likert scale and ask participants to rank the importance of each identified role generated from the first round. The third-round survey will take the most important roles identified and ask a second open-ended question about the needed organizational supports to ensure the counselors success with the identified most important roles. The fourth round will provide participants with coded responses from the third round and ask for suggestions on alignment.

I understand that:

- a) No known major risks or discomforts are associated with this research.
- b) I will not be compensated for my participation in this study. However, the information including the findings and recommendations generated from your participation will help to add to the body of literature regarding the organizational supports necessary for middle school counselors to successfully perform the most important roles and responsibilities.

- c) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Debbie Monroe, UMass Global Doctoral Candidate. I understand that Debbie Monroe may be contacted by phone at [redacted] or by email at [redacted]. The dissertation chairperson may also answer questions: Dr. Phil Pendley at pendley@umassglobal.edu.
- d) I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. I also understand that the investigator may stop the study at any time.
- e) The study will utilize electronic surveys. All surveys and research data collected will be stored securely and confidentially on a password-protected server.
- f) No information that identifies me will be released without my separate consent, and that all identifiable information will be protected to the limits allowed by law. If the study design or the use of the data is to be changed, I will be informed, and my consent re- obtained. If I have any questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may contact: UMass Global's Office of Institutional Research, UMass Global, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, BUIRB@umassglobal.edu.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights.

I have read the above and understand it and hereby voluntarily consent to the procedure(s) set forth.

<b>Signature of Participant or Responsible Party</b>	<b>Date</b>

<b>Signature of Principal Investigator</b>	<b>Date</b>



## APPENDIX E

### UMass Global Participant Bill of Rights



#### UMASS GLOBAL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

##### Research Participant's Bill of Rights

Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.
2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.
3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.
4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.
5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.
6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.
7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.
8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.
9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.
10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the UMass Global Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The UMass Global Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, UMass GLOBAL, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

APPENDIX F

**Survey Instrument- Round 1**

Survey Instrument Hosted by Survey Monkey

Survey Instrument Round 1

**RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:** A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for middle School Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

For the purposes of this study, *roles* can be defined as tasks, responsibilities, or daily job requirements

What roles do you perform during your workday?

APPENDIX G

**Survey Instrument- Round 2**

Survey Instrument Hosted by Survey Monkey

Survey Instrument Round 2

**RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:** A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for middle School Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

The following is an example survey. The actual questions will be based on the responses provided by the participants in Round 1.

Based upon the first survey, the below are the roles which middle school counselors perform during a typical workday.

Please rate the importance of each role listed below as it pertains to middle school counselors

	Very Important	Important	Slightly Important	Slightly Unimportant	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Role 1	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Role 2	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Role 3	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Role 4	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Role 5	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Role 6	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Role 7	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Role 8	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Role 9	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Role 10	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## APPENDIX H

### Survey Instrument- Round 3

Survey Instrument Hosted by Survey Monkey

#### Survey Instrument Round 3

**RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:** A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for middle School Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

The following is an example survey. The actual questions will be based on the participant's responses in Round 2.

Based upon the second survey, below are the rated roles of middle school counselors in order of importance.

The top-rated roles were rated by a means test using Likert scale responses. The six top-rated roles are Role 1, Role 2, Role 3, Role 4, Role 5, Role 6.

1. Role 1 was a high-rated role of a middle school counselor. Describe what organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform this identified role.
2. Role 2 was a high-rated role of a middle school counselor. Describe what organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform this identified role.
3. Role 3 was a high-rated role of a middle school counselor. Describe what organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform this identified role.
4. Role 4 was a high-rated role of a middle school counselor. Describe what organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform this identified role.
5. Role 5 was a high-rated role of a middle school counselor. Describe what organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform this identified role.
6. Role 6 was a high-rated role of a middle school counselor. Describe what organizational supports must be provided for a middle school counselor to successfully perform this identified role.

## APPENDIX I

### Survey Instrument- Round 4

Survey Instrument Hosted by Survey Monkey

Survey Instrument Round 4

**RESEARCH STUDY TITLE:** A Delphi Study to Determine the Organizational Supports Necessary for middle School Counselors to be Successful and Positively Influence Student Outcomes

The following is an example survey. The actual questions will be based on the participant's responses in Round 3.

Based upon the third survey, below are the rated organizational supports needed for middle school counselors to perform the top six identified roles.

Based on this information what do you perceive is essential to effectively align the necessary organizational supports with the roles identified as important?

## APPENDIX J

### UMass Global Institutional Review Board Approval

IRB Application Approved: Debbie Monroe > Dissertation x



**Institutional Review Board** <my@umassglobal.edu>  
to me, ddevore, pendley, irb

Sat, Sep 24, 2022, 9:01AM ☆ ↶ ⋮

Dear Debbie Monroe,

Congratulations! Your IRB application to conduct research has been approved by the UMass Global Institutional Review Board. Please keep this email for your records, as it will need to be included in your research appendix.

If you need to modify your IRB application for any reason, please fill out the "Application Modification Form" before proceeding with your research. The Modification form can be found at [IRB.umassglobal.edu](http://IRB.umassglobal.edu)

Best wishes for a successful completion of your study.

Thank You,

IRB  
Academic Affairs  
**UMass Global**  
16355 Laguna Canyon Road  
Irvine, CA 92618  
[irb@umassglobal.edu](mailto:irb@umassglobal.edu)  
[www.umassglobal.edu](http://www.umassglobal.edu)

This email is an automated notification. If you have questions please email us at [irb@umassglobal.edu](mailto:irb@umassglobal.edu).

APPENDIX K

**Certificate of Completion of Training by Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI)**



Completion Date 05-May-2021  
Expiration Date N/A  
Record ID 42333013

This is to certify that:

**Debbie Monroe**

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME.

**Human Subjects Research**  
(Curriculum Group)  
**Social-Behavioral-Educational Researchers**  
(Course Learner Group)  
**1 - Basic**  
(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

**Brandman University**



Verify at [www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wef6a1629-3c58-4b93-b7da-19bb931e8d91-42333013](http://www.citiprogram.org/verify/?wef6a1629-3c58-4b93-b7da-19bb931e8d91-42333013)