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UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF POST-SECONDARY COACHES
IN HIGH SCHOOLS: A SOCIAL CAPITAL ANALYSIS

LYNNE M. HAEFFELE

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Educational Administration and Foundations

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY

2009

UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF POST-SECONDARY COACHES
IN HIGH SCHOOLS: A SOCIAL CAPITAL ANALYSIS

LYNNE M. HAEFFELE

DISSERTATION APPROVED:

Date	Paul Baker, Chair
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UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF POST-SECONDARY COACHES IN HIGH SCHOOLS: A SOCIAL CAPITAL ANALYSIS

Lynne M. Haefele

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The general problem investigated in this study was college readiness: students acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills, and taking the necessary actions, to enable them to complete high school and enter and succeed in college. The more specific research problem for this study was to understand the role of a new category of institutional agents, *post-secondary coaches* in high schools, who facilitate students' college readiness.

This comparative case study focused on two post-secondary coaches in two high schools currently participating with Illinois State University in a state-funded grant project to improve college readiness. Data collection included structured interviews with the coaches and other school and external personnel; written descriptions by coaches of how they do their jobs; observations with field notes taken while shadowing coaches; and relevant documents, websites and artifacts. Data analysis involved both open coding and the application of a social capital coding framework, with results compared for both methods and both cases. Triangulation across data sources improved reliability. The study provided data for developing a theory of the post-secondary coaches' work in the

contexts of their respective schools. Coaching in a “brokering” high school that proactively provides tailored supports for students was more likely to generate social capital for the coach and college-going resources for students than coaching in a “clearinghouse” high school that offers services and information, but leaves action up to the students.

Very few studies have examined the emerging role of post-secondary coaching or similar roles, and most research applying social capital theory to educational phenomena is quantitative, not qualitative. This study contributes to the research literature by investigating how post-secondary coaches do their work, using social capital as a theoretical lens, and applying qualitative methods to describe and interpret links among factors. Recommendations for practice include calling for high schools to shift from clearinghouse to brokering practices to address students’ academic and social needs and to consider replicating the post-secondary coaching role; and calling for school leader preparation programs to incorporate the study of brokering school practices into their curricula. The study concludes with recommendations for future research.

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L. M. H.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In our 21st century society, educational credentials play a more important economic role than ever before in history. In the United States, average annual earnings are highly dependent on educational attainment; people earning a bachelor's degree or higher earn average incomes double or triple those of people with only a high school diploma (Day & Newburger, 2002; Porter, 2002). Many jobs in our highly competitive global economy now require educational attainment of more than a high school diploma.

Statement of the Problem

America's claim of equal opportunity for all does not hold true in public education. Many students, particularly those in lower socioeconomic and minority groups, lack the necessary preparation to enroll in college and successfully complete a higher education program of study. Using national Educational Longitudinal Study data (ELS2002), National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) researchers found that a large percentage of the surveyed high school cohort had expectations of attaining a 4-year degree or higher; however, among those who scored in the lowest achievement quartile, "almost as many planned to receive a master's, Ph.D. or other advanced degree as expected to receive a high school diploma [as their capstone credential]." A surprisingly high percentage of students reported that they were *not* receiving college advisement from

parents and/or school personnel. Only a little over half of the surveyed students indicated taking a college-prep program (Ingels, Burns, Charleston, Chen, & Cataldi, 2005).

To analyze the college readiness problem, researchers look at four units of analysis: students, schools, the educational system, and society at large. Each level of inquiry offers some insights into causes and potential solutions for the college readiness dilemma.

At the student level, academic preparation is a good predictor of college success. Using the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS88), Adelman (1999) concluded that college completion is strongly related to intense high school academic programs of study. He also found that the rigor of high school courses taken was a better predictor of college completion than class rank, GPA or test scores (Adelman, 2004). While most high school graduates go on to participate in some form of post-secondary education, less than half are academically prepared for college success (ACT, 2005; Manzo, 2005).

Students are surrounded by parents and other family members who may or may not understand how to help their children prepare for college (George, 2002; Wimberly & Noeth, 2004; Tierney & Auerbach, 2005; Cunningham, Erisman & Looney, 2007; Lippman, Guzman, Keith, Kinukawa, & Shwalb, 2008; Stewart, 2008), and peers who may or may not value education or share college aspirations (Tierney & Colyar, 2005; Kuh, 2007; MacAllum, Glover, Queen, & Riggs, 2007; Nelson & DeBacker, 2008; Sokatch, 2006). Students who are surrounded by college-knowledgeable people seem more likely to eventually attain college success.

The school unit of analysis includes two categories of institutional support for college readiness: academic and social. Academic studies of course-taking patterns

indicate that students may follow a prescribed college preparation course but still not be academically prepared for college success (ACT, 2004; Schmeiser & Haycock, 2004; Conley, 2005; Roderick, Nagaoka & Allensworth, 2006). Academic supports such as tutoring, diagnostic assessment, and teacher training can improve academic preparation (Ishitani & Snider, 2006, Balfanz, Herzog & MacIver, 2007; Cline, Bissell, Hafner & Katz, 2007).

Social supports may be equally as important as academics in preparing students for college (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007; Pathways to College Network, 2007). Social supports can include small learning communities, structured peer interactions and faculty advisors for small groups of students (Herlihy & Quint, 2006). Other forms of social support increase students' access to college information through post-graduation planning sessions, financial aid and college application assistance (Hoyt, 2001; Nagaoka, Stoker, Coca & Roderick, 2006; Perna, 2006; Corwin & Tierney, 2007).

Guidance counseling is a sub-category of school social support. Research shows that effective counseling has a positive effect on students' college preparation and attendance (Plank & Jordan, 2001; McDonough, 2005). However, counselors are severely limited in their ability to provide college advisement because of high student-to-counselor ratios, fiscal constraints and state and local policy limitations (Chapman & DeMasi, 1991; Barton, 2005; Perna, Rowan-Kenyon, Thomas, Bell, Anderson & Li, 2008). The national student-to-counselor ratio is about 485:1, with the average student spending about 20 minutes per year with his/her counselor (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001).

Stanton-Salazar (1997) described the need for “institutional agents” in schools, without assigning this role to guidance counselors. Some resources he described included appropriate course-taking and programs of study, access to tutoring and mentoring, and information about career guidance, college admissions, and financial aid.

One federal program has a broad and proven track record of success in increasing college readiness. The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) initiative, formulated during the Clinton administration in the 1990’s, provided 6 years of substantial funding to district-university partnerships, serving a significant number of low-income students, that agreed to reformulate academic and social supports for entire cohorts of students starting in seventh grade and continuing through high school graduation.

As illustrated in Figure 1, evaluations of the GEAR UP program, nationally and state-by-state, indicate that it has had significant positive results in terms of increasing high school graduation and college enrollment rates (National Council for Community and Education Partnerships, 2007).

Some studies examine new models for middle and high school counseling and advisement, including Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), focusing on counseling and academic coaching (Tierney & Jun, 2001); Personal Adult Advocates, making individual contacts and personalizing students’ educational experiences (Venezia & Kirst, 2005); and National College Advising Corps, placing college students in high schools to act as college planning advisors. Occasionally, families hire private post-secondary counselors to manage their students’ college preparation and college choice processes (McDonough, 1994).

Figure 1. GEAR UP program graduation and college enrollment rates 2005-06. From the National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Despite evidence that counseling is important to college access and success, and that most counselors are overburdened and constrained, these new counseling and advisement approaches are isolated examples. Research on these new models is sparse, and thus unlikely to have a meaningful effect on high school practice.

Applying a Theoretical Lens: Social Capital

Review of the college readiness literature reveals that *action*, *structures*, *relationships* and *resources* infiltrate every level of analysis. These factors are especially suitable for study at the school level. Social capital theory encompasses all these elements, and is thus a good match for a study of college readiness.

Key social capital theorists provide the basis for most subsequent studies. Pierre Bourdieu (1986) described various forms of capital (i.e., economic, social, cultural, human) and laid the groundwork for subsequent decades of sociological study. Bourdieu proposed noneconomic forms of capital that could be acquired and exchanged. Social capital involves relationships and resources that can be mobilized for individual or collective good.

James Coleman (1988) proposed that social capital (relationships and resources) is transformed into human capital attributes. Coleman described social networks as generators of social capital, especially the close-knit family network and its strong relationship ties. He created a three-part model of social capital creation within networks: (a) obligations and expectations, creating trust; (b) information channels; and (c) social norms.

While these theorists laid the groundwork for the use of social capital theory, others refined mechanisms for the interplay of actions, structures, relationships and resources. Granovetter (1973) developed a social network theory in which family and friends form close ties with each other, while acquaintances and working colleagues form weak ties. He claimed that weak ties provide access to new information and also to new social networks, both potential resources. The concept of weak ties across networks has been found to be generally useful in explaining resource mobilization across groups.

Burt (1992) developed the concept of “structural holes” between social networks and people who can span these holes, connecting one network to another. These boundary-spanning individuals create bridges across networks, thereby allowing resources to flow back and forth. Both strong ties and weak ties are important to the creation and mobilization of resources; network closure helps to develop valued resources, while bridging across structural holes to share those resources adds value (Burt, 2000).

To fully connect action, structure, relationships and resources, Nan Lin’s work is particularly useful (1999, 2001). He methodically built a structural and action foundation for a working model of social capital, which served as an analytical tool for this study.

Lin’s model includes three “ingredients” for social capital: structural position, network location and action. Structural position refers to one’s location in the organizational or network hierarchy. Network location refers to one’s possession of strong and weak ties, as well as whether one is a boundary-spanner or “bridge” creator. Actions can be either “instrumental,” in the sense that one is trying to accomplish something for oneself or for others, or “expressive,” meaning actions taken to obtain acceptance, affection, comfort or some other affective resource.

In Lin’s model, social capital has three main characteristics: (a) upper reachability—how far up the social ladder one’s contacts reach, (b) heterogeneity—how many different contacts one can access, and (c) extent of embedded resources—value contained in the networks one can access. Social capital in and of itself is not the final goal. Instead, it is a means to obtain a desired return, such as wealth, power or reputation. In this model, one’s identity as a college-going student or a college graduate would be considered a reputational return.

Research Gaps

The literature on college readiness and success consists mostly of quantitative studies using large databases of survey responses. These studies find correlates and predictors of college success, but statistics alone do not explain how and why these factors are attained by some students and not by others (such a low income or minority students), or how they operate to promote college success.

Social capital studies are also mostly quantitative, using extracted variables from large survey databases. These variables were not constructed specifically to measure social capital attainment and transfer in a comprehensive way. Qualitative, contextual case studies are needed to add to knowledge about how social capital may play a role in mobilizing resources for students preparing for college. This comparative case study partially fills these gaps and contributes to a deeper understanding of how post-secondary readiness may be enhanced through specific coaching roles.

Purpose of the Study

The general problem investigated in this study was college readiness: students acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills, and taking the necessary actions, to enable them to complete high school and enter and succeed in college and careers. The more specific research problem was to understand the role of an emerging category of institutional agents called *post-secondary coaches*, working in high schools to facilitate students' college readiness.

Study Description

This comparative case study characterized the roles of two postsecondary coaches in the context of their respective high schools. It also became a comparative case study of

the two high schools: one that was attempting to address the college readiness dilemma, and one that was not. The investigator examined the structures in which the coaching position resides, the coaches' actions and interactions with others as they did their jobs, and the perceived goals of their positions. Lin's social capital framework was applied as an analytical tool to understand this emerging role. As these coaching roles are relatively new in schools, this study was limited to understanding *how* these coaches do their jobs. Subsequent studies may investigate the question of *how effectively* these coaches improve students' college readiness.

The study built upon research previously conducted within the scope of an ongoing college readiness project in the participating districts. The project was funded under a state grant and involved schools in three public school districts. The goals of the project were to increase college readiness among students and to create resources that other districts could use to adapt the project for their students.

Within the research component of the grant project, the investigator interviewed students, parents, teachers and counselors regarding their knowledge and beliefs about college readiness and college attainment. The purpose of this earlier, limited-scope qualitative study was to probe the reality of post-secondary attainment factors identified in previous studies that used quantitative correlation and regression methods, and to elicit additional contextual and conditional information to better understand how students in these schools undertake college preparation and make postsecondary plans. Preliminary data analysis indicated that students were generally aware of academic and social factors contributing to and supporting their college aspirations. Parents of first-generation college aspirants were particularly supportive and eager to receive help from school

personnel for college planning and preparation. Findings and insights from this earlier study contributed to the current study.

Study Participants

A comparative case study approach was used to investigate the postsecondary coaching role within the context of each school. Participants were recruited from two high schools involved in the state-funded college-readiness project. To maintain confidentiality, the high schools were given pseudonyms.

Alpha High School is a high-minority, high-poverty school in a mid-size city. The school serves about 1,400 students, of which 62% are low-income (based on free or reduced lunch counts) and about 40% are minority. The school is on the state's *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) improvement list for its low overall performance on state tests, with roughly 30% of its students meeting or exceeding state standards. The postsecondary coach is a retired social studies teacher from the school who returned in the new coaching role 8 years ago, during the implementation of a 6-year federal GEAR UP grant in the district.

Beta High School is a higher-income, primarily white school serving nearly 1,700 students in a different mid-size city in the same state. About 24% of its students are low-income, and about 20% are minority. The district's demographics have shifted in the past decade with an influx of minority and low-income families from outside the area moving into available subsidized housing units. The school is on the state's NCLB improvement list for its low minority and low income student performance on state tests. The postsecondary coach is a retired guidance counselor from the school who returned in the new coaching role 2 years ago during the implementation of a 3-year state grant.

Research Questions

This study investigated how the coaches perceive their jobs and how their jobs are perceived by other actors within and outside the schools. These actors included the principal, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, other school staff, students, and college personnel. The study investigated the roles of the coaches within the specific contexts of their own schools.

The research questions that guided this study are as follows:

1. [Coach in Position] How is the coaching position described by the coaches themselves and by others? Where does the position reside within the context of the school, considering both formal and informal structures?
2. [Coach in Action] In what activities (actions), interactions and relationships do the coaches engage in the course of their work? What resources do coaches access, mobilize or confer for students and others?
3. [Coaching Purpose and Value] What are the intended outcomes or goals of the position? Is there any evidence to suggest that these outcomes are being pursued and/or attained?
4. [Social Capital Framework] Given the findings regarding the coaches' positions, actions, purpose and value, to what extent does Lin's social capital framework help to analyze and explain the work of these coaches?

This exploratory study used an interpretivistic paradigm and qualitative methods to understand the coaches' work. As referenced briefly above, it investigated the post-secondary coach positions in the context of their respective schools as well as in the broader external context of the community at large, including college contacts. Interview transcripts and notes, written descriptions, observations, and artifacts provided data regarding school structures and processes (formal and informal); coaches' actions; coaches' relationships inside and outside the schools; resources accessed, mobilized or

conferred by the coaches; and the goals expressed or implied for coaches' work. Natural categories and themes were identified through an initial qualitative data analysis. Lin's social capital framework was then applied as an analytical tool. After analysis and interpretation, a contextual theory was developed to explain the post-secondary coaches' work.

Conceptual Framework

The basic conceptual framework for this study is described in Figure 2. The framework positions the post-secondary coaches within the contexts of their respective schools and external environments. The study determined the coaches' structural locations, actions, relationships, access to resources, and goals using open coding, with subsequent analysis using a social capital theoretical framework. From the study findings, a theory of the coaches' work was developed.

Figure 2. Conceptual framework.

Assumptions and Limitations

Several assumptions were embedded within this study. First, it was assumed that college readiness is a desirable attribute for most, if not all, students. Many high schools have adopted a nominal “college for all” philosophy, but not all schools have fully translated this philosophy into policy and practice. However, given rising social and economic expectations for college attainment and its attendant credentials, it was assumed that whether or not students eventually do go to college, this should be an option that is available to them through adequate pre-college academic and social preparation.

Several assumptions were made regarding data collection for this study. These included: (a) that participants were forthcoming and honest with interview responses (e.g., that they exhibited their usual actions rather than “putting on a show” when observed); (b) that observations and interview notes were accurate; and (c) that the researcher was able to avoid common qualitative research concerns such as the “finding what one expects to find” problem.

To increase validity and reliability, the researcher used multiple data sources and triangulated among them. The researcher compared open coding and social capital coding results to look for congruence and/or dissonance.

Significance of the Study

Global societal and economic trends in recent decades have changed not only the way the world does business, but also expectations for educational attainment. As the global economy demands increasing levels of knowledge-based skills and the “baby boom” generation retires, young people expecting to fill those jobs will need higher education in increasing numbers. If this scenario holds true, then it will require a stronger

focus on college preparation not only for students, but also for educators, families and the community at large. When everyone is expected to attend and succeed in college, then logically everyone should master essential knowledge and skills prior to college entry. In addition to academic preparation, students, parents and educators must know how to prepare logistically for college entry by navigating the processes of career exploration, college choice, admissions, and financial aid applications.

College readiness research to date has studied the issue using several units of analysis: students, schools, the P-20 system, and society at large. While this research is extensive, it consists mainly of quantitative studies that correlate certain factors (demographic, academic, personal, social) with academic achievement, college-going and college attainment. While correlations provide clues to relationships, they do not explain *how* factors are linked or how they operate.

One factor that seems to make a difference in college readiness is effective school counseling. While the research shows that traditional counseling has been watered down due to heavy caseloads and limited resources, the nontraditional role of postsecondary coach has emerged in some high schools. These coaches operate within and outside of the traditional high school hierarchy. Very few studies have looked at how these coaches (or people in similar roles) do their jobs. In addition, while social capital theory has been applied to educational issues by many researchers, they have mostly used the same large survey databases and quantitative methods to extract variables that may relate to social capital factors. Again, very few studies have applied qualitative methods to investigate whether social capital theory and social networks are influencing work in schools.

This comparative case study contributes to filling the described research gaps by investigating how post-secondary coaches do their work, using social capital as a theoretical lens, and applying qualitative methods to describe and explain links among factors. Post-secondary coaches represent examples of new roles and responsibilities, operating within and outside traditional school bureaucracies, helping students connect to important college readiness resources and acquire important educational returns.

The theory of coaching and social capital acquisition that has emerged should prove useful to future studies of high school reform, college readiness, and coaching effectiveness, as well as to practitioners and parents seeking “out-of-the-box” solutions to students’ college readiness gaps.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the research literature (Figure 3) to establish the basis for the current study by: (a) defining the problem of college readiness (or the lack thereof); and (b) establishing a social capital/social network theoretical framework for the study.

Figure 3. Scholarly origins and context for the current study.

Part I: College Readiness Research

In our 21st century society, educational credentials play a more important economic role than ever before in history. In the U.S., average annual earnings are highly dependent on educational attainment: people earning a bachelor's degree or higher earn average incomes 100% to 200% higher than people with only a high school diploma (Day & Newburger, 2002; Porter, 2002).

Using recent national Educational Longitudinal Study data, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) researchers they found that a large percentage of the surveyed high school cohort (72%) had expectations of attaining a 4-year degree or higher (p. 127). For students who scored in the *lowest* achievement quartile, nearly half planned to receive a master's, Ph.D. or other advanced degree (Ingels et al., 2005, p. 130). The NCES researches also noted a surprisingly high number of students (up to one-third) indicating that they were *not* receiving college advisement from parents and/or school personnel. The surveyed students have high expectations for attaining bachelor's and advanced degrees, yet only a little over half are taking a college-prep program (p. 23). These findings suggest that many students lack the necessary preparation to enroll in college and successfully complete the baccalaureate degree.

Research investigating college readiness is plentiful. One way to organize the broad array of studies is by their units of analysis. Researchers have investigated the college readiness problem through at least four units of analysis: students, schools, the educational system (pre-K through college or P-20), and society at large. Each approach brings bits and pieces of the college readiness dilemma into focus. However, even when the four levels are reviewed together, important aspects of the problem remain unclear.

Student Factors

Some researchers have identified student factors that correlate with or predict college readiness and success. Not surprisingly, academic preparation is a student factor that strongly predicts college success. Using the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS88), Adelman (1999) studied the relationship between high school students' course-taking patterns and their college-going and completion rates, and concluded that college completion is strongly related to intense high school academic programs of study. In a second study, he found that the rigor of high school courses taken was a better predictor of college completion than class rank, GPA or test scores (Adelman, 2004). In his most recent study, Adelman (2006) again used NELS88 data to confirm that "[w]hen bachelor's degree completion is the reference point...curriculum exhibits the strongest correlation, followed by class rank/GPA, followed by test score" (p. 39). Research by ACT (2004a) showed that high school curriculum rigor relates to ACT scores as well as first-year college GPA and retention. However, while most students go on to some form of post-secondary education, less than half take the courses they need to be prepared for college success (ACT, 2005; Manzo, 2005). Some courses seem to be more critical than others, particularly the sequence of middle and high school mathematics courses (Hines, Hodel, Lin, Ragutt, Rau & Vogt, 2005; Perna, 2005).

Another way to study student factors is to look at the people who surround and influence them. These can be parents and other family members who may or may not understand how to help their children prepare for college (George, 2002; Wimberly & Noeth, 2004; Tierney & Auerbach, 2005; Cunningham et al., 2007; Lippman et al., 2008; Stewart, 2008), or peers who may or may not value educational performance or share

college aspirations (Tierney & Colyar, 2005; Kuh, 2007; MacAllum et al., 2007; Nelson & DeBacker, 2008; Sokatch, 2006). When students are surrounded by networks of college-knowledgeable people, they seem more likely to eventually attain college success.

Finally, some researchers have determined that students' personal and social factors (e.g., engagement, social connections) are good predictors of high school graduation and college outcomes (Horn & Carroll, 1997; Bridgeland, Dilulio & Morrison, 2006; Robbins, Allen, Casillas, Petersen & Le, 2006).

Limitations of these studies are attributable in large part to the fact that their data sources are large databases of anonymous survey responses, analyzed through standard statistical tests. These data are suitable for finding correlations and predictors among various factors and outcomes, but not for determining actual cause-and-effect explanations. These types of studies draw a few general conclusions: (a) students have to acquire knowledge and skills on their way to college, through mastering rigorous course content; (b) students need to know how to navigate college-going logistics, through acquiring information from family, peers, or other people; and (c) students' personal characteristics, such as social connections and engagement, are correlated with college readiness and college success.

However, studying student characteristics divorced from the contexts of classrooms and schools means automatically limiting analysis to the chosen (and largely isolated) survey variables. Some important questions cannot be answered by these types of studies: *Why* do some students get excluded from rigorous courses? *How* do peer groups develop their educational aspirations? *How* do counselors, advisors, and family

members get access to the information that students need about college logistics? *How* do adults' and students' social connections and engagement increase college readiness?

Limiting research questions to “what?” and “how many?” can lead researchers, practitioners and policymakers to develop over-simplified models of college readiness “ingredients.”

School Factors

A second research approach goes beyond the students themselves to study school factors, generally examining two categories of institutional support for college readiness: academic and social.

In general, schools and districts control the academic menu or curriculum, which takes the form of course offerings and programs of study. While many high schools now seem to have nominally adopted a “college for all” policy, course-taking patterns and studies of course content indicate that students may follow a prescribed college preparation course of study but still lack the necessary academic knowledge and skills for college success (ACT, 2004; Schmeiser & Haycock, 2004; Conley, 2005; Roderick et al., 2006). Programs in middle schools and high schools aim to systematically improve course rigor and sequence. At this writing, 31 states have joined the American Diploma Project, which seeks to establish K-12 standards that create a continuum of learning to assure academic readiness for college. Many secondary programs include supplementary assistance in the form of tutoring, diagnostic assessment, and teacher training (Ishitani & Snider, 2006, Balfanz et al., 2007; Cline et al., 2007).

Unfortunately, despite the increasing prevalence of stated college-for-all policies, many high schools still leave students and families to their own devices regarding choices

about the courses and assistance they offer. This neutral philosophy was described in *The Shopping Mall High School* (Powell, Farrar & Cohen, 1985). In most comprehensive high schools,

...the will to learn is perceived, in a deceptively sensible formulation, simply as the responsibility of students and their families....High schools thus solve many problems for themselves and their clients by saying 'It's here if you want it but it's all up to you.' (pp. 309-10)

Students and families without background and knowledge about college-going requirements can unknowingly make or passively accept course placements that block higher education aspirations.

Especially in the era of *No Child Left Behind* performance accountability, many schools have attempted to step up their academic offerings, raise graduation requirements and introduce tutoring and other academic supports. However, research indicates that *social supports* may be equally as important as academics in preparing students for college (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2007; Pathways to College Network, 2007). National high school reform efforts such as Career Academies, Talent Development High Schools and Project Graduation Really Achieves Dreams (GRAD) all include not only instructional improvements but also “personalization” in the form of small learning communities, structured peer interactions and faculty advisors for small groups of students (Herlihy & Quint, 2006). An increasingly common form of social support in schools is to increase students’ access to college information through post-graduation planning sessions, financial aid and application assistance, and generally establishing a college-going mindset among high school students (Hoyt, 2001; Nagaoka et al., 2006; Perna, 2006; Corwin & Tierney, 2007).

A sub-category of school social support involves guidance or counseling.

Research evidence shows that effective counseling has a positive effect on students' deciding to attend college and being prepared to succeed there (Plank & Jordan, 2001; McDonough, 2005). However, counselors today often face overwhelming student case-loads, forcing them to perform a triage-type function when allocating their time. They find themselves immersed in back-to-back seasonal cycles from registration through graduation each year. Seasonal duties include scheduling, testing, and college application cycles. Several studies confirm that counselors are severely constrained in their ability to provide customized college advisement, citing high student-to-counselor ratios, fiscal constraints and various state and local policy constraints (Chapman & DeMasi, 1991; Barton, 2005; Perna et al., 2008).

Stanton-Salazar (1997) described the need for “institutional agents” in schools, without necessarily assigning this role to guidance counselors. “Institutional agents can be formally defined as those individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly, or negotiate the transmission of, institutional resources and opportunities” (p. 3). The institutional resources he describes include college-preparatory course-taking, access to tutoring and mentoring, career guidance, and information about college admissions.

Selected case studies offer some hope regarding new models for middle and high school counseling and advisement. One such model is Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID), which focuses intensively on counseling and academic coaching. AVID instructors create coaching groups of students with similar class schedules and study goals. They get to know each student individually while creating the conditions for

college-going (e.g., tutoring, study skills, developing shared aspirations, access to college information) among their groups (Tierney & Jun, 2001). Another model uses Personal Adult Advocates to make individual connections and personalize each high school student's educational experience (Venezia & Kirst, 2005). A third model is the recently launched program, National College Advising Corps. In this model, funded by private foundations, a consortium of participating colleges and universities place college students in high schools to act as college planning advisors (National College Advising Corps, 2009). Occasionally, families go outside the overburdened public school counseling structure and hire private postsecondary counselors who manage and organize the college preparation and college choice processes for their students (McDonough, 1994).

Despite the evidence that counseling matters to college access and success, and despite general recognition that most counselors are overburdened and constrained, the retooled counseling and advisement approaches described here are isolated examples, not yet an emerging trend. The research to date on these new models is sparse, making it unlikely to have a broad impact on high school practice.

System Factors

Looking beyond the students to the schools revealed more information regarding the factors that affect college-going and college success. However, by reading these studies, it might be tempting to try to just “fix” the students or the schools to solve the problem. In reality, the operational context for college readiness is larger than the schools; it includes the broader educational system, from Pre-Kindergarten through K-12 through higher education, including transitions (and disconnects) across the sectors. This

continuum is often referred to as the Pre-K through Grade 20 or *P-20 system*. Older studies often refer to the Pre-K through Grade 16 (P-16) system.

Much of the published work that analyzes P-20 systems, their strengths and their shortcomings, falls into the realm of policy studies or expository writing rather than peer-reviewed empirical research. Often, empirical researchers are contracted to write these studies, which in some cases seem to be extrapolations from previous research on either K-12 or higher education issues. Many K-12 and higher education professional organizations have joined forces from time to time in order to hammer out plans to create “seamless systems” or “smooth transitions” across the sector boundary, which traces its historical origins to the early development of American colleges and the much later development of high schools. Recommendations to span the sector gaps usually include curriculum alignment, dual enrollment and/or Advanced Placement courses, unified data systems, joint accountability plans, shared assessments, and better state financial planning (Venezia, Kirst & Antonio, 2003; National Center on Accountability in Higher Education, 2005; Callan, Finney, Kirst, Usdan, & Venezia, 2006; Kazis, 2006; Lerner & Brand, 2006; Commission on the Future of Higher Education, 2006). Governors are exhorted to step in and unify the systems through shared governance (Conklin, 2005). Usually these recommendations are made to state policymakers, who are expected through policy directives to untangle and unify the many tentacles and traditions that make the educational sectors and their inhabitants unique.

Overall, the lack of empirical research into how system factors affect college readiness is evident. In a recent comprehensive review of the transition to college literature in sociology, Diel-Amen & Turley conclude that “[P]olicies and system-wide factors

are the least studied....Sociologists have done little to address the dynamics involved in efforts to construct P-16 policies that conceive of education as one large interconnected system of institutions of differing levels” (2007, p. 2357). To date, efforts to create the so-called smooth or seamless system have been spotty, often confined to independent partnerships among higher education institutions and school districts (Education Week Research Center, 2008). It is hard to imagine how simply adopting state policies could somehow mediate, mitigate or potentiate all the student and school factors that affect college readiness.

Societal Factors

Completing the contextual picture requires a brief look at research that examines the influence of society on college readiness. Over 40 years ago, a team led by sociologist James Coleman investigated the impact of school factors compared to societal factors on student achievement, and concluded that socioeconomic factors matter more to student outcomes than the work of schools (Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld & York, 1966). That report, prepared for the federal government, ignited a wave of school reform efforts as well as a backlash of research attempting to prove that schools do really make a difference in students’ lives. For 40 years, both quantitative and qualitative data have been collected and dissected, with a wide range of findings and conclusions. Despite this massive research undertaking, no definitive “recipe” for school effectiveness has yet emerged, and students’ academic failure is still often blamed on socioeconomic factors.

More recent research continues to investigate the factors of social class, race, and gender in relation to college-going. Most often, these studies examine issues of access

and equity in a search for evidence of systematic exclusionary practices. The evidence is compelling that such practices do exist. A key argument that emerges across these studies is that societal factors operate to maintain the status quo; that is, to perpetuate social stratification (Perna & Titus, 2005; Haycock, 2007; Rowan-Kenyon, 2007; Ream & Palardy, 2008). For example, one study provides data showing that 75% of children from families earning more than \$80,000 annually complete a baccalaureate degree, compared to 9% of children from families earning less than \$25,000 per year (Haycock, 2007). These analyses generally situate the educational system and the schools as instruments of the greater society, in which they must be responsive to society's norms and expectations, including maintenance of social class boundaries.

A historical examination of American educational policy development reveals that the *de facto* policy approach has been one of sorting individuals for educational opportunities based on perceived ability and the needs of the country's economic system. This "sorting machine" has been described as intending to create "a rationalized and controlled labor market through the sorting function of the public schools and the control of social conflict arising from racial discrimination and inequalities in the distribution of income" (Spring, 1976).

Societal factor research has been important historically, as it has illuminated systematic racism, classism and sexism in education and in society at large. Sometimes these data have triggered important policy changes in areas like civil rights, admissions policies, or financial aid programs. However, it is often difficult to translate these broad societal findings into actionable plans. Part of the problem may be that, similar to student-focused research, societal factor research is usually extracted from large, faceless,

nameless survey databases, without a way to fully understand the respondents in the contexts of their families, schools and communities.

At the time of this writing, it is no surprise that socioeconomic status affects educational outcomes, yet studies continue to proliferate proving that point. Of more interest and potential utility are outlier studies that disprove the point. These types of studies identify cases that challenge the status quo; an example is cases of high-poverty/high-performing schools (Curry, Pacha & Baker, 2007). An in-depth discussion of outlier research is beyond the scope of the current study, but it is sufficient to say that “out of the box” solutions are possible and probably necessary when tackling societal factors that affect educational outcomes.

Assigning Blame

Who is to blame when students are not ready for college? The answer to this question might be “everyone and no one.” One could review the research and conclude that problems abound at every level: student, school, system and society. Many interventions target the students or the schools, tackling one small problem or several. Few, if any, programs or projects to date have attempted to work across all four levels of analysis. It is possible that the fragmented approach taken by researchers, with their own narrow foci and inherent biases, has contributed to the fractured mosaic of college readiness policies and interventions.

On the other hand, it may not be realistic to work across all levels at once. That would require figuring out how to nurture individual students based on their different needs (which are also influenced by their families and friends); redesigning schools to create a college-going culture of both academics and social supports; smoothing out the

P-20 system to eliminate barriers and ease transitions; and most daunting of all, changing societal norms and behaviors that have historically perpetuated socioeconomic, racial and gender differences and which are reflected in many schools.

A more fruitful approach may be to focus more clearly at the school level, and to study factors that are subject to change at a manageable level. Some of these factors are: (a) individual action or agency, (b) structures, (c) relationships, and (d) resources. These factors actually operate at every level of analysis, either overtly or covertly.

For example, at the student level of analysis, individual *actions* are important in regard to how students interact with peers and adults, absorb knowledge and learn skills, and make choices. Students operate within several types of *structures*: families, neighborhoods, peer groups, schools. Students certainly develop *relationships*, positive and negative, with both peers and adults. And students' access to and accumulation of *resources*—information, jobs and money, social connections, and so forth—can go a long way toward either supporting or denying their college expectations.

At the school level of analysis, the people who manage and enact the educational process (e.g., principals, teachers, counselors, staff) perform *actions* that either enhance or inhibit their performance. For example, some teachers choose to remain isolated in their classrooms and perform repetitive tasks, while others actively seek new ideas, interactions, reflections and feedback from outside their classrooms. Within the schools, various *structures* operate that can also enhance or inhibit performance. Sometimes these structures (schedules, contracts, caseloads, calendars, hierarchies) impede creativity and interaction, enforcing isolation among teachers and staff. Sometimes school structures are flexible, or flat, or innovative (such as distributed leadership), and may thus enhance

collaboration and knowledge-sharing. *Relationships* in schools can be divisive or nurturing. Schools with visible cultures (and performance records) of excellence may exhibit strong evidence of trust and caring among students, faculty, staff and administration (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Schools' access to *resources* may be constrained by funding, by community norms or by district policies. On the other hand, schools may be entrepreneurial about resource acquisition and utilization, creating community support groups, not-for-profit school foundations, or partnerships with higher education institutions and the private sector.

Similar scenarios describing structures, actions, relationships and resources can be developed for the P-20 system and the broader society. When these four factors are grouped together, they represent key elements of social capital and social networks, which form the theoretical framework for the current study, which focuses at the school level.

Part II: The Theoretical Frame

When realtors are asked the question, "What is the most important thing about selling a house?" they often answer with the stock phrase, "Location, location, location!" Although houses have many other important attributes, location trumps them all. One could ask sociologists a similar question: "What is the most important thing about education?" The surprising answer may be, "Relationships, relationships, relationships!"

In a comprehensive review of social capital literature, John Field (2003) captured its essence quite neatly: "[Social capital's] central thesis can be summed up in two words: relationships matter. By making connections with one another, and keeping them going over time, people are able to work together to achieve things that they either could not

achieve by themselves, or could only achieve with great difficulty” (p.1). These relationships involve actors operating inside and outside of social structures, and using their connections to mobilize resources for their own benefit as well as for the benefit of their groups.

Reviewing the college readiness literature reveals that action, structures, relationships and resources infiltrate every level of analysis—students, schools, the educational system and society. Social capital theory encompasses all four elements, and therefore is a good match for a study of college readiness. This section reviews key social capital theorists whose work provides the basis for most subsequent studies; the work of important contributors who refined and operationalized social capital theory; and examples of studies that have employed social capital theory to investigate college readiness.

Key Social Capital Theorists

When asked to identify a scholar associated with social capital theory, the first person most academics would name is Pierre Bourdieu. His foundational essay (1986) describing the various forms of capital (economic, social, cultural, human) laid the groundwork for subsequent decades of sociological scholarship. When most people think of “capital,” they think of money or economic exchanges such as capital investments. Bourdieu proposed non-economic forms of capital that could be acquired and utilized by people in various ways. Social capital includes relationships and resources that can be mobilized for individual or collective good. Cultural capital includes family origin, socioeconomic status, religion and other social institutions. Human capital includes personal attributes (e.g., knowledge, skills, and credentials) that can be used to improve one’s own or others’ situations.

Bourdieu also proposed that capital can be accumulated, exchanged and transformed from one type to another. He believed that the forms of capital explained how social strata were maintained within society (sometimes called social reproduction). Bourdieu believed in the power of social capital, but also believed that it is reserved for the “haves.” According to Bourdieu, a lack of social capital among underrepresented or oppressed groups maintained societal class boundaries.

A second key theorist, James Coleman, also published his version of social capital theory in the 1980s. The same scholar, who was lead author of the 1966 report *Equity of Educational Opportunity*, now looked closely at the juncture between human and social capital, proposing that it was actually social capital (relationships and resources) that became transformed into human capital attributes (1988). Coleman outlined a picture of social networks as generators of social capital, and paid particular attention to the close-knit family network and its properties of strong relationship ties and closeness (or “closure,” to use Coleman’s term). He created a three-part model of social capital creation within networks: (a) obligations and expectations, creating trust; (b) information channels; and (c) social norms. His work is particularly cited in education studies, for he once again turned his sights on education, using his social capital theory to analyze and explain the phenomenon of high school dropouts. Thus, while Bourdieu used the theory to explain the behavior of society and its class structure, Coleman used the concept to explain the behavior of individuals.

Everett Rogers made a third important contribution to social capital theory. His 1962 book, *Diffusion of Innovations* (currently in its 5th edition), was a very extensive study of how ideas catch hold and spread through a population. He discussed the

concepts of “homophily” and “heterophily.” Homophilous people are a lot alike, and often have close communication and strong ties with each other. Information can travel quickly through a homophilous group, but often does not travel beyond the group. Heterophilous people are different from each other and may have trouble communicating, but if they do succeed, they can pass on new, interesting and/or useful information to each other.

Heterophilous network links often connect two cliques, thus spanning two sets of socially dissimilar individuals in a system.... So homophilous communication may be frequent and easy, but may not be as crucial as less frequent heterophilous communication in diffusing innovations. (2003, p. 306)

Rogers used social capital theory to describe the movement of information—an important resource—through and across social groups.

These three theorists (Bourdieu, Coleman, and Rogers) laid the groundwork for subsequent scholars to build upon in refining and social capital and social network theories and applying them to social phenomena.

Theory Refinements: Social Network Theory

While key theorists laid the groundwork for social capital theory, and in fact developed their own examples and studies to test their ideas, work yet remained to make the theory more useful for analysis. Bourdieu linked *relationships to resources* such as power, status and reputation, showing how these links can create social capital. Coleman linked *action to resources*, showing how these links can create human capital. Rogers linked *relationships to information*, a specific and important resource, showing how relationships between dissimilar people can create powerful information conduits. Now it was necessary to refine social capital theory to include a mechanism for the interplay of

actions, structures, relationships and resources. The development of social network theory provides that mechanism.

Predating the publications of Bourdieu and Coleman, Granovetter (1973) developed a social network theory that can be described briefly as follows: family and close friends form close ties with each other; acquaintances and working colleagues form weak ties. He, like Rogers, claimed that weak ties (or heterophilous relationships) provide access to new information and also to new social networks, both potential resources. Granovetter recognized that social networks are themselves structures, some closed to outsiders and others more porous. His work spawned a decade of studies putting his theory to the test, which he reviewed in a subsequent article (Granovetter, 1983). Some of the researchers created empirical tests for his idea, and generally found it to be useful in explaining resource mobilization across groups. Others described various social scenarios in which his concepts could be applied in both quantitative and qualitative studies. The general consensus among social scholars was that Granovetter was certainly onto something important.

Two decades later, other scholars made their own important contributions to social network theory, now embedded within the broader social capital theory. Burt (1992) developed the concept of “structural holes” between social networks, and the importance of people who can span these holes, connecting one network to another. The actions of these boundary-spanning individuals create bridges across networks, thereby providing avenues for resources to flow back and forth in ways not previously possible. Burt used *structures* and *actions* to explain how social capital is created. He later agreed that both strong ties and weak ties are important to the creation and mobilization of

resources; network closure helps to develop valued resources, while bridging across structural holes to share those resources adds value (Burt, 2000). An example might be a closely-knit group of software developers creating a new application in a small entrepreneurial group (strong ties). The software has potential value, but not if it never leaves the group. The group member(s) that can bridge across structural holes to other networks (weak ties), such as a marketing group, now enhance the value of the software. Resources in the form of both monetary compensation and new relationships that can be used for future ventures now move back across the bridge.

To fully connect action, structure, relationships and resources, Nan Lin's work is particularly useful (1999, 2001). He methodically built a structural and action foundation for a working model of social capital. His model is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Model of social capital theory. Reprinted with permission from Lin, N., 2001, Social capital: A theory of social structure and action, New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 76.

Lin's model portrays social capital as deriving from three *contextual elements*: structural position, network location and action. Structural position refers to one's location in the organizational or network hierarchy, which is often a pyramid with few powerful people at the top and many subordinate workers at the base, with other layers in between. Network location refers to one's possession of strong and weak ties, as well as whether one is a boundary-spanner or "bridge" creator. Actions can be either "instrumental," in the sense that one is trying to accomplish something for oneself or for others, or "expressive," meaning actions taken to obtain acceptance, affection, comfort or some other affective resource. Structural position, network location, and action combine to produce social capital.

Social capital has characteristics such as: (a) upper reachability—how far up the social resource ladder one's contacts reach, (b) heterogeneity—how many different kinds of contacts one can access, and (c) extent of embedded resources—the value contained in the networks one can access. Social capital in and of itself is not the final goal. Instead, it is a means to obtain the desired return, such as wealth, power or reputation. The return is the ultimate goal of social capital accumulation.

Lin's framework represents a blend of theories from various contributors. It is a useful tool for analyzing situations in which individuals belong to networks within hierarchies, where they take action for various reasons (both personal and altruistic), where they bridge across networks, and where they mobilize resources to obtain personal, professional and/or social goals. This study used Lin's framework as an analytical tool to study the work of post-secondary coaches in schools.

Theory Applications: Sample Studies

Examples of studies applying social capital theory to various social phenomena have proliferated since the late 1980s when the basic components of social capital theory and social network theory gained widespread traction. The concept reached the popular literature with the publication of *Bowling Alone* (2000) by Robert Putnam. Putnam's key thesis was that social networks are slowly crumbling in the United States, and he gave many examples using data and anecdotes from everyday American life. His understandable writing style and ability to give everyday meaning to social capital theory made his book a national bestseller.

For this review, empirical studies were selected for their applicability to college readiness. Applications from other fields, such as economics and general sociology, were not included.

Following the lead of general research on college readiness, investigators have used social capital theory to explore family influences, peer interactions, and at-risk or under-represented students. Most of these studies use quantitative methods to analyze the same large longitudinal survey data discussed earlier in this literature review. Variables were selected based on their relationship to known characteristics of social capital: family ties, peer relationships, and structures and actions within schools.

Parent social networks, particularly those that closely involve parents with schools and the information they provide regarding college-going, have been shown to be correlated with students' college readiness, acceptance and completion rates (Lareau, 1987; Horvat, Weininger & Lareau, 2003; Kim & Schneider, 2005, Auerbach, 2007). Similarly, peer social networks that share college-going aspirations can become a social

support system that creates a culture of success and increase college readiness and college-going (Kerckhoff, 1986; Sirin, Diemer, Jackson, Gonsalves & Howell, 2004; Tierney & Venegas, 2006; Juvonen, 2007). One study found that peer group and parent involvement effects were among the strongest predictors of college enrollment (Choy, Horn, Nunez & Chen, 2000).

School studies focus largely on the differences between the social networks of underrepresented and/or at-risk youth compared to those of their more privileged counterparts. These studies show, for the most part, that disadvantaged students generally have less access to network relationships with school personnel, college-oriented peers, and the resources (such as college-planning information) that flow through institutionally-established networks (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbush, 1995; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; White & Glick, 2000; Wimberly, 2000; Cabrera, Deil-Amen, Prabhu, Terenzini, Lee & Franklin, 2006).

One important study described two roles for schools in relation to “college linking”: *clearinghouse* and *brokering* (Hill, 2008). According to Hill, clearinghouse schools make college-going resources available, but students must know how to access them through their own social capital networks (such as upper academic tracks and peers, knowledgeable parents, or knowing which counselors and advisors to consult). It is possible that clearinghouse schools rely heavily on families’ college knowledge and social capital, making it seem less necessary for the school to provide those supports. “In these environments, access to resources is likely to depend more on students’ and parents’ initiatives, which may vary considerably according to a student’s background” (Hill, 2008, p. 60). Clearinghouse schools show considerable differences between racial and

ethnic groups on college readiness measures. Powell et al. (1985) characterized these schools as “shopping mall high schools,” with students as “winners and losers in the educational marketplace.”

In contrast, brokering schools use adults and peer groups as active agents in the college-linking process. The brokering school is “characterized by substantial resources and a strong organizational commitment to affording students and families access to these resources” (Hill, 2008, p. 60). These schools exhibit a strong student-centered orientation, and they show more parity in college-going outcomes across racial and ethnic groups than seen in clearinghouse high schools.

Overall, the evidence for social capital affecting educational outcomes can be considered circumstantial. That is, the evidence comes from correlations and regression analyses of survey variables that are more or less reflective of social capital characteristics, but not specifically designed to measure those characteristics. A comprehensive review of the social capital applications to educational outcomes literature reveals this problem.

Unfortunately, the conceptualization of social capital in these studies is narrow and restricted by the variables available in the data sets....Problems in the conceptualization and measurement of social capital have resulted in a body of research that, except for a few studies, does not acknowledge differential access to social networks and social resources. (Dika & Singh, 2002)

These reviewers recommend more carefully designed qualitative studies that can illuminate how social capital and social networks, at the ground level, actually operate to influence students' educational attainment.

One recent study provides a model for designing investigations that specifically apply social capital theory and social network analysis to analyze educational change in

school settings. Penuel, Riel, Krause and Frank (2009) used a network perspective when studying teachers' professional interactions, focusing "simultaneously on the overall social structure of a school and on the expertise and resources exchanged through interactions among teachers...." Their description incorporates the key characteristics of social capital: actions ("interactions"), structures ("social structure of a school"), relationships ("among teachers") and resources ("expertise and resources exchanged").

Penuel's research team mapped the structures of two schools with similar student demographics (except for SES), one in a more advantaged community and making more progress in school reform than the other. They then placed teachers, teacher-mentors, literacy coaches, and other instructors into appropriate positions on the map. Teachers responded to questionnaires about their social ties (closest colleagues, frequency of interactions); their perceptions about school norms, and what types of resources they needed and used to implement school reforms.

The researchers used a simple form of social network analysis, using the questionnaire data to create sociograms of teacher subgroups/networks, characteristics of these subgroups/networks, and interactions within and between networks. They classified forms of action and documented the types of resources exchanged (e.g., expertise, collaborative time, materials). Their analysis indicated that the more successful school had more cohesion within and across networks, while the other was more fragmented. Also, the network interactions at the more successful school were more compatible with the school's formal structures and activities, while at the other school, social structures did not match formal structures to the same degree. Overall, the study concludes that "social network analysis combined with other qualitative data...can help explain how

different levels and types of social capital in a school can facilitate or thwart the implementation of reforms” (p. 155)

Penuel et al. provided an example of how a study can be designed to directly investigate social capital and social networks. Although the study involved only two schools, data collection was rich and detailed, providing much opportunity for in-depth analysis. The survey variables were highly specific to social capital and network characteristics, thereby increasing the opportunity to look for nuanced relationships and interactions. This contrasts with the use of large-scale surveys designed for multi-purpose analysis, within which only a handful of variables measure social capital characteristics. Limitations of the study cited by the authors include not analyzing parent and community networks or student variables and a lack of qualitative and contextual data that would more fully characterize the actors and their relationships. Despite these limitations, this study shows that the social workings of a school can be illuminated and may have some explanatory potential for school performance.

Research Gaps

The preceding review reveals several gaps in the research literature. First, college readiness studies often focus narrowly on student characteristics that are measurable using large-scale longitudinal survey data and quantitative analysis methods. While this approach has some strength, the data are analyzed outside the context of (a) students’ interactions with family, peers and school personnel, and (b) school actions, structures and relationships that may affect students’ access to important college readiness resources.

Similarly, when social capital theory is applied to educational studies, methods are generally quantitative, identifying correlations, but with very few qualitative studies

giving flesh and form to the findings. These studies provide only circumstantial evidence regarding how social capital operates in real life situations. Additionally, most studies use data collection methods that were not specifically designed to study social capital or social networks and their effects.

Finally, the literature is lacking in-depth studies of college preparatory coaching as compared to traditional guidance counseling.

This study was designed to partially address these research gaps with in-depth qualitative analysis of post-secondary coaching roles in the context of the study schools.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Study Approach

This study used a comparative case study approach to investigate the post-secondary coaching role within the context of each high school. The two cases represented clear contrasts in terms of student demographics, post-secondary coaches' experience and background, and school/district context. The participants were recruited from schools and coaches in a state-funded grant project in two school districts.

Research Questions

This study investigated how the postsecondary coaches perceived their own jobs and how their jobs are perceived by other actors within and outside the schools. These actors included the school principals, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, other school staff, students, and college personnel. This study examined the presence/absence and character of the connections of these actors with the post-secondary coaches, within the specific context of each high school.

Four research questions guided the study:

1. [Coach in Position] How is the coaching position described by the coaches themselves and by others? Where does the position reside within the context of the school, considering both formal and informal structures?
2. [Coach in Action] In what activities (actions), interactions and relationships do the coaches engage in the course of their work? What resources do coaches access, mobilize or confer for students and others?

3. [Coaching Purpose and Value] What are the intended outcomes or goals of the position? Is there any evidence to suggest that these outcomes are being pursued and/or attained?
4. [Social Capital Framework] Given the findings regarding the coaches' positions, actions, purpose and value (Research Questions 1, 2 and 3), to what extent does Lin's social capital framework help to analyze and explain the work of these coaches?

Study Framework

The study was based on a review of the college readiness and social capital literature and identified research gaps. The study used open coding qualitative methods to determine the coaches' structural locations, actions, relationships, access to resources, and goals (research questions 1, 2, and 3). The coaches' work was further examined using Lin's social capital theoretical framework (research question 4). From the study findings, a theory of the coaches' work in the contexts of their respective schools was developed. A graphic summary of the overall study framework is depicted in Figure 5.

Study Participants

As described in Chapter I, participants were recruited from two high schools involved in a state-funded college-readiness project. Alpha High School, a high-minority, high-poverty school, serves about 1,400 students. Of the students, over 60% are low-income and about 40% are minority. The school has low overall performance on state tests, which has placed the school on the state's *No Child Left Behind* improvement list. The post-secondary coach began his coaching role 8 years ago as part of the school's GEAR UP grant. Beta High School, a higher-income, primarily white, school serves nearly 1,700 students, of which about 25% are low-income and 20% minority. The district faced changing demographics in the past decade, with an influx of minority and low-income families from outside the area moving into available subsidized housing units.

Figure 5. Study framework.

Beta High School is on the state's NCLB improvement list for its minority and low-income student performance on state tests. The post-secondary coach is a retired guidance counselor from the school who started the new coaching role 2 years ago.

Participants were provided with informed consent information prior to granting interviews. Interviewees were identified through contact lists created by the post-secondary coaches as well as through lists compiled by the researcher while shadowing the coaches on the job. [Informed consent information, interview protocols and the post-secondary coach writing prompt and observation guide are presented in the Appendix.]

Research Methods

Data collection took the following forms: (a) semi-structured interviews with coaches, regular guidance counselors, principals, teachers and students in each school; (b) written descriptions by coaches of how they do their jobs [open-ended]; (c) observations with field notes, taken while shadowing coaches as they did their work; and (d) documents, websites and other artifacts relevant to coaches' jobs.

Data Analysis

Data analysis involved five components: (a) open coding, (b) social capital framework coding, (c) triangulation, (d) comparisons between the two coding methods, and (e) comparisons between the two cases. Each is described in more detail below.

Open coding was used to identify natural categories and themes within the raw data garnered from interviews, field notes, written responses and artifacts (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). As data were coded, recurring codes were analyzed for similarities and differences and then grouped accordingly. Groups were reviewed and diagrammed to illustrate logical connections and relationships among concepts. With successive passes

through the data, different levels of generality and specificity were identified. Eventually, themes emerged from the categories, and supporting detail was added from the coded data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996).

Social capital framework coding was used to identify social capital categories and themes within the data (Lin, 2001). Lin's framework was translated into groups of questions that could be used to probe the data a second time. This was, in effect, an attempt to take a theoretical model and apply it to a situation in the real world. Again, categories and themes emerged that were then organized against the Lin framework and analyzed on the basis of the framework connections.

Triangulation of findings across data sources was included as part of the process in order to increase reliability (Daniel & Onwuegbusie, 2002). It involved comparing the findings across data sources to attempt more accurate interpretation. "This gives the researcher an opportunity to account for the strengths and weaknesses of each data collection strategy and to examine the overall data for convergence toward a clear understanding of the phenomenon under consideration" (p. 10). It was important to make sure the data had been carefully recorded and coded in order for the triangulation process to increase reliability.

Comparisons between findings from the two coding methods (Huberman & Miles, 1994) was done to determine if each method contributed new and/or different insights into the work of the post-secondary coaches in their respective schools. Categories were compared, overlaps and reinforcing findings were identified, and unique, disparate or non-supportive findings identified.

To make comparisons between the two cases (Huberman & Miles, 1994), data for the two coaches were compared to identify similarities and differences, as were data for the two high schools. As a comparative case study, this investigation required point-by-point analysis of various factors and themes for each coach and school.

When the five data analysis components were completed, it was possible to develop a theory of how the post-secondary coaches did their work within the contexts of their respective schools.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter first presents contextual findings for the two study high schools, then presents the study findings in relation to the research questions.

As described in Chapter III, four research questions guided this study:

1. [Coach in Position] How is the coaching position described by the coaches themselves and by others? Where does the position reside within the context of the school, considering both formal and informal structures?
2. [Coach in Action] In what activities (actions), interactions and relationships do the coaches engage in the course of their work? What resources do coaches access, mobilize or confer for students and others?
3. [Coaching Purpose and Value] What are the intended outcomes or goals of the position? Is there any evidence to suggest that these outcomes are being pursued and/or attained?
4. [Social Capital Framework] Given the findings regarding the coaches' positions, actions, purpose and value, to what extent does Lin's social capital framework help to analyze and explain the work of these coaches?

Also as described in Chapter III, data analysis involved five components:

1. *Open coding* to identify natural categories and themes within the raw data
2. *Social capital framework coding* to identify social capital categories
3. *Triangulation* of findings across data sources
4. *Comparisons between findings from the two coding methods*, and
5. *Comparisons between the two cases*.

Findings in this chapter first describe contextual factors for each study school, and then are presented in relation to each of the four research questions.

School Context

To provide context for the post-secondary coaching data, it was necessary to first compare key features of the two study high schools. Table 1 provides basic demographic and performance comparison data for the two schools for the 2007-08 school year. Data rounding was used to preserve the schools' anonymity.

Table 1

Alpha and Beta High Schools: Data Snapshot

	Alpha High School		Beta High School	
Students served	1,300		1,700	
Attendance rate	87%		93%	
Teacher Data				
Average experience	13 years		13 years	
Average salary	\$54,000		\$53,000	
Student Demographics	<u>1999</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>2008</u>
Low income	45%	62%	11%	24%
Black	23%	39%	7%	14%
White	75%	58%	89%	79%
Hispanic	1%	1%	2%	3%
Multiracial	1%	1%	1%	3%
Student Performance (2008)				
Reading	33% meet/exceed standards		63% meet/exceed standards	
Mathematics	30% meet/exceed standards		63% meet/exceed standards	
Instructional Expenditure per Pupil	\$5,500		\$5,000	

As seen in Table 1, the two schools are of similar size, with comparable teacher experience and salaries. Both schools have experienced changing demographics over the last decade, with minority and low income populations rising by roughly 50% at Alpha High School, and 100% at Beta High School during that time period.

Alpha High School

Alpha High School is a high-minority, high-poverty school. It resides within an urban district that recognized, nearly a decade ago, the need to provide its students with additional and innovative academic and social supports. The need for such support stemmed from the school's rising low-income and minority populations, as well as increasing state and federal accountability requirements. The school provides a number of specialized programs and activities for students with specific challenges. For example, the school's Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG) program serves approximately 40 students with serious life and school challenges, including homelessness, pregnancy, truancy, and substance abuse. This program provides special classes and intensive adult guidance to help students become employment-ready. Other students are served by the school's Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program (described in Chapter II), in which economically disadvantaged and underachieving students receive academic coaching and peer support to boost their course-taking and school performance.

During the 2000-2001 school year, the district partnered with a local public university to write a successful federal proposal establishing a Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) project. The GEAR UP grant provided the district with nearly \$1,000,000 per year to create academic and social supports for an entire cohort of students from their 7th grade year through their 12th grade year. Establishing a post-secondary coaching position at Alpha High School was part of the GEAR UP project plan for the 6-year duration of the grant. In contrast to the JAG and AVID programs, which serve selected students, the post-secondary coaching role evolved to serve all students in the school. Positive results were presented to district school board

members, showing that college attendance among Alpha graduates rose from 35% to 83% over the course of the grant period. The board members saw the need to institutionalize the coaching position at Alpha High School by creating a permanent line item within the district budget. According to transcripts of an interview with the district superintendent at the time (now retired), the board also felt a “moral obligation” to replicate the coaching position at the district’s other two high schools. At the time of this study, all three coaching positions were fully staffed and permanently included in the district budget.

As in most high schools, the guidance staff at Alpha High is responsible for a large caseload of students. The student/counselor ratio is 350:1. Students are organized into four “academies” for guidance purposes. Each counselor follows his/her assigned students throughout their 4 years of attendance, seeing to all required tasks such as keeping student files, scheduling classes, writing college and employment recommendations, and handling individual student challenges. The guidance department also includes a registrar and secretary. The Alpha guidance staff teams with the post-secondary coach, a scholarship/testing coordinator, and the teaching staff to individualize services for students.

College enrollment trends for Alpha High School are displayed in Figure 6. The year 2003 represents the point at which the post-secondary coaching role, originally established in 2000-01, evolved to serve all students in the school. Percentages do not include students who dropped out or transferred prior to graduation. As seen in Figure 6, college enrollment for Alpha High School graduates increased steadily up to a level of roughly 80% during the implementation of the GEAR UP project (through the 2005-06 school year), and remained around 80% after the grant period ended, when the Alpha coach became a permanent district employee.

Figure 6. College enrollment trend data for Alpha High School.

Figure 7 displays post-secondary plans for the Alpha class of 2008, with dropouts and transfers included. With all students included, the college-going rate for Alpha graduates was 70%. When trade/technical school attendance was included, the post-secondary education rate was 75%. In all, 91% of the total 2008 senior class cohort followed specified post-secondary plans.

Figure 7. Alpha High School post-secondary plans for 2008 senior class (n=263).

Alpha High School can be classified as a *brokering high school*, as described in Chapter II, using adults and peer groups as active agents in the college-linking process, and showing relative parity in college-going outcomes across racial and ethnic groups. High school test performance for Alpha High School student subgroups is displayed in Figure 8. While overall student performance (“All” in Figure 8) is relatively low, the performance gap between White and Black students is about 20%. This is a relatively small gap compared to the state’s average White/Black achievement gap of about 40%, as displayed in state report card data for 2008. Also, when all students are counted (including dropouts and transfers), Alpha High School sends 70% of its students to college immediately after graduation, despite its low overall performance. Although many of these students take remedial coursework upon enrolling in college, they are actively pursuing their post-secondary educational goals.

Figure 8. Alpha High School state test performance by racial/ethnic subgroup. Reprinted with permission from Dr. Harvey Smith, Northern Illinois University, Director, Illinois Report Card.

Alpha High School operates in a district that, as referenced earlier, recognized some 10 years prior to this study the need to boost the efforts of the adults in the district on behalf of students. The district mission states, “In [District] Schools, teachers and principals work collaboratively to support and increase the achievement (learning) of every student. All other adults within the system provide responsible supports that positively impact student learning.” This mission statement emphasizes student supports and collaborative work.

As an extension of the district mission, the mission of Alpha High School states:

It is the mission of [Alpha] High School to provide a safe learning environment that recognizes the diversity of all members of the school community. Our purpose is to promote student achievement through active learning, to encourage positive student contributions to society, and to inspire high expectations for the future in each student. This mission will be accomplished through a partnership of students, school staff, family, and community.

This school mission statement brings more specificity to the district mission, stating how the missions will be achieved (i.e., through active learning, high expectations, and a partnership among students and adults). The district and the high school mission statements exhibit *alignment* in relation to both purpose and responsibility. Similarly, the principal at Alpha High aligns her leadership expectations with the district and school missions. In her written communiqués to staff, she states her priorities. These include fostering respect among staff and students; developing strong parent and community partnerships; taking responsibility for student learning; creating a community of learners among students and staff; and having staff and students hold each other accountable. Her expectations and the concomitant actions of the high school staff and students further operationalize the district and school missions.

At the time of this study, school improvement goals for Alpha High School were focused on improving student performance in reading through several strategies, including content-area reading and vocabulary-building. Also, the school had recently extended the school day from six to seven periods to increase instructional time.

Beta High School

Beta High School is a white-majority school that has been experiencing demographic shifts for the past decade. According to state report card data, the numbers of minority and low-income students have doubled during that time (minority enrollment rising from 10% to 20%, and low income enrollment rising from 11% to 24%). Many minority students are from families displaced when housing projects were demolished in a major urban center in the state. These students face academic and social challenges that, historically, were unfamiliar to many of the district's administrators, teachers and staff. The district created a "Diversity Advisory Committee" to establish goals and objectives related to increasing understanding of diversity issues and improving educational outcomes for students from diverse backgrounds.

As an initiative of the Diversity Advisory Committee, freshmen at Beta High participate in a mentoring program that consists of daily homeroom time with faculty advisors, assigned upper class mentors, and occasional guest speakers. District documents state that the program goal is to help freshman students make a smooth transition from middle school to high school while developing trusting relationships with peers and adults. One component of the program encourages all students to make a commitment to graduate from high school.

Guidance staff members at Beta High have similar caseloads to those at Alpha High, with a student/counselor ratio of 340:1. Students are assigned alphabetically to one of five counselors, who follow the students throughout their attendance at the school, performing similar duties to the counselors at Alpha High. Beta counselors consult with individual teachers regarding individual students, but do not exhibit the type of intentional teaming on a daily basis observed at Alpha High. The guidance staff also includes a registrar and secretary.

During the fall of 2008, the Beta coach administered a survey to all sophomores at the high school (Class of 2010, $n = 375$). Of these students, 96% indicated that they intended to pursue some form of higher education after graduation. Post-secondary plan data for the Beta graduating class of 2008 are displayed in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Beta High School post-secondary plans for 2008 senior class.

In general, Beta High School can be characterized as a *clearinghouse school*, in which college-going resources and other resources are made available, but students must know how to access them through their own social capital networks (such as upper academic tracks and peers, knowledgeable family members, or knowing which counselors and advisors to consult). In fact, on one website page for the freshman mentoring program, teachers at the school advise that “freshmen must learn to advocate for themselves.” The teacher page also states that “teachers are more than willing to help students who ask.” Clearly, the bulk of responsibility for agency resides with the students at Beta High School. A problem with this philosophy is that students and parents cannot advocate for things that they do not know exist. For example, one Beta parent stated that she was unaware of the school’s available Advanced Placement courses and how her students could get enrolled in them until she overheard other parents talking about the courses at a fundraising event.

Clearinghouse schools tend to show considerable differences between racial and ethnic groups on college readiness measures. Figure 10 shows state high school test performance for the various student subgroups at Beta High. Although overall performance is higher than that at Alpha High, greater disparities among racial/ethnic group performance are evident. For 2008, the White/Black performance gap for Beta High is 45%, compared to the state average of 40%.

The district’s mission statement is “educating each student to achieve personal excellence.” Beta High School references this mission statement on its website and in written materials, but does not have a separate mission statement for the school. Therefore, the mission seems vague and aspirational, and without a translating version at the

school level, is not clearly operationalized. School improvement goals for Beta High School, as outlined in the school's 2007-08 improvement plan, are (a) to increase the percentage of students exceeding standards [on state tests] by 2% in reading, mathematics and science; and (b) to assure that 62.5% or more of students in all subgroups meet or exceed standards [on state tests]. The 62.5% target represents the minimum level needed to meet the state's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) standard for that year. Strategies include individual after-school tutoring, building teachers' assessment skills, and improving school/parent communications.

Figure 10. Beta High School state test performance by racial/ethnic subgroup. Reprinted with permission from Dr. Harvey Smith, Northern Illinois University, Director, Illinois Report Card.

When approached by the local public university in 2006, the district was willing to consider post-secondary coaching as one innovation in its quest to create new supports for its changing student population. The district partnered with the university to garner a state grant to fund the post-secondary coaching position 2 years prior to this study. The

post-secondary coaching position at Beta High School was established under that grant in the late fall of 2006. While the whole-school coaching model at Alpha High School was offered as an example, Beta High School, with central office guidance, instead designed a selected-student, cohort-type model, in which selected first-generation and/or at-risk freshmen and sophomores would be invited to participate. Roughly 25 students, mostly freshmen, agreed to participate in the first year (beginning in the spring of 2007) and have continued with varying levels of intensity in the subsequent school years. Among this group, two were seniors in the 2008-09 school year while one graduated in December 2008 and then enrolled in the local community college.

Research Question 1: Coach in Position

How is the coaching position described by the coaches themselves and by others? Where does the position reside within the context of the school, considering both formal and informal structures?

To answer this question, data from interviews, written materials produced by the coaches, school websites and other school artifacts, and field notes were reviewed and subjected to open-coding qualitative analysis. Various themes representing structural attributes of the positions emerged. This structural analysis resulted in the comparisons for the Alpha and Beta coaches shown in Table 2 and described more fully in the following sections.

Table 2

General Comparison of Coaching Positions in the Two Study Schools

Positional Feature	Alpha High School	Beta High School
Position Status	Permanent & full-time; salary funded with district funds on the regular professional payroll	Part-time; salary funded with temporary grant funds outside the regular payroll
Position Location	Centrally located in a permanent office across from the guidance office and main (principal's) office	Working out of various temporary locations; no permanent office
Position Assignment	To work with the entire student body	To work with a group of 25 selected students and some additional students on an occasional basis
Position Visibility	Coaching position tied to a formal program and moniker that is part of the school's identity	Coaching position is known to the guidance counselors, school office staff and selected students/families
Position Fiscal Resources	Annual district/school budget for activities, materials and supplies; private donations	Activities, materials and supplies funded with temporary grant monies
Position Tangible Resources	School provides computers, telephones, software, desks, conference tables; open access as needed to school facilities	Coach uses personal cell phone and computer; occasional access to school equipment/materials; occasional access to school facilities

The Coaching Position at Alpha High School

The post-secondary coaching position at Alpha High School was developed under the auspices of a federal GEAR UP grant that provided funding to the school from 2000 through 2006. During that time, student college attendance rates rose markedly, and the district decided to institutionalize the position at Alpha and also replicate it at the district's other two high schools. Consequently, the district budget now includes permanent district funding for the three positions. The Alpha coach is a retired social studies teacher from the high school. He works full-time, but is paid on a retiree scale.

The coach shares a large office, a former classroom, with another specialized support staff member who facilitates students' scholarship applications and the school's testing program. Her position was also established during the GEAR UP project. Their office is centrally located in the school, near the main office and directly across from the guidance offices. It is stocked with desktop and laptop computers, a printer, college catalogs, and file cabinets full of college application forms for a variety of institutions. It is furnished with large tables surrounded by chairs and benches. On any school day, the office is a hub of activity, with students moving in and out, working with the coach alone or in groups, or working with each other to research college options or complete application forms.

The coach is assigned to work with the entire student body at Alpha High School. Early in the program's inception, an attempt was made to single out students needing special assistance due to individual challenges, but the coach kept finding that his services could be helpful to an ever-widening circle of students. Within 2 years of the GEAR UP project's inception, the decision was made to adopt a school-wide college-

going strategy. While this decision dramatically increased the coach's workload, he found it much more satisfying to serve a broad range of students and to nurture higher education aspirations throughout the student body. This decision showed tangible outcomes in the rising numbers of students enrolling in post-secondary education (data displayed earlier in Figure 6).

The Alpha coaching position is highly visible to students, school personnel, and parents. The program was given a title, and its name appears in school newsletters, posters and fliers throughout the school [Program title is not provided to preserve anonymity.] It is featured prominently on the school's home web page. As the school's officially titled "post-secondary coach" to all students, every student in the school eventually comes in contact with the Alpha coach in both formal and informal settings, so he is constantly greeted and interacts continuously with students as he moves about the school.

The district has set aside a budget for activities related to post-secondary planning for students and parents. Expenditures include ACT preparation courses, transportation for campus visits, computer equipment, printing and mailing. The Alpha coach solicits donations from local businesses to underwrite food and beverages for evening activities such as financial aid workshops. In addition, the district funds a second full-time college-focused position: a scholarship and testing coordinator for the high school, who shares the converted classroom office with the Alpha coach.

The school provides the coach with a permanent headquarters from which he can operate, including the necessary equipment and supplies. The school features the coach's activities prominently in its communications within and outside the school. At Alpha

High School, the coach visits English classes several times per semester to announce events for the formal college readiness program, and works closely on a daily basis with the guidance counselors and the scholarship/testing coordinator. The coach is ideally situated to have access to essential school resources as he works with the entire student body.

The Coaching Position at Beta High School

The Beta High School coach works in a part-time position with a salary paid through temporary grant funds outside of the regular staff payroll. At the time of this study, she was working on the third year of project implementation. She is a retired school counselor being paid at a reduced rate (compared to regular staff) as a consultant in a contract arrangement. All fiscal and most tangible resources for the position are supplied by the grant funds, not by the district. It is anticipated that when grant funding concludes at the end of the current school year, the position will be terminated unless alternate external funding can be obtained. If the position were to continue, it would likely be through the initiative and efforts of the Beta coach and the university partner, not the district.

The Beta coach works out of various temporary locations, usually setting up shop in a conference room adjoining the guidance office. She works mainly with a small group of 25 students for whom she keeps records at home and gets access to information through the guidance counselors. On an occasional basis, she works with additional students. For example, when she facilitates college recruiter visits, she invites all students in the school to attend for colleges in which they have an interest. She also visits freshman homerooms to begin college planning discussions. On her own initiative, the Beta

coach has expanded her original assignment to include the facilitated recruiter visits and the freshman homeroom talks. The guidance counseling staff does not take part in these structured college-oriented activities.

In contrast to the Alpha High School scenario, at Beta High the coaching position is nearly invisible to most of the students and staff. The Beta coach has informed the guidance counselors of her role as well as the school office staff. However, due to the segmented nature of the school's programs, she has little or no contact with the principal, and limited contact with the teachers in the school. She creates her own fliers and distributes them herself, or arranges for them to be included in school newsletters at her request. The Beta coach uses her personal computer, email address, and cell phone to do most of her work. She has occasional access to school facilities for meetings and workspace.

Coach in Position Summary

Data analysis revealed two very different structural arrangements for the Alpha and Beta post-secondary coaches. The Alpha coach is embedded within the school's formal student support structures and afforded a position with high visibility inside and outside the school. The working environment at Alpha is guided by student-centered flexibility, giving the coach many options for assisting students. In contrast, because of temporary funding external to the school's main functions, the Beta coach is situated in an informal position marginal to the school's formal structures, and with very low visibility to most students and staff. While her own position is flexible, operating outside the formal school structures, the school's internal operations are bureaucratic and

relatively rigid, thus limiting the coach's options for instrumental action on behalf of students, despite her own initiative and effort.

In addition, the two coaches have two very different assignments. The Alpha coach is charged with assisting *all* students with post-secondary planning and follow-through. Given the brokering nature of Alpha High School, this would be a good fit for a school that has committed to use networks of adults and peers to address its goals in a holistic fashion. In contrast, the Beta coach is assigned to assist a selected group of at-risk students. This position assignment fits the description of Beta High School as a clearing-house school that offers segmented specialized services to a student population with diverse needs.

Research Question 2: Coach in Action

In what activities (actions), interactions and relationships do the coaches engage in the course of their work? What resources do coaches access, mobilize or confer for students and others?

Open coding of interview notes and artifacts, along with field notes collected while observing/shadowing the coaches, revealed that both coaches engage in similar actions, interactions and relationships in the course of their work, but to different extents due to the nature of their positions (e.g., full-time vs. part-time, permanent vs. temporary).

Data coding showed that both coaches engage on a regular basis in three basic functions: (a) facilitating processes, (b) linking to resources, and (c) networking with people. These functions are not discrete, but rather overlap, working in concert to assist students with post-secondary plans and actions. Figure 11 depicts these functions, which pertain to both the Alpha and Beta coaches.

Figure 11. Coach in action: Basic functions.

The functions and data for each coach are displayed in Table 3 and discussed in detail in the following sections. In addition to performing the three types of functions, both coaches display personal attributes that enable them to perform their actions effectively. These are described after the action analysis.

Alpha Coach in Action

Facilitating processes. This function takes up the bulk of the Alpha coach's time and effort. He spends 3 to 4 days per week providing customized assistance to students regarding the logistics of college selection and applications.

College selection entails matching student preferences, as ascertained through career explorations and inventories, with academic qualifications, college admission requirements, and family circumstances. The coach actively guides students to narrow their college choices to a reasonable and realistic group in a timely manner, usually early

in their senior year. He does this through arranged campus visits, contacts with college personnel, and web searches.

Table 3

General Comparison of Coaching Functions at the Two Study Schools

Action Category	Alpha High School	Beta High School
Facilitating Processes	<u>College Applications</u> College selection Application materials	<u>College Applications</u> College selection Application materials
	<u>Financial Aid Applications</u> FAFSA Pin Numbers FAFSA Completion Scholarships (Scholarship/testing coach)	<u>Financial Aid Applications</u> FAFSA Parent Workshops
	<u>Logistical Tools</u> Student database Progress checklists	<u>Logistical Tools</u> Student database
Linking to Resources	<u>College & Career Information</u> Career inventories/options Campus visits On-line searches Facilitated campus agent visits Facilitated military recruiter visits	<u>College & Career Information</u> Career inventories/options Job shadowing Campus visits On-line searches Facilitated campus agent visits
	<u>College Personnel</u> Admissions officers Financial aid Advisors/mentors	<u>College Personnel</u> Admissions officers Financial aid
	<u>Financial Resources</u> FRL fee waivers Scholarships	<u>Financial Resources</u> Scholarship information
Networking with People	Students/Parents Teachers/Administrators Counselors/Support personnel College and Military personnel Law enforcement/social service personnel Employers Scholarship/Testing Coach	Students/Parents Teachers Counselors/Support Personnel College Personnel Employers

The Alpha coach is very familiar with the application requirements and materials for the most-often selected colleges. These include the local community college, a local technical college, a local private 4-year college, and several regional public universities. For other college choices, he usually has the students themselves do the legwork of tracking down admission requirements and application forms, mostly on-line using laptop computers in his office. During this study, students were observed on numerous occasions entering the coach's office with passes from their classes, and forming 2- and 3-student work groups to help each other search college websites and fill out on-line applications. College applications involve collecting and packaging a variety of information accumulated throughout the students' high school careers. Transcripts, grade point information, ACT scores and recommendation letters all must be packaged along with general application information and financial aid forms. The Alpha coach is the school's final destination for students' application materials before they are shipped off to their respective colleges.

At Alpha High School, guidance counselors and English teachers assist the post-secondary coach by implementing a simple process of resume writing that they undertake with Alpha students. Beginning freshman year, students write personal resumes in their English classes, listing examples of activities, leadership responsibilities, and knowledge and skills they have acquired. The guidance counselors keep this information on file for easy access in subsequent years. This process continues through the students' senior year, when counselors write personalized recommendation letters based on the resume information. These letters then go to the post-secondary coach for inclusion in students' college application packets. One Alpha guidance counselor describes her working relationship with the post-secondary coach as follows:

I talk to him almost every day. We have a good system set up to pull together kids' [college] applications. [Alpha coach] is the college part of the puzzle.... We all play a part, sometimes at different times. For example, we have our students make up "resumes" throughout their 4 years here, so we can personalize their college recommendations. The registrar keeps the transcript system. Then it all goes to [Alpha coach] so he can help the kids get their college application packets completed. He brings the whole process together.

One very important hurdle for parents is completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, enabling their students to access a variety of federal grants and loans. While many colleges offer FAFSA workshops, it is not always the case that parents, especially low-income or otherwise disadvantaged, have the knowledge or means to attend. For the Alpha coach, finding and accessing financial aid for students always begins with the FAFSA. The Alpha coach works with students and parents to obtain FAFSA pin numbers very early in the college application process. At Alpha High School, the coach was observed helping students apply for their FAFSA identification numbers on-line from his office computer. He was observed on numerous occasions calling parents on the phone, guiding them through the FAFSA website at their home or work computers. He sets up large group sessions for parents to learn about the form and how to complete it. He also offers workshops where parents can bring their actual tax information and complete their forms with assistance from school and college personnel.

The Alpha coach works in tandem with his colleague and office mate, the scholarship and testing coordinator. She, too, works closely with the students in their college planning, helping them to find scholarship opportunities that match their college choices. She assists the students with their scholarship applications, often using information from the student resumes. Students were observed shuttling back and forth between the scholarship coordinator and the Alpha coach, working on various scholarship application

questions. One female student was observed lamenting that she didn't have any leadership experience to write about for a scholarship application. The Alpha coach knew her well enough to ask pointed questions, eventually getting her to realize that being a sports team captain and a student council representative both "counted" as leadership experience. The student was then able to complete that section of the application and return to working with the scholarship coordinator.

Since the coach serves the entire student body, at any given time, he guides students at different points along the post-secondary planning process. The Alpha High School coach has developed several logistical tools to keep him and his students organized throughout the process. For example, he has created a computer database that links students' academic (transcript) information and test scores with their college and career preferences, their parents' contact information, a running log of contacts with the coach, and lists of colleges students are considering and applying to attend. The database includes dates for meetings and deadlines along with checklists to guide student progress through the application process. The checklists are printed for individual students, who can then track their own application process for each college.

Linking to resources. The Alpha coach helps students find three main types of resources: (a) information about college and careers, (b) connections to college personnel, and (3) financial resources. Over time, the coach has built up a large repository of knowledge regarding who to talk to and how to find the necessary resources for each student.

The Alpha coach arranges career fairs in collaboration with the local community college. Students from the entire high school are solicited to attend, and several hundred

do so for each such scheduled event. Because student turnout is so high, many local and regional employers are eager to send representatives to the career fairs, making the experience richer for the students. The Alpha coach administers career inventories and includes students' career choices in his comprehensive database.

The post-secondary coach has transformed college representatives' school visits. In the past, college agents would arrange to come to the high school and stay for a few hours, setting up information tables in the cafeteria or school library. Students would typically wander by, collect some of the free giveaway items such as pens and key chains, and may or may not establish a more in-depth contact with the college representative. In contrast, the post-secondary coach now conducts facilitated meetings with the college representatives, arranging in advance for interested students and their parents to meet with them in small groups. The students, having already decided which colleges are realistic choices, benefit by receiving more in-depth and customized information, while the colleges benefit by being able to establish lasting contacts with prospective students and their parents.

The Alpha coach arranges multiple campus visits each year, both in group format and for individual students and their parents. These visits include transportation, tours with college personnel, auditing actual college classes, and interviews with current college students. Parents receive in-depth information and can ask personalized questions of the campus representatives. This information includes detailed cost breakdowns, institutional scholarship and grant availability, and other pertinent financial information.

In interviews, students at Alpha High have described these visits as helpful for making choices between colleges, and occasionally helping a student to make the actual

decision to attend college after graduation. The Alpha coach was observed working with one student, who had not yet visited a nearby college she was considering. The coach immediately picked up the phone and called a campus representative to get available times for a personal tour. Once he got that information, he then dialed the student's mother, gave her the time options, and arranged the visit for a date 3 days later. The coach called back to the campus to confirm the arrangements. The student left his office with a reminder in hand and a pass to leave school for the upcoming campus tour.

Some students at Alpha High School have chosen to pursue their college aspirations via military service. The Alpha coach conducts facilitated meetings with military recruiters, similar to those with campus representatives. Parents attend these sessions with their students, and the coach assures that the conversations benefit both students and parents. During the year of data collection for this study, military recruitment (especially among female students) had risen significantly. The Alpha coach speculated that the many benefits offered by the military branches, including training, pay, travel and college opportunities, were becoming more and more attractive to a wider array of students seeking economical and practical ways to attain a college education.

In addition to college and career information resources, the coach provides access to financial resources. At Alpha High School, where a significant number of students (62%) are low-income, the coach actively seeks to have students register for free or reduced lunch (FRL) status. Nationally, many high school students decline to participate in the FRL program for fear of social stigma. Through the work of the post-secondary coach and the guidance counselors, Alpha students sign up for these benefits in large numbers, because doing so creates financial eligibility for other benefits. These benefits

include waivers of college application fees and eligibility for a range of scholarships and grants, all significant financial resources for needy families. As the Alpha coach says to his students when they submit their FRL paperwork: “Trust me! You’re gonna *love* that you did this!”

As mentioned earlier, the post-secondary coach works very closely with another full-time employee who handles testing and scholarships for the school. Working together, the two adults assure that students have thoroughly plumbed their scholarship and financial resource options.

A third category of resources involves connecting students directly to college personnel. The Alpha coach refers to many of the college admissions staff as his personal friends, to whom he can go for assistance for individual students. At a presentation of his work to a professional conference of college admissions personnel, the Alpha coach was observed being greeted personally by many of the attendees, who chatted about various students and about upcoming joint events.

One vignette illustrates quite clearly the power of the Alpha coach to create college connections for needy students. Through his long association with college personnel at one nearby private college, the Alpha coach was able to negotiate admission, room, board and a part-time job for a female Alpha student who was homeless due to family dysfunctions. She was immediately connected to an advisor and is currently flourishing academically and socially at the college. During her freshman year, she came back to the high school often to visit with the Alpha coach, who continued to provide her with support services. During one observed interaction, he took the student to a community computer “bank,” where he helped her to get a free laptop computer for her use at the

college. With a part-time job at the college and taking a full-time course load, the student is now making her own connections with college personnel.

Networking with people. The Alpha coach's office is a non-stop beehive of activity, with students streaming in and out, college and military recruiters setting up and conducting meetings, and guidance counselors and support staff picking up and delivering paperwork. When the coach is not working in his office, he is out visiting classrooms, interacting with teachers and students in their academic classes.

The coach has a variety of reasons to interact with others on behalf of his students. Often, he contacts parents, teachers or guidance counselors to solve or prevent problems. These problems may include completing college applications on time, rearranging course schedules, or signing students up to retake the ACT examination. In one instance, the Alpha coach and a guidance counselor worked together with law enforcement personnel to assure that a jailed student could take a final exam on time. The Alpha coach said in a written description of his job, "The secret is to have others help. If I did not have total cooperation of everyone from students through teachers through administrators to parents, this program would not be a success." Other reasons to interact include joint planning for student college readiness events, conducting the events, facilitating meetings, and conducting campus and career visits.

The Alpha coach works particularly closely with one teacher who conducts a targeted vocational program, affiliated with Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG), for especially challenged students. The program helps students attain job and social skills and supports them academically to help them overcome their many home and personal barriers. The program teacher characterizes the Alpha coach as his "go-to guy." In

addition to working together at school for the approximately 40 students in the program, they also talk evenings, weekends, and throughout the summer to continue to help students and plan for upcoming support services. The teacher stated in an interview,

We just pick up the phone and talk all the time. Right now we are trying to get a girl into [a local private college]. She's a 'house-jumper,' but a great kid. So we are using a triangular approach: [Alpha coach], her counselor, and myself. We are all working with her on different parts of her challenges.

When the Alpha coach was observed walking into the teacher's room while he was conducting a class, the teacher continued the lesson and the Alpha coach talked to two students about college application deadlines without causing any classroom disruption.

The Alpha coach has developed a system with the English teachers (since all students take an English class every year) in which he visits their classrooms regularly to make announcements, and the teachers offer extra credit for attending the coach's college planning events. The English teachers also offer credit to students who bring their parents or guardians to the events. The coach was observed making one of his rounds to English classes to announce an upcoming evening event. When he entered each classroom, the teachers simply stopped their lessons and gave the coach the floor. Each teacher then made reinforcing comments to support the coach's college planning message.

Beta Coach in Action

Facilitating processes. The Beta coach performs many of the same actions as those described for the Alpha coach, although on a much smaller scale. She provides customized assistance to her select group of students regarding the logistics of college selection and applications. She hosts groups of students and parents in meetings with college and financial aid representatives, as well as working with individual students and

their parents. Mixing group and individual approaches allows for customized assistance and attention, especially for students and parents who, for lack of knowledge and experience, may struggle with the college application and financial aid processes.

The Beta coach recognizes that her first-generation students have limited family knowledge and support for the college selection process. She assists in three ways: (a) facilitating meetings with college representatives, (b) arranging campus visits, and (c) helping students narrow down their choices based on career inventories, job shadowing, admission criteria, financial resources, and other personal circumstances.

Like the Alpha coach, the Beta coach arranges for parents to receive FAFSA assistance on the school site, using an evening workshop format. She also makes parents aware of FAFSA support available at the local community college campus.

Linking to resources. The Beta coach has arranged job shadowing experiences for her students to give them first-hand access to jobs and the people who hold them. She described one such experience as “life-changing” for one of her students, who is experiencing health problems and wants to enter a health advocacy profession. For this student, understanding the knowledge and skills needed to achieve her career goal gave her the incentive to plan for and attend college.

Once students have a career or career cluster in mind, the Beta coach helps them to explore college options. She also takes into account each student’s academic record, family situation, and extenuating circumstances. Through one-on-one student interactions, the coach helps them to narrow down their options to several practical and realistic choices. She, like the Alpha coach, arranges facilitated visits with campus representatives.

As the Beta coach says,

The one-on-one exposure and the small group settings to meet with the actual admissions personnel enables everyone to hear good and helpful information. Once a comfort level is reached, the parents open up and become willing participants. The excitement and enthusiasm to pursue college aspirations increased because of these meetings.

This change has also partially streamlined the application process, since students with more in-depth information are more selective about the applications they work to complete.

The Beta coach arranges campus visits for her selected students and their parents, who might otherwise not have the knowledge or means to personally investigate a potential college choice.

Networking with people. The Beta coach was a former guidance counselor at the high school, so she moves freely and confidently around the school offices and classrooms, finding individual students or groups of students with whom she needs to communicate. She engages parents to support their students in making college plans, course schedules, and campus visits.

As an additional feature of her job, on her own initiative the Beta coach arranged to visit freshman homerooms as a guest speaker several times during the school year to raise student awareness of course-taking requirements and the benefits of early college planning. The guidance counselors at Beta High School saw this as a welcome supplement to their work of planning student schedules.

The Beta High School coach has developed strong relations with personnel at the local community college and at the large public university nearby. She has arranged for numerous personal interactions for her students and works with college personnel to

organize group and individual activities such as ACT preparation courses, campus tours, and classroom audits. She has been working in the post-secondary coaching role for only two years (compared to eight years for the Alpha coach). One of her stated goals is to expand her network of college personnel contacts to include representatives from colleges outside the immediate region.

The Beta coach has developed contacts with several employers willing to take on students for job-shadowing experiences, and with college students willing to tutor her students after school. She has used her personal contacts at the local university to enroll two seniors, who had been accepted for fall enrollment, in a summer “bridge” program to acclimate them to the college. The 3-week residential program was available without cost to the students, through the coach’s networking connections at the university.

Coaches’ Knowledge, Skills and Personal Attributes

An attribute that both coaches share, and which serves them well, is that of being “people persons.” Being outgoing and personable is extremely helpful in establishing rapport with parents, students, and other educators. However, in addition to this very useful personality trait, the coaches need a range of specific personal knowledge and skills. These include process and organizational knowledge, and skills such as networking, problem-solving, multi-tasking, and the ability to bring tasks to completion. Personal attributes include being empathetic, trustworthy, and motivational. This section discusses these shared characteristics in detail, with examples from both coaches.

Coaching knowledge. The knowledge needed by the coaches can be categorized as *process knowledge* and *organizational knowledge*. Process knowledge involves understanding the key steps in college selection, application, admission and attendance.

This includes understanding financial aid in all its variations. Timing and scheduling is extremely important if students expect to attain their college-going aspirations, so the coaches must be expert at knowing when and in what order events must take place.

For example, the Alpha coach understands that students who graduate from high school in December and want to attend college in January must follow a much different schedule than June graduates to obtain financial aid. Their parents must use the previous year's tax filings to establish eligibility, and the admissions process is pushed back considerably from the regular schedule. The Alpha coach always is among the first in the school to receive a list of anticipated early graduates (in September), so that he can begin the accelerated processes necessary to get these students into college.

The Beta coach is well aware of the annual schedules followed by counselors, based on her former job as a guidance counselor in the school. She can organize her activities to best mesh with the timing of college applications, recommendations, and testing.

Organizational knowledge involves understanding the structures, functions, responsibilities and cultures within both the schools and the colleges. One of the advantages of hiring recent retirees from same school seems to be that both coaches have been able to navigate their respective schools very efficiently. They understand the school hierarchies and the job descriptions of their colleagues. For example, the Beta coach already knows the guidance position and its duties; she can assure that she works in tandem and not at cross-purposes with the guidance staff. The Alpha coach stated in written documents that he sees the guidance counselors' responsibilities as including scheduling, grades, test scores, graduation records, and personal counseling, which

allows him to take advantage of their knowledge and work while he organizes events and deals with students and parents “in a non-threatening atmosphere.” At the same time that the Alpha coach recognizes differences in roles, he is able to facilitate a team approach among the different school personnel to provide the best possible service to each student.

The Beta High School coach, as stated earlier, is totally familiar with her school and its inner workings, which enables her to efficiently and effectively reach students without infringing on the work of others. She is situated as a supplemental service provider or case worker, which relieves some stress on the guidance counselors in regard to her selected students. On a broader scale, when she visits the freshman homerooms, she reinforces the work of teachers trying to explain to their students the benefits of various courses.

Coaching skills. The skills displayed by the post-secondary coaches may be described as networking ability, problem-solving ability, multi-tasking ability, and the capacity to take processes to completion in a reliable manner.

For both coaches, *networking ability* involves working daily with a wide variety of school personnel, students and parents. On certain days, the network widens to include external personnel such as college and military recruiters, admissions officers, and financial aid experts. For selected students, both coaches occasionally activate their networks of specialized support, including social workers and law enforcement personnel. Both coaches bridge between their schools and external agencies, particularly colleges. They constantly work to expand and strengthen their network contacts.

Problem-solving ability is a key skill for the post-secondary coaches. Each student's circumstances are unique in some way, whether because of academic, social, or

personal circumstances. While the coaches have the process of college selection and admissions thoroughly in hand, many glitches arise in the actual implementation of the process for each student. For example, when the Beta High School coach first began her job, she experienced some frustration because, while many parents eagerly committed to helping their first-generation students work through the college readiness process, when the time came to actually attend scheduled meetings or meet filing deadlines, several parents did not meet their obligations. The coach had to work individually with these families, to the extent that she would arrange transportation and child care services to get them where they needed to be. When the Alpha coach first started in his role 8 years ago, he encountered similar problems, particularly with the large group evening meetings he scheduled for parents and students. One way he has solved the problem is by soliciting meal donations from large businesses in the community. Now, virtually all evening meetings include free full meals for the families that attend, making them extremely well-populated.

The need for *multi-tasking* is a natural component of the post-secondary coaching job. Both schools in the study are relatively large, with roughly 1,300 and 1,700 students for Alpha and Beta high schools, respectively. The Alpha coach works mostly with juniors and seniors, but has contact with the full student body throughout the school year. This means that on any given day, the coach must juggle a variety of tasks, including event planning, individual student and parent assistance, conducting facilitated meetings with college and military recruiters, addressing classrooms on various topics, and interacting with counselors and teachers. Both coaches keep track of their students' schedules, early graduates, testing dates, and filing deadlines. They plan events well in

advance to assure that they are part of the school calendar for the year. During day-long observations, the Alpha coach was seen simultaneously completing paperwork, checking computer databases and talking on the phone to parents at various times throughout the school day.

While handling a variety of tasks each day is an important aspect of the coaching job, it is essential that each task be brought to *completion*, meaning that students are helped to arrive at their post-secondary destination with all the essential pieces—academic records, applications, financial support—in good order. Both coaches are very conscientious about assuring that each student progresses along in a timely manner to their post-secondary goals. For the Alpha coach, this means working closely with his whole-school team of counselors, teachers and the scholarship/testing advisor to bring each student's portfolio to fruition. For the Beta coach, it means shepherding her selected students through the college preparation, application, acceptance and enrollment process, consulting with parents, counselors and teachers along the way.

Coaches' personal attributes. The coaches exhibit several shared personal attributes that complement their knowledge of work processes and school/college organizations. These include *being empathetic and building rapport* with students, parents, and school and college personnel. For example, Alpha students refer to their coach by his last name only, treating him as one of their circle of friends. When directly asked about their relationship with the coach, one Alpha student commented that he is “a really good friend. He seems like he really cares about all the students.” Another student said that [the coach] “actually cares about students and how they are getting ahead and getting along.” While the Alpha coach has established strong and supportive relationships, he

stated that he is “easy going, but I can be very direct with them—students, parents, or college officials....I create a positive, non-threatening atmosphere.” The rapport that he has established appears to allow him to speak frankly and honestly about what must get done and how to do it.

For the Beta coach, working with a smaller group of students, it has become possible to get to know the parents or guardians of each student. When she visited one parent of a first-generation student at their home, the parent wept with joy at the thought of her son receiving such valuable assistance to get to college. The coach and the parent now talk regularly about the student’s progress. Another parent is the mother of two high school students who will be first-generation college attendees. She stated that when she began to try to help her children look up college information on-line, she felt like she was “swimming in a sea of information, trying to filter out what is most helpful.” She felt that the relationship she developed with the Beta coach made it easier to ask questions and make progress toward college admission for her students.

Both coaches have particularly strong rapport with their school’s guidance counselors. Having been a counselor herself, the Beta coach thoroughly understands the job requirements and its pressures, as well as having built good working relationships with the counselors prior to her retirement. One counselor expressed interest during an interview in returning to Beta High School after her own retirement in a role similar to that of the Beta coach. She stated that she saw the role as being extremely helpful to the counseling staff, whose time is consumed with a variety of tasks that preclude devoting quality attention to college logistics. Another Beta counselor, speaking for the guidance department in general, stated, “We help students get started on their college searches, but

we don't do the searches for them....Searches are much more self-directed by students now." She sees the Beta coach's role as very supportive for both the students and the counselors.

A component of building rapport is developing a sense of *trust* between the coaches and their student clients. This trust appears to stem from the fact that the coaches are reliable sources of support, information, and resources for the students and their parents. Both coaches have built reputations for problem-solving and completing multiple tasks on behalf of students. Parents and students rely on the coach's judgment while navigating the college readiness path. One example of this trust was observed when the Alpha coach asked students about their free/reduced lunch (FRL) status. It was clear that the students trusted the coach with family financial information, and students were not embarrassed to state that they were eligible for benefits but had not signed up to receive them. As referenced earlier, the coach's words were, "Trust me. You're gonna *love* the fact that you [signed up for free lunch]. It will pay you back many times." All students who were asked about FRL ultimately set aside any embarrassment they may have had, and trusted the coach enough to sign up for the benefit, which later would allow them to waive college application fees and become eligible for other types of financial aid.

The Beta coach personally helped families complete their FAFSA forms, meaning that she was entrusted with their financial information, including their taxable income. As a former counselor, she had built a reputation of confidentiality and trustworthiness that she was able to carry over into her new role.

Another coaching attribute is that of being *motivational* for students. While they understand that some students have higher or lower expectations for themselves, the

coaches see their jobs as finding a good match between student aspirations and resources that will lead them to a beneficial college experience. At Alpha High School, the coach organizes sessions for students to complete career interest inventories, which he then uses to guide students through a series of post-secondary opportunity explorations. When students see their potential pathways develop, driven by their own interests, they seem to gain a sense of control over their future choices. Alpha students were observed helping each other with on-line searches in the coaches' office, trading ideas and possibilities about potential college choices. It was clear that they had learned enough about their own interests and abilities that, through interaction with the Alpha coach, they could now productively engage in weighing options for the future. Alpha students also mentioned that they had found the campus visits and career fairs, arranged by the coach, to be highly motivating. The Beta coach felt that she had motivated several individual students, especially through arranging job shadowing opportunities and campus visits. Her stated goal for making the freshman homeroom visits was to motivate students early in their careers to make course choices and develop study habits that would enable them to realize their higher education goals.

Coach in Action Summary

The actions of the coaching position fall under three main functions, as discussed in the preceding sections. These are (a) facilitating processes, (b) linking to resources, and (c) networking with people. All these action categories are rendered more or less effective in part because of where the coaches are situated in their schools (see Part I: Coach in Position), and also by the knowledge, skills and personal attributes of the coaches themselves. Figure 12 provides a graphic summary of the Coach in Action

analysis. While the three functions are displayed in separate sections of the graphic, in reality, all three coaching functions are intertwined and all three are facilitated by the coaches' skills and attributes. All these actions and the coaches' characteristics exemplify the role of the coaches as bridging agents, reaching across institutional boundaries to garner resources on behalf of their students.

Figure 12. Coach in action summary.

While analysis of the two coaching roles show parallel categories of action, their range and intensity differ. When comparing the two coaches, the Alpha coach performs a wider range of instrumental actions on behalf of students. This difference can be attributed to the Alpha coach's broader role in serving all students, his longer and more well-established tenure in the position, and his stature as a senior staff member situated centrally in the school. He is able to maintain a higher level of intensity due to the four-year period of sustained interaction he has with each student. However, both coaches exhibit similar personal characteristics, including knowledge, skills and personal attributes, making them both well-suited for their networking and bridging roles. It is very likely that the Beta coach could perform her role at a very productive level in a brokering school like Alpha High School.

Research Question 3: Coaching Purpose and Value

What are the intended outcomes or goals of the position? Is there any evidence to suggest that these outcomes are being pursued and/or attained?

Coaching Goals

For this study, both post-secondary coaches were asked to submit formal, written goals for their positions. They refer to these goals often, in conferences with co-workers, students and parents, as well in meetings and written materials. The goals for each coach are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4

Post-Secondary Coaching Goals

Alpha High School Coaching Goals	Beta High School Coaching Goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help students enroll in college, get employment or enlist in military as needed • Help families learn more about money for college • Plan college visits and career exploration for students • Develop, maintain and encourage the use of a college resource room • Make post-secondary planning a family process • Increase the number of students successfully transitioning to post-high school opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase college preparatory skills • Gain a strong connection and familiarity with college campuses, faculty, staff and students • Improve academic skills through instruction and tutoring in reading, writing and mathematics • Increase their familiarity with college admissions policies and procedures • Maximize financial aid availability and navigate the financial aid process • Cultivate personal growth in leadership, decision-making, social competence, time management, and personal finance • Understand the connection between college majors and career paths

Comparing the goals for both coaches reveals a great deal of overlap. The goals can be clustered based on the type of action they address. The general goal clusters may be summarized as (a) create opportunities to explore post-secondary options, (b) bring post-secondary plans to fruition, and (c) increase access to financial aid. Table 5 displays coaching goals organized by goal cluster for each coach.

Table 5

Post-Secondary Coaching Goals Organized by Goal Cluster

Goal Cluster	Alpha Coaching Goals	Beta Coaching Goals
Create opportunities to explore post-secondary options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan college visits and career exploration for students • Develop, maintain, and encourage the use of a college resource room • Make post-secondary planning a family process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain a strong connection and familiarity with college campuses, faculty, staff and students • Understand the connection between college majors and career paths
Bring post-secondary plans to fruition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help students enroll in college, get employment or enlist in military as needed • Increase the number of students successfully transitioning to post-high school opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase familiarity with college admissions policies and procedures
Increase access to financial aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help families learn more about money for college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximize financial aid availability and navigate the financial aid process
Foster academic and social improvement		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase college preparatory skills • Improve academic skills through instruction and tutoring in reading, writing and mathematics • Cultivate personal growth in leadership, decision-making, social competence, time management & personal finance

The Beta coach's goals include an additional emphasis on improving academic and social skills. She stated that because she works with a select group of at-risk students, this emphasis was necessary for her program. In contrast, since the Alpha coach operates using a whole-school model, he relies on the teachers and counselors for academic and social support; thus his emphasis can be placed more specifically on post-secondary

planning and logistics. One Alpha guidance counselor commented, “Our freshman teachers are awesome about recommending to push students up into tougher classes. We get that done as quickly as we can and we work together to keep them there.”

Evidence of Goal Attainment

Observations and artifact review reveals clearly that both coaches are pursuing the stated goals of their respective positions. Each has a record of scheduled and completed events, including parent information sessions, college visits, career fairs and job-shadowing opportunities. Table 6 displays accomplishment records for a full school year.

Table 6

Post-Secondary Coaching Accomplishments for One Academic Year (2007-08)

Alpha High School Coach (whole school model)	Beta High School Coach (selected student/case management model)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1255 one-on-one student conferences with coach • 376 parent contacts (phone calls and conferences) • 4 parent/student workshops • 671 students attending workshops • 542 parents attending workshops • 85 students without computer access being helped with FAFSA pin numbers • 37 parents without computer access being helped with FAFSA completion • 387 students participating in sponsored campus tours/visits on 17 campuses • 121 students taking placement tests for local community college • \$5025 in external funds for coaching activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 facilitated college representative visits • 4 parent/student workshops • students with parents/guardians participating • 24 freshman homeroom visits to discuss college planning • 3 sponsored campus visits • 150+ tutoring sessions • 1 ACT review session • 4 job shadowing experiences

As expected, the records for the Beta coach are numerically lower than those for the Alpha coach, due to the selected-student/case management model of her school program. All the activities match the intended goals of the coaching position and demonstrate a record of program implementation on the part of both coaches.

Coaching outcomes are impressive for the Alpha High School program. Over 8 years of operation, the coaching effort, which includes the work of the post-secondary coach and the scholarship/testing coordinator, has clearly increased the numbers of students taking advantage of post-secondary opportunities (from 35% to 80%). College enrollment data for 6 years of graduates were displayed in Figure 6.

Other outcomes include students applying to college, students pursuing other post-secondary pathways besides college, and demographic disaggregation for college-going outcomes. Table 7 displays a summary of outcomes for the most recently completed school year for Alpha High School.

Table 7

Summary of Alpha Coaching Outcomes for One Academic Year (2007-2008)

Alpha High School Coach:

197 of 238 graduates (83%) enrolled in college directly from high school

200 of 238 graduates (84%) applied for admission to at least one college

27 of 238 graduates (11%) found employment directly from high school

14 of 238 graduates (5%) enlisted in the military directly from high school

100% of graduates pursued a deliberate post-secondary pathway after high school

Of 35 Black males in the 2008 graduating class, 29 applied to college and 28 are attending

Of 33 Black females in the 2008 graduating class, 30 applied to college and 29 are attending

Although this study was not designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the two coaches, it is clear that the well-established and embedded Alpha High School coach has been able to exercise a strong positive effect on his students' post-secondary opportunities. How the students fare after they enroll in and attend post-secondary education is not currently known, unless individual students keep in touch with school personnel. When the state's longitudinal student data system is in full effect (projected for 2010), it will be possible to follow graduates' progress in college. At the time of this study, the Beta coach was still in the process of establishing her role, and only one of the students that she serves had graduated from high school. If she continues in her position, it will be several years before outcome data and trends can be compiled for her position, based on her stated goals.

Research Question 4: Social Capital Analysis

Given the findings regarding the coaches' positions, actions, purpose and value, to what extent does Lin's social capital framework help to analyze and explain the work of these coaches?

This portion of the data analysis applies the components of Lin's social capital framework. For convenience, the graphical representation of the framework is displayed again, in the same form as originally described in Chapter II.

After the open coding process was completed to answer the first three research questions, the data collected for this study were subjected to analysis using the components of Lin's social capital model. The model components were translated into the data analysis questions displayed in Table 8.

Figure 13. Model of social capital theory. Reprinted with permission from Nan Lin, 2001, *Social capital: A theory of social structure and action*, New York: Cambridge University Press.

Chapter II described each model component in detail. The data analysis questions flow directly from Lin’s descriptions of each model component. For example, Lin explains that structural position relates to the pyramidal or hierarchical configuration of most organizations. Therefore, it was important to determine where each post-secondary coach “fits” within the school and district hierarchies. The data analysis question, therefore, asks about the coach’s location in the organizational hierarchy. Questions were developed in a similar manner for the other model components.

Table 8

Social Capital Analysis Framework

Social Capital Model Components		Data Analysis Questions
Contextual Elements	• Structural Position	What is the coach's location in the organizational hierarchy?
	• Network Location	What are the coach's strong and weak ties? How is the coach a boundary-spanner or bridge?
	• Actions	What is the coach trying to accomplish for others (instrumental actions)?
Social Capital Attributes	• Upper Reachability	How far up the social resource ladder do the coach's contacts reach?
	• Heterogeneity of Contacts	How many different kinds of contacts can the coach access?
	• Extent of Embedded Resources	How many and what type of resources can the coach access through his/her networks?
Returns	• College Attendance (Reputation)	To what extent are college attendance (reputational) returns realized?
	• Intermediate Returns	To what extent are intermediate returns realized?
	• Other	To what extent are other returns realized?

Social Capital Comparative Data

Interview and observation notes, written materials, and artifacts for both coaches were analyzed again to determine answers to the questions in the social capital framework. Results of this analysis are displayed in Tables 9-11. The results are discussed in the next section.

Table 9

Comparative CONTEXTUAL ELEMENT Data

Data Analysis Questions:		
CONTEXTUAL ELEMENTS	Alpha Coach	Beta Coach
<u>Structural Position:</u> What is the coach's location in the organizational hierarchy?	Permanent & full-time; salary funded with district funds within the regular professional payroll Centralized location in senior hierarchy with easy access to leaders Flexible, non-bureaucratic position within a flexible, non-bureaucratic school.	Temporary & part-time; salary funded with grant funds outside the regular payroll Fringe/marginal location peripheral to school hierarchy Coach is flexible; school is bureaucratic
<u>Network Location:</u> What are the coach's strong and weak ties? How is the coach a boundary-spanner or bridge?	<u>Strong ties:</u> guidance staff, students, parents, teachers, school administration, scholarship/testing facilitator <u>Weak ties:</u> college personnel, business sponsors, military recruiters, employers, law enforcement personnel <u>Bridging:</u> from school to college and workforce opportunities through personal networks	<u>Strong ties:</u> guidance staff, selected students & parents <u>Weak ties:</u> college personnel, some employers <u>Bridging:</u> from school to college and workforce opportunities through personal networks
<u>Instrumental Actions:</u> What is the coach trying to accomplish for others?	Increase the number of students successfully transitioning to post-high school opportunities. Accomplishing through individual and group coaching, numerous planned group events, networking, team problem-solving, facilitated contacts.	Increase the college-going success of selected students. Accomplishing through academic supports, individual coaching, some planned group events, facilitated contacts.

Table 10

Comparative SOCIAL CAPITAL ATTRIBUTE Data

Data Analysis Questions: SOCIAL CAPITAL	Alpha Coach	Beta Coach
<u>Upper Reachability:</u> How far up the social resource ladder do the coach's contacts reach?	<u>Within school district:</u> Contacts reach to school principal and central office. <u>External to school district:</u> Contacts reach to college admissions officers, college advisors, and financial aid personnel. Also has established extensive contacts with business sponsors/employers throughout the region.	<u>Within school district:</u> Contacts reach to guidance counselors, staff, and teachers, but not above. <u>External to school district:</u> Contacts reach to college recruiters some admissions officers, and some employers.
<u>Heterogeneity of Contacts:</u> How many different kinds of contacts can the coach access?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School district personnel (teachers, guidance counselors, administrators, school support personnel) • College personnel (admissions, recruiters, financial aid, student alumni, advisors) • Business personnel (corporate sponsors and potential employers) • Social workers (DCFS, private social services, public aid) • Law enforcement personnel (city and county, juvenile and adult) • Parents and guardians • Military recruiters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School district personnel (guidance counselors, teachers) • College personnel (college recruiters, admissions officers) • Parents and guardians of selected students • Business personnel (selected employers)
<u>Extent of Embedded Resources:</u> How many/what type of resources can the coach access through his/her networks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial aid • Housing and employment for needy college attendees • Extensive information • Network contacts at colleges and businesses • Physical resources: office, computers, software, books. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial aid for selected students • Expanded information • Some network contacts

Table 11

Comparative RETURN Data

Data Analysis Questions:		
RETURNS	Alpha Coach	Beta Coach
<u>College Attendance:</u> To what extent are college attendance returns realized?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 197 of 238 graduates (83%) enrolled in college directly from high school, compared to 35% six years previously • Reputational advantages of being college-enrolled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 graduate attending community college
<u>Intermediate Returns</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications filed • Scholarships secured • Other financial aid secured • Reputational advantages of being college-bound 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications filed for 2009 graduates (4) • Financial aid secured for 2009 graduates (4)
<u>Other Returns:</u> To what extent are other returns realized?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students build substantial social network contacts among college-going peers, college personnel and employers • Students attain part-time employment while in college • Students build resume of accomplishments during high school that can be parlayed to attain access to resources (education, employment) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students build moderate social network contacts among college-going peers, college personnel and employers

Discussion of Findings for Social Capital Analysis

The open-coding analysis of the post-secondary coaching data from both Alpha and Beta high schools revealed a compelling picture of the general nature of the coaches' work. The analysis revealed three main functions: facilitating processes, linking to resources, and interacting with people. Both coaches conducted all three of these functions

to a greater or lesser extent; the differences between the two positions were largely due to two factors: (a) the longer development and refinement time experienced by the Alpha coach, and (b) the centrally embedded, full-time position enjoyed by the Alpha coach. A conclusion from the open-coding analysis alone would be that both coaches are doing basically the same job, but the Alpha coach is doing the job with greater depth and breadth than the Beta coach, from a higher position in the school hierarchy, with more years' duration and with more claims to legitimacy based on the permanence of his position.

The application of Lin's social capital framework in a second analysis enables a different "slice" through the qualitative data. Applying the components of the framework reveals that, in fact, the Alpha coach is creating significantly more social capital and thus accessing more resources for students by virtue of his structural position, network location and instrumental actions.

The side-by-side comparison of contextual elements (Table 9) highlights the following findings:

1. A significant difference in structural positioning between the two coaches, wherein the Alpha coach enjoys a permanent, full-time and board-sanctioned salaried position in a flexible, non-bureaucratic school;
2. More extensive network ties for the Alpha coach due to his central network location, including both strong (internal) and weak (external) ties; and
3. A greater variety of instrumental actions on the part of the Alpha coach, meant to benefit a much larger number of students.

Overall, according to Lin's model, the Alpha coach would be expected to create more social capital for himself and thus generate more resources for students than the Beta coach.

To check the validity of this expectation, data from Table 6 was reviewed. The variety and extent of the social capital attributes of Alpha coach clearly outpace those of the Beta coach in all types: upper reachability, heterogeneity of contacts, and extent of embedded resources. The coach's social capital readily translates to resource acquisition for students. His contacts become their contacts. His knowledge becomes their knowledge. Ultimately his access to networks and knowledge translates into access to resources for students. When students become part of the Alpha coach's network, they clearly gain access to a more extensive supply of services and resources than the students in the Beta coach's network.

Benefits to students were outlined in the discussion of Research Question 3 and displayed in Table 6. That analysis showed that both coaches undertook to create similar types of benefits for students, albeit on a smaller scale at Beta High School. The social capital analysis of returns (Table 11) reveals that the Alpha coach has established a very strong track record of attaining the intended returns—college attendance—for students. While the students at Beta High School were younger and therefore had not matriculated to college at the time of this study, the social capital analysis indicates that the returns will be much smaller. Not only is a smaller group of students benefitting from the post-secondary coach's efforts at Beta High School, but also a smaller range of benefits can be expected. Because the Beta coach operates in a much smaller and less diverse network, and has had a shorter tenure than the Alpha coach, it seems unlikely that her students will

attain a comparable level of returns as they make the transition from high school to post-secondary education.

The application of Lin's social capital framework to re-analyze the coaching data provided additional insights into the work of the coaches, beyond those revealed through the open-coding analysis. Specifically, the social capital analysis showed that the coaching program at Alpha High School is significantly broader and deeper than that at Beta High School. Beyond the fact that many more students participate at Alpha, the differences between the two coaches as revealed by the social capital analysis (Table 10) can be summarized as follows:

1. The Alpha coach is able to *mobilize a greater range of contextual elements* to do his job: a stable structural location with a full-time position having access to internal and external personnel and resources, a central and beneficial network location, and a wide variety of supportive instrumental actions on behalf of students;
2. The Alpha coach is able to *access more social capital and mobilize many more resources* for students on the basis of his strong and weak ties with a wide range of contacts, both internal and external; and
3. The Alpha coach's students realize *reliable positive returns*, in the form of expanded post-secondary opportunities and access to resources, for participating in coaching activities.

Thus, the social capital analysis revealed that the differences between the coaching positions at Alpha and Beta high schools are more than scale and intensity; they are fundamentally different in terms of structure, network position, duration of interventions giving opportunity for cumulative gains, and range of instrumental actions.

Based on the analysis using Lin's model, the two coaches differ significantly in their capacity for building social capital that can be mobilized on behalf of their students, and, as a result, different results can be predicted for each model.

Summary

Open coding analysis of qualitative data revealed the contextual factors in each school and the basic positioning, three major functions, and goals of the post-secondary coaching position. Both coaches exhibited these basic features, some to a greater extent than others. The most prominent difference in the positional analysis was revealed to be each coach's position in the school structure. Processes and goals for each coach showed a great deal of overlap. The open coding analysis also provided insight into the personal knowledge, skills and characteristics of the coaches.

Social capital analysis of the data added new dimension to understanding the work of the coaches. Through applying Lin's framework as an analytical tool, it was possible to discern key differences between the coaches, beyond the duration, depth and intensity of their efforts. The social capital analysis confirmed that the coaches' structural positions were significantly different. It also revealed that the coaches' strength of network connections (strong and weak ties) and range of instrumental actions on behalf of students were markedly different between the two cases. These differences enabled the Alpha coach to accumulate much more social capital and make available many more resources for his students than the Beta coach. With the application of the social capital analysis, it was possible to relate the coaches' relative social capital capacity and resulting student results to the brokering/student-centered and the clearinghouse/system-centered contexts of their respective schools.

The importance of the brokering and clearinghouse school contrasts cannot be overestimated. Each represents a philosophy about the mission of the school and the adults in students' lives. The brokering school was student-centered, with teams of adults focused on meeting student needs. Decisions about policies, programs and interventions were based on this student-centered philosophy. In contrast, the clearinghouse school was system-centered, offering many segmented programs on a menu of options for students, who were expected to advocate for themselves and their needs. The adults did not regularly team in observable ways to meet these needs.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY, PRACTICE, AND RESEARCH

Part I: Discussion

As discussed in Chapter I, in today's globally competitive world, a college credential is more important than ever for success in the world's economy. At this writing, the U.S. President has called for every American to pursue some form of higher education (Obama, B., 2009). Survey data show that today's high school students have high aspirations regarding post-secondary education. Yet research shows that students' college readiness does not match their higher education aspirations (Ingels et al., 2005; Schmeiser & Haycock, 2004; Roderick et al., 2006). In addition to many students falling short on academic preparation, many also do not have access to the college-going knowledge and connections necessary to assure a smooth transition from secondary to post-secondary education. Many students, especially disadvantaged groups, lack college-knowledgeable social supports, both at home and at school. For these students, the logistics of post-secondary planning, college applications and access to financial aid can be overwhelming, and can derail students from attaining their higher education and career goals (Tierney & Auerbach, 2005; Cunningham et al., 2007, Lippman et al., 2008; Stewart, 2008).

When family and community supports for children are inconsistently available or absent, the duty to socially support students often falls to the public schools. For K-12 students, especially in elementary education, this support is evidenced through free and reduced lunch programs, after-school programs, and in-school social services. In some high schools, older students experience a sort of social stigma when participating in such programs and service levels often drop, as evidenced by significant reductions in free/reduced lunch counts at the high school level (Ralston, Newman, Clauson, Guthrie, & Buzby, 2008; Gleason, 1995).

With higher education a virtual necessity for this and future generations of students, a dilemma arises: given the general tendency of high school students to disengage from schools' social support systems, what types of social supports can high schools offer that will engage young people and their families in the important business of post-secondary planning and follow-through?

High schools traditionally establish several types of formal support structures for students. These include academic supports that improve academic preparation, such as guidance counseling for course selection and scheduling, or tutoring for selected students (Ishitani & Snider, 2006; Balfanz et al., 2007; Cline et al., 2007). Also provided are social supports, such as athletics, clubs, and sponsored events such as choirs and theatre productions. More targeted social supports such as small learning communities and targeted college planning sessions increase student engagement and access to college information (Herlihy & Quint, 2006; Nagaoka et al., 2006; Perna, 2006; Corwin & Tierney, 2007). However, because of the traditional design and philosophy of many comprehensive high schools, the use of these supports by students is largely voluntary.

These high schools, operating as the clearinghouse-type schools discussed by Hill (2008), adopt a neutral policy when it comes to mobilizing student support systems. This studied neutrality does not always serve students well, especially those who feel disengaged from learning and from social networks within the school. Parents do not necessarily agree with this “hands-off” approach:

The neutral stance that allows schools to accommodate the preferences of a varied constituency of both students and teachers places too much of a burden on their teenagers to be already self-directed, already proficient in decision-making. [Parents] prefer high schools more willing to take educational stands in accordance with their own beliefs, more willing to exert comprehensive institutional pressure on behalf of learning and character, more willing to give personal attention to every student. (Powell et al., 1985, p. 44)

While it would seem logical that guidance counselors should fulfill the role of shepherding students through their high school and post-secondary choices, research shows that counselors actually do very little college advising work (Chapman & DeMasi, 1991; Barton, 2005; Perna et al., 2008). Instead, they often function more as registrars and interventionists, keeping track of student’s records and slotting students into classes each year based on grades, credits, and teacher recommendations, and handling individual student problems. Heavy caseloads often preclude counselors from giving “personal attention to every student,” as described by Powell et al. (1985).

In some schools, like Alpha High School in this study, the district and school have made a commitment to return counselors to their full guidance roles. In these schools, counselors work hard to give individual attention to every student, even though the cost is high in terms of time and effort. They are able to accomplish this through networking among themselves, teachers and school support personnel. By doing so, schools like

Alpha have become what Hill calls brokering high schools, guiding students to resources through logical choices based on individual student needs and aspirations.

Post-secondary coaches in high schools exemplify a specialized school support position that bolsters the work of counselors and teachers; provides a vital bridge among parents, students and college personnel; and offers unique forms of personal attention to students. Based on data from one of the study high schools, the coaching role has potential to dramatically improve students' post-secondary learning opportunities. Based on this comparative case study, coaching positions in different high schools were found to have several similar features that, now identified, can be useful in structuring such a position in other locales. Also, this study indicates that coaching outcomes can differ based on whether the high school operates as a clearinghouse or brokering model.

This study used both open-coding analysis and social capital analysis to characterize the post-secondary coaching position. The open coding was very useful for identifying contextual characteristics of the study schools and for answering the first three research questions regarding position elements, functions and goals. The coding led to the identification of similar themes and components in the two coaching cases. The analysis also enabled the development of a general conceptual model of the post-secondary coaching position (Figure 12) that captures the essence of the coaches' three main functions: facilitating processes, linking to resources, and interacting with people. Multiple sources of evidence (triangulation) confirmed the centrality of these functions and the many ways they play out in the coaches' daily work.

The open-coding analysis revealed that both coaches have very similar goals for their work, although the Alpha coach has, over time and with many external resources,

built the capacity to pursue these goals on behalf of all students in the school, while the Beta coach pursues them on behalf of a selected group of students.

The social capital analysis, based on Lin's model (Lin, 2001), revealed that while the coaches perform similar activities, the Alpha coach is able to benefit students in more ways, largely due to his structural position, his extensive networks of internal and external contacts, and his range of purposeful instrumental actions on behalf of students. His effectiveness is apparent when his social capital is studied in terms of upper reachability, heterogeneity of contacts and extent of resource access. Ultimately, the payoff is measured in terms of the numbers of students pursuing their post-secondary goals. The Alpha coach has clearly been able to facilitate that payoff for many hundreds of students at Alpha High School.

The Beta coach can claim some progress toward generating the desired returns for her students. While her networks are not as extensive and rich as those of the Alpha coach, she does have them established in basic form. She is able to parlay her organizational and process knowledge of the school and of college-going logistics into tangible assistance for a select group of students. On a smaller scale than at Alpha High School, the Beta coach is making some progress in laying the groundwork for a broader effort. Until her students graduate, actual results will not be available for her case.

It is important to emphasize the ways that the post-secondary coaching position differs from that of the guidance counselor. Guidance counselors are generally assigned to a group of students using some system, usually grade level or alphabetical grouping. The counselors then handle a variety of seasonal tasks related to their student caseload: scheduling courses, making schedule changes, updating student records, organizing

required testing, writing college and other recommendations, and handling occasional disciplinary and academic problems for individual students. College advisement occupies a very small proportion of most counselors' time; with the range of other duties and caseloads of 300-400 students in many instances, it is not realistic in terms of time to allot individual college advisement to every student.

In contrast, the post-secondary coaches have a single main assignment: help students make and attain post-secondary plans, including higher education in most cases. With this singularity of purpose and the luxury of time, the coaches can concentrate on building their own capacity to help students. Instead of being constrained, as counselors are, by perfunctory bureaucratic assignments based on system demands, the coaches operate in a more free-wheeling and flexible manner, scheduling their work according to their students' needs. This fundamental shift to a student focus versus a system focus is the most striking difference between the post-secondary coaches and traditional guidance counselors in public high schools.

The coaches in this study operated in two very different types of schools. Alpha High School is a brokering school, while Beta High School is a clearinghouse school. While the general functions of the coaches were similar, as revealed through the open coding analysis in this study, their schools were quite different. Observations, interviews and document reviews at the two schools confirmed that the schools operated under different designs and based their interventions on different philosophies. While both schools have adopted their district's central vision of success for all students, they exhibited different versions of implementing that vision. The work of the post-secondary

coaches cannot be fully understood without also understanding the contexts of the two schools in which they work.

At Alpha High School, the administration and staff began a decade ago to specifically address the needs of their student body, which at that time was composed of about 45% low-income and 25% minority students. The school faced a challenge regarding the lack of social capital residing in the families of many students, and began to retool the school to address this deficit. The entire faculty and staff worked together to weave a network of support around all their students. The federal GEAR UP grant provided significant resources (nearly \$6 million over 6 years, from 2001-2006), allowing the revamping of student academic and social support systems for the 7th through 12th grades. Other targeted programs, including AVID and JAG, assisted especially challenged students and supplemented the whole-school network. While the percentages of low-income and minority students continued to rise, school performance indicators remained steady or increased.

When an observer walks through the hallways at Alpha, an atmosphere of student-centered work is pervasive. Adult interviewees at Alpha talked constantly about students in an overwhelmingly positive manner. They used the term “we” to talk about their joint and coordinated efforts on behalf of students. The principal sets specific expectations for teamwork, parent and community partnerships, and accountability, which are conveyed in writing and archived on the school website. Teachers and guidance counselors together consistently boost students into tougher courses and provide subsequent academic assistance. Social supports are tightly woven together based on the shared commitment of school personnel, parents and students.

Although student performance on state tests is generally weak compared to state averages, internal support systems are exceptionally strong. Alpha High School is currently on the state's *No Child Left Behind* improvement list for its overall performance, not for achievement gaps among student groups. The meeting standards gap between white and black students is 20 percentage points, compared to the state average of 40%. While Alpha High School has created an impressive web of social supports, student performance on state tests indicates that it has much work to do in the area of academic supports; curriculum alignment, course rigor, and performance standards should be closely examined and improved and professional development for teachers provided as needed.

In contrast, Beta High School operates very much like the “shopping mall high school” described by Powell et al. (1985). Students select courses of study and create four-year plans based on test scores and teacher recommendations. If students have strong parental support, they may request upward placement into tougher courses, but this discretion rests with the student and his/her family. Official websites of Beta High School state that students are expected to advocate for themselves.

Beta High School has historically been a white-majority, middle-class high school with relatively few low-income students. In this environment, the school could rely on families providing social capital for most students. The atmosphere of student and family choice and discretion described above was established when, in the large majority of cases, families could and did meet most of students' social needs. The school was free to provide a variety of academic and extracurricular choices from which students and their families could select. At the time of this study, while the school's demographics are in the process of radically shifting toward an increasingly minority and low-income student

population, the school has yet to acknowledge these changes and alter its approach to accommodate the declining family social capital available to the student population.

As Hill describes, clearinghouse high schools often show larger performance disparities among racial and socioeconomic groups of students. Beta High School is currently on the state's NCLB improvement list due to the low performance of its black and economically disadvantaged populations. The meeting standards gap between white and black students is 45 percentage points (compared to a state average of 40% and Alpha High School's 20%).

Given the different contexts of the two schools, the difference in the operating capacity of the post-secondary coaches makes a great deal of sense. In the brokering environment of Alpha High School, the coach is part of a large network of support for all students. His network strength is very high, as it is for most adults in the school. He has a variety of strong and weak ties, making him both a valued "insider" and a useful "bridge" to the external world of resources and opportunities. Therefore his access to resources is also high, an attribute that ultimately parlays significant resources to students, who then attain post-secondary education opportunities. At Alpha High, full student body participation in the program is an expectation, not an option. Therefore, a post-secondary coach in a brokering school acquires very high operational capacity, enjoys the cooperation of large and diverse networks, and acquires significant social capital with the potential for strongly positive outcomes for students.

In the clearinghouse environment of Beta High School, the coaching position is viewed as a segmented "program" to help a selected group of students, much as gifted and talented programs and special education programs are intended to help selected

groups. The operational capacity of the post-secondary coach is enhanced by her own ability to cross networks within the school, an ability that stems from her personal history of working at the school. However, her capacity is restricted by the fact that she operates on the fringes of the organization, much as many boutiques operate on the fringes of the shopping mall. While students were selected for her program on the basis of their first-generation status and academic/social needs, they could still opt not to participate, in the true spirit of a clearinghouse high school. In this scenario, the coach is limited in the amount of social capital she can accrue on behalf of students, and she is restricted in the numbers of students she can assist. Therefore, subsequent returns for Beta students are predicted to be fewer and less rich than those for Alpha students. Even if this coach were to work harder and longer, the contextual constraints of the clearinghouse model would likely preclude the full attainment of her position goals.

Analogies provide one way to describe the two coaching positions within the two schools. Alpha High School, a brokering school, might be likened to a spider web. Key personnel near the center of the web include the principal, guidance counselors, the scholarship/testing coordinator, and the post-secondary coach. Teachers are distributed around the web, all interconnected to each other and to the center via the many threads of the web. Students populate the entire web. Student needs might be likened to disturbances of the web, which then signal all the adult players throughout the school. The adults mobilize to action, customizing assistance to meet student needs. This model assumes that all students need personal attention and services, regardless of background or ability. The post-secondary coach, thanks to his structural location at the center of the web, has extensive network connections and access to many school and external

resources, which can be mobilized for the specific purpose of assisting students to access post-secondary opportunities. He is working in a synergistic, integrated organization designed to support students, and thus well-suited to his specific work.

Beta High School is a clearinghouse school, a description which is an analogy in itself. It is also analogous to a shopping mall, as described by Powell et al. (1985).

Segmented programs and services involve different networks of adults and students. Just as shoppers in a shopping mall, students have a great deal of choice about their courses of study, participation in programs, and seeking of specialized assistance. Just as when shoppers visit several stores, some products (resources) are accessed and some stay on the shelf. This model assumes that students have the personal capacity, required information, and family support to make rational choices during adolescence, and will choose what is best in terms of course selection, programs and services. The model also assumes that students who don't advocate for themselves do not care about their choices, or are happy with the default choices that are made for them.

The Beta post-secondary coach operates a boutique program for selected students who may or may not choose to participate. Some take advantage of her services; others do not. Still others in the school have no access to her services. As a boutique provider, her structural position is that of an independent operator at the fringes of the organization. Her network strength and social capital derives mainly from her past experience as a guidance counselor at the school, and does not arise from her current position. She relies heavily on her own extensive personal stockpile of contacts and good will accumulated through her previous work, and on her own outgoing and empathetic personal attributes.

Part II: Implications

This study has policy and practice implications for P-20 education and, specifically, high schools, colleges and universities, including school-university partnerships. In addition, this research suggests several areas for future study.

Implications for Policymakers

Policymakers have grappled with a perennial education dilemma for at least the past half-century: when problems are detected in the greater society (e.g., poor economic competitiveness, dangerous or disruptive behaviors by youth, changing demographics), educators are targeted as the primary agents to “fix” the problem. These fixes usually include creating new intervention programs and funding streams, mandating new curricula, or imposing new regulations for testing and reporting. Individual mandates are rarely packaged in a coherent way, creating inconsistencies and fragmentation of policies and practice.

Since the 1960s, with the passage of comprehensive civil rights legislation, mandated school reforms have focused on increasing educational opportunities, especially for underrepresented student groups. More recently, these reforms have shifted to creating accountability mandates aimed at closing achievement gaps among socioeconomic and racial/ethnic groups. Both versions of legislated school reform have been well-intended efforts to boost the collective achievement and attainment of America’s youth.

Unfortunately, these efforts have not produced the intended results and problems of low achievement and inequitable opportunity persist. At least part of this failure is attributable to the consistent pattern of segmented programs and funding at the federal and state levels, resulting in a variety of interventions targeted at selected students. This

pattern is mirrored in the segmented programs, opportunities, and interventions available in the typical comprehensive high school. Students who already have a supply of family knowledge and social support can get what they need from this fragmented system. However, for those students who lack this support, the high school's potpourri of scattered opportunities and interventions is not likely to serve them as intended. As family social capital in many locales continues to decline, it will be more important than ever to shift school philosophies and operations to a holistic approach that integrates academic and social supports for students.

Evaluations of holistic and integrated P-20 programs such as GEAR UP demonstrate that long-term, well-coordinated, and well-funded initiatives can systemically change school operations to address both academic and social supports for all students. These programs have promise for creating sustainable and effective improvements in public education. Policy-makers should continue to support college pipeline programs that take a whole-school, student-centered approach, with sufficient time and coordinated funding to effect deep and lasting school change.

Conversely, policymakers should be wary of projects that attempt to establish add-on, segmented interventions that do not fundamentally change the focus and goals of the school. Especially at the high school level, such projects perpetuate the clearinghouse environment that fails to serve students with little personal or family social capital. Projects that last only a short time, engage only selected or volunteer students, and that are managed by a few adults operating at the periphery of the school environment can be expected to have only limited positive results.

Implications for Practice in High Schools

Many districts and their high schools have adopted vision and mission statements that reference success for all students. In today's economic world, student success is being redefined to include at least some higher education. Historically, all students have not performed successfully in school nor attained the necessary credits and test scores to enter college; therefore, adopting these new missions implies that something must change in order for all students to succeed.

One way that high school leaders can change from voicing empty rhetoric about student success to providing real opportunities for students is to shift their focus to the students and away from the bureaucratic structures and processes that dominate traditional high schools. This means shifting from a clearinghouse model to a brokering model of schooling, dismantling the long-standing high school "sorting machines" (Spring, 1976). Student-centered schools are flexible, pro-active, and creative about providing a variety of academic and social supports. Adults in the school work together in a case-management mindset, holding each other accountable for providing differentiated interventions to fit student needs. Their family engagement is intense; the family is brought into the accountability equation, with real expectations for supporting their students. All adults become student advocates. Services are integrated rather than segmented, and students are expected to take full advantage of the opportunities presented to them.

As this comparative case study illustrated, brokering, integrated-service schools have greater potential to acquire and grow social capital resources on behalf of students than do segmented clearinghouse schools. Integrated schools in which adults flexibly team to assist students can be fertile breeding grounds for innovative, out-of-the-box

interventions such as post-secondary coaching. While historically some high schools could rely on family social capital to meet students' needs, today's expanded goal of applying high educational expectations to all students means that more and more students need schools to help them build their network contacts and provide access to information and other resources, especially those necessary for entering and succeeding in post-secondary education. Embracing rather than resisting this new school role can potentially convert success-for-all mantras from trite slogans to meaningful realities.

High schools should also be selective about implementing reforms that are grant-driven or externally imposed. Any reforms that are simply layered onto the school's existing structures and processes will likely have small effects that will not last beyond the grant period. If grant-driven projects provide the impetus for deep restructuring, such as the GEAR UP program provided to Alpha High School, then results are likely to be substantial, and the reforms institutionalized and sustained. Smaller grant projects, if undertaken, should fit clearly and logically within a larger, student-focused school improvement plan.

The post-secondary coaching role could potentially be replicated in many high schools, at low cost to the district, especially if the coaches are retirees. However, simply creating a coaching role without integrating the high school's services around student needs is not likely to yield high returns for student post-secondary attainment.

Finally, high schools should fully integrate academic and social supports for students. While brokering schools create an impressive web of social supports, they must pay equal attention to academic rigor and academic support services. Ideally, a high school improvement plan would lay out the means to address both essential areas of support and intervention.

Implications for Practice in Colleges and Universities

High schools and colleges can enjoy mutual benefits from the bridging model of partnership represented by the post-secondary coaching role. For high schools, the benefits include enhanced levels of college-going among graduates, access to up-to-date and personalized college information for students, and access to student financial aid options. For colleges, the benefits include streamlined recruiting through coach-mediated sessions with interested students, access to a diverse pool of prospective students, and coordinated campus visits. Regional colleges and universities (e.g., community colleges, regional state universities) could potentially realize the greatest benefits through cultivating strong post-secondary coaching relationships with high schools in their heaviest recruiting areas, thereby creating college-going student “pipelines” in their regions.

Developing long-term school/college partnerships with post-secondary coaching as an integral component represents a shift from haphazard, hit-or-miss college-going strategies to intentional strategies aimed at matching prospective students with colleges that match their career aspirations, educational records, and family circumstances.

Students’ need for social capital does not end when they graduate from high school. When they enter college from schools like Alpha High, they will need additional support through at least their freshman year. Many colleges and universities have instituted first-year success programs for at-risk students, providing peer and mentor support, using cohort placement for tough courses, and providing intensive advisement and monitoring of student progress and performance. With the expectation, as stated by President Obama (2009), that all students should attain at least one year of post-secondary education, the need for such support systems will continue to rise. Colleges

should examine their academic and social support structures, much as did the brokering-type high schools, to assure that sufficient resources are devoted to this new role. Many funders, including the federal government and several national foundations, have recently boosted their grant funding to create and expand college-level student support systems.

Implications for Future Research

Rising expectations for students' post-secondary educational attainment create the need to understand more about successful high schools. Policymakers and opinion leaders (e.g., National Council of State Legislators, National Governors Association, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation) have recognized this need and have launched policy studies and pilot programs to examine the condition of high schools and potential future models. Researchers should learn and explain more about how high schools make the shift to a student-centered approach that integrates formerly segmented programs; in other words, shifting from clearinghouse to brokering schools. Case studies exist of schools that have successfully redesigned their structures and processes around student needs, especially in schools with significant low-income student populations and low family social capital (Curry et al., 2007). However, more studies of successfully redesigned high schools are needed to provide valuable guidance to the many high schools that are struggling with various traditional and new roles and responsibilities amid economic and demographic changes.

Future research is also needed to understand successful school-college partnerships. These partnerships are inherently about people bridging across organizations, using their weak ties to access resources in others' networks. The post-secondary coaches in this study were examples of such bridging agents. Case studies reveal that while most

joint school-college projects are described as partnerships, some are fleeting and superficial, while others are substantial and sustained (Baker, Gardner & Curry, 2009; Kirschner, B.W., Dickinson, R., & Blosser, C., 1996). Not enough is known about the nature of the bridging relationships in these joint ventures, and why some partnerships bring tangible returns to the participants while others do not. Acquiring this knowledge would potentially enable stable and sustainable school-to-college pipelines to evolve. While historically, colleges and high schools evolved separately, today it is increasingly clear that they must work together to raise educational attainment.

Additional qualitative research is needed to learn more about the relationship of social capital to college-going and completion. In this study, the researcher used Lin's framework to demonstrate that the coach in one case was garnering significant social capital in his brokering school. That social capital brought resources to students in the form of information and enhanced post-secondary opportunities. Other cases are needed to understand more about how schools work with families to bolster social capital in the interest of students' educational attainment. Future studies should also explore the extent to which post-secondary coaches actually transfer social capital to students, who potentially accumulate network connections and resources on their own after high school. This qualitative research would require a multi-year study of students during their post-secondary experiences, using Lin's social capital framework and social network analysis to analyze their positions, connections and resource acquisition in their new environments.

Finally, where cases of post-secondary coaching do exist, evaluations of effectiveness are needed. When states complete and fully implement their P-20 student data

systems, it will be possible to study patterns of post-secondary student attainment from demographically similar schools, with and without post-secondary coaching support.

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APPENDIX

INFORMED CONSENT AND PARTICIPANT PROTOCOLS

Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Fall 2008

Principal Investigator: Lynne Curry

Funding Source: This study is funded by the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the study. The Principal Investigator will also describe this study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

What is the purpose of this study? The purpose of this study is to talk with participants about student's college attendance and success, and the new role of post-secondary coaching in high schools.

What will be done if you take part in this research study? You are one of several college personnel being interviewed. If you take part in this study, you will be asked a series of interview questions. The investigator will take notes, and interviews will be audio taped, but the cassettes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. Tape recorders will be turned off at any time during the interview if requested. The cassettes will be kept in a secure place in the investigator's office. The taped interviews will only be heard for research purposes by the investigator. The cassettes will be retained for possible future analysis. We respect your time and appreciate your participation. We expect this interview component to take less than 30 minutes. You may ask the researcher if you have concerns about the amount of time that will be required.

What are the possible discomforts and risks? This study involves minimal risk to you. You will not be asked any questions of a personal nature. Your participation will not affect your current or future relationship with your school, district, Illinois State University, or your students' future college of choice.

What are the possible benefits to you or to others? The primary benefit to you is the opportunity to reflect on students' college expectations and preparation and how you perceive the post-secondary coaching role. The information may help your institution to develop and/or strengthen programs that promote college readiness.

If you choose to take part in this study, will it cost you anything? Participation in this study will only cost you the time for the interview.

What if you are injured because of the study? This study involves no physical risks to you. No payment will be provided in the event of a medical problem during the course of the interview.

If you do not want to take part in this study, what other options are available to you? Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to refuse to be in the study, and your refusal will not influence current or future relationships with your institution, Illinois State University, or with students and/or school personnel.

How can you withdraw from this research study? If you wish to stop your participation in this research study for any reason, you may tell the researcher that you would like to end the interview. If you choose to withdraw from the study, please also contact Lynne Curry at (309) XXX-XXXX. Please be aware that participation is completely voluntary and declining to participate in the study will not affect your relationship with your school, district, Illinois State University, or your students' future college of choice. You are free to withdraw your consent and stop participation in this research study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be entitled. Throughout this study, the researcher will notify you of new information that may become available if it might affect your decision to remain in the study. In addition, if you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact ISU Research Ethics & Compliance, at (309) XXX-XXXX.

How will your privacy and the confidentiality of your research records be protected? Your responses will be collected and pooled with those of other interviewees as they are being analyzed. This procedure will help to protect your confidentiality. If the results of this research are published or presented at professional meetings or conferences, your identity will not be disclosed without your express permission. The cassettes will be coded so that no personally identifying information is visible on them. The cassettes will be kept in a secure place in the offices of the Department of Educational Administration and Foundations at Illinois State University. The taped interviews will only be heard for research purposes by the investigator.

Authorized persons from Illinois State University and its Institutional Review Board have the legal right to review your research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. If the research project is sponsored, then the sponsors have the legal right to review your research records. Otherwise, your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order.

Will the researchers benefit from your participation in this study? The researchers will not benefit from your participation in this study beyond publishing and disseminating the results.

Signatures

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, the procedures, the benefits and the risks that are involved in this research study.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

I have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and I have received a copy of this form. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions before I sign, and I have been told that I can ask other questions at any time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, I am not waiving any of my legal rights.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

I hereby give permission to audiotape my individual interview. I understand that I may request at any time for the tape to be turned off, and that it will be used to supplement notes taken during the interview. I have also been informed that the audiotape will not identify me by name and will be kept in a locked storage compartment.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

General Protocol for Interviewees

Fill out prior to the interview:

Interviewee: _____

Title/Position: _____

School: _____

District: _____

You were asked to take part in this study because you work at (name of school) as a post-secondary coach. I will be interviewing you about your role(s), responsibilities and experiences as a post-secondary coach. Your responses will be confidential, and any information reported to the school, district or others will be pooled with responses from other post-secondary coaches.

During today's interview, I will ask a series of questions. The information I gather from you will be held in confidence. When I use it, I will use a pseudonym so that your responses cannot be linked to you. If I want to use a quote from you, I will ask you to review the quote and will not use it without your permission. You may also decline to answer any questions with which you don't feel comfortable, and you may decide to stop your participation in this interview any time without penalty. Does this sound OK?

_____yes

_____no

Would it be OK to tape record the interview so that I don't miss anything?

_____yes

_____no

Allow me to begin with a brief preview of what the interview will cover. I will gather a little background information from you and ask you to provide a signed consent form. Then we will be talking specifically about your role(s), responsibilities and experiences as I mentioned earlier. We'll end our discussion by asking if you have anything else you would like to add.

Post-Secondary Coach Interview Protocol
Curry College Expectations/College Success

Date & Time: _____ **Completed by:** _____

BACKGROUND

TIME IN THE POSITION: _____ **YEARS IN THE DISTRICT:** _____

OTHER POSITION(S) HELD: _____ **GENDER:** _____ **RACE/ETHNICITY:** _____

ROLE(S) OF THE POST-SECONDARY COACH

- 1. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR OVERALL ROLE(S) IN YOUR JOB AS A “POST-SECONDARY COACH?”**
- 2. HOW DO YOU SEE YOUR ROLE AS DIFFERENT FROM OR SIMILAR TO THE ROLES OF OTHER SCHOOL PERSONNEL, SUCH AS COUNSELORS, TEACHERS, OR SOCIAL WORKERS?**
- 3. TO WHAT EXTENT HAVE YOU PERSONALLY SHAPED/CREATED YOUR JOB?**

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE POST-SECONDARY COACH

- 4. WHAT SPECIFIC RESPONSIBILITIES WOULD YOU LIST IF YOU WERE GOING TO WRITE A JOB DESCRIPTION FOR WHAT YOU DO? CAN YOU PROVIDE SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW, WHEN AND WITH WHOM YOU PERFORM THESE DUTIES?**
- 5. HOW EASILY DO YOU FEEL YOU CAN MEET THESE RESPONSIBILITIES? DO YOU FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE WITH SOME RESPONSIBILITIES OVER OTHERS?**
- 6. IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE YOUR JOB TO SOMEONE IN A COLLEGE, SUCH AS A COLLEGE ADMISSIONS OFFICER OR COUNSELOR, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**
- 7. IF YOU HAD TO DESCRIBE YOUR JOB TO PARENTS, WHAT WOULD YOU SAY?**

EXPERIENCES AS A POST-SECONDARY COACH

- 8. DESCRIBE FOR ME SOME EXPERIENCES THAT YOU THINK BEST ILLUSTRATE YOUR COACHING ROLE.**
- 9. CAN YOU GIVE SOME EXAMPLES OF EXPERIENCES THAT YOU FOUND PARTICULARLY REWARDING OR CHALLENGING?**
- 10. WHAT TOPICS DO YOU DISCUSS WITH YOUR STUDENTS RELATED TO PREPARING FOR COLLEGE?**
- 11. WHAT TYPES OF ONGOING RELATIONSHIPS DO YOU HAVE OR ARE YOU DEVELOPING WITH ANY COLLEGES, HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ATTENDING COLLEGE, OR COLLEGE AND/OR COLLEGE ADVISEMENT PERSONNEL?**
- 12. WHAT TYPES OF PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE PREPARED YOU FOR THIS POSITION?**
- 13. DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR EFFORT IS HELPING STUDENTS BETTER PREPARE FOR COLLEGE? IF SO, HOW?**
- 14. WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN WITH PARENTS RELATED TO GOING TO COLLEGE?**
- 15. TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU BELIEVE SOCIAL NETWORKS AND PEER GROUPS INFLUENCE STUDENTS' COLLEGE PLANS? EXAMPLES?**
- 16. WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU FEEL YOU BRING TO STUDENTS AND OTHERS IN YOUR ROLE?**

OTHER

- 17. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE WE DIDN'T DISCUSS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO MENTION?**

Educator Interview Protocol

BACKGROUND

POSITION: _____

YEARS IN POSITION: _____ **YEARS IN DISTRICT:** _____

MALE/FEMALE: _____ **RACE/ETHNICITY:** _____

STUDENTS' COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATION

- 1. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOUR STUDENTS HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ABOUT ATTENDING COLLEGE? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- 2. WHAT ROLE DO YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE IN INFLUENCING STUDENTS' COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATION?**
- 3. WHAT FACTORS DO YOU THINK INFLUENCE STUDENT'S COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATION?**
- 4. IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE YOUR STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE?**
- 5. WHAT TYPES OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT DO YOU THINK STUDENTS NEED TO BE COLLEGE-READY?**
- 6. WHAT TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORTS DO YOU THINK STUDENTS NEED TO BE COLLEGE-READY?**

INTERACTION WITH POST-SECONDARY COACH

- 7. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH [POST-SECONDARY COACH]?**
- 8. HOW OFTEN DO YOU TALK AND WHAT DO YOU TALK ABOUT?**
- 9. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE [PS COACH'S] JOB?**
- 10. WHAT VALUE, IF ANY, DO YOU SEE IN THE PS COACH'S WORK?**

OTHER

- 11. IN YOUR OPINION, HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL HELP STUDENTS CONSIDER COLLEGE WHO MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE DO SO?**
- 12. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE WE DIDN'T DISCUSS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO MENTION?**

PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

BACKGROUND

(IF MORE THAN ONE STUDENT IN THE DISTRICT/SCHOOL, COLLECT INFORMATION FOR ALL)

STUDENT'S AGE: _____ **YEAR IN SCHOOL:** _____

GENDER: _____ **STUDENT RACE/ETHNICITY:** _____ **YEARS IN DISTRICT:** _____

PARENT GENDER: _____ **PARENT RACE/ETHNICITY:** _____

STUDENTS' COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATION

- 1. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOUR STUDENT HAS REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ABOUT ATTENDING COLLEGE? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- 2. WHAT ROLE DO YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE IN INFLUENCING YOUR STUDENTS' COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATION?**
- 3. WHAT OTHER FACTORS DO YOU THINK INFLUENCE YOUR STUDENT'S COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATION?**
- 4. IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE YOUR STUDENT'S ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE? WHAT TYPES OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT DO YOU THINK YOUR STUDENT NEEDS TO BE COLLEGE-READY?**
- 5. WHAT TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORTS DO YOU THINK YOUR STUDENT NEEDS TO BE COLLEGE-READY?**

INTERACTION WITH POST-SECONDARY COACH

- 6. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH [POST-SECONDARY COACH]? HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR STUDENT'S RELATIONSHIP WITH [POST-SECONDARY COACH]?**
- 7. HOW OFTEN DO YOU TALK AND WHAT DO YOU TALK ABOUT? HOW OFTEN DOES YOUR STUDENT TALK WITH THE PS COACH, AND WHAT DO THEY TALK ABOUT?**
- 8. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE [PS COACH'S] JOB?**
- 9. WHAT VALUE, IF ANY, DO YOU SEE IN THE PS COACH'S WORK?**

OTHER

- 10. IN YOUR OPINION, HOW DOES YOUR SCHOOL HELP STUDENTS CONSIDER COLLEGE WHO MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE DO SO?**
- 11. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE WE DIDN'T DISCUSS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO MENTION?**

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**BACKGROUND**

STUDENT'S AGE: _____ **YEAR IN SCHOOL:** _____

GENDER: _____ **STUDENT RACE/ETHNICITY:** _____ **YEARS IN DISTRICT:** _____

PARENT GENDER: _____ **PARENT RACE/ETHNICITY:** _____

COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATION

- 1. WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL? WHAT TYPE OF JOB OR CAREER WOULD YOU EVENTUALLY LIKE TO HAVE?**
- 2. (IF PLANS INCLUDE COLLEGE) WHAT TYPE OF COLLEGE ARE YOU PLANNING TO ATTEND? DO YOU KNOW THE ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS FOR BEING ADMITTED TO THE TYPE OF COLLEGE YOU WANT TO ATTEND? DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR HIGH SCHOOL COURSEWORK WILL MEET THOSE REQUIREMENTS?**

ACCESS TO COLLEGE INFORMATION

- 3. WHERE DO YOU LOOK FOR AND FIND INFORMATION ABOUT COLLEGES YOU MIGHT WANT TO ATTEND?**
- 4. WHICH PEOPLE HAVE YOU SPOKEN TO ABOUT ATTENDING COLLEGE?**
- 5. WHAT, IF ANYTHING, DO YOU DISCUSS WITH YOUR COUNSELOR OR SOMEONE IN THE GUIDANCE DEPARTMENT IN RELATION TO GOING TO COLLEGE?**
- 6. HAVE YOU VISITED ANY COLLEGE CAMPUSES? IF YES, WHICH ONES? WHO TOOK YOU THERE? WHO DID YOU TALK TO THERE? WHAT DID YOU LEARN?**

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT COLLEGE

- 7. DID ANY OF THE ADULTS IN YOUR FAMILY ATTEND COLLEGE? IF YES, HOW FAR DID THEY GET?**
- 8. WHAT TYPES OF ACTIVITIES HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED IN WITH YOUR PARENTS RELATED TO GOING TO COLLEGE?**

SOCIAL SUPPORTS

9. THINK ABOUT YOUR CLOSEST GROUP OF FRIENDS. ARE ANY OF THEM PLANNING TO ATTEND COLLEGE? IF YES, DO YOU FEEL THAT YOUR FRIENDS ARE PREPARING PROPERLY FOR COLLEGE?
10. HOW DO YOUR FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES INFLUENCE YOUR THINKING ABOUT COLLEGE?

INTERACTION WITH POST-SECONDARY COACH

11. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH [POST-SECONDARY COACH]?
12. HOW OFTEN DO YOU TALK AND WHAT DO YOU TALK ABOUT?
13. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE [PS COACH'S] JOB?
14. WHAT VALUE, IF ANY, DO YOU SEE IN THE PS COACH'S WORK?

OTHER

15. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE WE DIDN'T DISCUSS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO MENTION?

College Personnel Interview Protocol

BACKGROUND

POSITION: _____ **YEARS IN POSITION:** _____

YEARS IN INSTITUTION: _____ **MALE/FEMALE:** _____ **RACE/ETHNICITY:** _____

STUDENTS' COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATION

- 1. DO YOU BELIEVE THAT STUDENTS HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ABOUT ATTENDING COLLEGE? WHY OR WHY NOT?**
- 2. WHAT ROLE DO YOU BELIEVE YOU HAVE IN INFLUENCING STUDENTS' COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATION?**
- 3. WHAT FACTORS DO YOU THINK INFLUENCE STUDENT'S COLLEGE EXPECTATIONS AND PREPARATION?**
- 4. IN GENERAL, HOW WOULD YOU CHARACTERIZE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PREPARATION FOR COLLEGE?**
- 5. WHAT TYPES OF ACADEMIC SUPPORT IN HIGH SCHOOLS DO YOU THINK STUDENTS NEED TO BE COLLEGE-READY?**
- 6. WHAT TYPES OF SOCIAL SUPPORTS DO YOU THINK STUDENTS NEED IN HIGH SCHOOLS TO BE COLLEGE-READY?**

INTERACTION WITH POST-SECONDARY COACH

- 7. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH [POST-SECONDARY COACH]?**
- 8. HOW OFTEN DO YOU TALK AND WHAT DO YOU TALK ABOUT?**
- 9. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE [PS COACH'S] JOB?**
- 10. WHAT VALUE, IF ANY, DO YOU SEE IN THE PS COACH'S WORK?**

OTHER

- 11. IN YOUR OPINION, HOW DOES YOUR INSTITUTION HELP STUDENTS CONSIDER COLLEGE WHO MIGHT NOT OTHERWISE DO SO?**
- 12. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE WE DIDN'T DISCUSS THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO MENTION?**

WRITING PROMPT**PLEASE SUBMIT YOUR RESPONSE ELECTRONICALLY TO: [EMAIL ADDRESS PROVIDED]**

PROVIDE A WRITTEN DESCRIPTION OF YOUR JOB AS A “POST-SECONDARY COACH.” IN ADDITION TO DESCRIBING YOUR DUTIES, PLEASE INCLUDE EXAMPLES AND STORIES ABOUT SPECIFIC INCIDENTS, EVENTS AND/OR SITUATIONS THAT HAVE OCCURRED THAT ILLUSTRATE WHAT YOU DO WITH AND FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS, SCHOOL STAFF, COLLEGE PERSONNEL AND OTHERS. IF YOU HAVE LEARNED SOME IMPORTANT LESSONS THAT YOU THINK WOULD BENEFIT OTHERS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN POST-SECONDARY COACHING, PLEASE INCLUDE THOSE AS WELL.

YOUR RESPONSE SHOULD BE A NARRATIVE THAT WOULD GIVE READERS BOTH THE SUBSTANCE AND THE “FLAVOR” OF YOUR ROLE, AS WELL AS SOME IDEAS YOU THINK THEY MIGHT FIND USEFUL FOR TRYING TO ADAPT WHAT YOU DO FOR THEIR OWN SCHOOL.

OBSERVATION GUIDE

DATE: _____ TIME PERIOD: _____

LOCATION: _____

OCCASION/EVENT: _____

PERSON(S):

FIELD NOTES: (INCLUDE INTERACTIONS, PURPOSE OF INTERACTIONS, OBSERVED CONVERSATIONS AND BEHAVIORS, ACTIONS ON THE PART OF THE POST-SECONDARY COACH AND OTHERS, RESOURCE ACQUISITION/MOBILIZATION, SETTING AND OTHER CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION. ALSO COLLECT ANY ARTIFACTS/MATERIALS USED.)