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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRACTICING SCHOOL COUNSELORS' PERCEIVED  
ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT AND THEIR SERVICE DELIVERY

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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Orlando, Florida

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## ABSTRACT

Role ambiguity in school counseling is common; therefore, school counselors deal with issues of role conflict, lack of advocacy, and the assignment of inappropriate duties. The American School Counselor Association (2012) *National Model* was developed to provide school counselors with a framework for the delivery of appropriate school counseling services to students; however, the National Model is *not* implemented in all school districts. School counselors' perceived organizational support (POS) was hypothesized as a possible variable mitigating the adoption of the ASCA National Model.

This study examined the relationship between school counselors' in Central Florida perceived organizational support (as measured by the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support* [SPOS]) and their school counseling service delivery (as measured by the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale* [SCARS]). Descriptive statistics, multiple linear regression (MLR), and Pearson product-moment correlation (two-tailed) analysis were employed to investigate correlations. MLR analysis was applied to the outcome/dependent variable of POS (total mean SPOS score) and predictor/independent variables of school counseling services delivery (five mean SCARS subscale scores). Overall, the five mean SCARS subscale score predicted only 6.1% of the variance in the school counselors' mean SPOS scores. In addition, none of the five mean SCARS subscale scores had a statistically significant beta coefficient.

Moreover, the results identified that school counselors at the elementary school level had higher POS, SCARS consultation, SCARS curriculum, and SCARS other scores than middle and

high school counselors. Furthermore, the school counselors with more experience and *not* working at Title I schools had lower SCARS counseling scores. The school counselors reporting an older age and with a larger counselor-to-student ratio also had higher SCARS curriculum scores.

To my family and friends:

Thank you for all of your support.

Your encouragement helped me make it through.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

School counseling is a misunderstood profession. Since the school counseling profession's inception in the early 1900s (vocational guidance), school counselors have struggled with role ambiguity, inappropriate duty assignments, and a lack of advocacy (e.g., Hatch, Chen-Hayes, & Stuart, 2008; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Lieberman, 2004; Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner, & Skelton, 2006; Perusse, Goodnough, Noel, 2001; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006). The lack of understanding by stakeholders (e.g., administrators, parents/primary caregivers, and teachers) of the role of school counselors impedes counselors from addressing their students' academic, career and social/personal needs. In addition, school counselor role ambiguity contributes to counselors spending significant time performing non-counseling related activities (e.g., clerical work, coordination of testing; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Consequently, school counseling role ambiguity reduces the effectiveness of services provided to all stakeholders.

To address the problem of school counselor role ambiguity, comprehensive school counseling program (CSCP) models were developed, providing counselors with defined appropriate roles to serve their diverse stakeholders (e.g., Gysbers & Henderson, 1997; Johnson & Johnson, 2002; Myrick, 2003). The American School Counselor Association's (ASCA, 2005, 2012) *National Model* became the official CSCP. However, the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* has *not* been adopted by the majority of schools in the United States (Studer & Oberman, 2006). Studer and Oberman (2006) surveyed school counselors in the Southeastern United States

( $N = 73$ ) and found that only 26% of the participants reported working within a CSCP (i.e., ASCA, 2005) and another 23% reported being in the process of instituting a CSCP. Therefore, standardized and empirically supported CSCP are available to school counselors and their school districts; however, the majority of school counselors are *not* implementing a CSCP.

### **Background of the Study**

A variety of reasons for the lack of understanding regarding school counseling and the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* are identified (e.g., Fitch, Newby, Ballesteros, & Marshall, 2001; Lieberman, 2004; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Confusion regarding school counseling is related to school administrators' perceptions regarding the role of the school counselor. Many school administrators are unfamiliar with the training and preparation of school counselors, and/or the ASCA (2005) *National Model*, so they often assign counselor duties as they see fit (e.g., Fitch et al., 2001; Lieberman, 2004; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). In addition, a lack of leadership and advocacy on the part of school counselors contributes to continued role ambiguity (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005; Kaplan, 1995; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Many school counselors identify that they do *not* have much time to counsel students, but many of them (to an extent) have themselves to blame if they do *not* advocate for the profession and communicate with administrators (Armstrong, MacDonald & Stillo, 2010; Dollarhide, 2003; Fitch et al., 2001; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Lieberman, 2004; Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006, Zalaquett, 2005). The lack of advocacy and communication with principals perpetuates the inability to implement CSCP's that enable school counselors to counsel (Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith,

2006; Zalaquett, 2005). “School counselors need to be advocates of their profession and not submissive bystanders” (Lambie & Williamson, 2004, p. 129). Furthermore, the day-to-day systemic demands facing school counselors contribute to their professional role ambiguity (Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Niebuhr, Niebuhr, & Cleveland, 1999). Specifically, the average school counselor in the United States has a student caseload of 471; where in one state counselors have a student ratio of 200 and in another state counselors have a ratio of 1,016 (*National Center for Education Statistics*, 2011). Therefore systemic variables (e.g., state educational funding, inconsistent school counselor preparation requirements) influence school counselors’ roles and service delivery. In addition, counselors do *not* have consistent preparation and may *not* be exposed to school counseling best practices (e.g., ASCA, 2005, 2010, 2012).

Although the lack of understanding regarding the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* and school counseling is prominent, many school counselors, counselor educators and researchers are trying to expand knowledge regarding school counseling through graduate courses, conventions, collaborations with school districts, and partnerships with the Collegeboard (e.g., Collegeboard, 2009; Dollarhide, 2003; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000).

Nevertheless, an area with limited empirical research is school counselors' implementation of services aligned with the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* and their perceived organizational support. School counselors' service delivery refers to the actual job/functions that school counselors perform in a school (e.g., classroom guidance, individual student planning, group work, paperwork, collaboration with parents and other educators, etc.). Some investigations have examined school counselors' job perceptions focus on job satisfaction

and role stress (e.g., Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Dixon-Rayle, 2006; Pyne, 2011); however, no studies were found that explored school counselors' perceptions of organizational support.

*Perceived organizational support* (POS) is defined as “a general belief concerning the extent to which an organization values its employees contributions and cares about their well-being” (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, & Sowa, 1986, p. 501). Hellman, Fuqua, and Worley (2006) noted that POS is grounded in Blau's (1964) social exchange theory and Gouldner's (1960) norm of reciprocity, suggesting that employees give special attention to the effort of the organization to recognize and reward their behaviors at the work place. Moreover, POS is the outcome of employees' experience with an organization's commitment and support towards them. Furthermore, the level of POS contributes to employees' subsequent commitment to the organization (McFarlane Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Exploring the relationship between school counselors' POS and degree of school counseling services (that align with the ASCA *Model*) delivery may support the school counseling profession, school counselors-in-training, and counselor educators. Understanding the extent to which school counselors' POS influences the delivery of the ASCA *National Model* may lead to implications in school counseling practice, supervision, and educational leadership.

### **Organizational Support Theory and ASCA National Model**

To set a context for investigation that follows, a review of the theoretical tenets of *Organizational Support Theory* (OST) and the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* is provided.

OST holds that in order to meet socioemotional needs and to assess the benefits of increased work effort, employees form a general perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Such



perceived organizational support (POS) would increase employee's felt obligation to help the organization reach its objectives, their affective commitment to the organization and their expectation that improved performance would be rewarded. Behavioral outcomes of POS would include increases in in-role and extra-role performance and decreases in stress and withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover. (Eisenberger, 2010, p. 1)

In addition, “according to OST, the development of POS is encouraged by employees' tendency to assign the organization human like characteristics” (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002, p. 698). Furthermore, Eisenberger (2010) noted that strong POS is *not* necessarily the result of good treatment towards employees; rather intentions and genuineness play an important part in the development of POS. For example, if positive treatment to employees is the result of a long union battle with an organization, it is unlikely that most employees have high levels of POS. On the other hand, if an organization offers discretionary benefits such as on-site day care, or flexible work hours, employees recognize that and it positively impacts the POS. Furthermore, “unfavorable treatment that is perceived to be beyond the organization's control will have a less negative effect on POS” (Eisenberger, 2010; Theory section, para. 1). An example might be reduced hours during a tough economic time. In summary, OST provides an explanation as to how POS develops and impacts the performance of employees (school counselors) and their interactions with the employing organization.

The second aspect of this study's conceptual framework is the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*. The ASCA (2012) *National Model* offers a comprehensive, developmental and preventative approach to school counseling that fosters student development in three areas: (a) academics, (b) career, and (c) social/personal. The ASCA (2012) *National Model* is comprised of

four *quadrants*. The first quadrant is *Foundation*, which “establishes the focus of the comprehensive school counseling program based on student needs” (ASCA, 2012, p.21). Additionally, the Foundation contains the beliefs, vision, mission and goals behind a CSCP. The second quadrant is *Management*, which focuses on overall program management. Management requires school counselors to manage an advisory council, program data, action plans, school counseling calendar and agreements with colleagues and administrators (ASCA, 2012). The third quadrant is *Delivery*, which “focuses on the method of implementing the school counseling program to students” (ASCA, 2012, p. 83). School counselors employing the ASCA (2012) *National Model*, deliver direct school counseling services to students such as: (a) individual student planning/counseling, (b) classroom guidance lessons, and (c) responsive services (such as crisis counseling). Additionally, indirect student services such as: (a) referrals to agencies, (b) consultation, and (c) collaboration with parents and colleagues are also provided to help students succeed. The last quadrant is *Accountability*, which consists of: (a) data analysis, (b) program results, and (c) evaluation and improvement. School counselor performance standards and program audits are utilized in this quadrant.

The ASCA *Model* (2012) also requires school counselors to provide indirect support to students through collaboration with teachers, parents/caregivers and administrators as well as through student advocacy. Implementation of the ASCA (2012) *National Model* benefits schools by: (a) increasing academic achievement (Brigman, 2002; Webb, Brigman & Campbell, 2005), (b) reducing school violence (Johnson, Sparks, Lewis, & Niedrich, 2006), (c) teaching students conflict resolution strategies (Brinson, Kottler, & Fisher, 2004), and (d) demonstrating school counselor accountability (Dahir & Stone, 2003; Myrick, 2003).

The conceptual framework for this investigation was grounded in the premise that if school counselors perceive that their schools support them, they provide school counseling services to the best of their ability; aligning with ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*. Counselors aware of the current systemic collaborative approach to school counseling service delivery ought to be willing to implement such an approach for the benefit of their students.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between professional school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support (as measured by the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support*; Eisenberger et al., 1986) and their school counseling service delivery (as measured by the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale*; Scarborough, 2005). The researcher tested the theoretical hypotheses that school counselors scoring at higher levels of POS will score at higher levels of school counseling service delivery that aligns to the ASCA (2005) *National Model*. Therefore, the primary research hypotheses (research hypotheses are a prediction of study outcomes that include a statement of expected relationships between two or more variables; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012) guiding the investigation was,

Practicing school counselors at higher levels of perceived organizational support at their schools (as measured by the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support*; Eisenberger et al., 1986) will score at higher levels of school counseling delivery that aligns to the ASCA (2005) National Model (as measured by the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale*; Scarborough, 2005)

### **Research Question**

The primary research question for this study is: “What is the relationship between school counselors' perceived organizational support and ASCA aligned service delivery?” High levels of POS would logically suggest a high degree of school counseling services alignment with the ASCA (2005) *National Model*, no conclusive evidence was found.

### **Significance of the Study**

The investigation contributes to the school counseling literature by providing insight into the influence of school counselors' POS on their school counseling service delivery. The study data offers a deeper understanding of how working conditions in schools (POS) influences actual school counseling practice. Findings from the investigation support practicing school counselors, school counselors-in-training, and counselor educators. In addition, the study offers further support for the theoretical constructs of POS and school counseling service delivery.

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations for this investigation include: (a) the study may *not* be generalizable because the sample includes only participants from Central Florida; and (b) the investigation employed a descriptive, correlational research design, therefore causality was *not* being tested. Specifically, an investigation employing a “correlational research design” involves “collecting data to determine whether, and to what degree, a relationship exists between two or more quantifiable variables” (Gay, Mills & Airasian, P., 2009, p. 196). In addition, threats to internal and external validity impact the interpretation of the results for this study. Threats to internal

validity for a correlational study may include: (a) history, (b) maturation, (c) instrumentation, (d) statistical regression, (e) biases, (f) experimental mortality, and (g) selection-maturation interaction (Lee, 2007). Threats to external validity may include the interaction effects of selection biases and the experimental variables, and reactive effects of experimental arrangements (Lee, 2007).

### **Definition of Terms**

*Comprehensive School Counseling Program:* A collaborative and systematic effort between a school's counseling department, administrators, teachers, parents/caregivers and the community to provide students with services that help them succeed in three core areas of development: academics, career and social/personal.

*Perceived Organizational Support:* A general belief concerning the extent to which an organization values its employees' contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011).

*School Counseling Internship:* A post-practicum experience under the supervision of a certified school counselor that is meant to help graduate students refine their counseling skills and prepare for a professional school counseling position (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2009).

*School Counselor:* School counselors are professional educators with a mental health perspective who understand and respond to the challenges presented by today's diverse student population. They collaborate with school staff and parents in order to meet students' academic, career and social/personal needs. They provide direct services to students via individual student planning, group work and classroom guidance (ASCA, 2009).

*School Counselors' Service Delivery*: The actual job/functions that a school counselor performs including: (a) direct services to students such as counseling activities and curriculum activities, (b) indirect services for students such as consultation activities, coordination activities, and (c) “other” activities (Scarborough, 2005).

### **Summary**

School counselors provide diverse services to their stakeholders with limited consistency among counselors. Nevertheless, the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* was developed to guide school counselors in providing consistent and comprehensive services to their stakeholders. However, many school counselors are *not* implementing comprehensive school counseling programs aligned with the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between professional school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support (as measured by the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support*; Eisenberger et al., 1986) and their school counseling service delivery (as measured by the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale*; Scarborough, 2005). Assessing the responses provided by the study's participants shed some light on the relationship between POS and ASCA aligned school counseling services delivery. The findings from this study contribute to the school counseling literature by providing an additional perspective on school counseling practice, training and research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The American School Counselor Association's (ASCA, 2005, 2012) *National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* was developed to assist school counselors in meeting the needs of their students. The ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* offers a comprehensive, developmental and preventative approach to school counseling that was designed to foster student development in three areas: (a) academics, (b) career, and (c) social/personal. Within the ASCA Model (2005, 2012) school counselors deliver direct services to students by providing: (a) individual student planning/counseling, (b) group counseling, and (c) classroom guidance lessons. The ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* also requires school counselors to provide indirect support to students through collaboration with teachers, parents/caregivers, and administrators as well as through program management and advocacy. Implementation of the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* benefits schools by: (a) increasing academic achievement (Brigman, 2002; Webb, Brigman & Campbell, 2005), (b) reducing school violence (Johnson et al., 2006), (c) teaching students conflict resolution strategies (Brinson et al., 2004), (d) demonstrating school counselor accountability (Dahir & Stone, 2003; Myrick, 2003). However, the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* is *not* the standard approach to school counseling program coordination and delivery. Studer and Oberman (2006) investigated the implementation of the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* in school counseling supervision and found that only 26% of the surveyed counselors reported working within a comprehensive school counseling model (such as ASCA's) and another 23% reported being in the process of instituting

such a model. Challenges such as administrators' misunderstandings about the role of the counselor, day-to-day demands, and lack of advocacy on the part of counselors are mentioned in the literature as reasons for the slow rate of adoption of the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Armstrong et al., 2010; Fitch et al., 2001; Hatch et al., 2008; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Lehr & Sumarah, 2002; Walsh, Barrett, & DePaul, 2007; Zalaquett, 2005). However, the perceived levels organizational support of school counselors was *not* investigated as a possible explanation for the slow rate of adoption and implementation of the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*.

This study examined the relationship between professional school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support (as measured by the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support*; Eisenberger, 1986) and their school counseling service delivery (as measured by the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale*; Scarborough, 2005). The research hypothesis for this study was, "Practicing school counselors at higher levels of perceived organizational support at their schools will score at higher levels of school counseling service delivery that aligns with the ASCA (2005) *National Model*. The review of the literature addresses the research hypothesis by: (a) considering a historical perspective of school counseling, (b) investigating what the current research identifies on the status of the profession, (c) discussing the school counseling preparation, (d) examining theories and concepts related to the topic, and (e) analyzing previous studies' implications and limitations.

### **School Counseling Origins**

School counseling began in the early 1900s; the term used at the time was *vocational guidance* (Gysbers, 2001). Vocational guidance emerged as a societal and educational initiative



aimed at helping high school students transition into the world of work (Gysbers, 2001).

Vocational guidance was intended to help match students with vocations that were in need of more prepared workers. The purpose of vocational guidance was to improve education in a way that would result in economic and societal gains for the United States by gearing qualified students towards Scientific fields (Gysbers, 2001). Therefore, the focus of school counseling at its inception was quite different than what it is today (comprehensive developmental programs).

The most notable figure at the inception of the vocational guidance movement was Frank Parsons who is often referenced as “the father of guidance” (Lambie & Williamson, 2004, p. 125). Frank Parsons helped establish the Bureau of Vocational Guidance in the early 1900s. Trainings provided by the Bureau led to the School Committee of Boston’s development of the first counselor certification program, and eventually to Harvard University’s adoption of the model which evolved into the first college-based counselor education program (Schmidt, 2003). Parson’s contributions impacted the fields of counseling and education by helping establish the school counseling profession.

By 1913, psychometrics, social work and education were incorporated into vocational guidance (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). The National Vocational Guidance Association (NVGA) was the result. After different mergers and influences, the NVGA became known as the American Personnel and Guidance Association (APGA), which is now known as the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2010). “Therefore, the evolution of the NVGA was significant to the development and recognition of school counseling as a profession” (Lambie & Williamson, 2004, p. 125).

During the 1920s there was less emphasis on the vocational aspect of school counseling and more emphasis on educational concerns (Gysbers, 2001). Additionally, accountability for

guidance and counseling programs began to emerge. Standards, measurement, and organization were examined in order to evaluate the completeness of guidance and counseling programs (Gysbers, 2004). During the 1920's, school counseling began to be considered an integral component of the educational system.

The 1930s added a mental health component to school counseling. Counselors began working with students on more personal issues (e.g., anger, sex, relationships with parents and financial need) than career/vocational choice (Gysbers, 2001). During this time, E. G. Williamson's trait and factor theory (a directive approach to school counseling) was developed. Williamson's approach to counseling addressed counseling techniques, personality problems, educational achievement, and occupational orientation (Williamson, 1939). In addition, Williamson (1939) presented the application of his theory. Furthermore, during the 1930s, a push to begin to standardize guidance and counseling programs emerged and researchers began to consider the importance of student outcomes with regards to school counseling accountability (Gysbers, 2004). However, the 1930s movement towards a more structured and directive approach to school counseling did not last long because of Carl Rogers' influence on the field of counseling.

Carl Rogers impacted the counseling profession in the 1940s with the release of his book, *Counseling and Psychotherapy* (Schmidt, 2003). Rogers' approach focused more on understanding and caring for the client, as opposed to diagnosis, advice, or persuasion (Sharf, 2000). Applying person-centered techniques to school counseling helped school counselors reach their students at deeper levels than previous directive approaches (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Nevertheless, despite the more personal tone of school counseling during the 1940s, the

counseling literature continued to emphasize the need for evaluation of school counseling programs (Gysbers, 2004).

The 1950s were significant for school counseling. In 1953, the American School Counselor Association (then known as the Senate) became the first new division of the American Counseling Association (ACA, 2010). Furthermore, in 1953, *The School Counselor* was established as ASCA's professional journal. Moreover, the 1957 launch of the Sputnik added a new dimension to school counseling. As a response to this Soviet accomplishment, the United States government passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) in 1958 (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). NDEA charged school counselors with the identification and placement of gifted students into math and science oriented tracks, so they could eventually help advance the U.S.'s technological endeavors. A benefit of NDEA for the field of school counseling was the allocation of funds for school counseling preparation programs in colleges, and for the provision of school counselors (with gifted training) in public high schools (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). As a result of ASCA's advancement and the NDEA; the school counseling field expanded during the 1950s.

During the 1960s, amendments to NDEA extended the search for gifted students to the elementary level. Additionally, in 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act designated national funds for school counseling (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Furthermore, during the 1960's, education (including school counseling) was being held accountable for its outcomes (Gysbers, 2004). Due to the emphasis on accountability, formal evaluations of guidance and counseling programs were conducted. Therefore, the considerable gain for the school counseling profession during the 1960s was the expansion of school counseling services to the elementary level; the challenge was responding to the demands of accountability.

By the 1970s, the role of the school counselor changed in certain areas of the country. A decline in enrollment and budgets, as well as difficulties in assessing school counseling outcomes led to the elimination of school counseling positions and the assignment of administrative duties to many counselors (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Accountability increased during the 1970s and so did the interest in comprehensive school counseling program development. By 1974, forty-four states had developed some type of guide or model for career guidance, counseling and placement (Gysbers, 2004). Additionally, the *Educational Act for All Handicapped Children of 1975* led to school counselor involvement with Exceptional Student Education (ESE). The 1970s was a challenging decade for school counseling. Job cuts and increased accountability may have put additional stress on counselors who were already busy with their general work demands.

During the 1980s and 1990s, legislative acts such as the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education Act of 1984, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Education and Applied Technology Education Act Amendments of 1990, and the School to Work Opportunities Act of 1994 reemphasized the importance of the career development component of school counseling (Gysbers, 2001; Lambie & Williamson, 2004). Moreover, in 1996, the Education Trust conducted a series of focus groups with school counselors, counselor educators, and principals in order to enhance the school counseling profession. The focus groups' outcomes indicated: (a) a need for school counselors to concentrate more on the academic guidance of all students rather than the mental health needs of individual students, and (b) that counselor education programs were not adequately preparing graduate students for the school setting due to an emphasis on mental health counseling preparation (Education Trust, 2001). The Education Trust Initiative (the Transforming School Counseling Initiative) led to a continuing debate between a mental

health-based approach to school counseling versus an academic achievement approach (Alexander, Kruczek, Zigelbaum, & Ramirez, 2003). Furthermore, by 1997, the ASCA National Standards were developed to help school counselors facilitate student growth in three core areas of development: (a) academics, (b) career, and social/personal (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). The legislative acts and research of the 1980s and 1990s helped reconceptualize the school counseling profession by emphasizing the importance of career development and academic achievement in school counseling. The development of the ASCA National Standards (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) provided the profession with a foundation for the development of the ASCA (2005) National Model.

In the 21st century, *No Child Left Behind of 2001* further emphasized the need for educational accountability (Dodson, 2009). At the time, the school counseling profession was in the process of developing the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*, which would help school counselors demonstrate accountability from their domain. By 2003, ASCA published the ASCA *National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs* and revised it in 2005 (Hatch et al., 2008). Since its publication, the ASCA National Model (2005, 2012) has served as a resource for state departments of education and school boards that have developed comprehensive school counseling programs. Additionally, the ASCA (2005) *National Model* contains four interrelated components (foundation, delivery system, management systems, and accountability) that help school counselors administer data-driven programs which benefit students and satisfy the demands consistent with the current accountability-driven educational environment. Furthermore, the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* serves as a guide for the implementation and maintenance of comprehensive school counseling programs, which in turn

helps define the role of the school counselor as a student advocate, a collaborator, and a leader (Burnham & Jackson, 2000).

Since school counseling's inception, as vocational guidance, the school counseling profession has expanded (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). Federal legislation, counseling theories and educational trends have impacted school counseling's evolution. As the role of the school counselor has expanded, no services seem to have been removed from the counselors' responsibilities (Lambie & Williamson, 2004). School counselors are often spread thin with obligations such as orientations, academic advising, ESE, English Language Learners (ELL), parental concerns, scheduling, personal counseling, classroom guidance, career development, testing coordination, and accountability. Unfortunately some of the responsibilities placed on school counselors are *not* congruent with the ASCA National Model (e.g. scheduling and testing coordination) and interfere with services to students. Therefore, many school counselors struggle with the stress from role ambiguity, role conflict, and role incongruence (Culbreth et al., 2005; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009). Nevertheless, school counselors are critical members of the educational community and have much to offer students.

## **Contemporary Context of School Counseling**

### **ASCA National Model Service Delivery**

“A comprehensive school counseling program is an integral component of a school's academic mission” (ASCA, 2012, p. xii). School counselors who deliver services according to the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012) promote and enhance the learning process for their students (ASCA, 2012). The ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012) suggests the following stance

for successful school counseling service delivery: (a) commitment to school improvement, (b) a willingness to use data to address equity, and (c) a social justice approach to working with students (Dahir, Burham & Stone, 2009; Stone & Dahir, 2006). School counselors can implement the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012) by aligning their service delivery to the framework of the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012). The process may take three to five years, but with clear guidelines and priorities, successful implementation can be reached (Carey, Harrity, & Dimmitt, 2005). The ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012) has four main components: foundation, management, delivery and accountability (ASCA, 2012). The *foundation* component involves: (a) developing a program focus identifying how students benefit from the school counseling program, (b) creating a vision statement that defines how future student outcomes turn out as a result of the school counseling program, (c) creating a mission statement aligned with the school's mission, and (d) developing measurable program goals (ASCA, 2012). Once the foundation is laid out, school counselors can begin to manage their Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (CSCP).

The *management* component of the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012) includes the following assessments and tools for successful administration: (a) school counselor competency and program assessments to evaluate progress; (b) use-of-time assessments; (c) annual program agreements with administrators; (d) advisory councils including school staff, parents and community members to review the school counseling plan and make recommendations for improvement; (e) use of data to measure results; (f) plans of action; and (g) shared calendars (ASCA, 2012). With these tools and resources in place, school counselors can implement the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012) in an organized, structured manner.

The *delivery* component encompasses direct and indirect services to students. Direct student services are delivered through: (a) school counseling curriculum, (b) individual student planning, and (c) responsive services (ASCA, 2012). The school counseling curriculum can be delivered via classroom lessons taught by the school counselors and/or teachers. Individual student planning is provided through appointments at school counselors' offices, and responsive services are offered anywhere in the school where students' immediate needs can be met. Indirect student services “are provided on behalf of students as a result of the school counselor's interactions with others including referrals for additional assistance, consultation, and collaboration with parents, teachers, other educators and community organizations” (ASCA, 2012, p. xiv).

The last component of the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012) is *accountability*. The accountability component entails analyzing school counseling program data to determine how students are impacted as a result of the school counseling program (ASCA, 2012). Program data can be used to examine students' academic achievement, attendance, and behavior. Analyzing school counseling program data helps school counselors identify areas of their programs that are working, as well as areas that need improvement. The *accountability* component encourages school counselors to actively monitor and revise their school counseling programs.

In addition to the four components of the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012), there are four themes incorporated as well; *leadership*, *advocacy*, *collaboration* and *systemic change* are part of the framework of the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012). School counseling leadership involves: (a) supporting academic achievement and student development, (b) effectively delivering the CSCP, (c) promoting a professional identity, and (d) overcoming the challenges of role inconsistency (ASCA, 2012; Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). School counselors can be



leaders within their schools by implementing and maintaining CSCP based on the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012). *Advocacy* is the second theme found in the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012). Advocating for students' academic, career and social/personal development is a responsibility of all school counselors according to the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012). School counselors can advocate for students by (a) empowering them to overcome barriers to their development, (b) promoting self-advocacy skills, (c) intervening when issues arise, (d) identifying supports for students, (e) developing action plans, (f) collaborating with school and local community, and (g) identifying and acting on resolving systemic problems (ASCA, 2012). Advocating for the well-being of students is an ethical responsibility of school counselors that promotes student success. The third theme of the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012) is *collaboration*. School counselors need to collaborate with others in order to implement and maintain successful school counseling programs. Seven of Lawson's (2003) ten varieties of collaboration are incorporated into the ASCA *National Model* (2005, 2012). The first is (a) *interprofessional collaboration*, which includes school counselors, teachers, student support professionals, and administrators; the second is (b) *youth-centered collaboration* (collaboration with students); next (c) *parent-centered collaboration*; (d) *family-centered collaboration*; (e) *intra-organization collaboration* (clerical staff, non-instructional school staff); (f) *inter-organizational collaboration* (community agencies, faith-based organizations, etc.); and *community collaboration*. Collaboration with the various groups identified by Lawson (2003) allows school counselors to gather a variety of supports that can help deliver appropriate school counseling services to students. ASCA (2012) offers suggestions as to how school counselors can collaborate with others: (a) open communication among stakeholders, (b) school counselor participation in committees that offer opportunities to share and discuss school improvement

ideas, (c) discussing student needs with the school and community, (d) school counselor participation on school leadership teams, (e) sharing the responsibility of the implementation and maintenance of the CSCP with stakeholders, (f) sharing the vision of student success with school community, and (g) committing to equity and opportunity for students. The last theme discussed in the *ASCA National Model* (2005, 2012) is *systemic change*. The reason for the systemic change theme is to help students succeed by removing barriers (found through data analysis) that get in the way of opportunities for achievement. ASCA (2012) provides a list of common barriers that school counselors may encounter when implementing the *ASCA National Model* (2005, 2012): (1) limited access to rigorous courses, (2) limited access to educational opportunities, (3) policies and procedures that limit intervention to issues such as bullying/harassment, (4) policies that interfere with multiculturalism and inclusion, and (5) policies/procedures that promote over-representation of certain groups in programs like special education. However, “through implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program, school counselors work proactively with students, parents, administrators, teachers and the community to remove systemic barriers to learning and promote changes that will create a learning environment where all students succeed” (ASCA, 2012, p.8). Systemic change takes time and happens in stages. “Systemic change occurs when inequitable policies, procedures and attitudes are changed, promoting equity and access to educational opportunities for all students” (ASCA, 2012, p.9).

The themes found in the *ASCA National Model* (2005, 2012) intertwine with the four framework components to enable successful program implementation. School counselors need to be able to lead, advocate, collaborate and strive for systemic change in order to develop and maintain the foundation, management, delivery, and accountability components of a CSCP.

## **Role of the School Counselor**

Professional school counselors are certified/licensed educators with a minimum of a master's degree in school counseling making them uniquely qualified to address all students' academic, personal/social and career development needs by designing, implementing, evaluating and enhancing a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes and enhances student success. (ASCA, 2010, p. 1)

Consequently, school counselors need to act as leaders, collaborators and student advocates (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Walsh et al., 2007). However, the above ASCA statement does not apply to all school counselors. In fact, throughout the evolution of the school counseling profession, there has been a lack of clarity regarding role and function (Hatch et al., 2008; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Lieberman, 2004; Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006; Perusse et al., 2001; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006). Counselors often see themselves spending too much time on administrative, disciplinary and clerical functions (e.g., Zalaquett, 2005). Furthermore, research findings (e.g., Culbreth et al., 2005; Nelson, Robles-Pina, & Nichter, 2008; Studer & Oberman, 2006) identify that the majority of school counselors are not working in schools with fully implemented comprehensive school counseling programs; thus not performing the roles consistent with the ASCA (2005) National Model.

Possible reasons for the lack of congruence within the school counselor role include: (a) administrators' misperceptions of appropriate school counseling duties, (b) day-to-day demands, and (c) lack of leadership and self-advocacy on the part of school counselors (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Baggerly & Osborn, 2006; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Culbreth et al., 2005; Hatch et al., 2008; Kaplan, 1995; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Lieberman, 2004; Monteiro et al., 2006; Niebuhr et al., 1999; Perusse et al., 2001; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith,

2006; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). However, before delving into the challenges that impact the adoption of an appropriate (ASCA based) school counselor role, school counselors' beliefs regarding the ASCA National Model should be examined.

### **School Counselors' Beliefs Regarding the ASCA National Model**

The ASCA (2005) *National Model* and its derivatives (state and school district comprehensive school counseling programs) are supported by professional school counselors (Hatch et al., 2008; Lehr & Sumarah, 2002; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001). Most school counselors want to enhance students' academic, career, and social/personal development and believe in the theory behind the ASCA (2005) *National Model*; however, some have reservations. In their investigation of practicing school counselors' ( $N = 1,279$ ) beliefs regarding the ASCA (2005) *National Model*, Hatch et al. (2008) identified that the majority of respondents in their study gave the highest ratings to the following components of comprehensive school counseling programs: (a) developing explicit program goals, (b) manageable student-to-counselor ratios, and (c) identifying student competencies and aligning them with program components. Conversely, Hatch et al. (2008) identified three areas that the school counseling-respondents did *not* endorse: (a) the use of data to identify achievement gaps, (b) monitoring students' academic development, and (c) monitoring students' personal/social development. These findings were consistent with Stone and Dahir's (2006) study of school counselors' readiness to deliver comprehensive school counseling programs, which found that high school counselors do *not* focus much on personal/social development and program management. Additionally, Poynton, Schumacher, and Wilczenski's (2008) study on school counselors' attitudes regarding the implementation of comprehensive school counseling programs (CSCP)

found that the most prominent secondary concern of their respondents dealt with perceptions of ability to assess outcomes of CSCP. Oberman, Studer, and Eby-Meeks' (2009) investigation study compared school counselor and trainee activities indicated that "collecting and analyzing data were among the least frequently conducted activities by counselors and trainees" (p. 4). Other studies (e.g., Lehr & Sumarah, 2002; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001) have identified that high school counselors are concerned with the amount of time it takes to maintain a CSCP since they are already burdened with many clerical-type duties. Therefore, school counselors in general seem to support the ASCA (2005) *National Model*; although, it is apparent that they are *not* comfortable with the data gathering, analysis and management aspects of CSCP.

Graduate students of school counseling should be aware of school counselors' acceptance of the ASCA (2005) *National Model* because they are working with practicing school counselors once they graduate, and not all of them practice in a way consistent with their training (Lazovsky & Shimoni, 2005). Most counselor education programs emphasize the ASCA (2005) *National Model* as the fundamental approach to school counseling, so it is assumed that interns expect to see some of what they have learned in their programs in the field (Armstrong et al., 2010; Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006). Studer and Oberman (2006) investigated the use of the ASCA (2005) *National Model* in school counseling supervision utilizing a 30-item questionnaire (*The School Counselor Supervision Questionnaire*) with 73 practicing school counselors in order to examine their beliefs regarding ASCA's (2005) *National Model*. A primary finding identified that regardless of internship placement, trainees received similar experiences in engaging in activities related to the ASCA (2005) *National Model* components. If Studer and Oberman's (2006) finding holds true, most school counseling interns should receive an internship experience that is consistent with their graduate training. Moreover, Walsh et al. (2007) conducted a

qualitative study examining school counselors' alignment with the new directions in the field of school counseling and the ASCA (2005) *National Model*, and concluded that new counselors from their study were successful in conducting a counseling program that was aligned with the ASCA (2005) *National Model*. So, if Walsh et al.'s (2007) results are duplicated in other settings, it may be fair to assume that recent counselor education graduates received training in their programs and internship placements that was congruent with the ASCA (2005) *National Model*. Ideally, the next generation of school counselors are well prepared to employ the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*, supporting increased role and service consistency in the school counseling profession.

### **ASCA Model Implementation Challenges**

#### **Administrators' Perceptions of School Counseling**

Principals are responsible for all of the programs and situations within their schools (Kaplan, 1995; Niebuhr et al., 1999). Therefore, principals determine the school counselor's role as well as the direction of the school counseling program (Fitch et al., 2001; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006; Zalaquett, 2005). Consequently, school counselors and school counselors-in-training need to be aware of principals' perspectives and philosophies, so that effective collaboration can be accomplished. When collaboration and communication with principals is lacking, principals often assign inappropriate (non-counseling) duties to school counselors (Fitch et al., 2001; Leuwerke et al., 2009; Niebuhr et al., 1999; Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, & Jones, 2004) and as a result, students miss out on services (due to their time being spent on non-counseling tasks). Many school counselors are assigned

duties such as: (a) the master schedule, (b) clerical functions, (c) administrative duties, (d) classroom coverage, (e) bus duty, (f) standardized test coordination and more (Fitch et al., 2001; Nelson et al., 2008; Zalaquett, 2005). Some of the reasons for the assignment of non-counseling duties to counselors include: (a) principals lack of knowledge or exposure regarding the ASCA Model (Fitch et al., 2001; Lieberman, 2004; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000), (b) their previous experience is usually that of a teacher (Fitch et al., 2001), (c) large workload (Niebuhr et al., 1999; Zalaquett, 2005), and (d) different paradigm (Janson, Militello, & Kosine, 2008; Kaplan, 1995; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006).

Principal training in graduate school as well as in district professional development workshops include segments related to the ASCA National Model (Fitch et al., 2001; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Unfortunately, the lack of knowledge about what school counselors are able to do negatively impacts school counseling service delivery (Fitch, et al., 2001; Niebuhr & Niebuhr, 1999; Zalaquett, 2005). Lack of principal knowledge regarding what school counselors can do often leads to the assignment of duties that school counselors may *not* have training in (e.g., ESE program coordination), or may *not* enjoy, which could lead to career dissatisfaction for the school counselors. As a result of principals' lack of knowledge, counselors may *not* be able to deliver a comprehensive school counseling program based on the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*.

Principals' previous experience as teachers may also impact the perception of school counseling (Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006). Many teachers are unaware of the broad scope from which counselors function; therefore, they may *not* appreciate the impact that counselors can make. If principals see school counselors as providers of ancillary services, they

may be fine with assigning extra duties in order to ensure that the counselors stay busy or become “team players.”

Conversely, Kirchner and Setchfield (2005) noted that it may *not* be the principals’ lack of understanding, but rather the real demands of the work settings that impinge on both counselors’ and principals’ roles. Zalaquett (2005) and Niebuhr et al. (1999) noted that the workload and day-to-day demands of working in the school system may leave the principal without many options regarding duty assignments. Therefore, principals may value school counseling initiatives such as the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*, but they may *not* be able to fully embrace them due to circumstances.

Finally, the different paradigms from which principals and counselors operate from may cause dissonance between the two professions (Kaplan, 1995; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). School counselors tend to consider the individual circumstances of students, whereas principals focus more on school-wide issues (Kaplan, 1995). School counselors also consider confidentiality as an essential component of their practice, whereas principals emphasize problem solving over confidentiality (Kaplan, 1995; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Furthermore, school counselors value student self-development and mental health; they believe that growth in these areas can be an end in themselves, but they also believe that success in academics, social situations and career development can be additional benefits of such growth (Kaplan, 1995). As Kaplan (1995) stated “To counselors, every student is an exception” (p. 262). Conversely, since principals are involved in all facets of their schools, they are more concerned with the “big picture” than counselors. Principals worry more about the masses than individual students. Additionally, principals view school counseling’s purpose as directly supporting student learning and achievement (Kaplan, 1995). Counselors are trained to help individual



students with their problems, but the primary focus of schools is education, and as the schools' leaders, principals must attend to the learning and achievement of *all* students. Moreover, principals tend to be more focused on problem solving and therefore may at times consider confidentiality as an obstacle to resolving student concerns. Both principals and counselors want their students to be safe and successful in school; however, each profession's perspectives address these goals differently (Niebuhr et al., 1999; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). School counselors are more focused on individual students in a supportive manner while principals are more concerned about achievement, organization and safety. In order for both professions to collaborate successfully for the benefit of students, they have to develop a working relationship built on trust, respect and communication (Dollarhide, Smith, & Lemberger, 2007; The College Board, 2009).

The school counseling literature (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Janson et al., 2008; Leuwerke & Walker, 2009; Nelson et al., 2008) identified the following in order to help foster an effective counselor-principal relationship: (a) offering to assist with school improvement initiatives, (b) providing resources that highlight the ASCA (2005) *National Model*, (c) encouraging principals to join the counselor at an ASCA convention or workshop, (d) facilitating communication and collaboration with counselor educators, (e) participating in School Advisory Committees, and (f) publicizing the school counseling program's achievements. By becoming involved and communicating with the principals, school counselors can demonstrate their dedication to the school and their regard towards the principal. These counselor-principal interactions should help counselors develop relationships with their principals that are based on trust and respect. Having a collaborative relationship with the principal may lead to the endorsement of comprehensive school counseling programs (Armstrong et al., 2010; Dollarhide et al., 2007).

## **Work Load, Daily Demands, and Fear of Data**

Counselors have many responsibilities including: (a) consulting with teachers and parents/caregivers, (b) responding to crisis, (c) presenting classroom guidance lessons, (d) collaborating with community agencies, (d) assisting with student transitions, (e) individual student planning, and (f) career development activities (ASCA, 2010; Kirchner & Setchfield, 2005). In addition, extra duties (which are not counseling-related) such as student registrations, standardized test coordination and hall duty are assigned to school counselors by their principals. The day-to-day demands of the school counseling profession can be overwhelming for some school counselors. Moreover, some school counselors are fearful about data and accountability (Hatch et al., 2008). Common reasons for the fear of data include, lack of training with data management, fear of time commitment with data analysis, and fear of undesired results (Hatch et al., 2008). With so much to be responsible for and worry about, it can be difficult for school counselors to implement and maintain comprehensive school counseling programs.

Kirchner and Setchfield (2005) investigated school counselors' and principals' perceptions of the school counselor role, surveying school counseling and educational leadership students who had taken a course with an emphasis on counselor-principal collaboration. The response rate was 82% with a total of 42 administrators and 23 counselors that completed Fitch et al.'s (2001) survey (based on the Kentucky Educational Professional Standards Board and ASCA tenets). The results identified that both counselors and administrators tended to agree about the functions of school counselors that are congruent with the ASCA (2005) *National Model*. However, Kirchner and Setchfield (2005) found that administrators tended to agree with role-incongruent statements more than counselors. Furthermore, administrators implied that if they are faced with budget cuts or scarce resources then they would assign role-incongruent

duties to school counselors, which in turn would become part of the standard day-to-day responsibilities. Kirchner's and Setchfield's (2005) finding is consistent with Zalaquett's (2005) remark about principals who at times believe that they have no option but assign duties such as test coordination to counselors even though they may agree with the ASCA (2005) *National Model*. Therefore, if Kirchner and Setchfield's (2005) findings were to be generalized, it would be difficult for school counselors to coordinate comprehensive school counseling programs while trying to keep up with a long list of day-to-day responsibilities.

The student-to-counselor ratio was an additional challenge faced by school counselors. ASCA (2010) recommends a student-to-counselor ratio of 250-to-1; however, ASCA (2010) reports that during the 2007-2008 school year, the national average student to counselor ratio was 467-to-1 with some states having ratios of over 800-to-1. If counselors are responsible for disproportionate caseloads, and long lists of duties (some which are non-counseling duties), they may not have the time to implement and maintain comprehensive school counseling programs, which in turn results in students missing out on services from their counselors (Nelson et al., 2008; Rambo-Igney & Grimes Smith, 2006). If school counselors do *not* advocate for more manageable case loads and responsibilities, as well as overcome fears of data management, the role of the school counselor remains unchanged.

### **Lack of Leadership and Advocacy in School Counseling**

A criticism of school counselors is that they do not help themselves (Armstrong et al., 2010; Dollarhide, 2003; Nelson et al., 2008). Counselors often complain about the non-counseling duties assigned to them, but in spite of this complaint, many do nothing about it. If school counselors do *not* advocate for comprehensive school counseling program

implementation, then who will? It is essential for school counselors to take charge of their school counseling programs and advocate for their support from administrators, teachers and the community (e.g., Galassi & Akos, 2004; Gysbers, 2004; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Zalaquett, 2005). Promoting comprehensive school counseling programs such as the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* is an ethical responsibility of school counselors. “The significant role played by school counselors for ensuring student success places a special burden on them to advocate for responsive programs that lead to graduation for all students on time” (Hayes, Nelson, & Tabin, 2002, p. 87). In addition to contributing to the improvement of graduation rates, comprehensive school counseling programs can: (a) help students earn higher grades, (b) provide students with preparation for the future, (c) provide college information, and (d) contribute to a more positive school climate (Galassi & Akos, 2004; Lapan, Gysbers, & Sun, 1997). Dollarhide (2003) noted that the lack of school counselor leadership (and advocacy) may lead to school counseling programs being labeled ineffective by teachers and administrators. Therefore, if school counselors want to provide effective school counseling services to their students and avoid performing clerical or quasi-administrative duties, they must do their part by taking charge of their school counseling programs and advocating for their implementation and support.

Advocating for the implementation and support of a comprehensive school counseling program is a challenging task; however, the student benefits are worth the effort (Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Dahir & Stone, 2003; Johnson et al., 2006; Poynton, Carlson, Hopper, & Carey, 2006). Comprehensive school counseling programs such as the ASCA (2005) *National Model* benefit the school community. Student achievement and behavioral improvement are correlated with school counseling activities that are aligned with comprehensive school counseling programs (e.g., Brigman & Campbell, 2003; Dahir & Stone, 2003; Johnson et al., 2006; Poynton

et al., 2006). Furthermore, school counselors' job satisfaction and commitment increases when the ASCA Model (2005) is implemented in schools (Baggerly & Osborn, 2006). Therefore, counselors need to advocate for comprehensive school counseling programs; by doing so, they help their students, the teachers, the administrators and themselves.

In order for school counselors to advocate for comprehensive school counseling programs, they need to develop and embrace their leadership skills. Dollarhide (2003) endorsed Bolman and Deal's (1997) leadership contexts (structural leadership, human resource leadership, political leadership and symbolic leadership) for school counseling. She believed that the leadership development in the four contexts is necessary for school counseling advocacy and CSCP implementation. The structural leadership context refers to the leadership in: (a) the building of a practical school counseling program, (b) attaining mastery over school counseling and education, (c) designing growth strategies for the program, and (d) implementing the program. Dollarhide (2003) explained that the necessary skills for this context (counseling, consulting, teaching, advocacy and research) are taught in most counselor education programs. The second context, human resource leadership involves: (a) empowering and believing in others, (b) communicating the belief in others, and (c) being visible and accessible. These skills should also be a part of most counselor education program. The third context is political leadership which may be the most challenging context for school counselors, since it is not a traditional role for counselors (Dollarhide, 2003). Political leadership requires: (a) an understanding of the power distribution within the school and the school district, (b) building links with stakeholders, and (c) the use of persuasion and negotiation. School counselors can enhance their political leadership skills through systemic observation and experience. Symbolic leadership is the fourth context mentioned by Dollarhide (2003) and it entails the utilization of

symbols and metaphors to conceptualize the meaning of change. The fourth context: (a) frames experiences in meaningful ways, (b) discovers and communicates a vision, (c) maintains relationships with stakeholders, (d) models appropriate and healthy behavior to others, and (d) requires leading by example. Symbolic leadership could be learned in graduate school, and it may evolve as counselors develop professional identities (Dollarhide, 2003). In conclusion, if school counselors enhance their leadership skills according to the four leadership contexts, they may have an easier time advocating, implementing, and maintaining comprehensive school counseling programs.

Counselor educators. School counselors are primarily responsible for CSCP, but counselor educators have an obligation to help promote the advancement of CSCP. Counselor educators can: (a) provide assertiveness and advocacy trainings for school counselors (Janson et al., 2008), (b) work together with educational leadership professors to provide seminars or courses designed to promote collaboration among school counseling and educational leadership students (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Dollarhide et al., 2007), (c) conduct workshops (Kahn, 1999) and present CSCP information at educational conferences (Nelson et al., 2008), and (d) emphasize the value of data driven school counseling programs to counselor education students and other related education professionals (Monteiro-Leitner et al., 2006). If counselor educators support school counselors in advocating for CSCP, and collaborate with colleagues in colleges of education and the community, there may be more awareness and endorsement for CSCP.

### **Perceived Organizational Support**

Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) declared that a general belief (held by employees) concerning the extent to which an organization values its employees' contributions and cares

about their well-being would be termed *perceived organizational support (POS)*. POS is a reciprocal concept that describes the extent to which an employee feels supported by their organization. Employees with high levels of POS are more likely to be loyal and dedicated to their organization according to this idea. Conversely, employees with low levels of POS are less likely to be as loyal and dedicated to their employers. POS research began with the observation that if supervisors are concerned with their employees' commitment to the organization, employees are focused on the organization's commitment to them (<http://www.psychology.uh.edu/pos/theory.asp>). Moreover, *Organizational Support Theory (OST)* emerged from Eisenberger's and colleagues' desire to “explain and predict the causes of POS and the positive consequences of POS for employee's psychological well-being, positive orientation toward the organization, and work outcomes favorable to the organization” (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011, p. 26).

Organizational support theory (OST; Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Shore & Shore, 1995) holds that

in order to meet socioemotional needs and to assess the benefits of increased work effort, employees form a general perception concerning the extent to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. Such perceived organizational support (POS) would increase employees' felt obligation to help the organization reach its objectives, their affective commitment to the organization, and their expectation that improved performance would be rewarded. Behavioral outcomes of POS would include increases in in-role and extra-role performance and decreases in stress and withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover.

(<http://www.psychology.uh.edu/pos/theory.asp>, para. 2)

According to OST, the development of POS is encouraged by employees' tendency to assign the organization human-like characteristics (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). “OST maintains that employees use attributional processes similar to those used in interpersonal relationships to infer their valuation by the organization” (<http://www.psychology.uh.edu/pos/theory.asp>, para. 7). Furthermore, treatment towards employees by higher ranking agents along with rules and policies of the organization support the personification of the organization, which influences the perception of the organization's favor or disfavor towards its employees. However, the genuine intent matters when considering POS. POS aligns with social exchange theory in the sense that rewards, benefits, and aid are more valued and positively responded to if they originate from the organization in a voluntary or discretionary manner, rather than as a result of a union contract or a government regulation (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). In order to assess the levels of POS for employee's, Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) developed the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS)*.

The SPOS was utilized for POS research with postal clerks, white-collar office workers, teachers, hospital staff and other workers in order to learn more about OST in general as well as to determine the validity and reliability of the SPOS (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). According to Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011), POS changes over time in response to employees' treatment by the employing organization. Reasons such as policy changes, an organization's reaction to unforeseen events or unexpected disregard for employees' welfare can cause significant drops in POS. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) indicated that POS is likely to increase or decrease depending on employee's perceptions in three main areas (i.e., fairness, supervisor support and organizational rewards and job conditions). Employees who feel like their organization treats employees fairly, distributes resources evenly, follows procedures adequately,



and values justice, are more likely to have a higher degree of POS. Additionally, workers who feel supported by their supervisors, are more likely to have higher levels of POS. Since supervisors are seen as agents of the organization who are responsible for directing and evaluating work performance; employees' relationships with these individuals have a significant impact on employee POS. Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) and Levinson (1965) agreed that employees view the actions of supervisors as actions of the organization itself. Furthermore, according to Levinson (1965) the personification of the organization is abetted by the following components: (a) the organization has a legal, moral, and financial responsibility for the actions of its agents; (b) organizational precedents, traditions, policies, and norms provide continuity and prescribe role behaviors; and (c) the organization, through its agents, exerts power over individual employees. Therefore, supervisor selection by organizations is important since supervisors represent vital components of an organizational structure and “personify” the organization in many employees' eyes.

In addition to supervisor support, organizational rewards and job conditions are the third area that influences POS. Recognition, pay increases, job security, autonomy and promotions are all significant factors that contribute to POS (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). For school counselors, the organizational rewards and job conditions area is less significant since generally, raises and promotions are inapplicable due to union contracts and lack of opportunities (due to the organizational structure of schools). However, recognition, job security and autonomy are important factors that do apply to most professions (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). POS for school counselors has *not* been examined much; however this study will contribute to the school counseling literature regarding this construct.

## Conclusion

The school counseling profession began in the early 1900s, as a service to assist in the vocational placement of high school students. Since then, school counseling has continued to evolve. Due to trends within the field, research and legislative mandates, more and more responsibilities were added to school counselors' repertoires throughout the years. Personal counseling, ESE duties college preparation, standardized testing, demonstration of accountability and more tasks have become the working reality of many counselors despite the fact that many of these duties are not congruent with the training and best practices of the school counseling profession.

The ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* was developed to define the appropriate role of the school counselor and thus help meet students' needs in three areas of development (academics, career, and social/personal). Most counselors would like to implement the ASCA (2005) *National Model* in their schools in order to provide the most effective and comprehensive services to their students (Hatch et al., 2008; Lehr & Sumarah, 2002; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001). However, challenges such as administrators' lack of understanding of the school counselor role, daily work demands and lack of leadership and advocacy within the school counseling profession have limited the adoption of ASCA (2005) *National Model*.

The challenges faced by school counselors may impact the internship and supervisory experience of school counselors-in-training. Therefore, new counselors may begin their careers with inadequate preparation (Dollarhide & Miller, 2006). Unprepared counselors can be a detriment to students and the school counseling profession because they may not be able to provide effective service delivery aligned with the ASCA (2012) *National Model*. In order avoid inadequate training of school counseling interns, the school counseling literature (Luke &

Bernard, 2006; Murphy & Kaffenberger, 2007; Wood & Dixon-Rayle, 2006) offers supervision models that are congruent with the ASCA National Model (2005). With the adequate training of site supervisors and their use of efficient supervision models, school counselors-in-training should be prepared to face the current challenges of the profession and be able to implement CSCP that align with the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*. Additionally, if school counselors take on leadership roles and advocate for the profession, school counselors and their supervisees will be able to better serve their schools.

However, in order for school counselors to take on leadership roles at their schools and become more involved in advocacy efforts, school counselors' POS needs to be examined. School counselors' POS has not been investigated with relation to school counseling services delivery. POS was studied in industrial settings and even with teachers, but not formally with school counselors. Understanding how school counselors perceive their positions and the support offered by their schools can help further the discourse regarding school counseling service delivery.

In conclusion, the current study's review of the literature offered: (a) a brief history of the school counseling profession, (b) an explanation of the contemporary role of school counselors, (c) insight into school counselors' beliefs about the ASCA (2005) *National Model*, (d) a discussion regarding the challenges of ASCA (2005) *National Model* implementation, (e) insight into the context of school culture in order to put into perspective the status of the school counseling profession and its implications on school counselors, and (f) an introduction to POS and OST. The current study's literature review provides insight into school counselors' POS and how it relates to the implementation of the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between professional school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support (as measured by the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support*; Eisenberger et al., 1986) and their school counseling service delivery (as measured by the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale*; Scarborough, 2005). The researcher tested the theoretical hypothesis that school counselors scoring at higher levels of perceived organizational support (POS) would score at higher levels of school counseling service delivery that aligns to the ASCA (2005) *National Model*. Limited research investigates the influence of school counselors' POS on their service delivery; therefore, the findings from this study offer implications for school counselors, school counselors-in-training, and counselor educators.

#### **Research Design**

The research design for this study was a quantitative, correlational research design. The researcher examined the relationship between two variables (POS and counseling service delivery aligning with ASCA Model) in a national setting (without manipulation; Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007). A correlational research design was appropriate for the investigation because the intent of the study was to examine the relationship between the variables as they occur in normal school counseling environment. The *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale* (Scarborough, 2005) and the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support* (Eisenberger et al., 1986) were the

primary data collection instruments and the hypothesis was that scores on the instruments would have a positive or negative correlation (e.g., high SPOS scores with high SCARS scores).

### **Population and Sample**

The population for this study was certified school counselors in Central Florida working in K-12 public schools. Participants were asked to indicate a variety of information including graduate degree earned on the demographics questionnaire (Appendix B). In addition, school counselors working in public schools were targeted because public schools represent the majority of work sites for Central Florida school counselors. The purposive sample was selected from school counselors working at the elementary, middle and high school levels. The participants were recruited from two districts in Central Florida: Osceola and Seminole counties. A third district (Orange County Public Schools) initially agreed to have their counselors take part in the investigation, but at a later date declined to participate in the study. Table 1 presents the descriptive data for the two participant school districts including race, English Language Learners, Exceptional Education Students, graduation rates, free lunch, reduced lunch and school district grade information.

Table 1

District Descriptive Data

District	Enrollment	2012 Fed									Grade
		White %	Black %	Asian %	Latino %	ELL %	ESE %	Grad Rate %	F. L. %	R. L. %	
Osceola	56369	28.4	11.5	3.0	50.0	17.0	13.5	77.5	51.9	12.6	C
Seminole	64368	57.1	13.6	3.5	18.5	4.0	18.0	80.3	30.6	8.6	A

From the identified target population, a minimal sample of 200 certified school counselors working in the school districts was desired to support appropriate statistical power. Specifically, the power is the long-term probability of rejecting the null hypothesis (e.g., hypothesis that there is no difference or effect) given the effect size, sample size, and alpha level (Balkin & Sheperis, 2011). Power analyses are calculated a priori in order make intentional decisions about sample size and avoid making Type II errors, or when the statistical test fails to reject a false null hypothesis (Balkin & Sheperis, 2011; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004). Therefore, the researcher consulted Cohen (1992) to identify the appropriate sample size to support an acceptable number of participants for the investigation. Moreover, for a multiple linear regression analysis (MLR) at alpha level .05, with a power of .80, to identify a moderate effect size .25, with five independent variables, a minimum sample size of 91 school counselors was needed (Cohen, 1992).

### **Data Collection Procedures**

IRB approval was granted prior to any data collection for this investigation. School counselor participation for this study was recruited via e-mails and telephone calls to district level counselors and administrators. The researcher explained the purpose of the study to district office leadership from Orange, Osceola and Seminole counties, and requested attendance to Spring school counselors meetings at each district in order to administer the data collection packets. Permission to administer data collection packets during the Spring district counselor meeting (during meeting break) was granted by the district administrator over Guidance services in Osceola County. Orange county did *not* participate in the study. The director of Student Services and the assistant superintendent in Seminole county approved the study in their district;

however, surveys were only permitted to be given to counselors during non-school hours. Therefore, the researcher dropped off surveys before and after school at each middle and high school in Seminole County. Half of the surveys for elementary counselors were mailed out and half were dropped off (before and after school hours) at elementary schools in Seminole County. Half of the elementary data collection packets were mailed out instead of dropped off due to the distance of some elementary schools in relation to the researcher's home and work location. The data packets included stamped self-addressed return envelopes for convenience.

During the school counselor district-level meeting at Osceola County, each school counselor was provided with a data collection packet containing: (a) an explanation of research/informed consent form, (b) a 19-question demographic questionnaire (Appendix A), (c) the SCARS, and (d) the 16-item version of the SPOS. The data collection packets for each level would be identified by a capital "E," "M," or "H" (elementary, middle, and high). At the meeting, the researcher shared the following statements based on the *Tailored Design Method* (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009) protocol for group administration of self-administered questionnaires and invited all of the counselors in attendance to partake in the completion of the data collection packets:

Greetings,

My name is Vincent Geigel and I am an Ed.D. student from UCF. I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today. I am conducting a research study on school counselors' perceptions of the field of school counseling.

The data obtained from my study may lead to improvements in school counseling practice and future counselor training.

I am looking to survey counselors at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. I would greatly appreciate your participation. I have brought surveys for you to complete. Participation is strictly voluntary, and the surveys will remain anonymous.

Chocolates are provided as a token of appreciation for participation.

The surveys are found in the envelopes that are being passed around. Please read the directions found in the first page of the survey packet. Then, proceed to answer the



questions. Once you have completed answering questions, kindly place the survey back in the envelope, seal it, and raise your hand, so that your survey can be collected and you can receive your chocolate.

You can contact me with any questions, or for the summary of results at Vincent\_Geigel@knights.ucf.edu.

Thank you very much for your participation.

The incentive for school counselors to participate was an opportunity to contribute to the school counseling field and help impact the future of the profession. The researcher applied *Tailored Design Method* (Dillman et al., 2009) suggestions along with social exchange theory tenets to ensure high response rates. To establish trust with counselors, the researcher: (a) wore a UCF badge, (b) was endorsed by district counselors, and (c) informed the school counselors that data obtained from the investigation may impact current practice and training of future counselors. To increase rewards for responding, the researcher: (a) consulted with district counselors, (b) displayed positive regard, (c) thanked the school counselors various times, and (d) provided chocolate as a token of appreciation for participation. To reduce social costs, the researcher: (a) avoided inconveniencing the school counselors by including the data collection as part of the agenda of standard district counselor meetings, (b) minimized requests for personal information (the survey was anonymous), and (c) provided data collection packets which contained questions relevant to the work of school counselors. Participation in the study assumed more secure at counselor meetings since the researcher was introduced (and endorsed) by the district counselor.

The data collection packets that were dropped off and the ones mailed out to elementary counselors in Seminole county also included: (a) an explanation of research/informed consent form, (b) a 19-question demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A), (c) the SCARS, and (d) the 16-item version of the SPOS. In addition, self-addressed return envelopes were provided for

convenience. The Seminole County data packets were followed by brief telephone calls reminding the school counselors to participate in the study a week from the drop off dates. Most of the telephone calls resulted in the researcher leaving voice-mails. To establish trust with these school counselors, the researcher reminded them that he works in the same district as them, and reminded them that he was the past-president of the local chapter of the state's counseling association, Seminole Counseling Association (SCA). In addition, the researcher shared the same information that was provided to the Osceola school counselors regarding supporting the profession. To increase rewards for responding, the researcher: (a) consulted with the director of student services, (b) displayed positive regard, (c) thanked the school counselors for participating, and (d) provided chocolate as a token of appreciation for participation. To reduce social costs, the researcher: (a) avoided inconveniencing the school counselors by providing data collection packets during non-work hours, (b) minimized requests for personal information (the survey was anonymous), and (c) provided data collection packets which contained questions relevant to the work of school counselors. The recruitment of participants in the two school districts resulted in a total of 215 data packets sent out, and 142 data packets returned (66% return rate).

### **Instrumentation**

The data collection instruments selected for this investigation were: (a) a general demographics questionnaire, (b) the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support* (SPOS; Shore & Tetrick, 1991) and (c) the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale* (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005). An introduction and review of the three data collection instruments follows.

## **General Demographics Questionnaire.**

The general demographic questionnaire, a one-page document, was developed by the researcher and contains items requesting information from the school counselor participants' such as (a) ethnicity/race, (b) school level (elementary, middle, high), (c) length of employment, and (d) school location (rural, urban, suburban). In addition, the general demographic questionnaire included five-point Likert scale statements investigating school counselors' perceptions of their professional service.

The initial version of the general demographics questionnaire was reviewed by volunteer doctoral level counselor education students at the University of Central Florida prior to administering the final form to participants. These volunteers were *not* potential study participants. Additionally, expert counselor education faculty at the University of Central Florida also reviewed the general demographics questionnaire to support the questionnaire's face validity and design quality. Feedback from students and faculty was incorporated in the construction of the final version of the general demographics questionnaire.

## **Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS).**

The SPOS (Shore & Tetrick, 1991) measures employees' perception of their organization's attitude toward them. The SPOS utilizes a six point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree”, to “strongly agree” for each of the 16 questions (short version) regarding POS. The construct validity of the SPOS was supported through a confirmatory factor analysis identifying the unidimensionality and distinguishability from measures of affective and continuous commitment (Shore & Tetrick, 1991). Hutchinson (1997) noted that “consistent with

Shore and Tetrick's findings, the SPOS was found to be unidimensional” (p.1025). Additionally, Hutchinson (1997) found SPOS to be distinguishable from perceived supervisory support and organizational dependability. Furthermore, Hellman et al. (2006) stated that an exploratory factor analysis of the SPOS by Eisenberger conducted in 1986 and subsequent factor analyses provided evidence for unidimensionality, reliability and acceptable item-total correlations. Hellman and colleagues identified the internal consistency of the SPOS as an acceptable level .88 ( $SD = .10$   $SE = .134$ ) with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .851 to .904. “The median reliability coefficient was .90 (mode = .94) with scores ranging from .49 to .98” (Hellman et al., 2006, p. 635).

Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) conducted a factor analysis of the SPOS with varimax rotation, Kaiser normalization, including a two-factor solution. Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) found that every item on the SPOS showed a strong loading for perceived support. Moreover, the 16-item version of the SPOS (used in this study) is the most often used version of the SPOS. The 16-item version was developed from the highest loading items on the original 36-item SPOS (Eisenberger, Fasolo, & Davis La Mastro, 1990). Yoon and Thye (2002) found the items in the 16-item SPOS have moderate internal consistency reliability at Cronbach's alpha .75. Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) noted that the 16-item version of the SPOS includes items that could be placed into the following 11 categories: (a) *employee performance* (items 1 & 27), (b) *appreciation of the employee's extra effort* (item 3), (c) *consideration of the employee's goals and opinions* (items 4 & 25), (d) *job enrichment* (item 35), (e) *employee's job satisfaction* (item 21), (f) *employee's well-being* (items 7, 9, 22, and 23), (g) *replacing employee with a new lower paid employee* (item 2), (h) *responses to possible complaints* (item 6), (i) *improved performance* (item 17), (j) *special favor requests by employees* (item 20), and (k) *help with problems* (item 8).

These 11 categories divide the SPOS items into clusters that can be compared to the factors found in the SCARS for correlational analysis.

### **The School Counselor Activity Rating Scale (SCARS).**

The SCARS (Scarborough, 2005) measures how school counselors spend their time versus how they would prefer to spend their time in job-related activities. The SCARS is a 48 item instrument was developed “to provide researchers with a psychometrically sound instrument for measuring school counselor activity” (Shillingford, 2009, p. 97). The SCARS uses a five point ranking system for statements regarding school counseling practice. The system is called a verbal frequency scale. “A verbal frequency scale is used as a measure of 'how often' an action is taken, rather than a Likert scale that measures 'strength of agreement’” (Scarborough, 2005, p. 276). The SCARS provides users two columns for scoring each statement. One column (Actual) is for tasks that counselors engage in, and the next (Prefer) is for tasks that counselors would like to engage in more regularly. The lowest score is a one (never) and the highest is a five (routinely). The SCARS is a good tool for determining how well school counseling programs are being implemented (Scarborough, 2005). The SCARS includes five subscales that assess school counseling service delivery: (a) counseling, (b) consultation, (c) curriculum, (d) coordination, and (e) other services (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). The subscales contain items describing specific activities that apply to each category. Moreover, Scarborough's (2005) study supported the utility of the SCARS to be a measure of process data reflecting how school counselors may actually spend their time versus how they would prefer to spend their time at work. Scarborough (2005) stated that all factors in the SCARS met Kaiser's criterion with eigenvalues greater than one. In addition, Scarborough (2005) noted that the discriminant construct validity was

established by examining correlations between SCARS subscales and a demographic variable which was *not* expected to associate. Furthermore, “Convergent Construct Validity was established by examining group differences among grade levels of employment on the subscales” (Scarborough, 2005, p. 279).

Scarborough (2005) conducted a “principal components factor analysis with an orthogonal transformation using the varimax rotation to identify factors and assess construct validity” (p. 278) for the SCARS. Scarborough (2005) chose the orthogonal rotation because it forces factors to be independent of one another. Furthermore, Scarborough (2005) used a .4 factor loading for the analysis of the SCARS. Moreover, she mentioned that all factors met Kaiser's criterion with eigenvalues greater than one. Scarborough (2005) named the four factors based on the item loadings: “Curriculum (Factor 1), Coordination (Factor 2), Counseling (Factor 3), and Consultation (Factor 4).” (p. 278)

The last section of the SCARS; the “other” category addresses common duties that school counselors perform that do *not* align with the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*, which includes activities such as scheduling, discipline, classroom coverage, enrollment and withdrawal of students, participation in committees, etc. Scarborough (2005) determined that an analysis of the Prefer scale disclosed a three factor solution which led to the following subscales: Clerical, Fair Share, and Administrative.

The researcher obtained consent to utilize the SPOS via e-mail from Dr. Eisenberger (University of Delaware). Permission to utilize the SCARS was provided by Dr. Scarborough at <http://www.umass.edu/schoolcounseling/scars-school-counselor-activity-rating-scale.php>.

## Data Analysis Procedures

After the data collection process, the data were scored and entered into a database and analyzed by SPSS (Version 20.0), using Multiple Linear Regression (MLR), Pearson product-moment correlations (two-tailed), and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The mean SPOS and SCARS were used in the data analyses because there were a few participants who did *not* provide a response for certain items. For this reason, if the sum total scores were used, those participants who did *not* fill in one or two items would *not* have a representative score, when compared with those participants who did *not* have any missing responses. By averaging the scores for each of the data collection instruments (SPOS and SCARS), the researcher was able to include these participants in the subsequent analyses (Lambie & Vaccaro, 2011). In addition, by using the data collection instrument mean scores, we reduced the variability between the participants' responses, making the estimates more precise (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Prior to the data analyses, the data set was examined to assess the fit between the distribution of the variables and the assumptions of the statistical analysis, such as normality, homogeneity of variance, linearity, and multicollinearity; no assumption violations were identified.

To test the research hypothesis that school counselors scoring at higher levels of POS would score at higher levels of school counseling service delivery that aligns to the ASCA (2005) *National Model*, MLR was employed. Specifically, MLR was applied to the outcome variable of total mean SPOS score and the predictor variables SCARS subscale mean scores (counseling, consultation, curriculum, coordination, and other services). In addition, to exploratory the relationship between the variables of (a) POS, (b) school counselor service delivery, and (c) reported general demographic data (e.g., school level), Pearson product-moment correlations (two-tailed) were performed.

## **Ethical Considerations**

In order to maintain ethical practice for the investigation, all collected data was *anonymous*. A waiver of consent from the UCF Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained to secure anonymity. Only the researcher has access to the completed data collection packets. The completed data was stored in a locked compartment at the researcher's home. Participants' involvement was voluntary and they were able to *not* participate in the investigation without consequence. In addition, an informed consent form pre-approved by the IRB at the University of Central Florida (UCF) was provided to all participants prior to beginning the data collection packets detailing their rights. Permission to utilize data collection instruments was granted by the authors of the SCARS and the SPOS.

## **Summary**

In order to examine the relationship between professional school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support and their school counseling service delivery, the researcher conducted a correlational investigation utilizing the SCARS and SPOS. The researcher collected data from certified school counselors working in Central Florida at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The use of personal contacts was used to recruit participants. Collected data was analyzed using multivariate statistics. The investigation aligned with all ethical research practices and IRB approval was granted prior to any data collection.



## **CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS**

This study investigated the relationship between professional school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support (as measured by the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support*; Eisenberger et al., 1986) and their school counseling service delivery (as measured by the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale*; Scarborough, 2005). The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, tests of normality, assessment of linearity, MLR, Pearson product–moment correlations (two-tailed), and analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results are presented as follows: (a) sampling procedures, (b) descriptive statistics of the participants and data collection measures, and (c) data analysis and results for the research hypothesis.

### **Sampling Procedures**

The targeted population for this study was practicing certified public school counselors working in Central Florida. Access to school counselors was obtained through communication with school district administrators overseeing school counseling and guidance services departments and school district websites. Approval from the University of Central Florida's (UCF) Institutional Review Board (IRB) was obtained by researcher prior to data collection. Purposive sampling was conducted because the researcher wanted to examine the relationship between local school counselors' perceived organizational support (POS) and service delivery. Specifically, “purposive sampling is the process of selecting a sample that is believed to be representative of a given population” (Gay et al., 2009, p. 113). The purposive sample in the

current study included practicing school counselors ( $N = 215$ ) from Elementary ( $n = 71$ ), Middle ( $n = 55$ ), and High ( $n = 89$ ) school levels in Central Florida.

The researcher requested approval to conduct the study in Osceola and Seminole counties in Florida from supervisors in charge of Guidance and Student Services in each county. Communication was initiated by telephone calls and e-mails from contacts found in school district websites. The district supervisors and researcher discussed time-lines, permission forms and meeting locations. Once plans were agreed upon and forms were signed, approval to survey the school counselors in Osceola and Seminole counties was granted. The researcher then put together the data collection packets containing: (a) an explanation of research/informed consent form, (b) a 19-question demographic questionnaire (see Appendix A), (c) the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale* (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005), and (d) the 16-item version of the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support* (SPOS; Eisenberger et al., 1986). Once the data collection packets were put together, the researcher provided the packets to school counselors from Osceola County by administering them at two school counselor meetings (one for elementary counselors and one for secondary counselors) in March, 2013. Prior to administering the data collection packets, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and discussed the invitation to participate and consent information as noted in Chapter 3 based on the *Tailored Design Method* (Dillman et al. 2009). The data collection packets were administered and collected during the meetings' breaks. The researcher thanked the participants and provided them with a chocolate bar as a token of appreciation for participation. A total of 57 surveys were handed out at the two Osceola county meetings, and 55 were returned (96.5% response rate).

The majority (83%) of Seminole County school counselors received their data collection packets at their schools via personal delivery from the researcher. The researcher shared the

same participation statements mentioned at the two Osceola County meetings with each Seminole County school counselor that he delivered packets to, which included the same information as the packets used in Osceola County, with the addition of a return envelope and a candy bar. The remaining (17%) school counselors (all from the elementary level) received their data packets by mail. They received the same data collection packets as the personally delivered packets; however, a brief hand written personal note from the researcher reminding them that he is a colleague and providing an additional thanks for their participation was included to help remind the school counselors to complete and return the packets. All of the school counselors from Seminole County received follow-up telephone calls a week after data collection packets were received, and for the counselors who had *not* returned surveys after the first reminder, a second telephone call was made the following week. Not all of the packets were mailed at the same time, so the data collection ran for about eight weeks in the Spring of 2013. A total of 120 data collection packets were sent to Seminole County school counselors; 87 were returned (72.5% response rate). In order to reduce measurement error and help increase the response rate, doctoral students in the University of Central Florida's Counselor Education program reviewed the data collection packets and offered feedback to the researcher to strengthen the data collection processes.

### **Participants' Descriptive Data**

Between the two school districts, a total of 215 data collection packets were disseminated and, 142 were returned (resulting in a return rate of 66%). However, two of the data collection packets were *not* complete ( $N = 140$ ), so the usable response rate was 65%. In order to increase

the response rate, the researcher employed the Dillman (2007) *Tailored Design* method and utilized paper surveys instead of an on-line survey.

Descriptive analyses of the data collected from the demographic questionnaire indicated that of the 142 school counselors who responded to the data collection packets, 121 (85%) were females; 21 (15%) were male. Race of the participants was reported as: 97 (68%) Caucasian; 17 (12%) Hispanic; 14 (9%) African-American; 5 (3%) Asian-American; 9 (6%) Other, and 3 (2%) did *not* respond to this item. The ages of the participants were reported as: 19 (13%) in their 20s; 41 (29%) in their 30s; 24 (17%) in their 40s; 32 (22%) in their 50s; 18 (13%) were 60+, and 8 (6%) did *not* respond to this item. Level of education results were: 110 (78%) had Master's degrees, 22 (15%) had Specialist's degrees, 6 (4%) had Doctorates, and the remaining 4 (3%) did *not* respond to this item. Moreover, 34 (24%) of respondents self-identified themselves as *guidance counselors*, while 106 (76%) identified themselves as *school counselors*. The average caseload for participants was reported as: 725 for Elementary Counselors, 522 for Middle School Counselors, and 460 for High School Counselors (see Figure 1).

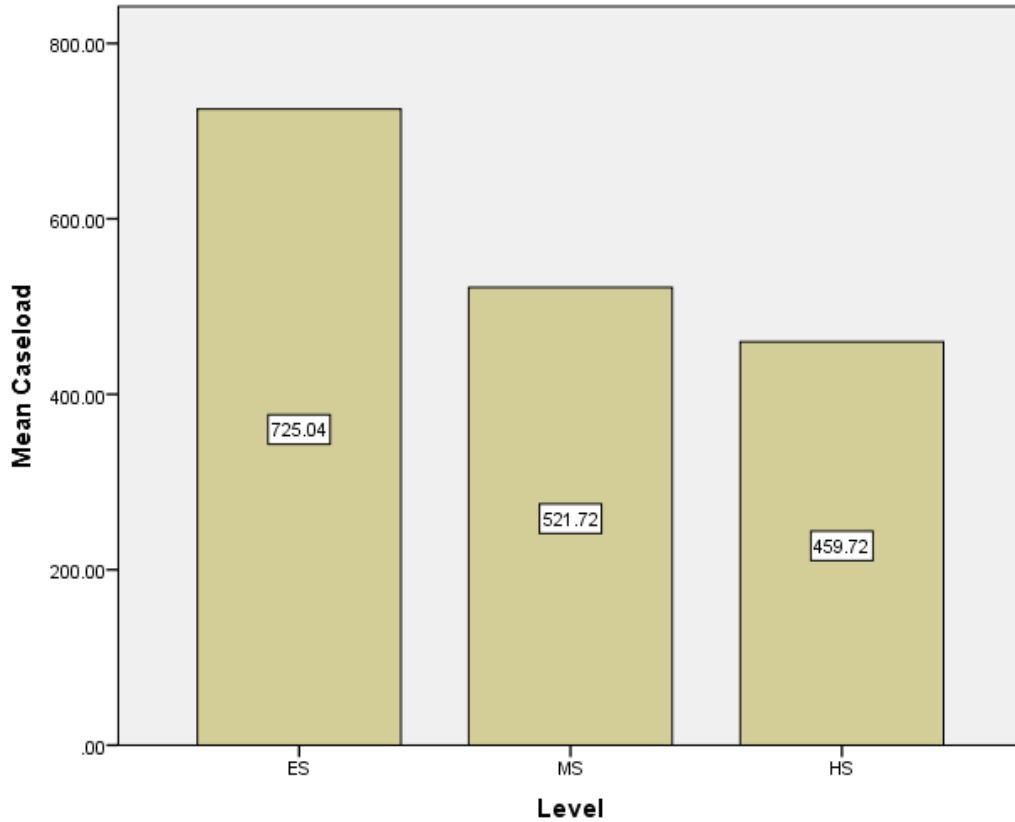


Figure 1: Caseloads

Further analysis of the descriptive data identified that school level participants to be 25% Elementary ( $n = 35$ ), 26% Middle ( $n = 38$ ), and 49% High ( $n = 69$ ). Results for Title I school status were: 29% Yes ( $n = 41$ ), 65% No ( $n = 92$ ), and 6% ( $n = 8$ ) did *not* know or did *not* respond to this item. School location reported by the school counselors was 51% Urban ( $n = 72$ ), 30% Suburban ( $n = 43$ ), 13% Rural ( $n = 19$ ), and 6% ( $n = 8$ ) did *not* respond to this item.

Regarding holding membership in a professional association, the school counselors reported that 45% ( $n = 64$ ) held a membership, 50% ( $n = 71$ ) did *not* hold a membership, and 5% ( $n = 7$ ) did *not* respond to this item. In addition, 64% ( $n = 91$ ) of school counselors reported feeling stressed or very stressed in their current positions. The higher the school level, the more

reports of feeling stressed or very stressed: 51% ( $n = 18$ ) of elementary counselors reported being stressed or very stressed, 63% ( $n = 24$ ) of middle school counselors reported being stressed or very stressed, and 71% ( $n = 49$ ) of high school counselors reported being stressed or very stressed. The participants reported the following regarding time spent providing direct services to students: (a) elementary counselors spent an average of 35% of their time providing direct services to students, (b) middle school counselors spent 47.7% of their time providing direct services to students, and (c) high school counselors reported spending 55% of their time providing direct services to students (see Figure 2).

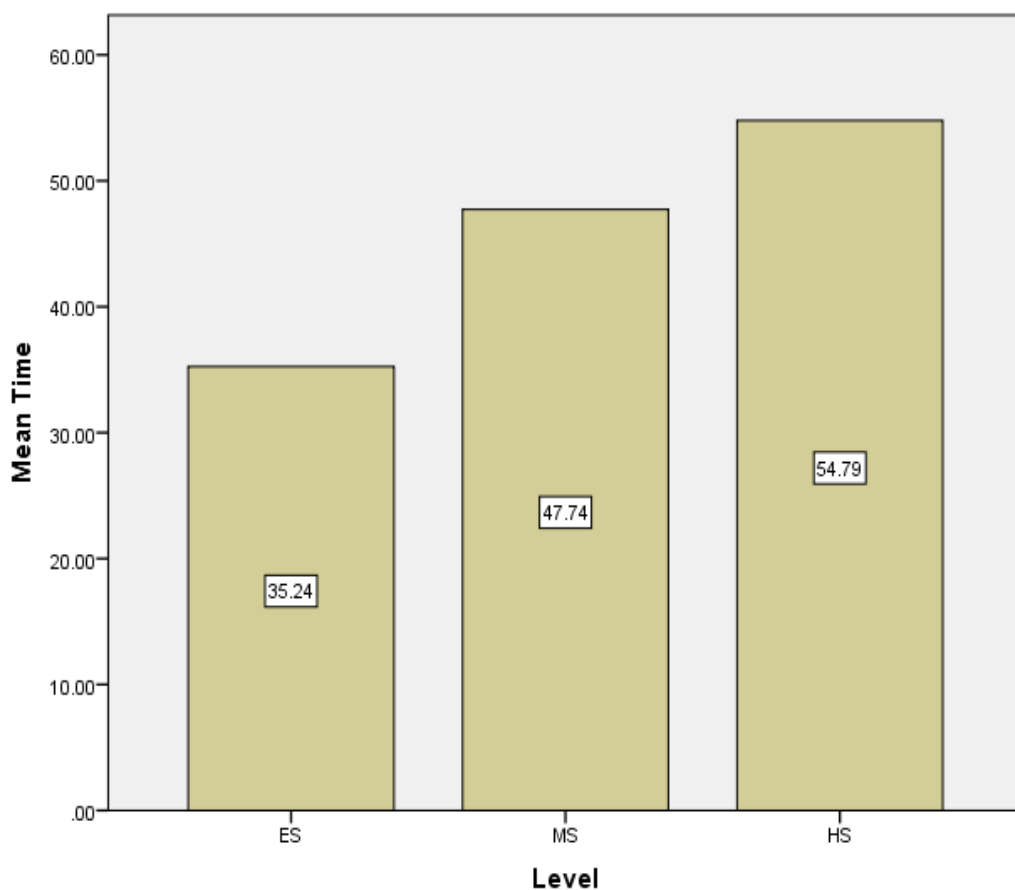


Figure 2: Direct Student Contact

The school counselors were asked to rate their level of familiarity with the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model* and the results identified 42% ( $n = 59$ ) of the sample felt familiar or very familiar with the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*. Broken up by school levels, 42% ( $n = 15$ ) of elementary counselors felt comfortable or very comfortable, whereas 47% ( $n = 18$ ) of middle school counselors reported feeling comfortable or very comfortable, and 38% ( $n = 26$ ) of high school counselors reported feeling familiar or very familiar with the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*. In addition, 66% ( $n = 94$ ) the school counselor participants reported feeling satisfied or very satisfied in their current profession. Specifically, the majority of the elementary counselors; 71% ( $n = 25$ ) reported feeling satisfied or very satisfied in their current positions, 57% ( $n = 22$ ) of middle school counselors felt satisfied or very satisfied, and 68% ( $n = 47$ ) of high school counselors also reported feeling satisfied or very satisfied about being professional school counselors.

### **Descriptive Data per Data Collection Instruments**

*School Counseling Activities Rating Scale* (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005) scores were used to measure the school counseling activities of study participants. Reliability scaling (SPSS, version 20) was used with the data collected in order to analyze the measurement consistency and reliability of the SCARS. Overall alpha coefficient for the SCARS with these data was good with an overall internal reliability of .86. Internal consistency reliability of the five individual SCARS subscales with these data was good to questionable: (a) .79 for Counseling Activities, (b) .72 for Consultation Activities, (c) .85 for Curriculum Activities, (d) .79 for Coordination Activities and (e) .63 for Other Activities (with items 6, 7, and 8 excluded). SCARS items six, seven, and eight were excluded due to alignment with the reality of the job of a school counselor

and because they negatively affected the reliability of the instrument. Specifically, SCARS item six is *scheduling*, which can be used as an opportunity to discuss future plans and ensure appropriate courses that will help prepare students for future careers. SCARS item seven was *enroll/withdraw* students. While the paperwork side is clerical in nature, other aspects such as transition assistance and closure are congruent with the role of a school counselor. *Maintaining educational records* was the eighth SCARS item. Filing papers in a folder is clerical staff work; however, school counselors need to be aware of current information regarding their students. Personal, legal, disability and educational information helps school counselors provide appropriate services to their students.

One hundred and forty participants completed the SCARS. The means and standard deviations for the five subscales are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Subscale Means and Standard Deviations

Subscale	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Counseling	2.57	0.53
Consultation	3.04	0.67
Curriculum	1.71	0.58
Coordination	2.32	0.6
Other	2.48	0.73

The results for Scarborough's investigation (2005) compare to those found in previous studies. Table 3 shows Scarborough's findings.



Table 3

## Scarborough Subscale Means and Standard Deviations

Subscale	ES Mean	ES <i>SD</i>	MS Mean	MS <i>SD</i>	HS Mean	HS <i>SD</i>
Counseling	3.46	0.65	3.14	0.62	2.6	0.53
Consultation	3.51	0.64	3.6	0.61	3.08	0.69
Curriculum	3.79	0.75	2.58	0.87	1.74	0.53
Coordination	3.17	0.62	2.9	0.69	2.59	0.68
Clerical	1.64	0.88	4.06	0.99	4.43	0.66
Fair Share	3.62	0.84	3.53	0.79	2.71	0.74
Administrative	1.84	0.7	2.1	0.83	1.39	0.54

ES = Elementary School; MS = Middle School; HS = High School

Scarborough's (2005) findings for the high school section were similar to the current study's findings in the high school section (approximately half of the participants in the current investigation were high school counselors). Scarborough (2005) divided the *Other* section into three sub-areas (clerical, fair share, and administrative), therefore, an exact comparison for the *Other* subscale is not available; However, the high school average of the three means together was 2.84, which was not far from the 2.73 found in the current study. Nelson et al. (2008) also utilized the SCARS in their study of Texas high school counselors (see Table 4).

Table 4

## Nelson, Robles-Pina, and Nichter Subscale Means and Standard Deviations

Subscale	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Counseling	2.84	0.64
Consultation	2.96	0.68
Curriculum	2.01	0.76
Coordination	2.7	0.69
Other	2.94	0.59

The findings in the current study are also comparable to the study conducted by Nelson et al. (2008).

The lowest mean score for participants in the current study was found in the curriculum activities subscale with a mean score of 1.72 ( $SD = .626$ ). The highest mean score were found in the consultation activities subscale with a mean score of 3.08 ( $SD = .697$ ). The highest mean for an individual item was question 10 in the counseling activities subscale (“Counsel students regarding academic issues”) with a mean of 4.05 ( $SD = 1.056$ ). The lowest mean for an individual subscale item was question eight in the counseling subscale (“Conduct small group counseling for students regarding substance abuse issues”) with a mean of 1.25 ( $SD = .571$ ). Table 5 displays the mean scores for each of the SCARS questions.

Table 5

## SCARS Questions Statistics

Question	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Range	Mode
Counseling 1	3.44	0.83	4	3
Counseling 2	3.42	0.97	4	3
Counseling 3	2.96	0.9	4	3
Counseling 4	3.05	0.97	4	3
Counseling 5	1.86	1.05	4	1
Counseling 6	1.98	1.00	4	1
Counseling 7	1.52	0.76	3	1
Counseling 8	1.25	0.57	3	1
Counseling 9	2.61	1.27	4	1
Counseling 10	4.05	1.05	4	5
Consultation 1	3.88	0.87	4	4
Consultation 2	2.51	1.01	4	2
Consultation 3	2.98	1.09	4	3
Consultation 4	2.99	0.98	4	3
Consultation 5	3.05	1.38	4	2
Consultation 6	2.91	1.19	4	3
Consultation 7	3.22	1.36	4	4
Curriculum 1	2.65	1.26	4	2
Curriculum 2	1.9	0.91	4	2
Curriculum 3	1.7	0.89	4	1
Curriculum 4	1.63	0.86	4	1
Curriculum 5	1.61	0.83	4	1
Curriculum 6	1.62	0.90	4	1
Curriculum 7	1.28	0.57	4	1
Curriculum 8	1.41	0.72	4	1
Coordination 1	2.78	1.14	4	3
Coordination 2	2.76	1.22	4	2
Coordination 3	2.73	1.15	4	2
Coordination 4	1.64	0.92	4	1
Coordination 5	1.87	1.03	4	1
Coordination 6	2.39	1.24	4	1
Coordination 7	1.79	1.04	4	1
Coordination 8	2.26	1.29	4	1
Coordination 9	3.31	1.02	4	3
Coordination 10	1.82	0.97	4	1

Question	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Range	Mode
Coordination 11	2.42	1.26	4	1
Coordination 12	1.72	0.86	4	1
Coordination 13	2.73	1.26	4	2
Other 1	3.13	1.20	4	3
Other 2	2.65	1.56	4	1
Other 3	2.62	1.30	4	2
Other 4	2.98	1.50	4	1
Other 5	3.05	1.73	4	5
Other 9	1.8	1.04	4	1
Other 10	1.29	0.65	4	1

The *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support* (SPOS; Eisenberger et al., 1986) was used to measure school counselor's levels of perceived organizational support. Reliability with these data was good; Cronbach's alpha was .94 for the 16 SPOS items. The mean for the SPOS in the current study was a 3.8, with a standard deviation of 1.33. Eisenberger et al. (1986) utilized the SPOS with high school teachers ( $N = 50$ ) and found  $M = 4.30$  and  $SD = 1.24$ . In another study by Eisenberger et al. (1990) of high school teachers ( $N = 39$ ) using the SPOS, the researchers found  $M = 3.70$  and  $SD = 1.30$ . Another study of professionals in a helping profession (registered nurses) conducted by Mallette (2011)  $N = 578$  resulted in  $M = 3.96$  and  $SD = 1.30$ .

Table 6 displays the individual scores for all of the items on the SPOS.

Table 6

## SPOS Item Scores

Question	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Range	Mode
SPOS 1	4.42	1.61	6	5
SPOS 2	2.7	1.89	6	3
SPOS 3	2.51	1.93	6	0
SPOS 4	3.57	1.84	6	4
SPOS 5	2.11	1.79	6	0
SPOS 6	2.58	1.84	6	3
SPOS 7	4.58	1.33	6	5
SPOS 8	3.98	1.73	6	5
SPOS 9	1.99	1.72	6	0
SPOS 10	4.3	1.44	6	5
SPOS 11	3.79	1.61	6	5
SPOS 12	2.99	1.99	6	4
SPOS 13	1.98	1.7	6	0
SPOS 14	3.97	1.6	6	5
SPOS 15	4.09	1.52	6	4
SPOS 16	2.99	1.64	6	3

**Data Screening**

The validity of statistical results (e.g. mitigating Type I and Type II error) are influenced by the data meeting important statistical assumptions. Therefore, researchers need to screen and clean their data, and test that statistical assumptions are met (e.g. normality, linearity; Osbourne, 2013).

## Normality

The normality of these data were examined with the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality results with these data are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality for SCARS Subscales

SCARS Subscale	Statistic	<i>df</i>
Counseling Activities	.144	115
Consultation Activities	.094	115
Curriculum Activities	.144	115
Other Activities	.100	115
Coordination Activities	.102	115

Although the table displays violations to normality, the sample size being over 100 compensates for the violations (Lawner-Weinberg & Knapp-Abramowitz, 2008). Violations of the assumption of normality are common in larger samples (Pallant, 2013).

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality was also utilized to examine residuals. The results are provided in Table 8.

Table 8

## Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality for Residuals

Residual	Statistic	<i>df</i>
Standardized residual	0.06	126
Studentized residual	.062	126

Furthermore, homoscedasticity was determined satisfactory (not violated) through visual examination of scatterplots (Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5, Figure 6, and Figure 7) for the counseling, consultation, coordination and other subscales. Homoscedasticity was violated with the curriculum subscale because the relationship was quadratic rather than linear.

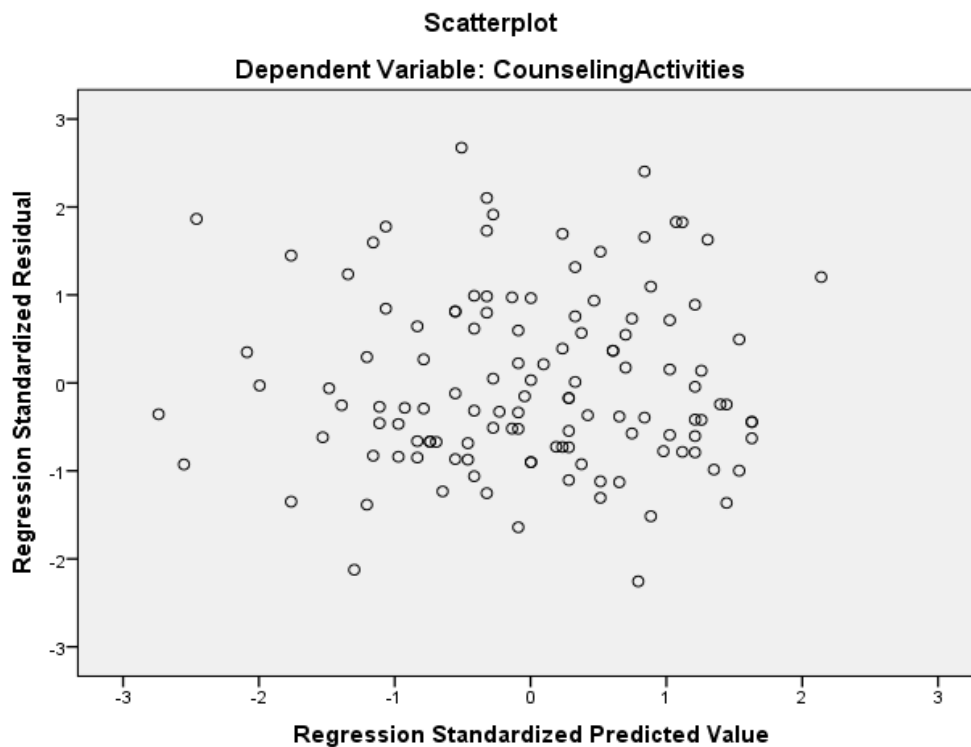


Figure 3: Counseling Scatterplot

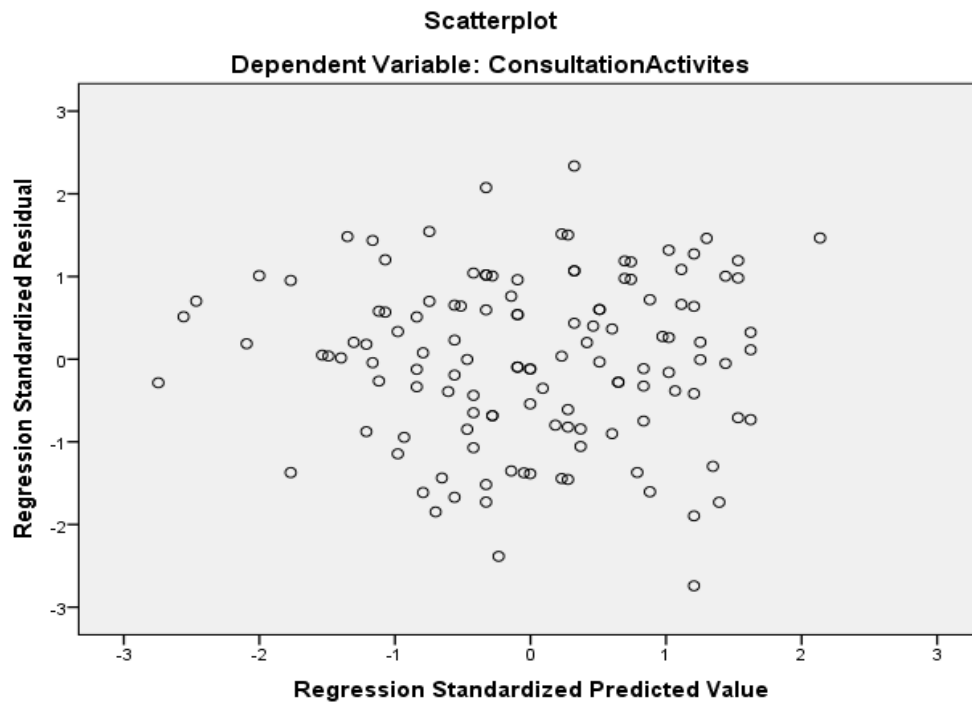


Figure 4: Consultation Scatterplot

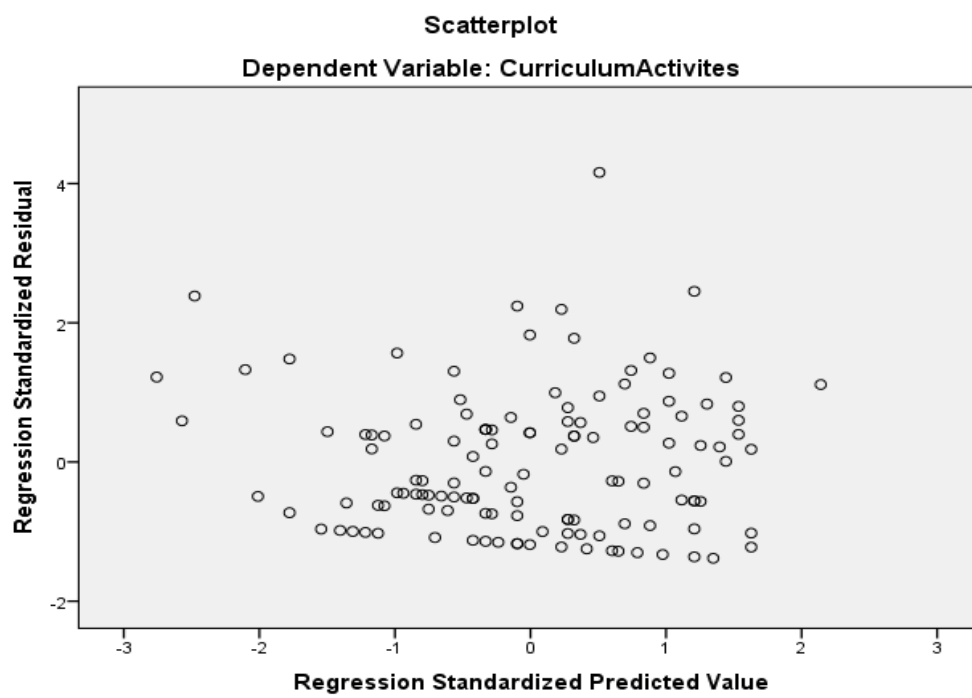


Figure 5: Curriculum Scatterplot



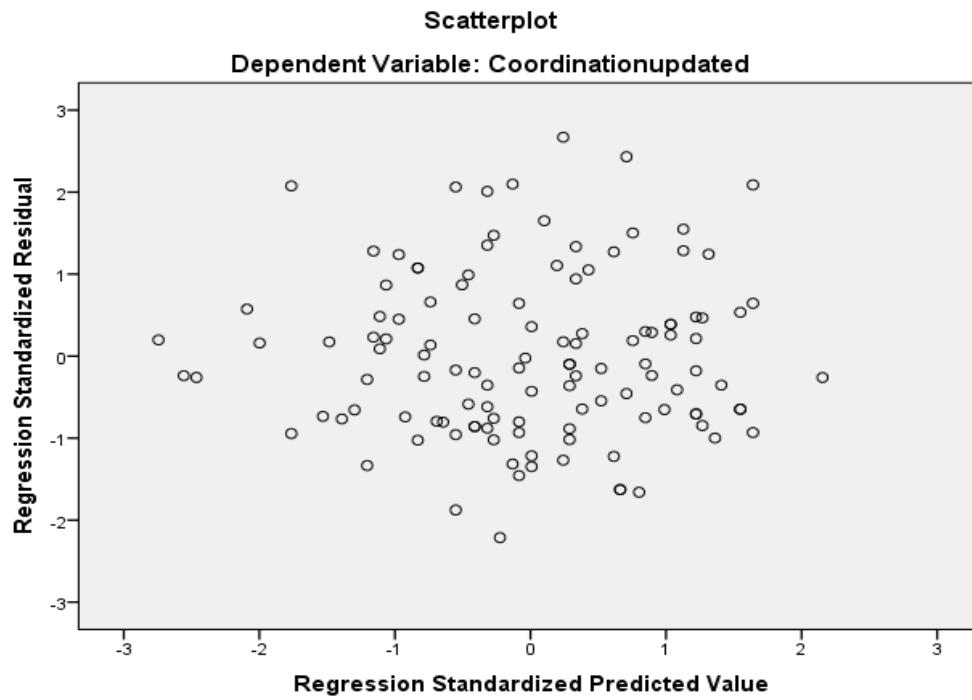


Figure 6: Coordination Scatterplot

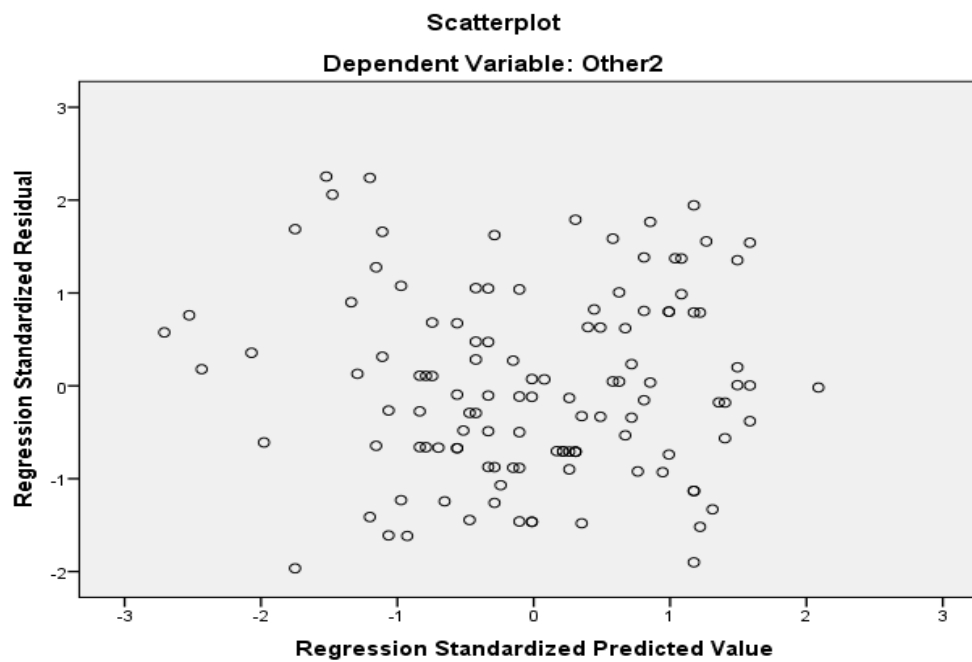


Figure 7: Other Scatterplot

Normality information for the SPOS is provided in Table 9.

Table 9

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality for SPOS

	Statistic	<i>df</i>
SPOS	0.06	127

### Linearity

Linearity was determined by examining the significance of each of the five SCARS subscales. The *counseling* subscale did *not* have a linear, quadratic, nor cubic relationship. The *consultation* subscale had a significant (.022) linear relationship. The *curriculum* subscale did *not* have a significant linear relationship; however, it had a significant (.035) quadratic relationship. The *coordination* subscale also had a significant (.014) linear relationship. The *other* subscale did not have a significant linear relationship; however, it had a significant (.048) quadratic relationship. The Pearson product–moment correlation (two-tailed) analyses supported the results of a statistically significant relationship at the 0.01 level among SPOS scores and four out of the five SCARS subscale scores: counseling ( $r = .063, p = .489$ ), consultation ( $r = .241, p = .007$ ), coordination ( $r = .223, p = .014$ ), curriculum ( $r = .144, p = .106$ ), and other activities ( $r = .044, p = .636$ ). The consultation subscale score was the only SCARS factor that did *not* correlate to the SCARS total score.

## Research Question

To examine the research question examining the relationship between professional school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support (as measured by the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support*; Eisenberger et al., 1986) and their school counseling service delivery (as measured by the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale*; Scarborough, 2005) multiple linear regression (MLR) analysis was applied to the outcome/dependent variable of perceived organizational support (total mean SPOS score) and predictor/independent variables of school counseling services delivery (five mean SCARS subscale scores). Overall, the linear composite of the predictor variables (five mean SCARS subscale score) predicted 6.1% ( $R^2 = .061$ ) of the variance in the school counselors mean SPOS scores,  $F(5, 107) = 2.39, p = .237$ . In addition, none of the five mean SCARS subscale scores had a statistically significant beta coefficient. To substantiate the MLR results, a Pearson product-moment correlation (two-tailed) analysis was employed to examine the relationship between the school counselors levels of perceived organizational support (total mean SPOS score) and their school counseling service delivery (five mean SCARS subscale scores). The results of the Pearson product-moment correlation (two-tailed) analysis identified the following correlations: (a) Total Mean SPOS score and SCARS Consultation Subscale score ( $r = .07, p = .246$ ); (b) Total Mean SPOS score and SCARS Counseling Subscale score ( $r = .19, p = .021$ ); (c) Total Mean SPOS score and SCARS Curriculum Subscale score ( $r = .06, p = .279$ ); (d) Total Mean SPOS score and SCARS Coordination Subscale score ( $r = .21, p = .014$ ); (e) Total Mean SPOS score and SCARS Other score ( $r = .04, p = .355$ ). The effect sizes for the identified correlations were small (3.61% and 4.41% of the variance explained; Cohen, 1988).

## Further Analyses

Pearson product–moment correlation (two-tailed) analyses was employed to examine the relationship between the school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support (total mean SPOS score), school counseling service delivery (five mean SCARS subscale scores) and reported demographic data (age, year of counseling experience, certified educator before counselor, current school level, Title I school status, counselor-to-student ratio, and professional membership status). The results of the Pearson product–moment correlation (two-tailed) analysis identified the following correlations: (a) Total Mean SPOS score and reported school counselor level (elementary, middle, or high school),  $r = -.26, p = .003$ ; (b) SCARS Counseling Subscale score and reported school counseling years of experience,  $r = -.18, p = .045$ , and school Title I status,  $r = -.18, p = .045$ ; (b) SCARS Consultation Subscale score and school level,  $r = -.39, p < .001$ ; (c) SCARS Curriculum Subscale score and age,  $r = .20, p = .025$ , school level,  $r = -.24, p = .006$ , and counselor-to-student caseload,  $r = .23, p = .011$ ; and (d) SCARS Other Subscale score and school level,  $r = -.46, p < .001$ . The identified correlations had moderate to small effect sizes (3.2%, 3.2%, 4.0%, 5.3%, 5.7%, 6.7%, 15.2%, and 21.1% of the variance explained; Cohen, 1988).

Post hoc analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to clarify the mean differences in the school counselors' Total Mean SPOS scores, SCARS Consultation, Curriculum, and Other subscale scores, and school counselor level (elementary, middle, or high school). The results identified that school counselors at the elementary level had higher SPOS scores than the middle and high school counselors,  $F(2, 124) = 4.44, p = .014$ . In addition, the school counselors at the elementary level had higher SCARS Consultation subscale scores than the middle and high school counselors,  $F(2, 125) = 12.83, p < .001$ . Furthermore, the school counselors at the

elementary level had higher SCARS Curriculum subscale scores than the middle and high school counselors,  $F(2, 126) = 9.66, p < .001$ . Lastly, the school counselors at the elementary level had higher SCARS Other subscale scores than the middle and high school counselors,  $F(2, 118) = 17.88, p < .001$ .

In summary, the results identified that the school counselors at the elementary school level had higher perceived organizational support, SCARS consultation, curriculum, and other scores than middle and high school counselors. In addition, the school counselors with more experience and not working at Title I school had lower SCARS counseling scores. Furthermore, the school counselors reporting an older age and with a larger counselor-to-student ratio had higher SCARS curriculum scores.

### **Summary**

Chapter four presented details of the sampling and data collection procedures for this investigation. Moreover, this chapter provided the results of the data analysis and included: (a) descriptive statistics, (b) reliability analysis, (c) normality and (d) linearity analysis. The next chapter discussed the implications and limitations of this investigation.

## **CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION**

Chapter 5 presents a brief review of the study, identifies the participants' demographic data, and reviews the data collection process. In addition, the results of the investigation for the research hypothesis are presented and compared to findings from other studies in the field of school counseling. Furthermore, the limitations of the study, implications for school counselors and counselor educators, and recommendations for future research are discussed.

### **Review of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between professional school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support (POS; as measured by the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support* [SPOS]; Eisenberger et al., 1986) and their school counseling service delivery (as measured by the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale* [SCARS]; Scarborough, 2005). The constructs and instruments utilized in this study were POS (SPOS; Eisenberger et al., 1986) and school counseling service delivery (SCARS; Scarborough, 2005). In addition, the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA, 2005, 2012) National Model was discussed to set the context for the investigation and school counselors' practices. School counseling research (e.g., Burkard, Gillen, Martinez & Skytte, 2012; Carey et al., 2005; Dahir et al., 2009; Nelson et al., 2008; Scarborough, 2005; Shillingford & Lambie, 2010) investigated school counseling service delivery and ASCA (2005, 2012) National Model implementation; however, a review of the research (e.g., EBSCOhost, Education Full Text, Psycarticles,

PsycInfo) on POS as it relates to school counselors did not yield any information on the relationship between POS and school counseling service delivery. Therefore, research was warranted to investigate the relationship between school counselors' POS and their service delivery.

The sample for this study was 215, certified, practicing school counselors (elementary school,  $n = 71$ ; middle school,  $n = 55$ ; high school,  $n = 89$ ). However, 142 data packets were returned (yielding a 66% return rate), and 140 of the returned data collection packets were successfully completed, resulting in a usable response rate of 65%. The participants completed paper surveys including (a) a general demographics questionnaire (Appendix B), (b) the SPOS (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Appendix C), and (c) the SCARS (Scarborough, 2005; Appendix D). The statistical procedures employed for this investigation included multiple linear regression (MLR), Pearson product–moment correlation (two-tailed), and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Specifically, MLR examined the predictive model with the outcome/dependent variable of POS (total mean SPOS score) and predictor/independent variables of school counseling services delivery (five mean SCARS subscale scores). In addition, Pearson product–moment correlation (two-tailed) analysis examined the relationship between POS and school counselor service delivery to support the MLR results. Furthermore, Pearson product–moment correlation analysis (two-tailed), and a Post hoc ANOVA were used to investigate the relationship between the school counselors' reported demographic data and their SPOS and SCARS scores.

To support a high response rate and mitigate measurement error, the data collection process aligned with Dillman's (2007) *Tailored Design Method* and tenets of social exchange theory. To establish trust with counselors, the researcher: (a) wore a UCF badge, (b) was endorsed by district counselors, and (c) informed the school counselors that data obtained from

the investigation may impact current practice and training of future counselors. To increase rewards for participating in the investigation, the researcher: (a) consulted with district counselors, (b) displayed positive regard, (c) thanked the school counselors various times, and (d) provided chocolate as a token of appreciation for participation. To reduce social costs, the researcher: (a) avoided inconveniencing the school counselors by including the data collection as part of the agenda of standard district counselor meetings (Osceola County) and provided surveys during non-school hours (counselors in Seminole County), (b) minimized requests for personal information (the survey was anonymous), and (c) provided data collection packets which contained questions relevant to the work of school counselors. Moreover, Seminole County data packets were followed by brief telephone calls reminding the school counselors to participate in the study a week from the drop off dates. To further enhance trust levels with the Seminole County school counselors, the researcher reminded them that he works in the same district as them, and reminded them that he was the past-president of the local chapter of the state's counseling association, Seminole Counseling Association (SCA).

To reduce measurement errors and strengthen the data collection process, the data packets utilized in this investigation were reviewed by volunteer doctoral level counselor education students and expert counselor education faculty at the University of Central Florida. The data packets were reviewed to support the data collection instruments' face validity and design quality. Feedback from the graduate students and faculty was incorporated in the construction of the final version of the general demographics questionnaire and the informed consent. Lastly, chocolate bars were offered to all of the participants in this study as a token of appreciation for their participation. Data collection for this investigation was conducted during March and April 2012.



## Discussion

The following section presents a discussion of the research findings as they relate to instrumentation, demographic information, and the research hypothesis.

### Participants

Descriptive analyses of the data collected from the demographic questionnaire indicated that of the 142 school counselors who responded to the data collection packets, 121 (85%) were females; 21 (15%) were male. Race of the participants was reported as: 97 (68%) Caucasian; 17 (12%) Hispanic; 14 (9%) African-American; 5 (3%) Asian-American, and 9 (6%) Other. The ages of the participants were reported as: 19 in their 20s (13%); 41 in their 30s (29%); 24 in their 40s (17%); 32 in their 50s (22%) and 18 were 60+ (13%). Level of education reported by the school counselors were: 110 (78%) had Master's degrees, 22 (15%) had Specialist's degrees, and 6 (4%) had Doctorates. Moreover, 34 (24%) of respondents self-identified themselves as *guidance counselors*, while 106 (76%) identified themselves as *school counselors*. The average caseload for the school counselor participants was reported as: 725 for Elementary Counselors (SD = 164.7, Range = 450 - 1000), 524 for Middle School Counselors (SD = 203.7, Range = 90 - 1167), and 460 for High School Counselors (SD = 190.0, Range = 100 - 1500).

The demographic data for the school counselors participating in this investigation was consistent with research conducted with other practicing school counselors. For example, Shillingford and Lambie (2010) found the majority of school counselors ( $N = 163$ ) who participated in their investigation on the influence of counselors' values and leadership practices on their school counseling service delivery were Caucasian (72%) females (84%) with a master's degree in school counseling (84%) or related field. Moreover, Sink and Yillik-Downer's (2001)

study of southern region school counselors' perceptions of comprehensive school counseling programs ( $N = 477$ ) reported the majority of participants to be Caucasian (73%) females (86%) with *all* participants holding at least a master's degree or higher in school counseling or a related field. In addition, Blacher, Murray-Ward and Uellendahl (2005) conducted a study regarding school counselors' activities and student assessments and indicated that the majority of their sample was Caucasian (77%) females (75%).

However, differences between the current sample of practicing school counselors and counselors participating in other investigations were identified. Specifically, Shillingford and Lambie (2010) reported a fairly even distribution of participants with elementary school counselors (33%), middle school counselors (31%), and high school counselors (30%). However, Sink and Yillik-Downer (2001) had more elementary school counselors (45%), less middle school counselors (21%), and an average representation of high school counselors (34%). Blacher and colleagues (2005) reported the following: elementary counselors (14%), middle school counselors (29%) and high school counselors (49%). The school counselor participants in the current study were more aligned with Blacher et al. (2005) than the other two studies. The results were: elementary school counselors (25%), middle school counselors (26%), and high school counselors (49%).

The reported mean student-to-counselor ratios for this investigation were: (a) Elementary School Counselors (725:1); (b) Middle School Counselors (522:1), and (c) High School Counselors (460:1). None of the grade levels had student-to-counselor ratios that were consistent with the ASCA (2012) *National Model's* recommendation of 1:250. The student-to-counselor ratios for the current sample were consistent with the majority of states' student-to-counselor ratios (e.g., ASCA, 2011; National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). The last national

report conducted by ASCA (2011) indicated that only three states and one territory were aligned with the recommended ratio: (a) New Hampshire (236:1); (b) Vermont (235:1); (c) Wyoming (200:1) and the US Virgin Islands (182:1).

## **Instrumentation**

*General Demographics Questionnaire:* In addition to the fill-in-the-blank and check mark portions of the demographics questionnaire, the general demographic questionnaire included Likert scaled items to obtain participants' information regarding how they perceive their current roles as professional school counselors. Questions 17 through 19 employed a one through five Likert scale, where one was the lowest response option and five was the highest option. For example, question 17 addressed stress levels on the job. A rating of one indicated limited stress, whereas a rating of five indicated that the job was very stressful. Results for question 17 indicated that the higher the school level, the more reports of feeling stressed or very stressed: 51% ( $n = 18$ ) of elementary counselors reported being stressed or very stressed ( $M = 3.6$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ , range = 3,  $Mdn = 4$ , Mode = 3); 63% of middle school counselors ( $n = 24$ ) reported being stressed or very stressed ( $M = 3.9$ ,  $SD = 0.95$ , range = 3,  $Mdn = 4$ , Mode = 3); and 71% of high school counselors ( $n = 49$ ) reported being stressed or very stressed ( $M = 3.77$ ,  $SD = 0.99$ , range = 4,  $Mdn = 4$ , Mode = 4). These findings were consistent with Dixon-Rayle's (2006) study examining mattering as a moderator for job stress and job satisfaction identifying that elementary school counselors reported having lowest levels of job-related stress, followed by middle school counselors with more stress, and high school counselors with the most stress.

Question 18 addressed familiarity with the ASCA (20012) *National Model*. The results identified 42% ( $n = 59$ ) of the sample felt familiar or very familiar with the ASCA (2012)

*National Model*. Broken up by school levels, 42% ( $n = 15$ ) of elementary counselors felt familiar or very familiar with the ASCA (2012) *National Model*, whereas 47% ( $n = 18$ ) of middle school counselors reported feeling familiar or very familiar, and 38% ( $n = 26$ ) of high school counselors reported feeling familiar or very familiar with the ASCA (2005, 2012) *National Model*. Although no studies were found that investigated familiarity with the ASCA (2012) *National Model*, Hatch et al. (2008) noted some counselors are fearful of the data and accountability components of the ASCA (2012) *National Model*. Hatch and colleagues (2008) noted that elementary school counselors reported low averages regarding the utilization of school-wide and student data for designing new school counseling activities ( $M = 1.76$ ,  $SD = .84$ ); middle school counselors also reported low mean scores regarding the use of data ( $M = 1.74$ ,  $SD = .89$ ); high school counselors' responses yielded low mean scores as well ( $M = 1.77$ ,  $SD = .85$ ). Responses had a range in mean ratings from 1.27 to 2.39. Furthermore, Hatch et al. (2008) noted that all levels also reported low scores in the use of data to evaluate school counseling results: (a) elementary school counselors ( $M = 1.89$ ,  $SD = .92$ ); (b) middle school counselors ( $M = 1.86$ ,  $SD = .95$ ); high school counselors ( $M = 1.85$ ,  $SD = .91$ ). They recommend further training for school counselors so the fear of data will lessen.

Moreover, school counselors in the current study were asked to rate their level of satisfaction in being a school counselor and 66% ( $n = 94$ ) of the participants reported feeling satisfied or very satisfied in their current profession. The descriptive statistics for all participants who responded to this item ( $n = 124$ ) were:  $M = 3.82$ ,  $SD = .86$ , Range = 3, Median = 4, and Mode = 4. Specifically, the majority of the elementary counselors; 71% ( $n = 25$ ) reported feeling satisfied or very satisfied in their current positions, 57% ( $n = 22$ ) of middle school counselors felt satisfied or very satisfied, and 68% ( $n = 47$ ) of high school counselors also reported feeling

satisfied or very satisfied about being professional school counselors. These findings also align with Dixon-Rayle's (2006) findings which indicate that elementary school counselors experienced the greatest job satisfaction. However, there was a difference between the current study and Dixon-Rayle's (2006) study. In the current study, high school counselors were more satisfied than middle school counselors, whereas the opposite was true in Dixon-Rayle's (2006) study. Furthermore, Baggerly and Osborn (2006) conducted a study on school counselors' career satisfaction and commitment and mentioned that 84.5% of the respondents from all levels reported being very satisfied (39.8%) or satisfied (44.7%). Therefore, school counselors in general appear to be satisfied with their chosen occupation.

*Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS):* The SPOS was used to obtain participants' mean POS scores. POS refers to a general belief held by an employee that the organization that he or she works for is committed to him or her continued membership and is generally concerned about the employee's well-being (Hellman et al., 2006). The SPOS utilizes a six point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree”, to “strongly agree” for each of the 16 questions (short version) regarding POS. Eisengerger and colleagues (1986) found that every item on the SPOS showed a strong loading for perceived support. Moreover, the 16-item version of the SPOS (used in this study) is the most used version of the SPOS. The 16-item version was developed from the highest loading items on the original 36-item SPOS (Eisenberger et al., 1990). Yoon and Thye (2002) found the items in the 16-item SPOS have moderate internal consistency reliability at Cronbach's alpha .75. Eisenberger and colleagues (1986) noted that the 16-item version of the SPOS includes items that could be placed into the following 11 categories: (a) *employee performance*, (b) *appreciation of the employee's extra effort*, (c) *consideration of the employee's goals and opinions*, (d) *job enrichment*, (e) *employee's job*

satisfaction, (f) *employee's well-being*, (g) *replacing employee with a new lower paid employee*, (h) *responses to possible complaints*, (i) *improved performance*, (j) *special favor requests by employees*, and (k) *help with problems*. The mean score for the SPOS with these data was 3.8 ( $SD = 1.33$ , range = 0-6).

No studies were found that utilized the SPOS (Eisenberger et al., 1986) to measure POS of practicing school counselors. However, a study of high school teachers ( $n = 39$ ) using the SPOS identified similar mean of SPOS scores ( $M = 3.70$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ; Eisenberger et al., 1990). Furthermore, Eisenberger and Huntington (1986) found financial trust company employees' ( $N = 120$ ) has similar mean SPOS scores ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ). Therefore, the SPOS scores for the school counseling in this investigation appear consistent with SPOS scores of other populations of helping professionals.

*School Counseling Service Delivery (SCARS)*: The SCARS (Scarborough, 2005) was used to gather the school counselor participants' service delivery scores. Overall alpha coefficient for the SCARS was good with an overall internal reliability of .86 with these data. The SCARS (Scarborough, 2005) uses a five point ranking system (a verbal frequency scale) for statements regarding school counseling practice. The lowest score is a one (never) and the highest is a five (routinely). The SCARS includes five subscales that assess school counseling service delivery: (a) *counseling*, (b) *consultation*, (c) *curriculum*, (d) *coordination*, and (e) *other services* (Shillingford & Lambie, 2010). A review of the results of the SCARS for this study identified the *consultation* subscale as having the highest mean ( $M = 3.04$ ,  $SD = .67$ ), followed by *counseling* ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = .53$ ), then *other services* ( $M = 2.48$ ,  $SD = .73$ ), then *coordination* ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = .60$ ), and *curriculum* subscale ( $M = 1.71$ ,  $SD = .58$ ).

The results of the current study were inconsistent with Scarborough's (2005) SCARS study examining practicing school counselors ( $N = 361$ ). Scarborough (2005) identified that elementary and middle school counselors reported higher mean scores in each of the SCARS subscales than scores reported in the current study; however, four out of the five high school counselors' subscale scores were consistent with the current study's findings. Scarborough (2005) reported the following for high school counselors: (a) *counseling* ( $M = 2.6, SD = .53$ ), (b) *consultation* ( $M = 3.08, SD = .69$ ), (c) *curriculum* ( $M = 1.74, SD = .53$ ) and (d) *coordination* ( $M = 2.59, SD = .68$ ). Furthermore, Nelson et al. (2008) reported the following subscale findings: (a) *counseling* ( $M = 2.8, SD = .64$ ), (b) *consultation* ( $M = 2.96, SD = .68$ ), (c) *curriculum* ( $M = 2.01, SD = .76$ ), (d) *coordination* ( $M = 2.7, SD = .69$ ) and *other* ( $M = 2.94, SD = .59$ ). Moreover, Shillingford and Lambie (2010) reported the following mean scores for their sample of Florida school counselors ( $N = 163$ ): (a) *counseling* ( $M = 33.23, SD = 6.98$ ), (b) *consultation* ( $M = 26.47, SD = 4.91$ ), (c) *curriculum* ( $M = 21.97, SD = 8.11$ ), (d) *coordination* ( $M = 39.31, SD = 8.61$ ) and *other* ( $M = 32.04, SD = 6.70$ ). The inconsistency with the scores of school counselors at the lower levels, and comparability to the high school counselors' scores may be due in part to sample size. Since the majority of participants in the current study were high school counselors, alignment to other high school counselors' scores may appear sensible. Another possible reason for the differences in scores may be variations in job descriptions and responsibilities of school counselors according to school districts. Another possible difference may be that school counselors in the current study were all from Central Florida, while other samples came from other southern states.

## Research Hypothesis

The primary research hypotheses guiding the investigation was, “Practicing school counselors at higher levels of perceived organizational support at their schools (as measured by the *Survey of Perceived Organizational Support*; Eisenberger et al., 1986) will score at higher levels of school counseling delivery that aligns to the ASCA (2005) National Model (as measured by the *School Counselor Activity Rating Scale*; Scarborough, 2005).”

To address the research hypothesis examining the relationship between professional school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support (as measured by the SPOS; Eisenberger et al., 1986) and their school counseling service delivery (as measured by the SCARS; Scarborough, 2005), MLR analysis was applied to the outcome/dependent variable of POS (total mean SPOS score) and predictor/independent variables of school counseling services delivery (five mean SCARS subscale scores). Overall, the linear composite of the predictor variables (five mean SCARS subscale score) predicted 6.1% ( $R^2 = .061$ ) of the variance in the school counselors' mean SPOS scores,  $F(5, 107) = 2.39, p = .237$ . In addition, none of the five mean SCARS subscale scores had a statistically significant beta coefficient. Therefore, the tested SPOS and SCARS model was *not* statistically significant for these data. To verify the MLR result, a Pearson product–moment correlation (two-tailed) analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between the school counselors' levels of POS and their five SCARS subscale scores. The results of the Pearson product–moment correlation (two-tailed) analysis identified the following correlations: (a) Total Mean SPOS score and SCARS Consultation Subscale score ( $r = .07, p = .246$ ); (b) Total Mean SPOS score and SCARS Counseling Subscale score ( $r = .19, p = .021$ ); (c) Total Mean SPOS score and SCARS Curriculum Subscale score ( $r = .06, p = .279$ ); (d) Total Mean SPOS score and SCARS Coordination Subscale score ( $r = .21, p = .014$ ); (e) Total



Mean SPOS score and SCARS Other score ( $r = .04, p = .355$ ). The effect sizes for the identified correlations were small (3.61% and 4.41% of the variance explained; Cohen, 1988).

Although no studies were found that investigated how school counselors' POS related to their school counseling service delivery, Eisenberger et al. (1990) investigated POS and employee diligence ( $N = 180$ ), commitment and innovation pointed out that there was a consistent positive relationship between high levels of POS and job performance. Supervisory evaluations of brokerage clerks, manufacturing employees, and university resident assistants resulted in alpha coefficients of .95, .93 and .58 respectively (Eisenberger et al., 1990). The average correlation between POS and performance in Eisenberger et al.'s (1990) study was .33 ( $p < .001$ ). Furthermore, Randall, Copranzano, Bormann and Birjulin's (1999) study of organizational politics and organizational support as predictors of work attitudes, job performance, and organizational citizenship behavior with manufacturing employees ( $N = 80$ ) suggested that organizational support was related to positive job performance ( $b = .15, SE = .13, R^2 = .05$ ).

The differences between the career fields discussed in Eisenberger et al. (1990) and Randall et al.'s (1999) studies and professional school counseling are significant; therefore, no direct correlations can be made between the studies. Moreover, performance assessments for the other studies were conducted by supervisors, whereas school counselors in the current study self-reported responses on the SCARS (Scarborough, 2005). The lack of research on the relationship between POS and school counseling service delivery warrants future studies on the topic. Other possible reasons for variations in the findings include: (a) sample differences, (b) different instruments used to measure variables, (c) lack of variance in the data, and (d) POS and school counseling service delivery did not correlate.

## Additional Findings

Results of the Pearson product–moment correlation (two-tailed) analysis for demographics, total mean SPOS score, and the five mean SCARS subscale scores identified the following correlations: (a) Total Mean SPOS score and reported school counselor level (elementary, middle, or high school),  $r = -.26, p = .003$ ; (b) SCARS Counseling Subscale score and reported school counseling years of experience,  $r = -.18, p = .045$ , and school Title I status,  $r = -.18, p = .045$ ; (c) SCARS Consultation Subscale score and school level,  $r = -.39, p < .001$ ; (d) SCARS Curriculum Subscale score and age,  $r = .20, p = .025$ , school level,  $r = -.24, p = .006$ , and counselor-to-student caseload,  $r = .23, p = .011$ ; and (e) SCARS Other Subscale score and school level,  $r = -.46, p < .001$ . The identified correlations had moderate to small effect sizes (3.2%, 3.2%, 4.0%, 5.3%, 5.7%, 6.7%, 15.2%, and 21.1% of the variance explained; Cohen, 1988). In addition, to clarify the mean differences in the school counselors' Total Mean SPOS scores, SCARS Consultation, Curriculum, and Other subscale scores, and school counselor level (elementary, middle, or high school), post hoc ANOVA was performed. The results identified school counselors at the elementary level had higher SPOS scores than the middle and high school counselors,  $F(2, 124) = 4.44, p = .014$ . In addition, the school counselors at the elementary level had higher SCARS Consultation subscale scores than the middle and high school counselors,  $F(2, 125) = 12.83, p < .001$ . Furthermore, the school counselors at the elementary level had higher SCARS Curriculum subscale scores than the middle and high school counselors,  $F(2, 126) = 9.66, p < .001$ . Lastly, the school counselors at the elementary level had higher SCARS Other subscale scores than the middle and high school counselors,  $F(2, 118) = 17.88, p < .001$ . Therefore, the middle and high school counselors perceived less support from their schools than did their elementary counterparts. In addition,

middle and high school counselors (on average) did not spend as much time on consultation activities, curriculum activities or other activities as the elementary school counselors.

Scarborough (2005) also identified elementary school counselors as having higher SCARS curriculum scores ( $M = 3.79$ ,  $SD = .75$ ) than their middle school ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = .87$ ) and high school ( $M = 1.74$ ,  $SD = .53$ ) counterparts. However, the Scarborough (2005) study identified middle school counselors had the highest SCARS consultation and other scores, indicating that the current study was only slightly consistent with hers.

Nelson et al. (2008) investigated Texas high school counselors' SCARS data and their identified score ( $M = 2.01$ ,  $SD = .76$ ) for the curriculum subscale was also lower than the scores from school counselors at the lower levels identified in Scarborough's (2005) study. Findings from Nelson et al. (2008) were more consistent with the Florida high school counselors' scores in the current study.

## **Limitations**

All investigations have limitations that influence the interpretation of the study results. The following section presents study limitations within the domains of research design and sampling.

### **Research Design**

This study employed a correlational design; therefore, causality was *not* investigated (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006). In addition, relationships identified in the investigation may have been a result of other extraneous variables *not* measured in the study. Furthermore, mortality was a threat to internal validity for the current study because school counselors not perceiving high

organizational support at their schools may experience feelings of burnout and may have elected not to participate in the investigation.

### **Sampling Limitations**

Sampling limitations in this study include surveying school counselors from two school districts in Central Florida (in a non-random sample), administering surveys in person and by mail, and sample size. First, the sample of school counselors in this study may *not* be representative of all school counselors in the United States. Furthermore, most of the participants knew or had heard of the researcher, so possible bias may have impacted the participants' responses. Second, providing data collection packets in person and by mail may have impacted the time respondents took to respond to survey items. In addition, school counselors who completed the data collection packets with the researcher present may have responded in ways that they thought would seem favorable to the researcher or their District Counselor, while the counselors who volunteered to complete the data collection packets on their own time, may have been more honest. Lastly, a larger sample could have strengthened statistical power.

### **Instrumentation Limitations**

The primary limitation regarding instrumentation of the SPOS is that it was *not* normed on practicing school counselors. The closest group of people referenced by Eisenberger (1984) was high school teachers. However, high school teachers serve a different function than school counselors within the educational system. Furthermore, the training of school counselors is much different than that of a classroom teacher. The primary limitation with the SCARS is that it is

relatively new, and its psychometric properties are still being investigated. In addition, some incongruence exists between the SPOS and the SCARS. The SPOS employs a Likert scale to measure participants' responses, while the SCARS utilizes a verbal frequency scale in which participants were asked how often they engaged in certain school counseling activities (Scarborough, 2005). Therefore, the analysis between both instruments had to be analyzed by comparing two different scales.

Despite the differing scales, both instruments were self-report, which could mean certain bias impacted the results. Moreover, participants' answers on one instrument may have influenced answers their answers on the other instrument. Nonetheless, despite the identified limitations, the present investigation contributes to the current school counseling literature.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future studies with relation to POS and school counseling service delivery would benefit from a mixed methods design including an experimental aspect, along with a qualitative component. A mixed-methods investigation could provide a more in-depth look into the relationship between POS and school counseling service delivery. Specifically, an *explanatory mixed-methods design* would provide quantitative data results (during the first phase) that would then help determine the type of data necessary for the qualitative component of the study (Gay, et al., 2006). The researcher could then utilize the qualitative findings to help support and explain the quantitative results (Gay, et al., 2006). Moreover, the suggested mixed-methods approach could potentially help researchers identify particular aspects of school counselors' experiences that affect their outlook towards organizational support and school counseling service delivery.

A larger, more diverse sample of school counselors would also be beneficial, helping

provide better representation of the school counselor population and strengthen statistical analysis (Cohen, 1992). Additionally, utilizing on-line surveys would help expedite the data collection process by reducing travel time and the data entry process. Moreover, investigating the differences in individual school districts' expectations for the role of the school counselor could provide further insight that may impact future studies. Lastly, adding multiple measures for each construct may provide a more thorough analysis of the data. The suggestions presented in this section should help future researchers conduct a more comprehensive and efficient follow-up study.

### **Implications**

This study's findings offer implications for practicing school counselors, counselor educators, and school administrators. The implications for school counseling, counselor education, and school leadership are discussed further.

### **School Counselors**

School counselors at the high school level were found to be the least familiar with the ASCA (2012) *National Model*, and to have the highest levels of stress according to the results obtained from the current study's demographic questionnaire. In addition, this study's high school counselors aligned with Scarborough's (2005) sample of high school counselors and averaged the lowest SCARS curriculum scores out of the three levels examined. In the meantime, high school counselors can take advantage of resources from ASCA and its local divisions and chapters in order to learn more about the *National Model*. With more familiarity, school counselors should be able to begin expanding on the ASCA (2012) *National Model* at their respective schools.

Being aware of ASCA (2012) *National Model* information should encourage high school counselors to be more proactive so that they can provide the most appropriate, effective practice model of school counseling services to their students. High school counselors should also recognize their stress levels and engage in activities to reduce stressors, so they can do their jobs to the best of their abilities. Perhaps collaborating with other counselors, and operating from an ASCA perspective could help relieve some of the stress.

Elementary school counselors reported having the least amount of direct student contact. By following the ASCA (2012) *National Model*; specifically, the school counseling curriculum component, elementary school counselors should be directly engaging with students more regularly, strengthening the school counseling program at their schools, and help the counselors get to know more of their students better.

Middle school counselors were identified as being the least satisfied group. If middle school school counselors communicate with each other and school administrators in department meetings, staff meetings and district meetings, they could identify the areas of their jobs that are bothersome, or not fulfilling. Once the issues are identified, collaboration with other staff members, even distribution of duties, and reassigning inappropriate non-counseling duties to the appropriate staff, should help middle school counselors feel more satisfied. Once again, utilizing and sharing the ASCA (2012) *National Model* can help school counselors advocate for their students and their appropriate roles.

Even though no significant relationship between POS and school counselor service delivery was identified, there are implications to consider. First, school counselors may not be able to claim that low levels of organizational support are part of the reason for the lack of implementation of the ASCA (2012) *National Model*. Second, school counselors who are

committed to the ASCA (2012) National Model may want to investigate other constructs such as job satisfaction or relationships with administrators, and how they may impact school counseling service delivery. Third, when working with interns who want to engage in school counseling activities that align with the ASCA (2012) National Model, school counselors may choose to emphasize to their interns that identifying a mentor may be more beneficial than trying to look for support from the school as a whole (as they start out). Lastly, considering the level challenges of school counseling could be explored, so that school counselors can identify and address barriers to ASCA (2012) National Model implementation.

### **Counselor Educators**

Counselor educators are in a unique position to help school counselors-in-training and practicing school counselors *not* only learn about the ASCA (2012) *National Model*, but also learn how to communicate and advocate for it. Results indicate that counselor educators may want to pay attention to the findings in this study identifying low mean average scores. Specifically, the SCARS curriculum subscale ( $M = 2.01$ ,  $SD = .76$ ) is worth investigating since it had the lowest total mean average. Moreover, specific SCARS curriculum item scores for classroom lessons addressing: (a) family and friends issues ( $M = 1.63$ ,  $SD = .86$ ); (b) personal growth and development issues ( $M = 1.61$ ,  $SD = .83$ ); (c) conflict resolution ( $M = 1.62$ ,  $SD = .90$ ); (d) substance use issues ( $M = 1.28$ ,  $SD = .57$ ); and (e) personal safety issues ( $M = 1.41$ ,  $SD = .72$ ) indicate a need for further discussion among counselor educators and practicing school counselors/counselors-in-training. In addition, the SCARS counseling items addressing small group counseling for family/personal issues ( $M = 1.52$ ,  $SD = .76$ ) and for substance abuse issues ( $M = 1.25$ ,  $SD = .83$ ) should also be addressed by counselor educators when they instruct or



provide workshops for practicing school counselors and counselors-in-training (due to the low SCARS scores). Counselor educators who are aware of school counseling issues related to school counseling curriculum and small group counseling may be able to help their students better prepare for the work force. Perhaps partnering with veteran school counselors could potentially help increase future SCARS investigation outcomes in the areas addressing curriculum and small group counseling. Furthermore, counselor educators can collaborate as consultants with district level school counseling leaders to help with ASCA (2012) *National Model* training and implementation initiatives. In addition, counselor educators could help provide in-service trainings to practicing school counselors emphasizing how to address the challenges of conducting classroom lessons involving: (a) family and friends issues; (b) personal growth and development issues; (c) conflict resolution; (d) substance use issues; (e) personal safety issues; and running small group counseling sessions addressing family/personal issues, and substance use issues. Furthermore, counselor educators can evaluate their curriculum to identify any areas that could be improved on so that school counselors-in-training feel more comfortable with the above mentioned areas once they enter the field of school counseling as professionals. Lastly, mock classroom lessons, small groups with peers and internship assignments addressing the above mentioned issues relating to school counseling curriculum and small group counseling may also help improve SCARS scores in future investigations.

### **School Administrators**

School administrators and district level school counseling leaders may gain insight from the current study's results pointing out classroom lessons and small group counseling as areas that school counselors should work on to more efficiently implement their districts'

comprehensive school counseling programs. Supporting the maintenance and delivery of CSCP is a responsibility of principals and student services administrators since *Florida's School Counseling and Guidance Framework* was published by the Florida Department of Education in 2010. School administrators and student services administrators can learn more about the ASCA (2012) *National Model* (which was the basis for the Florida Framework) by joining ASCA, attending conferences, reading about the ASCA (2012) *National Model* and holding discussions with their school counselors. Knowledge regarding CSCP may help educational leaders see the connection between school counseling services and school improvement initiatives. In addition, this study identified that high school counselors feel stressed in their current roles, and middle school counselors were the least satisfied group. Educational leaders may choose to address these concerns through communication with their counselors, consultation with leaders in the field, familiarizing themselves with school counseling research, and utilizing the ASCA and College Board websites as resources (ASCA, 2012; College Board, 2009). Moreover, administrators and student services leaders could partner up with counselor educators to provide trainings or workshops for practicing school counselors so they feel more comfortable when providing classroom lessons and small group counseling. Comprehensive school counseling programs usually align well with school and county goals. Through collaboration with school counselors, administrators can help empower their school counselors to engage in best practice, and address school improvement plan demands.

### **Summary**

This study investigated the relationship between POS and school counseling service delivery. Overall, the five mean SCARS subscale score only predicted a small amount (6.1%,

$R^2 = .061$ ) of the variance in the school counselors mean SPOS scores,  $F(5, 107) = 2.39$ ,  $p = .237$ . In addition, none of the five mean SCARS subscale scores had a statistically significant beta coefficient. However, descriptive statistical data provided insight into the sample population's demographics, familiarity with the ASCA (2012) *National Model*, stress levels, and overall job satisfaction.

Additionally, the results identified that school counselors at the elementary school level had higher perceived organizational support, SCARS consultation, curriculum, and other scores than middle and high school counselors. Moreover, the school counselors with more experience and not working at Title I school had lower SCARS counseling scores. Furthermore, the school counselors reporting an older age and with a larger counselor-to-student ratio had higher SCARS curriculum scores.

The findings for this study provided recommendations and implications to stakeholders associated with the field of school counseling. In addition, follow up studies utilizing more comprehensive approaches such as mixed-methods research including an experimental component as well as a qualitative component, could help further the understanding of POS as it relates to school counseling service delivery.

## **APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM**



## EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: The Relationship Between Practicing School Counselors' Perceived Organizational Support and Their Service Delivery

Principal Investigator: Vincent Geigel, Ed.S.

Other Investigators: N/A

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Glenn Lambie

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you. You do not have to participate. You do not have to answer any question(s) that you do not wish to answer. Please be advised that you may choose not to participate in the study, and may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

- The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between professional school counselors' levels of perceived organizational support and their school counseling service delivery. The study findings will contribute to school counselor education and school counselor development.
- If you elect to participate in this study, it involves the completion of three data collection instruments. The instruments include (a) a general demographics form, (b) the Survey of Perceived Organizational Support, and (c) the School Counselor Activity Rating Scale. You would complete the three instruments by completing the data collection packet provided. This data collection packet contains all the instruments and has clear concise directions for each section. If you agree to participate, you will just need to pick up one of the packets. Lastly, your responses to this investigation are anonymous.
- It should take about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaires.
- There are no known risks or discomforts associated with participation with this study. However, taking the time to complete the questionnaire may inconvenience you.
- There may not be direct benefits to you for participating in this study; however, it is hoped that your participation will lead to knowledge that may help other counseling professionals and contribute to the counselor education literature.
- Your responses to this investigation are anonymous. Your name or other identifying information will not be collected. All data collection packets will be stored in locked cabinets in the primary investigator's office. The data collected will be used for statistical analyses and no individuals will be identifiable from the pooled data. The information obtained from this research may be used in future research and published. However, your right to privacy will be retained. All data will be presented in group format

• (aggregated) and no individuals will be identifiable from your data

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this research, please contact Vincent Geigel at (407) 925-5865; Vincent\_Geigel@knights.ucf.edu, University of Central Florida, College of Education, Doctor of Education Program, Orlando, FL. Questions or concerns about research participants' rights may be directed to the UCF IRB Office, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL, 32826-3246. The telephone numbers are 407-823-2910 or 407-882-2276.

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

***I understand my rights as a research participant, and I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done. By completing the data collection instruments, I consent to participate in this research***

## **APPENDIX B: GENERAL DEMOGRAPHICS QUESTIONNAIRE**

### General Demographics Questionnaire

#### *Practicing School Counselors' Perceived Occupational Support and Their Service Delivery*

**Directions:** Please complete the following general demographics survey (all responses are anonymous).

1. **Gender:**       \_\_\_Male \_\_\_Female \_\_\_Other
1. **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ years old
2. **Ethnicity:**   \_\_\_African-American \_\_\_Asian-American \_\_\_Caucasian/White (Non-Hispanic)  
                      \_\_\_Hispanic \_\_\_Native-American \_\_\_Pacific/Islander \_\_\_Other

#### **EDUCATION:**

3. **Highest Degree Completed:** \_\_\_Masters; \_\_\_Specialist; or \_\_\_Doctoral
4. **What university/college did you complete your school counseling certification requirements?**  
College/University: \_\_\_\_\_ Year Graduated: \_\_\_\_\_
5. **What is your graduate degree in (e.g. School Counseling)?** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **EXPERIENCE:**

7. **Were you a Certified Educator (e.g. teacher, administrator, school personnel) prior to working as a school counselor?**       \_\_\_Yes or \_\_\_No
  - a. **If yes, how many years did you work as a certified educator prior to working as a Certified School Counselor? (Years/Position title(s))** \_\_\_\_\_
8. **How many years have you been working as a Licensed/Certified School Counselor?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. **What is your current title/position (e.g., school counselor)?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. **What is your current level (e.g., elementary, middle school, high school)?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. **Is your school classified as Title I school?**       \_\_\_Yes or \_\_\_No
12. **What is your current student caseload?** \_\_\_\_\_
13. **How would you best describe the area your school is located (e.g., urban, rural)?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. **What is the current student enrollment at your school?** \_\_\_\_\_
15. **Are you a member of a state or national counseling association (e.g., ACA, ASCA, FCA, FSCS)?**  
\_\_\_Yes or \_\_\_No
  - a. **If so yes, which associate(s) are a member of?** \_\_\_\_\_



**16. In your current position, what percent of your time do you spend providing direct services to your students and other stakeholders (e.g., individual counseling, parent conferences)? \_\_\_\_\_**  
\_\_\_\_\_ %

**17. How would you rate your current level of stress on the job?**

1	2	3	4	5
Limited Stress				Very Stressful

**18. How would you rate your level of familiarity with the ASCA National Model?**

1	2	3	4	5
Limited / Unfamiliar				Very Familiar

**19. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with being a practicing school counselor?**

1	2	3	4	5
Limited / No Satisfaction				Very Satisfied

## **APPENDIX C: SURVEY OF PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT**

# 16-item Survey of Perceived Organizational Support

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Listed below and on the next couple of pages are statements that represent possible opinions that YOU may have about working at your school. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by circling the number that best represents your point of view about your school. Please choose from the following answers:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

## 1. The school values my contribution to its well-being.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

## 2. If the school could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary it would do so.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

## 3. The school fails to appreciate any extra effort from me.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

## 4. The school strongly considers my goals and values.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

## 5. The school would ignore any complaint from me.

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**6. The school disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**7. Help is available from the school when I have a problem.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**8. The school really cares about my well-being.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**9. Even if I did the best job possible, the school would fail to notice.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**10. The school is willing to help me when I need a special favor.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**11. The school cares about my general satisfaction at work.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**12. If given the opportunity, the school would take advantage of me.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**13. The school shows very little concern for me.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**14. The school cares about my opinions.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**15. The school takes pride in my accomplishments at work.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

**16. The school tries to make my job as interesting as possible.**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
strongly disagree	moderately disagree	slightly disagree	neither agree nor disagree	slightly agree	moderately agree	strongly agree

## **APPENDIX D: SCHOOL COUNSELOR ACTIVITY RATING SCALE**

1 = never    2 = rarely    3 = occasionally 4 = frequently    5 = routinely	ACTUAL	PREFER
Attend professional development activities (e.g., state conferences, local in-services)		
Coordinate with an advisory team to analyze and respond to school counseling program needs		
Formally evaluate student progress as a result of participation in individual/group counseling from student, teacher and/or parent perspectives		
Conduct needs assessments and counseling program evaluations from parents, faculty and/or students		
Coordinate orientation process / activities for students		
<b>"Other" Activities</b>		
Participate on committees within the school		
Coordinate the standardized testing program		
Organize outreach to low income families (i.e., Thanksgiving dinners, Holiday families)		
Respond to health issues (e.g., check for lice, eye screening, 504 coordination)		
Perform hall, bus, cafeteria duty		
Schedule students for classes		
Enroll students in and/or withdraw students from school		
Maintain/Complete educational records/reports (cumulative files, test scores, attendance reports, drop-out reports)		
Handle discipline of students		
Substitute teach and / or cover classes for teachers at your school		

Please reference:

Scarborough, J. L. (2005). The School Counselor Activity Rating Scale: An instrument for gathering process data. *Professional School Counseling*, 8, 274-283.

## The School Counselor Activity Rating Scale



Developed by: Janna L. Scarborough, Ph.D., NCC, NCSC, ACS

## School Counseling Activity Rating Scale

Below is a list of functions that may be performed by school counselors.  
In Column 1, please write the number that indicates the frequency with which you ACTUALLY perform each function.  
In Column 2, please write the number that indicates the frequency with which you would PREFER to perform each function.

Please place the corresponding number in each box.

Ratings: 1 = I never do this; I would prefer to never do this  
 2 = I rarely do this; I would prefer to rarely do this  
 3 = I occasionally do this; I would prefer to occasionally do this  
 4 = I frequently do this; I would prefer to frequently do this  
 5 = I routinely do this; I would prefer to routinely do this

1 = never 2 = rarely 3 = occasionally 4 = frequently 5 = routinely	ACTUAL	PREFER
<b>Counseling Activities</b>		
Counsel with students regarding personal/family concerns		
Counsel with students regarding school behavior		
Counsel students regarding crisis/emergency issues		
Counsel with students regarding relationships (e.g., family, friends, romantic)		
Provide small group counseling addressing relationship/social skills		
Provide small group counseling for academic issues		
Conduct small groups regarding family/personal issues (e.g., divorce, death)		
Conduct small group counseling for students regarding substance abuse issues (own use or family/friend use)		
Follow-up on individual and group counseling participants		
Counsel students regarding academic issues		
<b>Consultation Activities</b>		
Consult with school staff concerning student behavior		
Consult with community and school agencies concerning individual students		
Consult with parents regarding child/adolescent development issues		
Coordinate referrals for students and/or families to community or education professionals (e.g., mental health, speech pathology, medical assessment)		

1 = never 2 = rarely 3 = occasionally 4 = frequently 5 = routinely	ACTUAL	PREFER
Assist in identifying exceptional children (special education)		
Provide consultation for administrators (regarding school policy, programs, staff and/or students)		
Participate in team / grade level / subject team meetings		
<b>Curriculum Activities</b>		
Conduct classroom activities to introduce yourself and explain the counseling program to all students		
Conduct classroom lessons addressing career development and the world of work		
Conduct classroom lessons on various personal and/ or social traits (e.g., responsibility, respect, etc.)		
Conduct classroom lessons on relating to others (family, friends)		
Conduct classroom lessons on personal growth and development issues		
Conduct classroom lessons on conflict resolution		
Conduct classroom lessons regarding substance abuse		
Conduct classroom lessons on personal safety issues		
<b>Coordination Activities</b>		
Coordinate special events and programs for school around academic, career, or personal/social issues (e.g., career day, drug awareness week, test prep)		
Coordinate and maintain a comprehensive school counseling program		
Inform parents about the role, training, program, and interventions of a school counselor within the context of your school		
Conduct or coordinate parent education classes or workshops		
Coordinate school-wide response for crisis management and intervention		
Inform teachers / administrators about the role, training, program, and interventions of a school counselor within the context of your school.		
Conduct or coordinate teacher in-service programs		
Keep track of how time is being spent on the functions that you perform		

Continued...



## **APPENDIX E: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD DETERMINATION**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901, 407-882-2012 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

From : **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To : **Vincent Geigel and Vincent Geigel**

Date : **May 07, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 5/7/2012 the IRB determined that the following proposed activity is not human research as defined by DHHS regulations at 45 CFR 46 or FDA regulations at 21 CFR 312.61:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Review Submission Form  
Project Title: Career Development Analysis  
Investigator: Vincent Geigel  
IRB ID: SBE-12-08415  
Funding Agency: None

University of Central Florida IRB review and approval is not required. This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are to be made and there are questions about whether these activities are research involving human subjects, please contact the IRB office to discuss the proposed changes.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Janice Turchin on 05/07/2012 04:46:15 PM EDT

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Janice M. Turchin'.

IRB Coordinator

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