Article 23

Sexually Active and Sexually Questioning Students: The Role of School Counselors

Paper based on a program to be presented at the 2016 American Counseling Association Conference, March 31–April 3, Montreal, Canada.

Vaughn Millner and Amy W. Upton

Millner, Vaughn, PhD, LPC, NCC, is an associate professor in the Department of Professional Studies at the University of South Alabama. With research interests in human sexuality and ethics, she served as principal evaluator of a multi-component OAH/CDC teen pregnancy prevention initiative and surveyed parents' attitudes about sex education in public schools as well as assessed adolescent attitudes, intentions, and behavior regarding sexual risk-taking.

Upton, Amy W., PhD, NCC, NCSC, is an assistant professor in the counseling program at the University of South Alabama. Dr. Upton has taught school counseling for 3 years and worked previously as a school counselor for 16 years. Her research interests are around professional identity, school counselor preparation, school counseling program development, and development of resiliency in young people.

Abstract

The high school dropout rate, a national concern, is strongly related to adolescent pregnancy and indirectly to sexual identity questioning. In addition to a higher dropout rate for adolescent parents, early parenting reduces the likelihood adolescents will continue to college. School counselors are poised to support students' healthy sexual decision making, thus potentially reducing barriers to students' successful educational outcome. In this article, we present a systemic, ecological counseling systems approach to addressing risky adolescent sexual behavior in the complex ecology of the school. Using the ecological systems model, we highlight ways to reduce school dropout rates by examining school counselors' roles as collaborators, leaders, and student advocates. A primary aim of this article is to draw attention to school counselors' current and potential roles and professional practices as they relate to helping students who are exhibiting risky sexual behavior or sexual questioning. The authors call for school counselors to recognize and act upon the alignment of professional standards and professional counseling roles as advocates, change agents, collaborators, and key resources for other school personnel. Implications for ethical decision making, training, and research are addressed.

Keywords: adolescents, sexual activity, school counseling, school counselor roles

Societal forces such as technological change and cultural and economic globalization of the economy have been reshaping adolescents' pathways into adulthood (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005; Mortimer & Larson, 2002). Cultural shifts regarding sexual choices and behaviors, particularly, have changed dramatically over the last few decades (Fussell & Furstenberg, 2005; Mortimer & Larson, 2001).

Although human sexuality is a normal part of development and is a biological process, researchers have demonstrated that even the reproductive life stages have shifted in age over the past few decades (Finer & Philbin, 2013). For example, from 1951 to 2000, the time period between first birth and median age at first birth increased for both females and males, thus creating a longer time during which they may require effective methods to reduce unintended pregnancies (Finer & Philbin, 2013). In addition, there is a growing delay of first marriage (Bumpass, Sweet, & Cherlin, 1991; U.S. Census Bureau, 2006), extending the time between the period of non-marital fertility and married/committed coupled unions. These differences are not necessarily constant in U.S. society. For instance, African Americans and women with more educated mothers are increasingly becoming far less likely to marry (Finer & Philbin, 2013).

In addition to the trend in changes to the timelines for coupled unions and the adolescent reproductive schedule, the rates of sexual activity vary greatly across the span of adolescence. In the United States, about one-third of those aged 15 have had sexual intercourse; by age 16, the rate grows to one-half; and by age 19, the rate increases to 71% (Finer & Philbin, 2013).

As sexuality trends have shifted over the last decades, there has emerged a growing need to address the social and educational needs of adolescents traversing developmental milestones of reproductive health (American Psychological Association, [APA], 2002) and sexual identity (Espelage, Aragon, Birkett, & Koenig, 2008). Many students have expressed that they are unprepared for the changes associated with puberty, indicating that sex education is not always available or useful to adolescents (Coleman & Hendry, 1999). Moreover, sexually diverse youth have expressed at-school victimization (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002) thus impacting many levels of a community, including students, schools, and school staff (DePaul, Walsh, & Dam, 2009; Farmer, Welfare, & Burge, 2013).

Because adolescents spend a great deal of time at school, there is a fortuitous opportunity for school counselors to provide students with support in regard to issues they may face regarding sexual decision making, adolescent pregnancy, and sexual questioning in general. Little is written in professional counseling literature related to school counseling and students' decisions to engage in unprotected sexual activity (DePaul et al., 2009), but there is information addressing school counselors' roles in counseling sexually diverse students (e.g., see Bidell, 2005, 2012; Farmer et al., 2013). Through support, education, collaboration, and advocacy, school counselors have an opportunity to facilitate a positive school environment that will support students who are engaged in both sexual decision making and sexual identity questioning.

This article seeks to bring forth the association of adolescent sexual health choices within the context of school membership. Sexual decision making takes place in a socio-cultural context and is influenced by family, friends, teachers, and professional school counselors, who are themselves influenced by the immediate community and larger society within which they reside.

Theoretical Framework

The transition from adolescence to adulthood is seen by some to be culturally scripted (i.e., culture influences individual behavior implicitly, without conscious deliberation; Fussell & Fusterberg, 2005). In this regard, Bronfenbrenner's ecological human development model is highly relevant as a framework to examine individual, social, and societal factors related to adolescent sexual health issues and educational outcomes. Bronfenbrenner's ecological perspective purports that to understand human development, one must look to relationships among a variety of five systems in relationship to the individual: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, the macrosystem, and the chronosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The microsystem includes the individual and family; the mesosystem includes school, friends, the parents' workplace, and the neighborhood. The mesosystem connects the microsystem to the exosystem, a larger social system with governmental and social policies and resources. The macrosystem is more removed from the individual and represents patterns of culture and cultural values. The chronosystem is related to the timing of individual events and major transitions in a person's life as well as to the timing of non-normative events that occur during the time that person lives, e.g., wars, natural disasters, acts of terrorism. The chronosystem includes major life transitions and provides ways to comprehend differences in time experienced by individuals and families. Meaning is attached to the event through the lenses of health, developmental stage, and wellness. Bronfenbrenner's theory holds that individuals are both products and producers of their environments (Berk, 2006).

A systems school counseling approach consistent with Bronfenbrenner's model is ecological counseling (Cigrand, Havlik, Malott, & Jones, 2015; McMahon, Mason, Daluga-Guenther, & Ruiz, 2014). Ecological counseling is contextualized, collaborative, interdisciplinary; concerned with meaning; and uses a range of intervention targets dependent on the level and type of assistance needed (Conyne & Cook, 2004). Key to ecological counseling is recognition of the interaction of people and the environment and the meaning-making that occurs within the context of the interaction. Ecological counseling is meta-theoretical in that it allows for different theories to explain human behavior. Within the ecological counseling theory, professional counselors are encouraged to select the counseling approach best suited to their clients' needs (Conyne & Cooke, 2004). Best practices in ecological counseling include identifying those individual and contextual factors that impact clients' development and creating evidence-informed interventions across systems (Chronister, McWhirter, & Kerewsky, 2004).

Sexuality Issues and Dropout Prevention

Dropout prevention is a nationwide concern (DeNisco, 2014). On-time graduation rates and high school completion are viewed as the minimum standard, with college and career readiness being the more accepted standard (Brown, 2010). School counselors, particularly high school counselors, are actively immersed in responsibilities related to minimizing high school dropout rates (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012a; White & Kelly, 2010).

Herein we focus on the role of school counselors as they address educational barriers related to adolescent sexual decision making, teen pregnancy, and sexual identity issues. Sexual decision making can determine the extent to which youth are engaged in sexual risk-taking (i.e., engagement in sexual behavior that puts one at risk for infections, diseases, pregnancy, or psychosocial harm). Both teen pregnancy and sexual identity questioning are correlated with a high risk for dropping out of school, as both issues can marginalize students.

Teen Pregnancy

The primary cause of dropout for high school aged girls is teen pregnancy (Shuger, 2012). This is supported by a study conducted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that found approximately 26% of students reported they dropped out of school when they became pregnant (Bridgeland, DiIulio, Morison, 2006). Moreover, a separate study found only 2% of adolescent females who became parents before age 18 completed college by age 30 (Hoffman, 2006).

Unintended adolescent pregnancies contribute to a variety of negative social consequences in addition to an interrupted educational path (Hoffman & Maynard, 1997; Shuger, 2012). In comparison to adult mothers, adolescent mothers are more likely to (a) receive public assistance (Hoffman & Maynard, 1997); (b) have lower incomes (Johnson & Favreault, 2004); and (c) have higher fetal mortality rates (MacDorman & Kirmeyer, 2009).

The United States remains first among developed countries in the industrialized world for pregnancies of adolescents aged 15 to 19 years (Kearney & Levine, 2012). The United States is making substantial progress toward reducing adolescent birth rates and now has its lowest rate in recorded history (National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, 2015). Despite this rate, almost three out of ten adolescent females in the United States become pregnant. For African American and Hispanic females, the rates are higher, 36% and 38%, respectively. Although adolescents in the United States report similar levels of sexual activity as adolescents in Europe, U.S. adolescents are less likely than European adolescents to use contraceptives (Santelli, Sandfort, & Orr, 2008).

Dropping out of school due to teen pregnancy or related issues is not inevitable. Adolescent pregnancy is a complex social issue and must be addressed by committed individuals across communities—parents, adolescents, faith leaders, the business community, and school officials. The school culture can be an important piece of maintaining or re-connecting students with school. According to the study funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Bridgeland et al., 2006), students who dropped out of school because of parenthood reported they would have worked harder to stay in school if teacher expectations had been higher and more had been demanded of them.

Sexual Identity

Sexual identity is another issue particularly relevant to adolescents in the school setting (Murdock & Bolch, 2005) and part of the human developmental process (Bockting & Gray, 2004; Chivers & Bailey, 2000). Adolescent students can experience stress and confusion in exploration of their sexual identity (Mustanski, Garofalo, & Emerson, 2010) and have few resources available for support (Kosciw, Greytak, Diaz &

Barkiewicz, 2010). Indeed, suicide is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010) and youth are almost two and a half times more likely to die by suicide when they identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual (King et al., 2008; McDaniel, Purcell, & D'Augelli, 2001). Those unsure of their sexual identity are also at increased risk for high-risk sexual activity, low grade point average, high rates of absenteeism, and substance use (Bell, Ompad & Sherman, 2006; Birkett, Espelage, & Koenig, 2009; Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; D'Augelli, Pilkington, & Hershberger, 2002; Kosciw et al., 2010; Mercer et al., 2007; Pinto, Tancredi, Neto, & Buchalla, 2005; Russell, Ryan, Toomey, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2011; Suh & Suh, 2007).

Professional Contexts and Boundaries

School counselor roles vary between ideal and espoused and those actually occurring in the workplace (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Culbreth, Scarborough, Banks-Johnson, & Solomon, 2005). This disparity is influenced by multiple factors including state certification requirements and expectations, individual school district expectations, individual principal expectations, school counselors' training and expectations, and the influence of the counselors' environment and community (Dodson, 2009; Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner, & Skelton, 2006; Vaughn, Bynum, & Hooten, 2007).

Professional organizations governing the profession of school counseling interpret counselors' responsibilities somewhat differently from one another (Bridgeland & Bruce, 2011; House & Hayes, 2002). The differences are generally in perspectives of role and function of school counselors being counselors or educators. However, the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), the American Counseling Association (ACA), and the Education Trust all acknowledge the importance of the role school counselors have in working with at-risk students.

Identification of school counselors' opportunities to serve sexually diverse students has attracted the attention of the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association [APA] & National Association of School Psychologists, 2015). APA, an organization without any oversight of professional school counselors' responsibility or for school counselor advocacy or role determination, has included school counselors among other professional groups in its resolution to advocate for the establishment of a safe school environment for sexually questioning students. Alarmingly, APA's *Resolution on Gender and Sexual Orientation Diversity in Children and Adolescents in Schools* indicated "low numbers of school personnel intervene to stop harassment or bullying against transgender and other gender diverse students in school settings and may even participate in harassment of transgender and gender diverse students" (2015, Concerns and issues in the context of schools section, para. 2).

ASCA Position Statements

Several professional associations support school counselors, and, as may be expected, their predominate lens on roles and function vary to some degree. However, ASCA is typically deferred to as taking the lead (ASCA, 2012a, 2012b; Dodson, 2009; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Suh, Darch, Huffman & Hansing, 2014).

ASCA has published 32 position statements of school counselors' role and function around specific issues. Presently, there are three that seem to directly address the

role of the school counselor working with students around sexual identity or sexual development or behavior issues. These include *The School Counselor and HIV/AIDS/STD Prevention* (ASCA, 2012c), *The School Counselor and the Identification, Prevention, and Intervention of Behaviors That Are Harmful and Place Students At-Risk* (ASCA, 2011), and *The School Counselor and LGBTQ Youth* (ASCA, 2014). There are other role statements that indirectly address working with students around sexual issues. It is notable that in these position statements and throughout much of the literature, there is a lack of discussion or research specifically on the school counselor's role with working with students who are pregnant or at risk for becoming pregnant. ASCA does, however, provide a solid framework through the ASCA National Model (2012b) and the various ASCA Position Statements for school counselors to build on their current roles and functions in order to develop ways to better serve these students.

Current Roles and Functions
        The primary roles that school counselors are called to perform through which they can be active in working with sexually active and sexually questioning youth are as (a) key stakeholders in the dropout prevention efforts, (b) advocates for students, (c) systemic change agents, and (d) collaborators with parents, faculty, and community (ASCA, 2012a; White & Kelly, 2010). These roles cut across multiple levels of the school system.
        School counselors provide direct and indirect student services through the delivery of school counseling curriculum, individual student planning, responsive services, referrals, consultation and collaboration (ASCA, 2012b). Under these themes and roles, school counselors can provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be successful in the academic, career, and personal/social domains. They develop programs for students, faculty, and parents; and they build and nurture community connections for collaboration within the schools as well as resources for families and students. These are the espoused roles of school counselors, the foundation and framework that are promulgated within the profession. Additionally, they also find the demands and duties within their individual buildings may vary and they may face role stress and burnout (Burnham & Jackson, 2000; Culbreth et al., 2005). These variations in what is espoused and what is actually practiced create a demand for school counselors to be better advocates for themselves and their role (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008).

School Counseling Roles Through the Lens of the Ecological Counseling Model

        School counselors are in a position to view and navigate multiple systems within a school. With individuals, stakeholders, communities, and systems all acting and interacting upon each other, ecological counseling can serve as an appropriate lens through which the school counselor might envision and implement her or his school counseling program (McMahon et al., 2014). Additionally, the interaction of school counselors within each of these systems aligns with school counselor roles that are promulgated throughout the field, working with a focus on the individual, the group, the whole school, and the system (ASCA, 2012b; McMahon et al., 2014).

Microsystemic and Mesosystemic Interventions

Among the micro- and mesosystems within the ecological model, school-wide counseling classroom guidance can provide effective intervention and strategies to support students who are sexually active. School counselors can provide school-wide intervention/prevention within their comprehensive school counseling program. Middle and high school counselors specifically can provide classroom guidance lessons on healthy decision making, respect for self and body, self-esteem and self-concept development, peer relations, and even cross-curricular instruction with health teachers or nurses who provide the sex education curriculum in most schools (ASCA, 2012a; Chronister et al., 2004). Additionally, identified at-risk students can be provided with more intensive services including small group opportunities and individual counseling and responsive services (ASCA, 2012b).

Exosystem Interventions

There are at least two ways to use exosystem interventions in the school setting, including (1) identification of supportive resources such as evidence-based programs to prevent teen pregnancy; and (2) collaboration to facilitate counselors, teachers, and students working together toward a common goal. School counselors can optimize their role as educational leaders to support both of these efforts.

School counselors can address sexual risk-taking in an exosystems approach by identifying an evidence-informed, age-appropriate, medically-accurate, sex education program and connecting trainers for the program to the school system. Evidence-informed sex education programs can reach a large percentage of adolescents, providing them with opportunities to make informed decisions about their sexual health (McCave, 2007), but evidence-informed programs are not consistently implemented across U.S. school systems. Indeed, the U.S. Department of Education (2011) found that only 7.8% of school programs in the United States were evidence-based. Evidence-informed programs are those programs that have been proven through systematic reviews to be effective. They offer the benefits of directing school resources to programs with a proven record of achieving success.

An evidence-informed, abstinence-plus approach to sex education (i.e., sex education that includes both sexual abstinence and strategies for safe sex practices) is supported by professionals in the medical, scientific and public health professions, including the American Academy of Pediatricians, the American Medical Association, the American Public Health Association, and the Society for Adolescent Medicine (Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States [SIECUS], 2013). *The National Sexuality Education Standards* (Future of Sex Education Initiative, 2012) guidelines for implementing sex education in schools were developed by a partnership of experts in health education, sexuality education, public health, public policy, philanthropy, and advocacy. The standards support the implementation of evidence-informed, age-appropriate sex education curricula in schools that include abstinence-plus approaches.

Abstinence-plus sex education is in contrast to abstinence-only education, which promotes sexual abstinence as the only approach for prevention of adolescent pregnancy (Stanger-Hall & Hall, 2011). A typical hurdle to the implementation of abstinence-plus approaches to sex education is the belief that parents will object to abstinence-plus sex

education (Brough, 2008). However, studies conducted across the United States to determine parental support for abstinence-plus approaches have found strong parental support for abstinence-plus approaches (Baldassare, 2005; Bleakley, Hennessey, & Fishbein, 2006; Eisenberg, Bernat, Bearinger, & Resnick, 2009; Millner, Mulekar, & Turrens, 2015; Yarber, Milhausen, Crosby, & Torabi, 2005).

The role in identification of evidence-based sex education programs aligns with the school change feedback process (SCFP) posited by Colbert and Magourik Colbert (2003). They argued that it is the school counselor's responsibility to assist and support teachers in their efforts and to ensure that students receive accurate and thorough knowledge regarding their self-image and self-concept. This strengthening of the relationship between teachers and school counselors would be a benefit to school counselors working in this capacity. A successful comprehensive, evidence-based school counseling program requires the support of teachers as well as other stakeholders. These relationships are beneficial to all involved; most importantly the students.

Additionally, through working with the other stakeholders, (e.g., teachers, parents, administrators, nurses, and health care providers, as well as community agencies and resources), school counselors can provide both prevention and support interventions for at-risk students. Serving as the person to link the student with the school and the community, school counselors help to develop an environment that can provide the necessary supports. As the consequences of at-risk sexual behavior in young people impact the student as well as the school, the family, and the community, this alliance of the multiple stakeholders among the school and community is even more important (Chronister et al., 2004).

School counselors, trained to collaborate, can work with multiple stakeholder groups and bring them together to work in the best interest of the adolescent. The training that school counselors receive includes counseling theory, counseling skills, group counseling theory and practice, as well as training specifically in developing and implementing comprehensive school counseling programs that build the knowledge, attitudes, and skill sets to be leaders in collaboration within a school building (ASCA, 2009; Brigman, Mullis, Webb, & White, 2005; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2015). In this role, they can serve students at risk of pregnancy and other consequences of teen sexual activity. They can develop and provide intervention programs and supports for students who are facing the consequences of these at-risk behaviors. Through bringing together the various stakeholders, students can be provided multiple pathways to overcome the additional challenges that they may encounter. These students can be supported to stay in school and to complete their education. They can be provided with skills for healthier living, for more effective parenting, and for balancing the multiple roles they may assume as parent and student (Taylor & Karcher, 2009).

Advocating for and serving as a liaison in the identification and inclusion of appropriate evidence-based sex education curriculum potentially carries some risk. Like the many ways that school counselors must advocate when they observe inequities or policies that marginalize students, there is a risk of pushback from the stakeholders or systems that are involved when advocating for programs and policies that may carry some political discord (ASCA, 2012b). The role of systemic change agent and advocate demands courage and leadership, and school counselors must be trained and prepared to

act accordingly (McMahon, Mason, & Paisley, 2009). As with the many areas that school counselors serve in this capacity, the benefits to the students and the community outweigh the risks.

Macrosystem Interventions

Advocacy for positive social change regarding societal messages about sex and sexual orientation could fall into both exosystem and macrosystem interventions. For instance, advocacy impacting school policy changes could be considered an intervention at the exosystem level whereas advocacy that impacts culture and values could be called a macrosystem intervention. Since each interacts with the other, it is difficult to draw the line between the two.

The advocate role is considered an important role for the school counselor regardless of the variations in lens on role and function held by the multiple stakeholder groups (Trusty & Brown, 2005). Most directly, ASCA and ACA call for school counselors to act as advocates on behalf of the students that they serve (ASCA, 2009; ASCA, 2012b; Lambie & Williamson, 2004; Ratts, DeKruyf, & Chen-Hayes, 2007). They are expected to serve as a voice for underserved students, for minority students, for students at risk, and for those students and families who otherwise may lack a voice. Additionally, school counselors are expected to work as advocates to identify and remove institutional, societal, and other barriers that students encounter that impede their ability to succeed in the academic, personal/social, and career domains (ASCA, 2012a). Pregnancy could certainly be considered a barrier to the students' success in all of the three domains mentioned above.

Through their roles as collaborators, advocates, and systemic change agents, school counselors bring about awareness, initiate the development of new and needed programs, and actively work to change policies that currently create barriers for student success. This role of systemic change agent is sometimes overlooked or under-appreciated, but school counselors are tasked with advocating and removing barriers and the current systems and policies are sometimes those exact barriers that need to be removed (McMahon et al., 2009). Even so, as Trusty and Brown (2005) noted in their discussion of an advocacy competency model for school counselors, there is a need for counselors to balance advocacy with relationships and diplomacy. Otherwise, advocacy and change work are not necessarily effective**.**

Chronosystem Interventions

Interventions may be more likely to be successful if they are aimed at both the individual and the family systems and continue over a period of time rather than in one setting. It is important to recognize that children's developmental stage, e.g., identity vs. role confusion for young adolescents (Erikson, 1963), can influence their reactions to both events and interventions.

Education about the ways culture influences sexual behavior can empower youth to make informed choices about their current and their future lives. Meaning-making can be relevant to youth as they search for meaning of their values, goals, and future selves. Counselors can encourage students' meaning-making in such a way that it transcends context from societal norms for the purpose of the creation of a self-directed life full of potential (Cook, 2015).

Implications and Recommendations

Ethical and Legal Challenges

The ethical and legal challenges that surround working with a minor in a school can be immense and an in-depth review is beyond the scope of this article. Instead, we point to two primary challenges in addressing sexual issues of youth that will inevitably need to be addressed: imminent risk and confidentiality.

ACA and ASCA ethical guidelines call for a counselor to maintain confidentiality with a student/client unless there is imminent risk to self or others (ACA, 2014; ASCA, 2010). The first challenge might be determining what is imminent risk. Here, chronological and developmental age and frequency and intensity of risk behavior must be considered when determining whether or not to breach confidentiality (Lazovsky, 2008; Moyer & Sullivan, 2008).

The second challenge a school counselor may face in working with minor students around topics of sexuality and sexual activity is that, as the child's legal guardian, the parents have the right to be the guiding voice in their child's life. They are generally legally accorded the right to information about their child (Remley & Herlihy, 2005; Welfel, 2002). Further complicating the interaction of ethical guidance and legal statutes is the potential component of school board policy. Some states and school districts have policies that direct school counselors' behavior when dealing with specific issues of a sexual nature (Mitchell, Disque, & Robertson, 2002). These policies can potentially place a school counselor in a position that is in direct opposition with his or her ethical codes (Dansby-Giles et al., 1999; Mitchell et al., 2002). Conflict among ethics, law, and policy is not uncommon for school counselors (Mitchell et al., 2002), and when working with students around issues of sexuality, these conflicts may be more apparent.

These varied forces in the school counselor's professional life make working with youth around sexual issues challenging at best and reinforce the need for the school counselor to determine and follow a model for ethical decision making such as Stone's (2013) *Solution to Ethical Problems in Schools* (S.T.E.P.S). Overall, school counselors must be diligent, know the applicable law, know the school system regulations, practice prevention through stakeholder education, follow a decision-making model, consider the contextual factors, and consult with other professionals as they determine the ways they are best situated to help these students.

Training

Concerns have been raised about the lack of skills-based training for school counselors working with students questioning their identity (Farmer et al., 2013). Although there is little information in the literature to indicate concerns are similar for counselors dealing with students' sexual activity questions, anecdotal evidence tells us that school counselors would like to have additional information about helping youth in both of these arenas. Whereas school counselors may be trained in interventions such as crisis response (see ASCA, 2013), they may not have the information they need to answer individual questions students may pose about safe sexual practices and sexual identity, which could also be considered crisis prevention—at least on the individual level.

Counselor education programs could use a variety of ways to increase counselor trainees' skills, such as providing a human sexuality course, incorporating discussion about human sexual development in course topics, infusing systems theory into theory courses, and teaching about interventions that are culturally sensitive. As one example, The University of Massachusetts Amherst College of Education website provides a counseling resource webpage related to sex education including websites, curricula, and related research (University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2015).

CACREP is echoing the need for additional coursework. Section 1, *The Learning Environment – The Academic Unit*, of the 2016 CACREP Standards states that "beginning July 1, 2020, all entry-level degree programs require a minimum of 60 semester credit hours" instead of the 48 credits currently required for school counseling and other specialty programs (CACREP, 2015).

Even armed with targeted training, school counselors may find additional community resources specific to the population served are often available and needed within the school setting. School counselors could take advantage of these resources by developing relationships with local health departments and community partners whose training could enable counselors to optimize a positive school environment through collaborative community partnerships and resources. As a result, this could help schools prepare to meet the contemporary developmental challenges faced by adolescents today.

Research

Given the prevalence of sexual issues in the school setting and their impact on academic achievement, research is needed to identify school counselors' perceptions of the relevancy of addressing sexual decision-making issues and sexual identity issues. Too, the study and application of a sociocultural model, such as Bronfenbrenner's, could provide a viable structure to prepare school counselors to address school counseling strategies across system levels. This approach could potentially provide a way to bridge differences in actual and perceived roles within the school counseling profession.

Conclusion

Adolescent sexual norms have changed dramatically over the past few decades (Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Verma, 2002). These changes magnify the importance of school counseling professionals providing the education, social policies, and support that will equip adolescents and young adults to navigate safely through adulthood. By being available for students who seek assistance with key sexual issues and by demonstrating caring, non-judgmental behavior attitudes, professional school counselors can determine ways the school setting can play an active and essential role in the optimal development of adolescents. They also have key opportunities to intervene in multiple systems that both influence the students while the students influence the systems, thereby becoming facilitators of positive social change with schools.

In terms of helping students with sexual issues, school counselors can play an important role in the lives of sexually at-risk and sexually questioning youth by acknowledging the competencies espoused for them through ASCA's National Model (ASCA, 2012b) and applying the principles to a comprehensive school counseling program that provides prevention and intervention services to students around sexual

issues. Through enactment of these competencies, a school counselor can provide support to students while arming them with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to make healthy decisions, to problem solve, and to seek and identify available resources.

Students spend a great deal of their day in school and school counselors may be the only counselors that a student ever sees. Regardless of whether or not a student has outside support, each day a student walks through the doors of that school building, we believe that all involved in that student's educational process hope, that at the end of 12 years, that student leaves the school environment with a diploma at graduation. Additionally, school counselors and colleagues support postsecondary training or education for students to prepare them for career satisfaction and success (Alger & Luke, 2015; Hines, Lemons, & Crews, 2011). As school counselors are trained counselors who work to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed for adulthood, they would be suited to provide prevention efforts around at-risk and sexual behaviors, and to identify and address areas in development such as self-esteem that have been identified as risk factors for these behaviors. Moreover, as a counselor in the building who provides responsive services, students will often come to them to discuss current or potential at-risk behaviors such as engaging in sexual activity. Counselors provide responsive services to students, including interventions, community resources, and support as well as bringing together the multiple stakeholders when needed, including parents, that can best help a student.

Through the application of interventions at various system levels, school counselors could collaborate with existing and new partners to identify and implement effective pregnancy prevention language and strategies to prevent teen pregnancy and reduce sexual bias within the school system. Collaborative efforts could build community support and leadership and empower community members to be active in changing social/cultural norms that support sexual violence, bias against some types of sexual orientation, and ignorance of options for healthy sexual decision making.

As such, school counselors can realize their calling to promote safe and positive school environments for all students, regardless of sexual orientation, sexual experience, or parental status, that (a) are free of harassment; (b) support academic success and resiliency of all students; (c) reduce the risk for adolescent pregnancy; (e) and reduce the risk of at-school victimization. There are system-level pathways for school counselors to facilitate a healthy, well-functioning, school ecosystem through the leadership roles of collaborator and student advocate.

References

Alger, A. L., & Luke, M. (2015). The school counselor perspective: Preparing students to be college and career ready within a comprehensive school counseling program. *Practitioner Scholar: Journal of Counseling & Professional Psychology*, *4*(1), 17–35. Retrieved from http://www.thepractitionerscholar.com/article/view/13610/9371

American Counseling Association. (2014). *ACA code of ethics*. Retrieved from http://www.counseling.org/Resources/aca-code-of-ethics.pdf

American Psychological Association. (2002). *A reference for professionals: Developing adolescents*. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/develop.pdf

American Psychological Association. (2015). *Resolution on gender and sexual orientation diversity in children and adolescents in Schools.* Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/about/policy/orientation-diversity.aspx

American School Counselor Association. (2009*). The role of the professional school counselor.* Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/ home/rolestatement.pdf

American School Counselor Association. (2010). *Ethical standards for school counselors.* Retrieved from https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/ Resource%20Center/Legal%20and%20Ethical%20Issues/Sample%20Documents/ EthicalStandards2010.pdf

American School Counselor Association. (2011). *The school counselor and the identification*, prevention*, and intervention of behaviors that are harmful and place students at risk*. Retrieved from https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/ media/asca/PositionStatements/PositionStatements.pdf

American School Counselor Association. (2012a). *ASCA school counselor competencies.* Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved from https://www.schoolcounselor.org/ asca/media/asca/home/SCCompetencies.pdf

American School Counselor Association. (2012b). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs* (3rd. ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.

American School Counselor Association. (2012c). ASCA position statements: *The school counselor and HIV/AIDS/STD prevention.* Retrieved from https://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PositionSta tements.pdf

American School Counselor Association. (2013). ASCA position statements: *The school counselor and safe schools and crisis response.* Retrieved from http://www.schoolcounselor.org/asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PositionStat ements.pdf

American School Counselor Association. (2014). ASCA position statements: *The school counselor and LGBTQ youth*. Retrieved from https://www.schoolcounselor.org/ asca/media/asca/PositionStatements/PositionStatements.pdf

Baldassare, M. (2005). *PPIC statewide survey: Special survey on population in collaboration with The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*. Public Policy Institute of California. Retrieved from http://www.ppic.org/main/ publication/asp?i=652

Bell, A. V., Ompad, D., & Sherman, S.G. (2006). Sexual and drug risk behaviors among women who have sex with women. *American Journal of Public Health*, *96*(6), 1066–1072. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2004.061077

Berk, L. E. (2006). *Child development* (7th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Bidell, M. P. (2005). The Sexual Orientation Counselor Competency Scale: Assessing attitudes, skills, and knowledge of counselors working with lesbians, gay, and bisexual clients. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *44*, 267–279. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2005.tb01755.x

Bidell, M. P. (2012). Examining school counseling students' multicultural and sexual orientation competencies through a cross-specialization comparison. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *90*, 200–207. doi:10.1111/j.1556-6676.2012.00025.x

Birkett, M., Espelage, D. L., & Koenig, B. (2009). LGB and questioning students in schools: The moderating effects of homophobic bullying and school climate on negative outcomes. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *38*, 989–1000. doi:10.1007/s10964-008-9389-1

Bleakley, A., Hennessey, M., & Fishbein, M. (2006). Public opinion on sex education in U.S. schools. *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, *160*(11), 1151–1156. doi:10.1011/archpedi.160.11.1151

Bockting, W. O., & Gray, N. (2004). Transgender identity and HIV risk: An Internet-based study. In *Abstract presented at the 112th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Honolulu, Hawaii.*

Bontempo, D. E., & D'Augelli, A. R. (2002). Effects of at-school victimization and sexual orientation on lesbian, gay, or bisexual youths' risk health risk behavior. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *31S*, 28–39. doi:10.1016/S1054-139X(01)00415-3

Bridgeland, J. M., & Bruce, M. (2011). 2011 national survey of school counselors: Counseling at a crossroads. New York, NY: The College Board. Retrieved from http://media.collegeboard.com/digitalServices/pdf/nosca/true-north.pdf

Bridgeland, J. M., DiIulio, J. J., & Morison, K. B. (2006). *The silent epidemic: Perspectives of high school dropouts*. Civic Enterprises for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED513444.pdf

Brigman, G., Mullis, F., Webb, L., & White, J. (2005). *School counselor consultation: Skills for working effectively with parents, teachers, and other school personnel.* Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. In *International Encyclopedia of Education, 3*(2), 1643–1647. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The bioecological model of human development. In R. M. Lerner (Ed.), *Theoretical models of human development: Handbook of child psychology* (6th ed., Vol. 1). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Brough, K. (2008). Sex education left at the threshold of the school door: Stricter requirements for parent opt-out provisions. *Family Court Review*, *46*(2), 409–424. doi:10.1111/j.1744-1617.2008.00209.x

Brown, J. V. (2010). Saving the freshman. *Techniques: Connecting education & careers*, *85*(7), 28–31.

Bumpass, L. L., Sweet, J. A., & Cherlin, A.J. (1991). The role of cohabitation in declining rates of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, *53*(4), 913–927. doi:10.2307/352997

Burnham, J. J., & Jackson, C. M. (2000). School counselor roles: Discrepancies between actual practice and existing models. *Professional School Counseling*, *4*(1), 41–49.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2010). National center for injury prevention and control: Web-based injury statistics query and reporting system (WISQARS). Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/

Chivers, M. L., & Bailey, J. M. (2000). Sexual orientation of female-to-male transsexuals: A comparison of homosexual and nonhomosexual types. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *29*(3), 259–278. doi:10.1023/A:1001915530479

Chronister, K. M., McWhirter, B. T., & Kerewsky, S. D. (2004). Counseling and ecological prevention in practice. In R. K. Conyne & E. P. Cook (Eds.), *Ecological counseling: An innovative approach to conceptualizing person-environment interaction*. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Cigrand, D. L., Havlik, S. G., Malott, K. M., & Jones, S. G. (2015). School counselors united in professional advocacy: A systems model. *Journal of School Counseling*, *13*(8), 1–48.

Colbert, R. D., & Magouirk Colbert, M. (2003). School counselor involvement in culture centered education reform. In P. B. Pederson & J. C. Carey (Eds.), *Multicultural counseling in schools: A practical handbook* (pp. 3–26). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Coleman, J. C., & Hendry, L. B. (1999). *The nature of adolescence* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Conyne, R. K., & Cook, E. P. (2004). Understanding persons within environments: An introduction to ecological counseling In R. K. Conyne & E. P Cook (Eds.), *Ecological counseling: An innovative approach to conceptualizing person-environment interaction.* Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Cook, E. P. (2015). Understanding people in context: The ecological perspective in counseling. Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs. (2015). *2016 CACREP standards for accreditation.* Alexandria, VA: Author. Retrieved from http://www.cacrep.org/section-1-the-learning-environment/

Culbreth, J. R., Scarborough, J. L., Banks-Johnson, A., & Solomon, S. (2005). Role stress among practicing school counselors. *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *45*(1), 58–71. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6978.2005.tb00130.x

Dansby-Giles, G., Carpenter, J., Howes, J., Hubert, R.M., Huss, S. N., Kraus, K, Reed, S., Thomas, R., & Whitledge, J. (1999). *Report of the ASCA ethics committee, 1997-1999*. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED448361.pdf

D'Augelli, A. R., Pilkington, N., & Hershberger, S. (2002). Incidence and mental health impact of sexual orientation victimization of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths in high school. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *17*, 148–167. doi:10.1521/scpq.17.2.148.20854

DeNisco, A. (2014). Graduation rates up, but more work needed to prevent dropouts. *District Administration*, *50*(10), 24.

DePaul, J., Walsh, M. E., & Dam, U. C. (2009). The role of school counselors in addressing sexual orientation in schools. *Professional School Counseling*, *12*(4), 300–308.

Dodson, T. (2009). Advocacy and Impact: A comparison of administrators' perceptions of the high school counselor role. *Professional School Counseling*, *12*(6), 480–487. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2010-12.480

Eisenberg, M. E., Bernat, D. H., Bearinger, L. H., & Resnick, M. D. (2009). Condom provision and education in Minnesota public schools: A telephone survey of parents. *Journal of School Health*, *79*(9), 416–424. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2009.00429.x

Erikson, E. H. (Ed.). (1963). *Youth: Change and challenge*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Espelage, D. L., Aragon, S. R., Birkett, M., & Koenig, B. W. (2008). Homophobic teasing, psychological outcomes, and sexual orientation among high school students: What influence do parents and school have? *School Psychology Review*, *37*(2), 202–216.

Farmer, L. B., Welfare, L. E., & Burge, P. L. (2013). Counselor competence with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients: Differences among practice settings. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *41*, 194–209. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2013.00036x

Finer, L. B., & Philbin, J. M. (2013). Sexual initiation, contraceptive use, and pregnancy among young adolescents. *Pediatrics*, *131*, 886–891. doi:10.1542/peds.2012-3495.

Fussell, E., & Furstenberg, F. F. (2005). The transition to adulthood during the twentieth century: Race, nativity, and gender. In R. Settersten. J. F. Furstenberg, & R. Rumbaut (Eds.), *On the frontier of adulthood: Theory, research, and public policy* (pp. 29–75). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Future of Sex Education Initiative. (2012). National sexuality education standards: Core content and skills, K–12 [a special publication of the *Journal of School Health*]. Retrieved from http://www.futureofsexeducation.org/documents/josh-fose-standards-web.pdf

Hines, P. L., Lemons, R. W., & Crews, K. D. (2011). Poised to lead: How school counselors can drive college and career readiness. K–12 Practice. *The Education Trust*. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED527908

Hoffman, S. D. (2006). *By the numbers: The public costs of adolescent childbearing*. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy,. Retrieved from http://thenationalcampaign.org/resource/numbers

Hoffman, S. D., & Maynard, R. A. (1997). *Kids having kids: Economic costs and social consequences of teen pregnancy*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute Press.

House, R., & Hayes, R. L. (2002). School counselors: Becoming key players in school reform. *Professional School Counseling*, *5*(4), 249–256.

Johnson, R. W., & Favreault, M. M. (2004). *Economic status in later life among women who* raised *children outside of marriage*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute. doi:10.1093/geronb/59.6S315

Kearney, M. S., & Levine, P. B. (2012). Why is the teen birth rate in the United States so high and why does it matter? *MMWR Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 8:60*(13), 414–420. Retrieved from http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/22792555

King, M., Semlyen, J., Tai, S. S., Killaspy, H., Osborn, D., Popelyuk, D., & Nazareth, I. (2008). A systematic review of mental disorders, suicide, and deliberate self-harm in lesbian, gay and bisexual people. *BMC Psychiatry*, *8*, 70–97. doi:10.1186/1471-244X-8-70

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Diaz, E. M., & Barkiewicz, M. J. (2010). *The 2009 National School Climate Survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools*. New York, NY: Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network.

Lambie, G. W., & Williamson, L. L. (2004). The challenge to change from guidance counseling to professional school counseling: A historical proposition. *Professional School Counseling*, *8*(2), 124–131. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/42732614

Larson, R. W., Wilson, S., Brown, B. B., Furstenberg Jr., F.F., & Verma, S. (2002). Changes in adolescents' interpersonal experiences: Are they being prepared for adult relationships in the twenty-first century? *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *12*(1), 31–68.

Lazovsky, R. (2008). Maintaining confidentiality with minors: Dilemmas of school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, *11*(5), 335–345. doi:10.5330/ PSC.n.2010-11.335

MacDorman, M. F., & Kirmeyer, S. (2009). Fetal and perinatal mortality, United States, 2005. *National vital statistics reports*; *57*(8). Hyattsville, MD: National Center for Health Statistics. 2009. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr57/nvsr57_08.pdf

McCave, E. L. (2007). Comprehensive sexuality education vs. abstinence-only sexuality education: The need for evidence-based research and practice. *School of Social Work Journal*, *32*(1), 14–28.

McDaniel, J. S., Purcell, D., & D'Augelli, A. R. (2001). The relationship between sexual orientation and risk for suicide: Research findings and future directions for research and prevention. *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior*, *31*(*Suppl.*), 84–105. doi:10.1521/suli.31.1.5.84.24224

McMahon, H. G., Mason, E. C. M., Daluga-Guenther, N., & Ruiz, A. (2014). An ecological model of professional school counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, *92*(4), 459–471. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6676.2014.00172.x

McMahon, H. G., Mason, E. M., & Paisley, P. O. (2009). School counselor educators as educational leaders promoting systemic change. *Professional School Counseling*, *13*(2), 116–124. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2010-13.116

Mercer, C. H., Bailey, J. V., Johnson, A. M., Erens, B., Wellings, K., Fenton, K. A., & Copas, A. J. (2007). Women who report having sex with women: British national probability data on prevalence, sexual behaviors, and health outcomes. *American Journal of Public* Health, *97*(6), 1126–1133.

Millner, V., Mulekar, M., & Turrens, J. (2015). Parents' beliefs regarding sex education for their children in southern Alabama public schools. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy*, *12*(1), 101–109. doi:10. 1007/s13178-015-0180-2

Mitchell, C. W., Disque, J., G., & Robertson, P. (2002). When parents want to know: Responding to parental demands for confidential information. *Professional School Counseling*, *6*(2), 1096–2409. Retrieved from http://www.pc3connect.org/otherdocs/When%20Parents%20Want%20to%20Kno w--%20Parental%20Demands%20for%20Confidential%20Information.pdf

Monteiro-Leitner, J., Asner-Self, K. K., Milde, C., Leitner, D. W., & Skelton, D. (2006). The role of the rural school counselor: Counselor, counselor-in-training, and principal perceptions. *Professional School Counseling*, *9*(3), 248–251. doi:10.5330/prsc.9.3.g108486473q49kh1

Mortimer, J. T., & Larson, R. W. (2002). Macrostructural trends and the reshaping of adolescence. In J. T. Mortimer & R. W. Larson (Eds.), *The changing adolescent experience* (pp. 1–17). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Moyer, M., & Sullivan, J. (2008). Student risk-taking behaviors: When do school counselors break confidentiality? *Professional School Counseling*, *11*(4), 236–245. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2010-11.236

Murdock, T. B., & Bolch, M. B. (2005). Risk and protective factors for poor school adjustment in lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) high school youth. Variable and person-centered analyses. *Psychology in the Schools*, *42*, 159–172.

Mustanski, B., Garofalo, R., & Emerson, E. (2010). Mental health disorders, psychological distress, and suicidality in a diverse sample of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youths. *American Journal of Public Health*, *100*(12), 2426–2432. doi:10.2105/AJPH.2009.178319.

National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy. (2015). *The national story*. Retrieved from https://thenationalcampaign.org/data/landing

Pinto, V. M., Tancredi, M. V., Neto, A. T., Buchalla, C. M. (2005). Sexually transmitted diseases/HIV risk behavior among women who have sex with women. *AIDS, 19*(Suppl 4): S64–S69.

Ratts, M. J., DeKruyf, L., & Chen-Hayes, S. F. (2007). The ACA advocacy competencies: A social justice advocacy framework for professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, *11*(2), 90–97. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2010-11.90

Remley, T. P., Jr., & Herlihy, B. (2005). *Ethical, legal, and professional issues in counseling* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Russell, S. T., Ryan, C., Toomey, R. B., Diaz, R. M., & Sanchez, J. (2011). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adolescent school victimization: Implications for young adult health and adjustment. *Journal of School Health*, *81*(5), 223–230. doi:10.1111/j.1746-1561.2011.00583.x

Santelli, J., Sandfort, T., & Orr, M. (2008). Transnational comparisons of adolescent contraceptive use: What can we learn from these comparisons? *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*, *162*(1), 92–94. doi:10.1001/archpediatrics.2007.28

Scarborough, J. L., & Culbreth, J. R. (2008). Examining discrepancies between actual and preferred practice of school counselors. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *86*, 446–459. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6678.2008.tb00533.x

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States. (2013). *Who supports comprehensive sexuality education?* Retrieved from http://www.siecus.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.ViewPage&PageID=1198

Shuger, L. (2012). *Teen pregnancy and high school dropout: What communities can do to address these issues*. Washington, DC: The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and America's Promise Alliance. Retrieved from https://thenationalcampaign.org/resource/teen-pregnancy-and-high-school-dropout

Stanger-Hall, K. F., & Hall, D. W. (2011). Abstinence-only education and teen pregnancy rates: Why we need comprehensive sex education in the U.S. *PloS One*, *6*(10), e24658. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0024658

Stone, C. (2013). *School counseling principles: Ethics and law* (3rd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American School Counselor Association.

Suh, S., Darch, E., Huffman, S., & Hansing, K. (2014). School counseling practice in the United States and its implications for Asia-Pacific countries. *Journal of Asia Pacific Counseling*, *4*(2), 131–145. doi:10.18401/2014.4.2.5

Suh, S, & Suh, J. (2007). Risk factors and levels of risk for high school dropouts. *Professional School Counseling*, *10*(3), 297–306. doi:10.5330/prsc. 10.3.w26024vvw6541gv7

Taylor, E. R., & Karcher, M. (2009). Cultural and developmental variations in the resiliencies promoted by school counselors. *Journal of Professional Counseling: Practice, Theory & Research*, *37*(2), 66–87. Retrieved from https://www.txca.org/images/tca/Documents/Journal/Vol%2037%20Number%20 2.Fall%20Winter%202009.pdf#page=74

Trusty, J., & Brown, D. (2005). Advocacy competencies for professional school counselors. *Professional School Counseling*, *8*(3), 259–265. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/42732467

University of Massachusetts Amherst. (2015). *Resources for counselors: Sexual education.* Retrieved from https://www.umass.edu/schoolcounseling/sexual-education.php

U.S. Census Bureau (2006, September 21). *Estimated median age at first marriage, by sex: 1890 to the present*. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/ population/socdemo/hh- fam/ms2.pdf

U. S. Department of Education. (2011). Office of planning, evaluation and policy development, policy and program studies service. Prevalence and implementation fidelity of research based programs in public schools. Final report. Washington, DC: Author.

Vaughn, L., Bynum, R., & Hooten, M. A. (2007). Perceptions of the school counselor's role: A challenge for the profession. *Alabama Counseling Association Journal*, *33*(2), 8–18. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ901592.pdf

Welfel, E. R. (2002). *Ethics in counseling and psychotherapy*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

White, S., & Kelly, F. (2010). The school counselors' role in dropout prevention. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, *88*(2), 227–235. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6678.2010.tb00014.x

Yarber, W. L., Milhausen, R.R., Crosby, R. A., & Torabi, M. R. (2005). Public opinion about condoms for HIV and STD prevention: A mid-western state telephone survey. *Perspectives on Sex and Reproductive Health*, *37*(3), 148–154. doi:10.1363/3714805