

Trusting Each Other: Student-Counselor Relationships in Diverse High Schools

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Abstract

Many minority, first-generation, and low-income students aspire to college; however, the college application process can present a significant obstacle. These students cannot always rely on their parents for college information and must instead turn to their high schools, where counselors are in a key position. Drawing on a two-year field study at two racially and socioeconomically diverse high schools and interviews with 89 students and 22 school counseling faculty and staff, I examine the role of trust in creating successful student-counselor relationships that can facilitate the transmission of social capital during the college application process. My findings indicate that distrust between counselors and students is due to a lack of shared understanding regarding expectations and roles. My evidence suggests that the diverse nature of the school context created structural constraints that contributed to this distrust. By analyzing the strategies of one counselor who succeeded in connecting with students and working through these structures, I demonstrate ways that trusting relationships can be formed.

Keywords

college access, trust, counselors, social capital, inequality

Although college attendance rates have increased among all students, social background still remains a significant predictor of college attendance and graduation (Bozick, Lauff, and Wirt 2007; Choy 2001; U.S. Department of Education 2012). Despite high aspirations, less advantaged students, who are disproportionately minorities and first-generation college students, are less likely to realize their college goals compared to their more advantaged peers (Goyette 2008; Reynolds et al. 2006; Schneider and Stevenson 1999). Such students encounter multiple obstacles in the college process, including lack of academic preparation, scant information on college, and limited finances (Avery and Kane 2004; Holland 2010; Klasik 2012; Weis, Cipollone, and Jenkins 2014). Despite wanting to assist their children, many parents who have not attended college find it difficult to provide concrete information (Freeman 2005; Venezia and Kirst 2005). Instead,

these families tend to rely on the school, which puts school counselors in a key position (Freeman 2005; Gonzalez, Stoner, and Jovel 2003; O'Conner 2000). Students, however, may have trouble connecting with their counselors (Farmer-Hinton and McCullough 2008; Holland 2010; McHugh et al. 2013; Stanton-Salazar 1997). Research finds that when students and counselors are able to connect, counselors have the potential to become empowering agents (Farmer-Hinton 2008; O'Conner 2000; Stanton-Salazar 2011). Yet, few studies explore

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the dynamics of the counselor-student relationship (McKillip, Rawls, and Barry 2012).

Drawing on a two-year field study at two racially and socioeconomically diverse high schools and interviews with 89 students and 22 school counseling staff, I examine the obstacles that less advantaged students face in developing trusting relationships with their counselors that could facilitate access to social capital. I use Stanton-Salazar's (1997) framework, which describes the conditions that make it difficult for minority and working-class students to gain access to social capital. Social capital encompasses those resources that facilitate the negotiation of schools and pathways of access, and institutional agents play a key role in assisting minority youth in accessing these resources (Stanton-Salazar 1997, 2011).

Trust is a central component of Stanton-Salazar's (1997) framework; yet how trust functions as both a bridge and a barrier to social capital has not been sufficiently articulated. The majority of research on trust in schools focuses on what trust looks like on the organizational level among school faculty (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Forsyth, Adams, and Hoy 2011; Van Maele, Forsyth, and Van Houtte 2014) or how teachers develop trust in students (Van Maele and Van Houtte 2011). This work tends to depict trust as a one-way street, examining how only one party feels about another. While this research tells us about the power of trust among adults in schools, we know little about how students view trusting relationships with school faculty or how the dynamics of mutually trusting relationships work. I examine students' and counselors' perspectives and what these relationships look like in the presence and absence of trust. My findings build on Stanton-Salazar's (1997) framework and work by Bryk and Schneider (2002) and Schneider and colleagues (2014) on trust by explicating how trust operates on a day-to-day basis in the social exchanges between counselors and students.

My findings identify the elements that are key to developing trust between students and counselors. This trust provides access to information—social capital—that can facilitate college attendance (Bryan et al. 2011; Farmer-Hinton 2008; Gonzalez et al. 2003; Muhammad 2008; Plank and Jordan 2001). Without trust, students may be less likely to meet with school counselors, ask questions, and take their advice regarding the college process. This may be particularly detrimental to less advantaged students who cannot access this

college knowledge from their parents. How trusting relationships work to increase social capital in a diverse school context is particularly crucial as the number of racial/ethnic minority students enrolled in schools continues to grow (Hussar and Bailey 2014). Whereas the majority of research on the role of schools and counselors focuses on homogenous student populations (Farmer-Hinton 2008; McDonough 1997), I investigate these relationships in two mixed-race and mixed-socioeconomic status (SES) schools, which adds another layer of complexity.

LITERATURE

College Aspirations and College Application

Understanding the dynamics of the student-counselor relationship is more important than ever as more students aspire to higher education (Goyette 2008; Reynolds et al. 2006). However, college aspirations do not always lead to college attendance, particularly for minority and low-income students (Baum, Ma, and Payea 2010; Fox, Connolly, and Snyder 2005; Reynolds et al. 2006; Schneider and Stevenson 1999). These students face multiple obstacles in the college application process and are less likely to complete each step (e.g., meeting minimal academic qualifications, taking the SATs, and submitting an application) compared to their white and higher-income peers (Avery and Kane 2004; Klasik 2012).

Less advantaged students may have difficulty completing the college application process due to a lack of college knowledge. College knowledge is “information, formal and informal, stated and unstated, necessary for both gaining admission to and navigating within the post-secondary system” (Conley 2010:41). Despite wanting to go to college, many low-income students lack information about application policies and do not prepare themselves for college admissions via participation in extracurricular activities or researching schools (Venezia and Kirst 2005). Such students may have difficulty navigating the college process because they lack access to dominant forms of cultural capital—the cultural preferences, attitudes, signals, and interactional styles valued by schools that can facilitate educational and social mobility (Lareau and Weininger 2003). During the college application process, middle-class youth benefit

from their and their parents' cultural capital by seeking out help from guidance counselors, hiring private counselors when such help is insufficient, and having a knowledge of the admissions process due to their social networks (Lareau 2011; McDonough 1994, 1997). Working-class youth, socialized to respect teachers and handle problems on their own, may be less likely to seek out and demand help (Calarco 2011; Lareau 2011).

More advantaged students gain much of their college knowledge from their parents, but less advantaged students often rely on the school (Lareau 2011; Weis et al. 2014). High school resources and organizational structures influence students' college attendance (Hill 2008; Klugman 2012; McDonough 1997; Roderick, Coca, and Nagaoka 2011; Wolniak and Engberg 2010). The number of counselors, counselors' knowledge of the application process, their expectations for students, and their organizational practices in distributing college information can all influence students' educational attainments (Hill 2008; McDonough 1997; Perna et al. 2008; Woods and Domina 2014). Frequent student-counselor contact can increase a student's likelihood of attending college, and this is particularly true for lower-SES students (Belasco 2013).

Social Capital

Schools clearly play an important role in helping students through the college application process, especially minority, low-income, and first-generation college students. Stanton-Salazar's (1997, 2011) social capital framework focuses on the role of relationships between such youth and institutional agents in providing support and information on how to navigate educational institutions (see also Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch 1995). "Institutional agents" occupy positions of status and have the ability to assist youth by providing support, information, and connections (Stanton-Salazar 1997, 2011). In contrast, "gate-keeping agents" make subjective decisions regarding their support based on race, class, and gender (Stanton-Salazar 2011). While gatekeepers preserve inequality, institutional agents assist youth with social mobility by acting as empowering agents. They take action, mobilize resources, and recognize they are embedded within larger structures that may be working against the empowerment of minority and low-income students. Institutional

agents may use strategies such as "decoding the system" to figure out which actors control key resources (Stanton-Salazar 2011:1092); they may also help students develop "coping strategies" to breach institutional barriers, such as "problem-solving capacities, help-seeking orientations, networking skills and instrumental behaviors" (Stanton-Salazar 2011:1093).

Stanton-Salazar's framework has its roots in the work of Bourdieu (1986) and Coleman (1988). For Coleman (1988), social capital is a resource social actors use to achieve certain ends and it consists of trust, information, and norms. For Bourdieu (1986), social capital is the collection of resources within a network of institutionalized relationships. It is enhanced by economic and cultural capital, so people who are well endowed with capital have the easiest time accumulating more of it, reproducing inequalities (Bourdieu 1986). Drawing on both theorists, Stanton-Salazar's (1997) framework emphasizes the importance of social capital in a student's network in facilitating access to educational achievement and attainment. Networks reproduce racial, gender, and class inequalities by facilitating opportunities for privileged youth through interpersonal connections and acting as structural barriers for disadvantaged youth who are cut off from mainstream social ties (Stanton-Salazar 1997).

Trust

Stanton-Salazar (1997) identified multiple barriers that prevent students from accessing social capital from school agents; however, he acknowledged that the core issue is a lack of interpersonal trust. Trust is also central to Coleman's (1988, 1994) concept of social capital, upon which Stanton-Salazar bases his framework. Stanton-Salazar (1997:17) conceptualizes interpersonal trust within the framework of "solidarity and shared meaning in the context of institutional relations." Similarly, Bryk and Schneider (2002), also rooting their conceptualization in Coleman (1988, 1994), define what they term "relational trust" as a reciprocal understanding of expectations, obligations, and roles. Trust occurs at individual and institutional levels, influencing school outcomes. At the root of both concepts is the notion that trust is based on common understandings and expectations of relationship roles. This is a useful but instrumental view of trust, based on social

exchanges and calculations of social obligations (Schneider et al. 2014).

The mutual understanding of expectations and roles in social exchanges forms the basis of trusting relationships, but another layer binds people in an organization together and creates a social good that enhances a school—the intentionality behind one’s actions in a social exchange (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Schneider et al. 2014). Schneider and colleagues (2014:41) define the four elements of intention as respect, competence, integrity, and personal regard; personal regard, or “extending oneself for others beyond what is formally required,” can fortify social networks within an organization. Personal regard infuses an element of caring into student-counselor relationships, which is absent from the more instrumental view of trust. Counselors display personal regard when they care for students as people, not just as clients whom they are delivering a service to. Through personalizing their counseling, spending time getting to know students, and doing more than just the bare minimum, counselors can show their personal regard. Demonstrating this kind of care can help develop more effective college-going cultures, particularly among African American students (Knight-Diop 2010). I incorporate both the instrumental social exchanges between students and counselors and the affective component that is created through personal regard in my analysis to more fully articulate the role of trust in the creation of social capital in interpersonal exchanges.

School Counselors and Trust

Considering this definition of trust, what stands in the way of creating trusting relationships between students and counselors? Stanton-Salazar (1997:18) argues that barriers to trust can be institutionalized when the roles of school agents are “inconsistent, contradictory and ambiguous.” School counselors experience multiple and conflicting roles—they are tasked with college counseling; course planning; scheduling; facilitating communication between students, teachers, and parents; and acting as mental health counselors (McDonough 2005; McKillip et al. 2012; Rosenbaum, Miller, and Krei 1996). Providing all these services to all students is virtually impossible, especially when counselors have high caseloads. Public workers tasked with servicing clients

without adequate resources may selectively provide services to those whom they believe will benefit the most (Lipsky 1980). Therefore, many counselors may be in constant triage mode, focusing only on students whom they think they can best help (Corwin et al. 2004; O’Conner 2000). When counselors selectively provide services to students, this hurts trust.

School counselors may also be ambivalent about their position as college advisors. Previously, counselors were criticized for their heavy-handed role as gate-keepers in the college application process (Cicourel and Kitsuse 1963; Rosenbaum 1976). Twenty years later, researchers found that school counselors were encouraging all students to go to college; however, counselors were failing to adequately advise students about their chances of college success (Rosenbaum et al. 1996). Recent research finds that due to these conflicting pressures, counselors send mixed messages—both encouraging and discouraging students from college attendance (Devine-Eller 2012)—that may contribute to a lack of trust.

Despite the difficulties of establishing such relationships, research emphasizes the transformative nature of trust in schools (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Forsyth et al. 2011; Van Maele et al. 2014). Solid relationships between students and school agents can increase educational expectations and achievement and decrease disciplinary problems (Crosnoe, Johnson, and Elder 2004; O’Connor 2000). Teachers’ perceptions of trust are associated with higher academic achievement (Goddard 2003; Goddard, Salloum, and Berebitsky 2009) and successful school reforms (Bryk and Schneider 2002; Forsyth et al. 2011). However, little research focuses on student trust in counselors; instead, research has examined what contributes to or hinders trust among teachers, between teachers and administrators, or the trust teachers have in students (for exceptions, see Gregory and Ripski 2008; Phillipppo 2012). Understanding how both parties interpret each other’s actions in the context of trust is crucial to developing social capital. This is particularly true when examining diverse high schools, where race and class influence relationship dynamics (Stanton-Salazar 1997). Research on trust emphasizes the importance of context and how processes may vary for different groups in different contexts (Ream et al. 2014; Van Maele and Van Houtte 2011).

I build on the current literature and Stanton-Salazar’s theory by identifying how different

elements work together to inhibit or facilitate the development of trusting relationships within racially and socioeconomically diverse high schools. I focus on the following questions: How does the high school context influence the work and perspectives of school counselors during the college application process? What are students' and counselors' expectations for their relationship, and how does this affect trust? How are trusting student-counselor relationships developed in these schools?

METHODS

Research Sites

Data for this article come from a larger study examining how students navigate the college application process. In conducting this research, I spent two years at two racially and socioeconomically diverse schools observing and interviewing students and counselors. Both schools are located in the north-eastern suburbs, about 20 miles from each other. They were ranked in the top 100 public schools in their state in 2012 by *State Magazine*¹ and have similar graduation rates (over 95 percent),² rates of attendance at four-year colleges (approximately 75 percent), and levels of diversity. Evans-town High School (EHS)³ is 61 percent white, 15 percent African American, 20 percent Latino, and 4 percent Asian; Park City High School (PCHS) is 49 percent white, 41 percent African American, 6 percent Latino, and 4 percent Asian. About 20 percent of students at both schools receive free or reduced price lunch.⁴ Student to counselor ratios were 186:1 at EHS and 212:1 at PCHS,⁵ both below the 2012 American School Counselor Association recommended ratio of 250:1.

I chose diverse schools to compare how the same counselors interacted with students from different backgrounds. These schools also had many of the elements research has identified as key to college access, such as a college-centered culture (McDonough 1997; Roderick et al. 2011) and relatively low student caseloads that permit more frequent student-counselor meetings (Belasco 2013; Woods and Domina 2014). This allowed me to focus on the particular role of student-counselor trust and relationships in transmitting social capital during the college application process. By studying these schools, I was able to analyze how less advantaged students in some of the best

high school circumstances negotiate relationships with counselors.

Data Collection

Observations. Over two years I spent time getting to know the schools and observing in classrooms, offices, hallways, and lunchrooms. I attended many college-related events, including college fairs, college representative visits, parents' nights, financial aid nights, and essay workshops. My first year in the field (2010–2011), I observed extensively at the schools; I followed up the next year by attending specific college-related events. I also shadowed five students, two African American males and one African American female at PCHS and two African American females at EHS. I met these students in classes where I observed (at PCHS), or they expressed an interest in being shadowed (at EHS). I interviewed all the females; I asked both males for interviews, but they did not return consent forms. Shadowing these students allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding of how the school worked and how students and faculty interacted. I also shadowed three adults at the schools, a security guard at PCHS and a counselor and an administrator at EHS, which allowed me to understand more about how faculty and staff viewed students. I observed in the schools from one to six hours at a time. I took notes during my observations and interactions (when feasible) and used those notes to type up field notes within 24 hours. In total, I conducted 225 hours of focused observations across the schools.⁶

Student Sample. I used a variety of data collection techniques to understand the student experience. I interviewed 89 students across the two schools. I interviewed a subsample of these students over time so I could see how students moved through the college application process. I also had students fill out a survey to gather demographic information (e.g., race/ethnicity self-identification and parental education levels) and college application information (e.g., SAT scores) that I did not ask about in interviews.

I chose the majority of my student sample using stratified random sampling (69 percent). The schools gave me lists of students stratified by race and grade, and I randomly chose students from that list. The larger study centers on the

Table 1. Student sample demographics

		Total (Percentage)	Park City High School	Evanstown High School
Gender	Male	45 (51)	21	24
	Female	44 (49)	20	24
Ethnic/racial identity	African American	45 (51)	19	26
	White	36 (40)	18	18
	Latina/o	4 (4)	1	3
	Asian	1 (1)	0	1
	Biracial/multiracial	3 (3)	3	0
Highest level of parental education	Parent has BA	60 (67)	34	26
	Parent has high school diploma	24 (27)	6	18
	Parent did not graduate high school	5 (6)	1	4
Achievement level	High achieving (GPA >3.5)	33 (37)	21	12
	Moderate achieving (GPA 3.4–2.5)	31 (35)	14	17
	Low achieving (GPA <2.5)	25 (28)	6	19

experiences of African American students, so they were oversampled. Students who participated in interviews were asked to recommend two friends to be interviewed, as the larger study was also interested in the role of peers. I then contacted these students and invited them to an information session. This snowball sample accounts for 13 percent of the student sample, and purposive sampling accounts for 18 percent. I recruited students while observing (purposive sampling) to access harder-to-reach populations (e.g., less academically engaged students) who were less inclined to come to the information sessions where I explained the study to randomly selected participants. Making personal connections with these students helped me secure their participation.⁷ I used a variety of sampling techniques to ensure a diverse group of participants (see Table 1).

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 48 students at EHS and 41 students at PCHS. To gain a fuller picture of students' college application experiences and counselor relationships at different points during their junior and senior years, I interviewed a subsample of students multiple times. In 2010 to 2011, I randomly chose eight seniors (two African American females and two African American males at each school) to interview twice, once in the fall/winter and once in the spring. The next year, I followed up with the juniors in my sample who were then seniors and

reinterviewed them once in the fall and once in the spring. Of the 29 juniors I interviewed in 2010 to 2011,⁸ I was able to reinterview 19 of them in 2011 to 2012.⁹ The second year I also recruited a small number of students through stratified random sampling to fill in demographic holes in my sample and ensure I reached saturation.

After the initial interview, students filled out a survey of demographic and academic information. Students I followed up with in their senior year also filled out an abbreviated survey similar to the year before. A total of 86 students completed the initial survey, and 14 students reinterviewed in their senior year completed the abbreviated survey.¹⁰ I collected achievement data for 88 students (test scores and GPAs) from the high schools, which allowed me to classify students as high-, moderate-, and low-achieving.¹¹

School Counselor Interviews. Across both schools, I interviewed a total of 22 adults involved in the school counseling programs to understand their perspectives on how students navigate the college application process and to learn more about what kinds of college resources were offered. At EHS, I interviewed all eight counselors, the college and career counselor, and the guidance director. At PCHS, I interviewed eight of the nine counselors,¹² two guidance interns, one guidance secretary, and the guidance director.

Data Analysis

All interviews were audio recorded (when possible),¹³ transcribed, and coded along with field notes. I coded these based on themes from my interview guide and used Atlas ti, a qualitative data analysis software program. The interview guide focused on examining how students engaged in the college application process, so these themes guided the coding of my interviews and my observations. My analysis was guided by Stanton-Salazar's (1997) theory and the concept of social capital. I was attuned to the influence of social capital on how students navigated the college process (e.g., the content, use, and structure of youths' networks), and I used my theoretical knowledge to make sense of my data (Wilson and Chaddha 2009). My analysis was deductive, guided by my theoretical framework, and inductive, based on the patterns that arose from the data. This allowed me to search for evidence that disconfirmed my original theory and be attuned to new patterns.

Trustworthiness

I shared raw data, memos, and drafts with other researchers to get feedback on my analyses. At the end of each school year, I shared my general findings with the principals at both schools and the guidance director at PCHS to get their feedback. In addition, incorporating multiple data collection methods allowed me to triangulate my findings and verify information. However, I focused on the dynamics of the schools as students and counselors saw them, with an understanding that each party may have very different interpretations of the same relationship or event. As such, I report these interpretations, acknowledging that students' and counselors' perspectives on each other cannot always be verified, yet these perspectives are important because they likely shape how each party approaches future interactions.

FINDINGS

College Counseling at EHS and PCHS

Through my observations and interviews, I found that PCHS and EHS had very similar college-going cultures (school climates where norms and values emphasize college-going and are supported by rigorous academics and college advisement) (Knight-Diop 2010; Roderick et al. 2011). Both

schools discussed college a great deal with students and devoted many hours to college-related events. College dominated the schools verbally, in announcements and classroom discussions, and visually, with hallways and guidance offices plastered with college posters. In both counseling departments, counselors met with each student at least once a year to decide on course schedules and discuss postsecondary plans. Both departments used the same college and career planning software, which allowed students to take career and personality inventories, explore different colleges, and plot their GPA and SAT scores against alumni from their high school to assess their admissions chances at different colleges.

The organization of the guidance programs at each school differed, although I did not find this made a significant difference in students' college knowledge, the college culture, or students' relationships with counselors. The main way the programs differed was in their physical organization: At EHS all counselors were located in one central office; at PCHS, two to three counselors were located in each of three "Team" offices that also housed other administrators. At PCHS, 9th graders were in a separate building, and two counselors worked exclusively with these students. In 10th grade, students were assigned a Team counselor who then stayed with them throughout the rest of high school. At EHS, students were assigned to a counselor in 9th grade and stayed with this counselor. EHS had nine counselors with assigned students, one guidance director, and one college and career counselor; PCHS had nine counselors with assigned students and one guidance director.

Acknowledging but Not Addressing: Trying to Appease Everyone at a Diverse School

At the foundation of Stanton-Salazar's (1997) framework are the deep-rooted race and class conflicts in society and their effect on trust. These underlying conflicts played a role in the difficulties counselors and students had in connecting and in the dynamics of their interactions. In particular, counselors at both schools described the demands of trying to reach two very different socioeconomic populations: the wealthy, high-powered student population who attend highly selective colleges and the lower-income

population struggling to graduate. A counselor at PCHS said,

You have essentially an urban low-performing school combined with a suburban high-performing school, and there's not a big middle. You have two schools in this one school. . . . Everything you do, you have to duplicate it in a way that serves all the populations. And that's fun, but challenging.

For this counselor, work at PCHS was challenging and time-consuming because counselors had to double their efforts. A counselor at EHS had similar feelings about the range of issues she had to deal with:

Here, how do you please everybody because everybody has different ideas about what's right and how it should happen? How do you also defend the underdog and try to get them what they need when we still have to make sure that we're servicing our high-powered and wealthier families?

She was sometimes frustrated that no one measure could please both populations.

Communicating with these different parent populations took up much of counselors' time. An intern in the guidance department at PCHS described how "helicopter" parents could take up an entire day with a string of emails. Another counselor at PCHS said, "You have really high demanding-your-attention parents, but then you have also the parents that you need to reach out to more so you have to do more of the work on that end. But it's really everything in between." For this counselor, both types of parents took up time, either with demands or the work needed to reach out to them. Similarly, another counselor at PCHS noted, "It's really hard to always be able to service everybody equally because the very bright kids take a lot of your time and the kids who are getting into trouble take a lot of your time."

The diverse nature of the schools created constraints for counselors, as they were pressed for time to respond to very different populations and their needs. Although counselors discussed how they had to do "everything twice," they did not do things differently. Counselors noted that certain students lacked college knowledge and tried to give these students more information; however,

they did not necessarily adjust their strategies for students who needed more than an overload of information. For example, when I asked a counselor at EHS how prepared students were for the college process, he responded,

It really varies. I find that if students have had siblings or if their parents have gone to college, graduated from college, then it's on their radar. . . . For students who maybe aren't as financially secure, who maybe are first generation, whose parents didn't go to college or maybe English isn't the first language, I find that they're not prepared. We do a great job in the department here, though, trying to prepare them throughout the four years. It's not that we start seeing them in junior year to start talking about college.

This counselor identified first-generation college students as not being prepared and acknowledged a difference in college knowledge due to socioeconomic status; yet he did not discuss how counseling strategies to assist these students needed to be adjusted. Even though it seemed like first-generation college students were less prepared, the counselor emphasized that this was not due to lack of information on the part of the counseling department. When I asked a counselor at PCHS if she saw any differences between high- and low-income students in how they went about the college process, she said,

[Higher-income students] definitely have more of an idea of what they're supposed to be doing. You need a little more specific direction for the lower-income students, so a little more one-on-one. And I think maybe because they've come from college-educated parents, they've gone through the process themselves so the parents are helping more, where we step in and help students of the lower-income families a little bit more in that way.

This counselor also acknowledged differences in how much parents could help impart college knowledge. She suggested some modifications to her strategies but focused on adding a bit more to what was already in place.

At both schools, race and parental education were interrelated, and this is reflected in my

student sample: 92 percent of white students had at least one parent who had graduated from college, compared to 48 percent of African American students. The counselor quoted previously acknowledged this as well. When I pressed if there were any racial differences in how students navigated the process, she said, "In Park City the higher percentage of families that are lower income are more students of color, so I guess the same trend there [as with income]." Race and class were intricately connected at the schools, and therefore difficult to disentangle, but specific issues that racial minority students may have faced in the application process or in accessing social capital from counselors were unacknowledged for the most part by counselors in my interviews.¹⁴ Overall, these schools' diversity was acknowledged in a surface way by many counselors—in terms of how it added challenges and required more time and effort. How race and class altered students' college application experiences and how the intersection of these two factors might require counselors to alter their own strategies was not a part of the conversation, preventing counselors from being true empowering agents for students (Stanton-Salazar 2011).

Trust

The previous section described counselors feeling pulled in multiple directions and their reaction, which was to focus on providing more information without considering how to adapt their strategies for the diverse student population. In the next two sections, I show how important trust (or the lack thereof) was in such an environment. I examine the structural foundation of trust by focusing on what students and counselors expected from each other, how they viewed the counselor's role, and the consequences when expectations and roles were misaligned. In the third section, I examine the strategies of one counselor to show what trust looked like when shared expectations and clear roles were enhanced by personal regard.

Unshared Expectations—Help-seeking

Considering the pulls on counselors' time, it is no wonder that PCHS and EHS had structural elements similar to what Hill (2008) calls the "clearinghouse" strategy, a system that provides substantial resources but does not proactively try

to connect students and parents with such resources. The counseling programs focused on providing multiple opportunities for students to acquire college information: Both counseling websites had forms available online and hosted multiple workshops and parents' nights focused on college. However, this system relied on students having the necessary cultural capital to seek out, access, and use this information.

Counselors believed there were ample resources available and multiple opportunities for students to get information. Although counselors acknowledged the class differences in college knowledge, they did not always consider that class differences might affect how students went about accessing college information. Counselors seemed to expect all students to take initiative in the college process in the same way, and they expressed frustration when some students failed to do so. For example, one counselor at EHS described how prepared students were for the college process come senior year as follows:

Half are fine and they show up in September with all their applications done. . . . The other half have no clue. Not because there aren't plenty of resources here, but because they're not ready. They're not engaged. They're not invested in it. They're not sure where they're going to go. They're scared they're not going to get in and they haven't made the effort.

Many counselors described students who struggled with the application process as lacking effort and motivation. Counselors put the onus on students to take the initiative to seek help when they were struggling. Another counselor at EHS described a student who did not know if he needed to submit an essay with his application. When the counselor asked him again a few weeks later and the student still did not know, the counselor chalked it up to, "There's a lack of organization in knowing what needs to be sent to each college and a lack of follow through."

Counselors expected students to seek out help and take initiative, and certain students lived up to those expectations, which likely reinforced counselors' expectations. More advantaged students, who tended to be white and come from homes where both parents had graduated from college, knew a lot about the process come senior year and tended to take the initiative that

counselors were looking for. For example, Anna, a white, moderate-achieving female senior at EHS with college-educated parents, said she could not really get anything done with her applications unless she was seeing her counselor face to face. Anna said, “She’d forget or she wouldn’t answer emails really, so I would have to go to her office if I had questions . . . she probably wanted to kill me . . . but I just kept pushing her to get my stuff done.” Although Anna found her counselor to be unresponsive, she kept going back and made sure her transcripts and recommendations were sent out. Anna felt entitled to certain services from her counselor, and she continued to follow up until she got them.

Similarly, more advantaged students changed counselors if they felt they were not getting the services they wanted. Carrie, a white, high-achieving female junior at PCHS whose parents were both college educated, switched counselors at the end of her sophomore year. Her original counselor, Mrs. Rogers, had told Carrie to take a lower-level course her sophomore year, and Carrie felt she was now behind “students who are more academic.” She said,

I didn’t feel that she was helpful for me, especially I knew that in my junior year it was gonna have more of an effect on me and my college application experience with my school counselor so I thought if I didn’t have a good one. . . . I didn’t have a good experience. She didn’t advise me to take some of the right classes but I’m happier now with my new one.

Similar to Carrie, Asha, an African American, low-achieving female at EHS whose parents were not college educated, also felt like her counselor, Ms. Coriander, had low expectations for her, as did her friend Felicity, who was also African American, low-achieving, and a first-generation college student. However, they handled the problem differently from Carrie. Asha said, “But we never really told her how we felt because I don’t want to have a bad vibe [so we] just leave it as it is.” Other research describes similar patterns of working-class students and their parents being less likely to make demands than their middle-class peers (Lareau 2011; Lareau and Horvat 1999).

Minority and first-generation students were less likely to seek help, and when they did, it

was usually later in the process, after counselors felt like they had given out the same information multiple times. Student-counselor relationships suffered when students sought out help and were rebuffed, and students were less likely to try again. Bob, an African American, moderate-achieving male senior at PCHS whose mother was college educated, made attempts to seek help initially, but he found his efforts were not well received. He said he never tried to talk to anyone in the counseling office anymore:

I’d rather just deal with it myself aside from getting, some kind of backlash, like I said something stupid. . . . I just don’t deal with them. When I used to go they would tell me, I guess they were busy with other students’ college stuff, and they tried saying it over and over again. They’ll tell me what I need, but they won’t really tell me what I have to do with it.

When the busy staff did pay attention to Bob, they assumed he understood things and handed him papers without explaining. He said, “I’ll ask them [the guidance staff] a question, they’ll say ‘you’ve been through this a million times.’” Bob expected to receive help that went beyond simply providing information, and when those expectations were not met, he eventually stopped going to the guidance office, cutting off an important source of social capital. This is similar to the experiences Weis and colleagues (2014) noted among minority students in an affluent school, where students felt bombarded with information but little practical help.

At PCHS, one counselor, Mr. Whitmore, did describe ways he worked to be more proactive. His philosophy acknowledged differences in help-seeking and focused on individually reaching out to less engaged students; for example, students who had not filled out applications yet were invited to a special essay workshop. However, he discussed how his efforts to extend these practices met with some resistance from senior counselors.¹⁵

Unclear Roles—Supporting Aspirations

In addition to having mismatched expectations about providing college information, less advantaged students and their counselors were not on the same page regarding the counselor’s role, specifically in terms of supporting student aspirations.

College was emphasized to all students from the moment they entered the high schools. Indeed, students' college destinations were made public through school bulletin boards that celebrated their acceptances (EHS) and the local newspaper printing students' postsecondary destinations (PCHS). As a result, students felt pressure to attend the most selective college they could, and at the very least a four-year school, leading to a stigma associated with two-year community college attendance (Holland 2015). Because students believed the schools were encouraging them to attend a four-year college, they felt betrayed when their counselors did not live up to what they thought the counselor's role should be in supporting this dream. Asha, for example, said,

My school counselor, she's okay. Sometimes I think she puts me down. When I came for college, she kept saying County, go to County, go to County [community college]. But when I talk to other people, not students, other grown-ups and people who have went to college. In the college itself, they told me I had a chance.

Asha felt that Ms. Coriander had low expectations for her, and she was disappointed and put off by their early interactions. Asha then sought help from another counselor, Mrs. Ricardo, because she no longer believed Ms. Coriander was fulfilling her role of supporting aspirations.

Students at PCHS also felt a lack of support of their aspirations. Ace, an African American, high-achieving male senior whose mother had gone to college, had enlisted the help of a counselor at a local nonprofit college counseling organization, STAR. He felt his school counselor went behind his back in talking to his STAR counselor about his list of schools.

Yeah, Mrs. Rogers didn't like me applying to [Ivy League school]. She didn't like me applying to a couple of schools and she actually . . . I felt like she went behind my back. She went and called [my STAR counselor] and said why are you letting him apply to all these reach schools.

Ace had issues with his school counselor from the beginning of the process: "I felt like she was generalizing, exaggerating, and making assumptions about me from the start . . . and even after I told

her what kind of school I wanted to go to, she still wanted to push for [schools I wasn't interested in]." In not trusting in his ability to get into certain schools and by contacting his STAR counselor without his knowledge, Ace felt his counselor lacked trust in him and was not supporting his aspirations.

Many students believed the school counselors' role was to be their cheerleaders. Bob said,

When I go to ask someone a question . . . I'm not actually going to them for help . . . maybe I need someone else to be like, "Yeah you're worth it, just go ahead and do it, you'll probably get accepted." Maybe that's what I'm looking for."

Bob was disappointed in his interactions with his counselor, Ms. Small, when she suggested he look into community colleges. When counselors did not fulfill the cheerleader role and support students' aspirations, students lost trust.

Rosenbaum and colleagues (1996) found that counselors pushed all students to attend college, but counselors at PCHS and EHS seemed to encourage college only so long as students aimed for the appropriate stratification level. This is similar to Devine-Eller's (2012) findings concerning mixed college-for-all messages, and it is also an example of counselors acting as gate-keepers rather than institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar 2011). Counselors at PCHS and EHS did not indicate that they felt more selective, four-year colleges were only for certain students, and many expressed a sincere desire to help students find the right school for them. However, counselors were also dealing with pressure from the administration to make sure that every student applied to college and to increase the number who attended. This may be why counselors focused on the numbers, telling me that if students were applying to schools the counselors felt they were not qualified for, they would show them graphs of past students who had applied to those schools and what kinds of GPAs and test scores were required to get in. Counselors wanted to provide students with what they felt were more realistic college choices, and in trying to temper college dreams, they seemed unsupportive. Trust issues resulted from misunderstandings in what each thought the role of a counselor should be: Students expected counselors to support their college aspirations, whereas counselors focused on giving practical information. Racial differences may also have been underlying

these dynamics. From a critical race perspective, college aspirational development among African American youth does not mirror that of dominant youth, and additional cultural supports are needed, particularly from the school (Freeman 2005; Muhammad 2008). Racial minority students may have been looking to counselors to support their dreams in different ways from the kinds of support dominant-group students sought.

Personal Regard in Action

Part of trust is developing a mutual understanding and emotional connection, and this was important to students and counselors. Without knowing someone on a deeper level, it was hard for students and counselors to go beyond their formal relationships and for counselors to be institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar 2011). Felicity, for example, had difficulty getting help with financial aid forms due to her lack of a relationship with Mr. Gregor, a counselor whose role it was to help students with all aspects of the college process. She had made two appointments with Mr. Gregor and both times had been unable to find him. The second time she was in tears, and when she found Mr. Gregor, he apologized and said he was not able to meet with her because he was not supposed to help students with financial forms. Later, Mr. Gregor told me that he was not supposed to help, but if he knew a student, he probably would, and he knew most other counselors operated like that. Without knowing Felicity, Mr. Gregor did not trust her enough to provide help on a financially sensitive form that was not part of his job description. This example shows how a lack of personal regard could impede students from accessing critical social capital.

Clearly, trusting students and developing relationships with them was important to counselors, as they were willing to go out of their way for such students. Students also valued these kinds of relationships; yet, few students felt they had close relationships with their school counselors. At EHS, students did describe one counselor as being helpful. Mrs. Ricardo¹⁶ was a black-Hispanic, middle-aged woman who wore glasses and bright scarves that coordinated with her dangly earrings. Her office was crammed full of student photos, letters, and college banners. I interviewed six students who had her as a counselor, but I was surprised that a number of other students brought up her name in interviews.

I shadowed Mrs. Ricardo for a day, interviewed her, and engaged in informal conversations to learn more about her rapport with students. I found that Mrs. Ricardo used a number of strategies to gain students' trust. She focused on developing clear expectations and embodying the role of supporting student aspirations that students desired. She also displayed a sincere personal regard for students.

Modeling Communication Expectations

Mrs. Ricardo gained students' trust and facilitated their help-seeking by modeling her expectations. She emphasized the importance of communication and modeled this by proactively seeking out students. She was constantly out of her office, looking for specific students, rather than waiting for them to come to her, as other counselors seemed to do. Anna, who did not have Mrs. Ricardo, noted how different this approach was compared to her own counselor: "[My counselor is] alright, she's helpful when you're there in the meeting but I know some people, that have Ricardo, she'll [contact] them and ask them how their week is and she's way more involved." The day I shadowed Mrs. Ricardo, I ran around the school with her as she visited one homeroom after another and chatted with students. By the end, she had collected a group of students who trailed her as she moved around the school.

Mrs. Ricardo made her expectation that students should communicate with her clear by constantly encouraging them to come to her office. This meant she almost never ate lunch by herself or went out to lunch with the other counselors. Instead, she would tell students to bring their lunch to her office. These lunch meetings indicated that Mrs. Ricardo was always available, and she was there for more than just crises. She modeled the kind of communication she wanted with students by being proactive, and she indicated her personal regard by seeking students out, eating lunch with them, and checking in on how they were doing on a deeper level.

Making the Roles Clear—Being Supportive

Mrs. Ricardo worked to make the roles of the student-counselor relationship explicit, but she

did this in an unconventional way. She told her students they were in a “marriage,” saying, “in our marriage we don’t always have to like each other, but we’re together till graduation do us part.” This “marriage” meant Mrs. Ricardo loved all her students unconditionally, which she told them frequently. This definition of the relationship made it easier for Mrs. Ricardo to support students’ aspirations. When students like Asha and Felicity felt dismissed in their attempts to apply to four-year colleges, she stepped in, going outside her job description and indicating personal regard. Asha noted,

She’s really cool. She helps Spanish people, white people, and black people. I think she’s a really good school counselor. She sometimes goes out of her way to do things she sometimes maybe shouldn’t do for us because we’re not her students, but she’s really nice.

Mrs. Ricardo also supported students who wanted to pursue alternative postsecondary paths. J. J., a low-achieving white male senior whose parents had not graduated college, had made the decision to go to a trade school. J. J. told me about the pressure he felt to attend college, but then said about Mrs. Ricardo,

She normally just gives me support when you have everybody around you pushing you, like go to college and stuff, she’s my school counselor, and she knows a lot about me. She’s the only one who understands that [college is] not what I wanted to do.

By providing individualized attention and support to all students, Mrs. Ricardo was able to gain students’ trust.

Trust across Race and Class

Both Felicity and Asha insinuated that African American students had a lot of difficulty getting help from and connecting with their counselors at EHS; they mentioned that Mrs. Ricardo was known for helping African American students, even when she was not their counselor. The fact that Mrs. Ricardo was the only black counselor at EHS and one of only a handful who spoke Spanish may have contributed to minority students

believing she was one of the few counselors they could go to. In some ways, minority students may have seen Mrs. Ricardo as a “multicultural navigator”—a model as to how racial and ethnic minorities can navigate, and be successful in, both dominant and non-dominant settings (Carter 2005). To students, Mrs. Ricardo may have seemed more willing to advocate for them because she discussed the particular issues racial/ethnic minority students faced. In my interview with Mrs. Ricardo, I asked her if minority students had a different experience at EHS compared to other students. In my field notes¹⁷ I wrote,

She said yes on many levels. . . . She said that even having white friends and a high SES, [minority students] still don’t do as well as they could. They feel like they stand out in AP and honors classes. Teachers ask how they feel about urban issues when they don’t know anything about urban issues. They talk to each other about being uncomfortable.

She also described the lack of comfort their parents had in demanding things from the school. In my field notes, I wrote that Mrs. Ricardo said, “Parents will applaud minority students. They’ll applaud straight A’s but they don’t think, ‘Oh well, if they’re getting straight A’s, maybe they should move up a level.’ Parents think that the school knows what’s right and don’t really question that.”

Mrs. Ricardo acknowledged that race in particular shaped students’ experiences, regardless of class, unlike other counselors whom I talked with. My findings also indicate that some African American students with college-educated parents had difficulty developing trust with their counselors. However, race was not the sole barrier students faced in connecting with their counselors at both schools. At PCHS, 4 out of the 10 counselors were African American, yet students still struggled with navigating these relationships. Although racial and ethnic identity certainly came into play in the relationships Mrs. Ricardo was able to make with students, the strategies she used to connect with them likely played a role as well.

Mrs. Ricardo’s approach to counseling created the kind of trust that seemed to make it easier for students to gain access to social capital; however, many of Mrs. Ricardo’s strategies were outside the

norm. Over the years, she had found that the “official” way to do things was not the most efficient, and she told me she “never put anything in writing.” This approach led to problems for one student who wanted official accommodations for his health issues, and Mrs. Ricardo’s unwillingness to start those procedures led him to find a new counselor. There were also tensions between Mrs. Ricardo and the other counselors, many of whom were younger and white. Some counselors did not like her approach, thought she was ineffective, and believed she purposefully steered students away from getting help from the college and career counselor. Mrs. Ricardo tended not to respond to emails, frustrating counselors who relied on this method of communication. In talking with Mrs. Ricardo, she was also critical of the other counselors, noting that she would never leave campus for lunch like they did and questioning how they organized a field trip she used to lead.

Students connected with and found other counselors helpful, but Mrs. Ricardo was consistently mentioned in interviews. This analysis of Mrs. Ricardo is not meant to draw a picture of an ideal counselor, but of an approach that bridged a gap between counselors and disadvantaged students. Mrs. Ricardo was successful in building trusting relationships, but her strategies and practices were not without drawbacks. Although students seemed to want unqualified support for their college aspirations, when underprepared students attend four-year colleges, they may encounter significant obstacles and leave without a degree and in debt (Rosenbaum, Deil-Amen, and Person 2006). To show her “unconditional love,” Mrs. Ricardo seemed to support students no matter what their goal. Some students, however, may have needed more realistic advice. Although Mrs. Ricardo showed her personal regard for students by going above and beyond her job description, this meant she never ate lunch alone or had time to work on her paperwork during school hours, making it difficult for her to separate her work and personal life. When I talked with her, she mentioned a number of times that she was planning on retiring soon, and while she loved her students, she was exhausted. Many of the other counselors operated on the opposite end of the spectrum from Mrs. Ricardo, and their strategies may have created more efficient systems for dealing with paperwork and handling their caseloads. These counselors’ focus on the hard numbers, in

terms of admissions chances, may have led students toward more financially and academically reasonable postsecondary options.

CONCLUSIONS

I found that the high school context influenced counselors’ work in significant ways. The diversity of the student population led counselors to feel pulled in opposite directions. More advantaged students and parents demanded personalized attention, whereas less advantaged parents and students were difficult to get in touch with and required more assistance. Counselors attempted to manage this by providing more information and waiting for students to come to them. While this strategy worked for some students, it hurt relationships with others due to conflicting expectations. More advantaged students were more adept at navigating the process and more likely to seek help from counselors when they needed it, conforming to counselor expectations. Less advantaged students were less likely to seek help and expected more than just information when they did ask for it. When these students did not find the assistance they needed, they stopped coming, reinforcing counselors’ feelings that such students lacked “follow through.” Less advantaged students and counselors also had misunderstandings regarding the counselor’s role in the college process. Whereas counselors saw themselves as guiding students toward appropriate and realistic college choices, students wanted counselors to reinforce their college dreams. When counselors failed to be cheerleaders, trust was lost. Lacking shared expectations and role understandings led students either to not seek out the help they needed to navigate the college process or to feel overloaded with information and little practical assistance when they did ask for help. This made the college application process all the more difficult for students and diminished their access to critical social capital from counselors.

Considering these barriers to trust and access to social capital, what can be done? One counselor demonstrated successful strategies in forming trusting relationships with students. Mrs. Ricardo’s strategies—such as seeking students out, modeling communication, and the marriage analogy—led to social exchanges that reinforced common expectations and shared understandings of the counselor’s role. In addition, Mrs. Ricardo

infused her student exchanges with personal regard that indicated she truly cared. Mrs. Ricardo also examined the unique ways race and class structured students' experiences and their interactions with school personnel. This was in contrast to other counselors, who focused on how class differences created challenges that required them to do everything twice but who did not necessarily adapt their strategies. Mrs. Ricardo acted as an empowering agent who recognized that the institution created constraints for minority and working-class students that she had to work through (Stanton-Salazar 1997, 2011).

This study contributes to our understanding of the role of trust in creating social capital and the dynamics of student-counselor relationships in two ways. First, little research examines how both parties feel about trusting relationships, which has limited our understanding of the way trust operates. By focusing on how both students and counselors view the relationship, I show how misunderstandings regarding expectations and roles in basic social exchanges lie at the foundation of mistrust. I also highlight the perspective of students, which has been absent in studies of trust at the school level. Trust facilitates access to crucial college information, or social capital, and this study shows how students may avoid the counseling office and be cut off from information if they lack trusting relationships with their counselors.

Second, my findings show how school context influences trust and relationships. Race and class differences created unique structural constraints for counselors at EHS and PCHS. Counselors acknowledged that class differences led to unequal stocks of college knowledge, but they did not consider how their strategies might need to be altered, instead focusing on providing more information in an effort to save time. This reaction failed to account for the ways race and class, individually and at their intersection, structured students' expectations regarding help-seeking and aspirations, which further hurt trust. Most counselors rarely acknowledged the different effects of race and class and instead focused on the correlation between the two. Mrs. Ricardo, in contrast, acknowledged the specific challenges minority students faced, regardless of class, and this may have contributed to her trusting relationships.

Scholars have argued that adults need to actively engage with students (McHugh et al. 2013) and model how to move across cultural

and social boundaries (Carter 2005) to give students access to social capital, but we need more in-depth studies of how educators can do this. I identified the strategies Mrs. Ricardo used to create trust; however, she was successful because she went above and beyond her job description and skirted the lines of her department's norms. Mrs. Ricardo's strategies would not work for every counselor, nor be feasible in every school, nor should the solution be to ask counselors to add even more work to their already full job descriptions. Additionally, some of Mrs. Ricardo's strategies, such as unconditionally supporting students' aspirations without also providing them with feedback regarding their chances for four-year college success, may have had more drawbacks than benefits for students. However, we can learn about how trust works more broadly from her approach. Shared expectations and understandings of relationship roles in combination with personal regard and an understanding of how race structured students' experiences at the school led to trusting relationships for students and Mrs. Ricardo. Additional research is needed to understand the effect of each element on trust, how they work independently, and their interactions. I show how Mrs. Ricardo was successful by infusing personal regard into her social exchanges, but it is unclear if her relationships would have been as trusting if she created shared expectations and understandings of roles but lacked personal regard. Can these basic social exchanges flourish into trust without also developing personal regard? More research is needed to further break down these processes and relationship dynamics.

The schools I studied had excellent resources, lower than average counselor caseloads, and high graduation and college attendance rates, yet still minority and first-generation students had difficulty navigating the college process and had different counseling experiences compared to their more advantaged peers. My data show that although resources were available to these students, lacking critical social and cultural capital made it difficult for them to access the information they needed to navigate the college application process. This highlights the importance of trust in helping students gain access to social capital, even in high schools with college-going cultures. However, many racial/ethnic minority and first-generation college students attend schools with far fewer resources, fewer counselors, and less college encouragement. For these students, the

issues I highlight here may be magnified, and more than just trusting relationships may be needed to increase social capital. Future research needs to consider the importance of the high school context in shaping such relationships and their effects.

RESEARCH ETHICS

My research protocol was reviewed and approved by the Harvard University Institutional Review Board. All human subjects gave their informed consent prior to their participation in the research, and adequate steps were taken to protect participants' confidentiality.

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NOTES

1. To preserve confidentiality, I do not identify the locations of the schools.
2. Percentages have been rounded to preserve the confidentiality of the towns and schools.
3. All names have been changed.
4. Data from the National Center for Education Statistics for 2010 to 2011.
5. After ninth grade.
6. "Focused observations" are when I was at the schools solely to observe. I spent 135 hours at Park City High School (PCHS) and 90 hours at Evanston High School (EHS).
7. I asked teachers, coaches, and other school staff to put me in touch with students; I then reached out and asked them to participate. I also introduced myself and chatted with students during my

observations; I was then able to explain the study to them and ask them to participate.

8. Juniors recruited in 2011 to 2012 were only interviewed once.
9. I was unable to interview three students who were no longer in the school systems. Another seven students were not interviewed for a variety of reasons (e.g., unable to contact or schedule conflicts).
10. Some students did not complete the survey due to time constraints or technical difficulties with accessing the survey online.
11. One student's achievement data could not be located by the school.
12. Despite approaching one counselor multiple times, I was never able to secure an interview.
13. I recorded all student interviews; some adult interviews were not recorded due to noisy rooms or the impromptu or informal nature of the interview situation.
14. EHS had a large Latino population and some activities, such as Hispanic Heritage Day, attempted to appeal to Latino parents. Counselors tried to advertise this event by posting flyers and sending emails in Spanish; however, they were disappointed when few families attended.
15. Mr. Whitmore was in an administrative role so he did not have a caseload of students. This may have limited his ability to make deeper relationships, and he was not mentioned as someone students personally connected with.
16. To preserve confidentiality, identifying characteristics and other details have been altered.
17. I did not record my interview with Mrs. Ricardo and instead took copious notes. Mrs. Ricardo had a policy of "don't put anything in writing," and although she was okay with me taking notes during our conversation, I felt I would have made her uncomfortable if I recorded it.

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