Through analyses of counselor interview data, the authors highlight the challenges to and opportunities of college counseling in a recently-chartered college preparatory high school. The findings suggest that the charter school framework provides counselors with innovative organizational structures to foster college counseling and student social supports, but the organizational challenges of sustaining a new school distracts counselors from reflecting on and implementing a comprehensive college counseling model.

College Counseling in Charter High Schools: Examining the Opportunities and Challenges

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Introduction

"I would definitely say [two counselors] encouraged me to go to college because each and every day they would tell me, 'Oh, you're so great, and you can do anything you want to do.' I always wanted to go to college, but I never felt like I was good enough. So for them to encourage me everyday . . . definitely encouraged me to go."

"The person who mainly helped me was my counselor . . . He really had an idea of what was good for me, and he gave me the different choices. And he said, 'I think these are schools that would be good for you, but you pick. Like, here, research them and find out which one is best for you.'"

Review of the Literature

Thirty-two percent of African American students and 20 percent of Latino students attend college compared to 41 percent of White students; this college attendance gap has persisted over time (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001, 2005). Transitioning to college is challenging for students of color, particularly first generation college-bound students, who often rely heavily on the resources at their high schools for college planning guidance (Ceja, 2000; Freeman, 1997; González, Stone & Jovel, 2003; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; O'Connor, 2000). Many students of color tend to rely on schools because they disproportionately live in communities with friends and family members

who have had limited opportunities to transition to college (Choy, Horn, Nunez & Chen, 2000; González, et al., 2003; Levine & Nidiffer, 1996; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; O'Connor, 2000; Sander, 2006; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Wimberly & Noeth, 2004). The challenge is that their local schools may not be fully equipped, due to their resources or mission, to fill that void for students and their families (Martinez & Klopott, 2005).

Charter schools are beginning to fill this void for communities of color (Boo, 2004; Robinson-English, 2006). Charter school networks, such as the Achievement First College Preparatory Charter School Network and the national network of KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) charter schools, have implemented college preparatory school missions and instituted social supports that serve as school-based social capital for students' college planning activities (see Achievement First, n.d., Kipp, n.d.). Like other charter schools, college preparatory charter schools are increasing in number due to the lack of opportunities and resources found in regular public schools, and the dearth of college planning guidance particularly exists among those regular public schools disproportionately serving students of color (Achievement First, n.d.; Anyon, 1989; Boo, 2004; Cabrera & La Nasa, 2000; Kipp, n.d.; Kozol, 1991; Manno, Finn, Bierlein & Vanourek, 1998; McDonough, 1997; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Oakes, 1985; Stanton-Salazar, 1997; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Yun & Moreno, 2006). Of particular concern is the lack of college counseling for students of color, especially since effective college counseling provides students with school-based social capital by establishing college expectations and sharing specific information on finding and selecting colleges. The limited access to and quality of college counseling is associated with schools' organizational weaknesses such as large counselor caseloads and restricted counselor time toward college advising (Ceja, 2000; Corwin, Venegas, Oliverez & Colyar, 2004; McDonough, n.d.). Since reforms for more equitable and effective college counseling have not been prioritized (see McDonough, n.d., 2004), charter schools' bureaucratic freedoms should spur new and inventive ways of college counseling for students of color. This paper explores the opportunities of and challenges to college counseling as school-based social capital in a charter school designed to prepare students of color for college.

Background

To understand college counseling in an urban charter school, it is important to examine the literature on urban contexts, college preparation and counseling, and charter schools. By linking these bodies of work, the reader can focus on the unmet educational opportunities that charter schools propose to offer to urban communities with histories of social and economic inequalities. Further, linking the literature in this manner reveals the tensions of meeting students' college preparation and counseling needs within charter school communities that are developing firm notions of practice. These literatures will be framed by social capital theory in order to contextualize the role of school-based social capital in fostering student mobility through college counseling.

Social Capital and College Counseling

In the literature, the ability to access social capital reduces poverty (see Warren, Thompson & Saegert, 2001), educational underachievement (see Goddard, 2003; Ream, 2003; Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995), and student dropout rates (see Croninger & Lee, 2001). Recently, scholars have used social capital theory to explain how to improve college access for students of color (see Ceja, 2000; González, et al., 2003; Noeth & Wimberly, 2002; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Social capital is defined as the norms and information channels available through social relationships (Coleman, 1988; Lin, 2001; Portes, 1998). According to social capital theory, students will witness college-going as routine (i.e., a norm) and receive information on how to find and apply to colleges (i.e., information channels) through their relationships with family members, friends, and neighbors. However, there is inequality in access to social capital. Since social capital is an asset embedded in social relationships, the extensiveness and quality of norms and resources shared can vary because historical discrimination and structural inequality have

limited the opportunities of people of color (Lin, 2000). Further, due to racial and socioeconomic segregation, inequality in social capital exists because people of color tend to reside among other people of color who have also experienced limited educational and economic opportunities, leading to the sharing of a "restricted variety of information and influence" (Lin, 2000, p. 787).

Thus, Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch (1995) emphasize the importance of school-based social capital in which school staff can help to promote college-going as a viable postsecondary option (i.e., a norm) and share specific information on the college preparation and choice process (i.e., information channels) through their relationships with students. According to Stanton-Salazar (1997), school-based social capital is enacted 1) when students' supportive ties with institutional agents exist within school networks, and 2) when shared resources and information from institutional agents lead to advancement in the educational system (see also Ceja, 2000; Goddard, 2003; González, et al., 2003; Lin, 2001; Stanton-Salazar and Dornbusch, 1995). Counselors are an example of an institutional agent who typically pass on norms and resources about college including 1) establishing a college-going culture and expectations for students, 2) offering early access to information on making the transition to college, 3) sharing the appropriate courses and tests that are required for college admission, 4) sharing personalized guidance on finding and selecting appropriate postsecondary institutions, and 5) distributing information on scholarships and financial aid (McDonough, n.d., 2004).

Evidence of the enactment of college counseling as school-based social capital is prevalent in elite college preparatory schools that disproportionately serve white and affluent students (Cookson & Persell, 1985; McDonough, 1997; Peshkin, 2001; Powell, 1996). These schools give counselors small caseloads and vast resources for them to guide their students' college planning activities; these schools also limit counselors' competing priorities such as teaching classes or holding other posts un-related to college planning activities (Cookson & Persell,

1985; Falsey & Heyns, 1984; McDonough, 1997; Peshkin, 2001; Powell, 1996). As a result, counselors can provide personalized assistance with the college planning process including individual and group working sessions on the types of schools to apply to and completing the college applications (McDonough, 1997; Powell, 1996). They can also advise students regarding their ninth through twelfth grade academic course timetables and meeting university entrance requirements (Cookson & Persell, 1985; McDonough, 1997; Powell, 1996). Further, through personalized relationships with students, these counselors can deliberately intercede when students express uncertainty or concern about the path to college (Cookson & Persell, 1985; McDonough, 1997; Powell, 1996).

Inequality in College Planning and Preparation
Many students of color do not receive the same school-based social capital for the transition to college (Ceja, 2000; Kozol, 1991; McDonough, 2004; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). The reason is that the effectiveness of school networks in transmitting these kinds of norms and resources depends upon school structures (Kozol, 1991; McDonough, 2004; Oakes, 1990; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Thus, scholars have documented how school-based social capital for students of color can be counterfeit social capital (i.e., student-staff relationships that students perceive as supportive although staff are pressured to complete job tasks at the expense of students' academic growth) (see Ream, 2003), negative social capital (i.e., student-staff relationships that are laden with staff members' low expectations will undermine the genuine sharing of norms and resources) (see Noguera, 2001; Portes, 1998), or low-volume social capital (i.e., staff members who genuinely desire to help students advance academically but lack the resources and skills to effectively help students) (see González, et al., 2003).

College counseling, as school-based social capital, can also be counterfeit and low-volume. For example, the literature shows that students of color have disproportionately limited access to college counseling due to large counselor caseloads and restricted counselor time toward college advising (Ceja, 2000; Corwin et al., 2004; González, et al., 2003; Lee & Ekstrom, 1987). To

illustrate the impact of limited access to college counseling, McDonough (n.d.) reports that counselors devote only about 20 percent of their time to college counseling. With limited time for college counseling combined with student-counselor ratios of 300 students to one counselor, she estimates that as little as 40 minutes or less per student per school year is allotted toward college counseling in the typical high school. Yet, in schools with higher proportions of students of color, the ratio of students to counselors averages 740 students to one counselor, with some ratios as high as 5000 students to one counselor, leaving many of these students in a position to receive much less than, if any of, the estimated forty minutes of college advising per year afforded in the typical school (McDonough, n.d.). In addition to higher student-counselor ratios, the ability of counselors to spend time on the college preparation for their students is often undermined by conflicting school priorities. Corwin, et al. (2004), for example, found that overcrowding, tiered tracking systems, and administrative hindrances fostered the marginalization of college counseling in predominantly minority and low-income schools. Further, under pressure to meet emergent and conflicting priorities such as scheduling classes, making disciplinary referrals, and monitoring student attrition, the counselors they interviewed noted that they often forfeited college counseling.

McDonough (1997) not only found inequities in the availability of college counseling, but she also found that the extensiveness of college counseling varies by the racial and socioeconomic demographics of schools. In predominantly white and affluent schools, counselors offered more high-volume social capital such as extensive student advising, detailed discussions on the types of schools for students to apply, and hands-on assistance with completing the application packet and essay. These counselors also started advising students much earlier in their high school years, i.e. offering college advising to students in the ninth grade in order to guide students' course taking patterns and to compile longitudinal data for students' letters of recommendation. Counselors in less affluent and predominantly minority schools offered more low-volume social capital

because they did not begin college advising until students' senior year. The counselors were not able to provide extensive guidance because their schools did not prioritize college preparation, and the counseling staff was not allotted the time, space, and resources to provide college counseling as a direct service (McDonough, 1997).

This limited access to and quality of college counseling hampers college planning among students of color. Students of color rely on their schools for college planning guidance to a great degree though they are often disappointed with the lack of time and resources their counselors provide toward their college planning activities (Ceja, 2000; Corwin, et al., 2004; Freeman, 1997, 1999; González, et al., 2003). Ceja (2000), for example, reported student frustration with the limited access to and quality of college counseling. Students described the impact of high student-counselor ratios on their counselors' inability to guide their college planning activities such as coping with psychological barriers to college, compiling information on possible colleges, selecting appropriate postsecondary institutions, and navigating the financial aid system. For these students who were primarily first-generation college bound students, this limited access to their counselor and his/her guidance meant that students who met the qualifications for four-year colleges opted out of attending college or decided to attend community college.

Are Charters a Solution?
Discrepancies in resource allocations often drive parents, teachers, and community members to create charter schools (Fuller, 2000). And, there is no greater frustration than the lack of equitable and effective learning contexts for college preparation and planning in communities of color (Auerbach, 2002; Ceja, 2000; Immerwahr, 2003; Kozol, 1991). Charter advocates consider charter schools to be a solution to enduring inequality, particularly when organizational structures sustain such inequality (Fuller, 2000; Fuller, Gawlik, Gonzales, Park & Gibbings, 2003). Parents, teachers, and community members find the charter school concept attractive because it offers autonomy from district regulations, allowing school founders to

control their school's mission, governance, pedagogy, and organizational structure – often with the hope that their control over the school will foster improved access to quality educational services (Johnson & Landman, 2000; Leonard, 2002; Manno et al., 1998; Schorr, 2002). For policymakers, the premise of charters is that this autonomy will translate into innovative methods and practices beyond what can be developed within the bureaucracy of traditional public schools (Fuller, 2000; Wells, 2002).

Since the limited access to and quality of college counseling is related to schools' organizational structures, the charter school framework serves as a potential solution to inequality in college counseling for underserved students of color. Currently, charter school communities are redesigning school organizational structures and student-staff ratios in order to improve college access for students of color. Since charters can not have selective admissions, their innovative approaches include un-tracking students previously designated as either academically or socioeconomically vulnerable and challenging those students with college preparation tasks and activities (Achievement First, n.d., Boo, 2004; The Cesar Chavez Public Charter Schools for Public Policy, n.d., Kipp, n.d., Robinson-English, 2006). McClafferty and colleagues (2002) find that one of the key features of creating a school culture where college is an expectation for *all* students is restructuring the counseling department. They argue that the counseling department should be restructured so that 1) all counselors are considered college counselors, 2) counselors' roles serve to prioritize college expectations among students and the faculty, 3) counselors' caseloads are designed for more personalized support to students and their families in their college decision-making activities, and 4) counselors offer a comprehensive counseling model where college expectations guide student advising on both instructional and non-instructional issues.

Paradoxically, charters have many of the same challenges of regular public schools that prevent them from being as innovative as their missions intend them to be. Findings suggest that most charters have fiscal and logistical challenges that limit their effectiveness (Fuller, et al., 2003; Manno, et al., 1998). Leonard's (2002) case study of a charter school reveals how start-up challenges such as acquiring sufficient building space detracted attention from the implementation of the school's philosophy and mission. Griffin and Wohlstetter (2001) also described similar pragmatic challenges that existed across charter schools in Boston, Minneapolis, and Los Angeles. These authors noted that implementing an innovative school philosophy or mission was hampered because the triage nature of operating new schools did not allow staff members to be reflective about their practice.

School networks in communities of color offer unequal access to school-based social capital because they do not offer students equal access to college counseling. Equitable and effective college counseling is hampered due to high student-counselor ratios and school organizational structures where counselors are not allotted the time, space, and resources to focus on college counseling. Yet, students of color disproportionately rely on their school networks for college planning support and guidance because their parents may not have had opportunities to attend college. With organizational barriers to equitable and effective college counseling, the charter school framework serves as a potential solution to inequality in college counseling. However, the fiscal and logistical challenges that are inherent to new charter school organizations can affect the educational opportunities that charters presume to offer.

Methods

For this study, counselor interview data were extracted from a larger, mixed methods case study, which explored one charter school's college preparatory context (e.g., resources, activities, staff expectations) and its impact on the postsecondary plans and experiences of its first four graduating classes. This mixed methods case study included senior student surveys, senior student focus groups, and faculty interviews. Among the school's faculty, all eight counselors were interviewed. Six out of the eight counselors were African American and four out of the eight counselors were female. From spring 2002 to spring 2005, all counselors were interviewed annually and in different

sequential roles from freshman counselors to senior counselors to fifth-year/alumni counselors, leading to 22 actual interviews conducted. The intent of the face-to-face interviews was to capture how counselors structured college counseling for their student population. The topics included the school's mission, student-counselor relationships, school history and organization, student academics, student social support, and college preparatory activities. The interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 1.5 hours, with most interviews lasting an hour.

Each counselor interview was audio taped and transcribed to facilitate analysis. Data were analyzed by (a) organizing transcripts chronologically both by year and by respondent, (b) reading and re-reading transcripts during uninterrupted time periods for general understanding of the interview data, (c) manually coding respondents' references within the overall topical areas covered in the interview protocol, (d) examining trends to discover key categories that emerged from the transcripts, (e) re-coding transcripts within these key categories, and (f) compiling data within these coding categories into a tabular format to formulate themes (Bogdan & Biklin, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Two themes from this analytical process are presented. The first theme reflects the challenges to counselors' endurance in their effort to offer college counseling as school-based social capital. The second theme reflects the norms and resources counselors provided as school-based social capital to help their students consider college-going as a viable option and to help their students find and select colleges. In order to corroborate these findings, scheduled presentations were made to school staff, and comparisons were conducted with teacher and administrator interview data, senior student focus group and survey data, school records and documents, and school district data.

Glenn Hills College Prep: Community Context and School Background
Glenn Hills was a bustling manufacturing community, which attracted over 100,000 African American southern migrants from the 1940s to the 1960s (Chicago Department of Public Health, 1996; Lemann, 1991). Over time, Glenn Hills' African American residents lost access to

over 70,000 jobs due to deindustrialization, white flight, and the withdrawal of commercial institutions (Lemann, 1991; Wilson, 1996). By the 1990s, forty-eight percent of Glenn Hills' residents were below the poverty level (Chicago Department of Public Health, 1996).

In 1998, Glenn Hills College Preparatory Charter High School (GHCP) was founded because too few local youth were being prepared to attend college. GHCP's mission is to develop local students into college-bound students, regardless of their academic or socioeconomic vulnerabilities. This is accomplished through immersion in an academic and social support community. Students spend four years in a curriculum that offers honors and Advanced Placement courses, and the school community provides academic and social supports to help students aspire to and transition to college. Through fundraising, the school receives an additional $2,000 per student beyond local, state, and federal funds in order to keep student-staff ratios low and to provide students with supplemental programming such as college tours and summer enrichment programs. Among GHCP's first four graduating classes, 54 percent were accepted to four-year colleges and universities and 11 percent transitioned to two-year institutions. These matriculation rates are notable because, as entering freshman, only 15.6 percent of these students read at or above national norms, and only 12 percent had parents who graduated from college (Chicago Public Schools Department of Research and Evaluation, 2006). These matriculation rates are also notable since only about 33 percent of Glenn Hills' eighteen year olds graduate from high school annually (Allensworth, 2005).

Results
The results of the counselor interviews are organized: 1) to explore the challenges counselors endured in their effort to offer college counseling as school-based social capital, and 2) to describe the norms and resources counselors provided as school-based social capital to help their students become college-bound.

Un-chartered Territory
Charter schools offer the freedom to be innovative in school structures, curricula, and staffing,

thus making these schools attractive to employees of regular public schools and individuals from alternate career fields who hope to explore and institute their own ideas on the best ways to educate children (Fuller, 2000; Manno et al., 1998; Wells, 2002). The counselors at GHCP were no different. They were former college recruiters and admissions personnel, child welfare and social service workers, psychologists, social workers, and/or recent graduates of advanced degree programs in the aforementioned fields. All of the counselors mentioned their passion for helping teens, particularly teens of color living in low income communities, as the reason they were attracted to taking a position as a counselor in this college preparatory charter high school.

> I wanted to work with a school that directed kids to college. I wanted to work with Black kids and under-resourced kids. . . . So this was a good fit for what I was looking for.

Counselors also mentioned that they were attracted to the unique job structure of working with students over a concentrated period of time. Counselors are assigned to the same 100 or fewer students for the four years of high school and the first year of college; an alumni counselor advises GHCP alumni from their sophomore year until their graduation from college. Many of the counselors commented on the need for this kind of structure due to their own high school experiences or previous work experiences with teens in similar communities and contexts.

> I think that the primary feature that is different about our model is that we follow our kids. Most schools that I am aware of have an academic advisor, who you don't really see until maybe your junior year. . . The fact that we follow them for all four years [of high school] and even into the fifth year [the first year of college] is what really makes our model unique. Then, we collapse all those functions into one person. So we have the academic counseling piece, where we are all responsible for some school programs, and we also do this clinical counseling piece. We see this as all part of a whole, because a red flag in

> academics might have a link to something happening at home. . . If you separate those out and you have two different people asking different questions, you might not ever get to that source. So, I think that is what makes us special too.

Though the counselors were passionate about helping students, their efforts can be characterized as low-volume social capital because they lacked the resources and skills to be high school counselors. None of the counselors had previously been employed as high school counselors. They all admitted that they were, as one counselor said, "learning by the seat of my pants." Further, given that they were employed at a new school, the counselors also did not have an existing template for how to share norms and expectations of college access or a template for how to organize their counseling services.

> Like the history of so many charter schools – you get the idea, you get the charter, and you open your doors and then you figure out what you're doing. What we're realizing is the need for goals and benchmarks, so my primary role as an advisor is to be that clinical intervention piece, which is everything from character development to their emotional states and the psycho-social developmental needs of the students in the context of school and their families and their communities. So again, in freshmen year, just the same way that we knew we wanted them to be reading at grade level and doing math and having had a lab science – how do we measure their psycho-social development? So, we're now trying to create that protocol.

Their efforts were further complicated by the organizational transitions of their start-up charter school, which led to instances of counterfeit social capital. During the first few years of the school's founding, counselors noted that they were too preoccupied with the triage nature of the school's organizational life and the day-to-day needs of their students to focus on the delivery of a comprehensive counseling model to their students. Counselors describe these years as the school's "reactionary mode." Counselors describe the school's reactive phase

as the result of organizational challenges such as staff turnover and building rehabilitation, which took time away from refining the school's innovation of un-tracking academically and socioeconomically vulnerable students (Farmer-Hinton, 2006).

As a start-up charter school, GHCP endured challenges with housing their school within an adequate learning environment, similar to the challenges that most start-up charter schools endure with regard to securing a building space (Leonard, 2002; Manno, et al., 1998; Schorr, 2002). In addition to problems with the building's infrastructure, the reactive phase of GHCP's history included high teacher and principal turnover with nearly 100 percent turnover in year one of their charter. These kinds of transitions led to counselors offering counterfeit social capital by spending their time substitute teaching and fulfilling other roles that detracted time away from solely functioning as an advisor to their students.

Due to the reactive phase of the school's history, staff members were not on one accord with how the mission should be defined and implemented. Counselors discussed how staff members had engaged in a school-wide debate on how "college prep" should be defined at GHCP.

> We go back and forth. I think there are definitely some people on staff who want to just teach hard-core college prep without recognizing that our kids may not be there just yet. And we all have to be reminded on occasion, "Slow down. Go back." Without that you're completely compromising what it is that you're trying to do. I think that's the hardest thing, just recognizing that we can't teach the same way we did if this was a magnet school because the magnet school kids are college bound, you know, they know they're going whereas our kids sort of sign on to this idea that they might and hopefully through the process they will. I think that's their mindset and we have to begin at their levels.

Counselors believe that since their job is to "look at the big picture and take a holistic view of the student," they were more willing to "revamp what 'college prep' means in this neighborhood." For them, revamping "college prep" means tailoring student social support so that their students have the ability to navigate a college preparatory curriculum and school culture. GHCP counselors suggested that focusing solely on college preparation without social support — as well as social support without college expectation as a norm — would undermine the mission. School counselors discussed how they fostered school-based social capital by offering students access to school-based programs (such as college tours and enrichment programs), clinical counseling (such as individual and group counseling sessions), student mentoring, and social service referrals in order to address students' personal problems, work habits, and predispositions toward college, which the counselors learned were not addressed prior to students' high school enrollment. They noted that all of these counseling services were created under the guise of *college for all*.

> Well, when I talk to each one of them individually I'm like, "Well you know that you're stuck with me for five years.". . . And they're like, "oh yea, when I go to college." . . . It's never a moment that I do not talk about college with them. Even when they're in a crisis situation, I still bring up college. To say, you know, well, "How will this situation hinder you from going to college?". . . You know a lot of the kids do want to leave [Glenn Hills], or do want to leave [the school's street intersection]. So, I let them know college is your way out. So, it's just a constant conversation, it's just a constant discussion.

The counselors note, however, that most of the progress that they have made in terms of organizing school-based social capital for college access came "just learn[ing] from experience." Consequently, the current state of their counseling model is the result of counselors sharing with other counselors what worked and did not work with the first four graduating cohorts (with the first cohort graduating in 2002). The counselors also admit that they have not refined their counseling model so that they cohesively address student competencies for their devel-

opmental levels. With the school's organizational challenges resolved and the school's mission clarified within the counseling unit, counselors note a desire to be more reflective about their practice and to move toward a more unified counseling curriculum and strategic counseling model.

> Our students come to school every day with so many needs across the board: social, academic, emotional. We could easily not plan to do anything and have plenty to do. I think we're starting to realize that and we're going to get a little more organized and we're going to focus our clinical mindsets. . . What are the social skills, what are the coping mechanisms, what are the professional skills we want you to have by the end of 9th grade? If we start to actually think about that, we're definitely smarter off, and we still have to figure that out. Then, we have to just step back and say, "How do we structure our day?" If the history department didn't structure, there's no way they would teach all they want to teach. So we have to, I think, come up with, "Well, what's our curriculum?" for their development, and we'll see this summer if we get back to that.

In sum, the counselors note that their counseling services are still being refined. They acknowledge the benefits of their counseling structure (e.g., counselor caseloads of 100 students or less; one counselor for both academic counseling and clinical counseling; counselors assigned to the same cohort throughout high school and the first year of college; an alumni counselor for additional counseling during students' college years). Through this structure, they are able to offer students school-based social capital, which they consider to be central to developing their student population into college-bound students. The challenge has been to offer a full array of social capital (i.e., high-volume social capital). They were not able to create a comprehensive counseling curriculum and protocols within an environment of growth and change. Thus, counselors engaged in counterfeit social capital by expending time to help sustain the school instead of using that time to

focus on the delivery of a comprehensive counseling model. Further, while passionate about their jobs, they also engaged in low-volume social capital because they did not have the guidance experience or an existing template for how to counsel students.

"Infusing College"

Counselors describe their students as having varied backgrounds and experiences. They note that their students have various past and ongoing crises such as homelessness, teen pregnancy, community violence, and parental incarceration. Further, due to GHCP's lottery system, the academic backgrounds of students are also varied. Counselors describe the range of their student caseloads from students who are below grade-level in reading to students who are talented enough to attend some of the community's magnet and selective admissions high schools. Additionally, counselors said that some students enrolled in GHCP because their parents wanted a smaller, safer environment, and some students enrolled because their parents wanted a school focused on college preparation. One counselor commented:

> . . . I wasn't quite prepared for just how complex the students were going to be in terms of their academic needs, their social needs, their family needs. . . But the mission really came to life. Then I realized that we're developing college-bound kids, as opposed to recruiting them.

In "developing college bound" students, counselors find that school-based support has to be personalized in order to meet their students' academic and non-academic needs, particularly those that may distract students from an opportunity to attend college. Their primary strategy is "infusing college" by making college-going the norm for students whom they describe as either having no plans to attend college or very vague college aspirations. They *infuse college* by engaging students in informal, yet repetitive conversations about college as a viable postsecondary option.

> I think one of the ways we do it is by infusing college in almost every conversation we have. There's one girl that I can think of in particular who just has this tough girl

sort of persona that she does not need to have in here. . . every time I see her in a situation I ask her, "How is this going to help you be a writer and do that creative writing degree?" So it's clinical in a very real way, but every conversation is about college and perhaps if they hear it enough they'll believe it.

In addition to repetitive conversations with students about college, counselors impart college going as the norm among their student population through formal school programs. Counselors describe their efforts as "one hundred percent . . . [college] exposure" because their students participate in formal programming that allows them to tour colleges, take college courses, participate in foreign exchange programs, and complete summer academic enrichment programs on college campuses.

So, we know it helps them emotionally to experience these new things. It helps the family get used to them being away. And it gives them something very real to put on their resume'. That's the social capital piece. And then we make them write thank you letters. That way, if they want a letter of recommendation from Yale . . . they can get that.

Counselors shared that these programs are not only for the exposure to and experience of college, but to help students envision a future outside of the economic limitations of their local context. Counselors note that the economic and social context of Glenn Hills implies that going to college is not an option, as evidenced by the low rates of educational attainment reached by students' adult relatives and fellow community members. Counselors note that they want students to experience these programs so that they are exposed because "a lot of them are just confined to [Glenn Hills] in their experience."

In addition to the formal and informal methods to make college-going a normative behavior, GHCP counselors provide college planning information and resources through the school's curriculum and through counseling sessions with students. Counselors are responsible for leading a series of courses called "College Prep" that students take from the ninth through the twelfth grades. In the ninth and tenth grade courses, counselors provide information on study skills and test taking strategies; they also discuss topics such as adjusting to high school, high school graduation requirements, career interests, and developing a life plan. In the courses for the latter grades, counselors focus exclusively on the college choice process. In the eleventh grade, counselors focus specifically on sharing test-taking skills for college admissions tests like the ACT as well as helping students complete of the common application and drafts of personal statements. The counselors have learned that establishing early deadlines for the college applications make for a better start for their students' senior year in which the College Prep class is spent helping students complete and submit applications and financial aid forms by Thanksgiving break. Counselors note that the variety of information and resources (i.e., school-based social capital) is needed because "a lot of them [GHCP students] won't be able to find a lot of time, space, and resources at home, on their own time, to do these applications so we provide that for them."

In addition to advising students within curricular offerings like the College Prep class, counselors also make the college choice process individualized either through group sessions or individual student mentoring.

I would review everything with them. I set up appointments. I was very good about being there on Thursday morning, for example, to go over things. I would give them homework. I would say, "I want the admission application done by Thursday," and then we will review that. And if it wasn't done completely, I highlighted things or put on post-its and told them to have that done by next Thursday.

Individualized assistance is important so that the counselors can help students make good college choices – even if that means attending a two-year school.

We have tried to get the students to where they can succeed because a failure would be such a blow to their self-esteem. . . For example, this one kid was basically a non-reader and he probably reads at the fifth-

grade level now. I took him to a junior college for registration. They did placement testing . . . [and] geared him towards classes where he can succeed - where he has the maximum amount of academic support and classes where there are people he can go to for help.

The counselors note that the senior year timetable has been fine-tuned and communicated well enough among the staff that there is a whole school effort toward helping and mentoring seniors as they complete their college search and choice phase. Yet, the counselors find that their timetable, while helpful for transitioning students through the application pipeline, was not as helpful for their students' emotional and psycho-social transitions. From the experiences of each of the first four graduating classes, counselors found that the mechanical juggling of meeting deadlines and writing essays can become low-volume social capital because that is not all that their students need in order to prepare for college. One counselor emphasized the importance of "staying power", a phrase which alluded to students' resiliency. Other counselors speak of a similar need for protocols to help with fears and confidence issues, which if not addressed in the earlier grades, shows up in the senior year and causes delays in the completion of senior year college planning tasks.

I think a lot of students come here with the dream of college, and it's still not real yet – the realities of leaving their family and going to this other place they don't know. I think in senior year that all comes to a head. You see a lot of kids who fall off their course work, or maybe sabotage things or don't get things done on time, and at the last minute they are like, "Ohhh, I didn't do that." So there is a lot of triage in that regard, and that was taxing.

In sum, counselors engage students in both formal and informal methods in order to provide social capital for students' college aspirations and plans. Counselors engage in repetitive conversations in their relationships with students in order to reinforce the norm that their lives after high school can consist of postsecondary options, despite the fact that many adults and peers in their personal networks did not have the opportunity to attend or graduate from college. Counselors also led various classes and school programs that are designed to expose students to college in order to further ingrain college-going as a normative behavior. In addition to developing students' aspirations, counselors used both formal classes and informal meetings to transition students through the college choice phase of their high school career. Through individual meetings, mentoring groups, and the College Prep class, counselors provided personalized college planning information, resources, guidance and support. Counselors considered this school-based social capital as valuable since their students enrolled at GHCP with little or vague college aspirations and with little or no resources at home to complete the college choice process on their own.

Conclusion

Equitable and effective college counseling is lacking for students of color due to the organizational capacity of the schools they disproportionately attend (Corwin, et al., 2004; McDonough, n.d.). Less affluent and predominantly minority schools are less likely to offer the lower student-to-counselor ratios and the extensive guidance, which can lead to the kinds of school-based social capital that is needed to nurture students' college aspirations, college selections, and college application submissions. This kind of school-based social capital toward college planning is warranted since students of color are disproportionately first-generation college bound and live in communities where fewer adults have attained a college degree (Choy, et al., 2000; Sander, 2006).

As a reform effort, charter schools can presumably address the kinds of structures and bureaucracies that foster such educational inequalities. They presume to address the state of educational inequalities by being given the freedom to develop innovative educational methods and programs. However, the organizational challenges to create and sustain charter schools can detract from that promise and, instead, offer counterfeit and low-volume social capital. These findings suggest that a school context undergoing growth and change is not hos-

pitable to the development of innovative methods and practices. Innovations cannot be appropriately developed and refined when counselors have to expend time to sustain the school. Further, the liberal hiring practices of charters mean that these counselors, though educated and trained in their respective fields, were not prepared to develop a college counseling model in a high school. As a result, counselors who should serve as institutional agents of school-based social capital did not offer a full array of school-based social capital for college access.

On the other hand, the charter system offered nontraditional school structures and smaller student enrollments, which were valuable for allowing counselors the freedom to address a problem that has not historically been prioritized - the un-tracking of academically and socioeconomically vulnerable students in order for them to transition to college. While counselors typically function as gatekeepers and invariably sort such students so that they are not on the path toward college, the findings suggest that these counselors were able to develop a notion of 'college prep' in which students who were made vulnerable through poverty and their previous educational experiences were given school-based social capital to make attending college the norm. Further, instead of the college counseling model, used in typical high schools, where counselors simply disseminate college information (see McDonough, n.d.), they used mentoring relationships, school programming, and clinical sessions with students to nurture their students' college expectations and to guide their college planning activities.

Improving access to college counseling in communities of color is a historical problem that has intensified due to waning job options for workers without college degrees (McDonough, n.d.). While charter schools offer a framework to address such inequalities, the pragmatic challenges to creating and sustaining charter schools detract from the effort to improve access to college counseling. The challenge is that it takes several years to navigate the unfamiliar territory of a new school and the unfamiliar territory of un-tracking academically and

socioeconomically vulnerable students is a process that can take several years to complete (Manno et al., 1998). The irony is that it is the most vulnerable population who will ultimately be placed at risk of not accumulating the full array of social capital that they need towards their transition to college.

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