

Developing College Knowledge in Diverse Student Populations

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Abstract

This descriptive study assessed students' perception of their college knowledge after exposure to Naviance. The study design included identification of a sample group of diverse high school students that participated in an after-school college and career intervention, Naviance. The participants' perception of their college knowledge was measured through self-report using a survey containing five Likert-type scale items, developed by the researcher. There appeared to be no clear pattern of change in the sample group's self perception of their college knowledge whether it was more confident or less confident. The implication of this research in, that there is an ongoing need for future research to develop interventions that allow access to college knowledge for underserved student populations.

INTRODUCTION

Overview

Developing college knowledge in underserved student populations, such as first generation college-goers, African Americans, English language learners, and low socioeconomic groups, presents a challenge to high schools (Hooker & Brand, 2010; Parikh, 2013). These students struggle with gaining access to the critical information that would allow them to be prepared for the college-going process and ultimately participate in attending college.

Throughout the United States, school systems and communities recognize the gap between affluent, white students and other populations of students in their preparedness for the college application process. School districts and communities implement various interventions that are intended to support underserved students in developing college knowledge. These interventions are sometimes woven into the high school's culture, curriculum, and extracurricular activities. Neighborhood and community organizations might also create their own interventions to address concerns about a lack of college knowledge. School districts, such as Baltimore County Public Schools, purchase computer-assisted career guidance systems such as Naviance, in an effort to provide all students access to this much-needed information.

Parikh points out that the continued college enrollment gap is made up of students who are of low socioeconomic status, African Americans, Hispanics and first generation college-goers; these populations are underrepresented in postsecondary education (2013). These groups of students are left with limited postsecondary options. They lack college knowledge, the college-going process and an understanding of college-going culture. First generation college-goers, students of color and low socioeconomic students are more likely to complete Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for financial aid late or to not understand the

college application process (LaManque, 2009). These students also show a lack of relatedness to key school staff members that can provide support and most often do not have family members that are prepared to provide guidance (Farmer-Hinton, 2008).

The efforts to close the gap in college knowledge are reflected in the development of various programs that date back more than ten years. Conley identifies college knowledge as an important component of career and college readiness (2010). The lack of this component of career and college readiness influences the students' preparedness for the application process. Included in college knowledge is the understanding of high school's relatedness to college acceptance, the application process including timeline, and completing the FAFSA.

Approximately five years ago, Baltimore County Public Schools provided a series of professional development workshops around behavior intervention. The focus of these workshops were African American males in the public schools that wanted to do well, but were often overlooked in the public school setting. These workshops caused the researcher to view their assigned school's population differently and led to the establishment of the College and Career Club, now known as Triple C. This researcher became acquainted with students that wanted to further their education, but did not know how to pursue their desires. These students had career aspirations, but were unclear about career possibilities, possible earnings and education requirements. The school's guidance counselors biannually provided all students with Naviance lessons. Hobson, Naviance's publisher, claims that their computer-assisted career guidance system (CACGS) is an effective tool for underserved populations of students; as a result, the researcher chose to explore whether it provided what the students thought they might need (Hobson, 2016).

Statement of Problem

This study attempted a different approach than in previous studies, exploring computer-assisted career guidance systems, which explored customer satisfaction regarding their interaction with the system. This study was conducted to determine if interacting with Naviance altered the student's self-perception of their college knowledge.

Research Question

This descriptive study was developed to assess students' perception of their participation in Triple C, utilization of Naviance, and their perception of their college knowledge. The research question asked: if students' perceptions of their "college knowledge" changed over time after participating in an after-school college club, which emphasizes the use of Naviance? The findings are based on the self-report survey the students completed, and did not require a hypothesis.

Operational Definitions

College knowledge is specific information a student requires access to in order to be effective in completing the college-going process. The student has an understanding of the relationship between high school performance and college admission, the importance of their relationship to guidance counselors, the completion of college applications, and the financial aspects of attending college, including completing FAFSA in a timely manner. College knowledge for more affluent students is typically developed in the home.

Naviance, a computer-assisted career guidance system, is used by Baltimore County Public Schools in middle and high schools to support students in developing college and career readiness. It is intended that students be introduced to Naviance in middle school; they are given a user ID and password. Guidance counselors go into the students' English class twice per year,

once in the fall semester and once in the spring semester. Modules within Naviance include an interest inventory, exploration of career clusters/careers, colleges, and scholarships. A segment of the career exploration encompasses over 3,000 five-minute videos related to a wide variety of careers. The videos feature personalities involved in various careers. Naviance is accessible to students at home and to their parents. There is also a Naviance application that can be downloaded to the student's cell phone.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This literature review explores current practices for addressing the college knowledge gap between affluent white students and ethnically/socially diverse student populations. The first section defines college knowledge. The second section details challenges identified in addressing the college knowledge development of ethnically diverse high school students. In section three, interventions utilized to close the college knowledge gap between affluent white students and diverse student populations are discussed. Section four looks at computer-assisted career guidance systems as an intervention in the area of college knowledge. In the conclusion, the need to research the impact of a computer-assisted career guidance system, specifically Naviance, is presented, as well as factors that could influence the research outcomes.

College Knowledge and Ethnically Diverse High School Populations

College knowledge is the collective body of privileged information a student has about the college-going process and college culture that allows them to make decisions about applying for postsecondary education and federal financial aid in a timely manner that works to their advantage in transitioning to postsecondary education (Conley, 2010). Included in this collection of information is an understanding of the connection between high school performance and future career aspirations, knowledge of college requirements, the college application process and the finances related to going to college (Conley, 2010; Hooker & Brand, 2010; LaManque, 2009; Stillisano, Brown, Alford, & Waxman, 2013). Students from affluent families, whose parents attended college, develop the foundation of college knowledge from their homes. The social capital and cultural capital instilled in these students gives them access to resources inside and outside of school for the development of college knowledge. Social capital is the development of

relationships that lead to information i.e., guidance counselors or teachers that encourage and help. The cultural capital is the environment where college-going is cultivated through the curriculum, the tone of the school and parental support, as well as understanding college culture. This development of college knowledge occurs most often in predominately white high schools in wealthier school districts. When schools have diverse student populations, there is a disparity or a gap between the affluent white students' college knowledge and the first generation college goers, African Americans, Hispanics, English language learners, and low socioeconomic status students, as well as other ethnically diverse student populations.

Challenges Encountered by Diverse Student Populations in Developing College Knowledge

Throughout the literature, students that were referred to as a diverse student population, or the underserved student population, included ethnically diverse students, low socioeconomic status students and first generation college goers. These students can benefit from a variety of interventions with comprehensive resources and supportive adults to nurture the development of college knowledge (Hooker & Brand, 2010). These students are less likely to have role models who attended college in their homes. Family knowledge about academic courses that leads to college, the importance of a student's GPA, knowledge of college culture, as well as knowledge of timelines for college and financial aid applications is often lacking. These students struggle, making informed choices based on opportunities or the labor market prospects without appropriate information. For these student populations at the end of 11th and beginning of the 12th grade, earlier college and career aspiration may be diminished. They are unclear about college finances and lack understanding of their eligibility for a PELL grant, which is obtained by completing the FAFSA in a timely manner (Kelchen, & Goldrick-Rab, 2015). A parent's lack of understanding about college also imposes limits on a student's aspirations, as the parent may

not believe college is attainable. Unable to understand college-going culture, these students are more likely to apply to college late, and apply for financial aid late. LaManque (2009) states,

The more knowledgeable students are about the college system – the application and financial aid processes – the more likely they are to apply and apply on time. That is, knowledge is associated with the timing of the decision as well as the decision itself. Rational economic theory suggests that persons will act in their own best interests, given the information known to them. (p. 4)

Studies document that diverse student groups can feel disconnected from their school's culture, and lack the social and cultural capital to navigate the processes required for college and career readiness (Chapman, Tatiana, Hartlep, Vang, & Lipsey, 2014; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Kelchen, & Goldrick-Rad, 2015; LaManque, 2009). Lack of social capital, coupled with the lack of relatedness to teachers, mentors, counselors and other school staff limits students' access to and development of college knowledge. Relatedness is key to any student's development of college knowledge, such as having access to encouragement, guidance in course selection and support in the timely completion of college and financial aid applications.

Farmer-Hinton (2008) found that when social capital needs are addressed with low socioeconomic status students, college knowledge could occur as pressure or another problem for the student to manage, with the possibility of conflict around deservedness. Lack of cultural capital, not understanding expectations, self-management and responding appropriately, present another limitation to diverse student groupings. Often peer and community culture takes precedence over school culture, which can contribute to students being underserved, and to the school not creating accessible pathways to include all students, allowing for the development of cultural capital (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Welton & Martinez, 2014; Stillisano, et al., 2013).

Interventions Addressing the Problems of Diversity and College Knowledge

Based on recent literature the assumption can be made that the three most common types of college and career interventions for diverse student populations are: 1) intentional creation of college-going culture within a high school; 2) after-school extracurricular college and career readiness programs focusing on college knowledge, with possible supports for academic growth; and 3) community-based programs within the targeted student population's community. Each of these interventions encompasses key variables that influence college knowledge development.

The first priority of high schools focused on creating a college-going culture is academic preparedness, with a component or portion of the curriculum focused on the development of college knowledge. Within this college knowledge component, paying for college and FAFSA is addressed. Royster, in researching college readiness from an academic perspective, used students' performance on the ACT's Educational Planning and Assessment System (EPAS) in all four-subject areas beginning in the 8th grade year (Royster, Gross & Hochbein, 2015). The study findings are consistent with other studies confirming the gap between students of color and low socioeconomic students and their white counterparts in college and career readiness. The study also noted that taking college preparatory courses resulted in academic college readiness based on the ACT measures. Further, the study determined that students not participating in extracurricular, college preparatory activities were more likely to be academically college ready. However, it was also found that students who pursued help with college-going tended to be at high risk of not being academically college ready. The research did not address the broader concept of college readiness including the application process for college and financial aid or the social/emotional aspects of college-going, which other studies found critical for diverse populations of students.

Early College High School model, Washington State Achievers, and Citizen Schools possess four characteristics that made them effective in addressing the needs of diverse populations. Although similar in mission each program is procedurally distinct. For example the Early College High School model transforms the high school experience of traditionally underrepresented groups in part by locating them on college campuses. Among the programmatic goals is for students to see themselves as college goers. The Washington State Achievers is a grant-funded program within selected schools in the state of Washington that promotes early college awareness, focusing on college counseling, mentoring and the opportunity to earn a college scholarship. The Citizen Schools, a non-profit organization based in Boston, Massachusetts, after-school programs for middle school students preparing them for high school and postsecondary education, building a college-going identity. The intervention's effective characteristics are a rigorous curriculum with staff supports for students participating in demanding classes, and early college exposure along with opportunities to earn college credits (Hooker & Brand, 2010).

Go Centers operate in Texas high schools that serve high proportions of historically marginalized groups, as well as students who live in low-income communities. When the high schools with Go Centers were evaluated, it was unclear whether the centers were effective, due to the number of other college and career readiness programs within the school. The Go Center programs possess four key attributes associated with supporting diverse student populations in developing college knowledge. The Go Centers are inclusive and accessible and designed to help students develop aspirations and plans to attend college. Comprehensive services to students, including guidance to preparing for college, applying to college and accessing financial aid with

a systematic approach of informing families and involving a variety of stakeholders, are attributes of the Centers (Stillisano et al., 2013).

Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) recruits 9th graders and provides career and academic advising services. College students doing their practicum or an internship provided the advising services. Prior to beginning the GEAR UP once monthly hourly meetings, the 9th graders complete an assessment to determine their interest. Based on the interest assessment, the advisors develop a curriculum aligned with the American School Counseling National Standards. An analysis of GEAR UP identified the prevailing themes of student interest as 1) navigating the college system; 2) expansion of career options; 3) counseling relationships; 4) personal insight; and 5) future orientation – students desire to continue to learn about college and careers (Parikh, 2013). This study supports the need for diverse students to be supported in recognizing the connection between high school and the future and the students' need for opportunity and access to developing college knowledge.

Computer-Assisted Career Guidance Systems and College Knowledge

Computer-Assisted career guidance systems (CACGS) came into existence over 45 years ago and have become an intrinsic component in providing career planning in the high school setting. Over this period of time, CACGS have evolved from slow, limited online access, available only when in specific locations, to availability via wireless handheld devices, like a student's cell phone, with the ability to complete interest inventories, link to other internet websites and store user information over a period of years. However, in reviewing college and career readiness literature and college knowledge interventions for diverse high school students, the use of CACGS for supporting these students is not addressed. Studies conducted on CACGS focused on user satisfaction while interacting with the CACG system (Fowkes & McWhirter,

2007; Harris-Bowlsbey, 2013). Due to the wide spread uses of CACGS, there is a need to research these systems' effectiveness with various populations groups such as, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. There is a need to understand the effectiveness of CACGS, alone or in conjunction with other career interventions that affect college and career readiness. Interventions include college and career course work within the school curriculum, student's contact with school counselor, school staff, family influence, and community programs. Longitudinal studies could help determine if CACGS influence changes over time, ruling out alternative explanations for changes that occur.

To address issues of college and career readiness, Hobsons Education Advances developed the Naviance platform, CACGS for middle and high school students. Hobsons defines college knowledge as including knowledge of college application procedures, knowledge of college cost and admission requirements, majors of areas of study and extracurricular offerings, academic preparation for post-secondary readiness and financial aid. The platform includes support in four areas: self-discovery, career exploration, academic planning and college and career preparation for K–12 institutions. The activities include interest inventories, a grade level to-do list, career videos, career clusters with descriptions and diverse careers within each cluster, and recommended colleges based on the student's profile.

Two features make Naviance a viable intervention for the development of college knowledge for all students and their families. First, Naviance provides accessibility to parents through the Family Connection allowing the parents to see what their student is seeing and learning. Second the Naviance app can be downloaded to the students' or parents' cell phone a home computer with internet service is not required. Naviance's accessibility provides all students with the ability to explore and develop college knowledge as they choose. The College

and Career Readiness Curriculum is structured for all students, addressing the needs of underserved student populations, including first-generation, college-going students (Hobsons, 2016).

The Naviance website provides information on the curriculum's pilot in 2014 which included 200 11th grade students in four different states across the country. The time frame for the pilot is not stated, however, 16 lessons were included, such as videos, goal setting, essay writing, and short answer responses within the Naviance platform. The results of the pilot claimed "on average students experienced an eight-percent point increase in college knowledge and financial aid literacy and those who completed a high number of lessons showed a more significant increase in post-assessment scores" (Hobsons, 2016, p.14). Naviance literature goes further to say that their curriculum "provides benefits to first-generation and underserved student populations as well as to any students with aspirations of attending a post-secondary institution or specialized career path after high school" (p. 15). This literature review did not result in identifying independent research studies on the effectiveness of Naviance.

Conclusion

Among the gaps that emerge as a result of this literature review is the lack of discussion and research about CACGS used as a part of college and career readiness programs and the development of college knowledge. The tools utilized in college and career readiness interventions, whether in high school curriculum, extracurricular activities or community programs, are generally not identified. The role of CACGS in college and career readiness interventions or the possible impact of these systems is unclear. Studies highlight the importance of relationships in school and in the community, mentors and knowing others who have attended college can help with an understanding of the college-going process. Most often, a diverse

student population can benefit from a college-going high school culture that is inclusive and accessible to all students, with school counselors and teachers that reach out to students. Diverse student populations benefit when support is extended to students' families in completing college and FAFSA applications, as well as in navigating other aspects of the college-going process.

In considering conducting a study to determine the effectiveness of Naviance in the development of college knowledge, there are numerous variables that can influence the outcome. First, within the Baltimore County Public Schools curriculum there are college and career readiness courses offered 9th through the 12th grade. Second, all students are introduced to Naviance in the 9th grade, if not in middle school, even though they may or may not remember how to access the platform. Third, by the 11th grade, students may have established a relationship with a counselor or have a mentor in or outside of school. Finally, some students participate in a community group that focuses on encouraging students to explore their future. These factors will have to be considered in a way to clearly isolate results, and to state that gains in college knowledge are related to the use of Naviance.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Design

This descriptive study assessed students' perception of their college knowledge after exposure to Naviance. The study design included identification of a sample group of diverse high school students that participated in this after-school college and career intervention. The researcher collected data through a survey completed by the participants. The students completed the survey before and after five weeks of exposure to Naviance. The meetings were held one day per week in each week. As a result the surveys were used to analyze the impact of the intervention on their perception of their college knowledge.

Participants

The sample group was comprised of students that participated in an after-school club Triple C, or the College & Career Club. Triple C is open to any student who wishes to attend. In the school, morning announcements were made regularly about the club, the researcher and other teachers invited students to join, and the participating students brought their friends to the club. The club met after-school every Tuesday, when there was an activity bus to provide transportation home. The eleven students that attended were identified as one African American male 11th grader, one Asian female 9th grader, two African females 9th and 11th graders, two African American males and five African American females: two 9th graders, one 10th grader and two 11th graders.

Instrument

The participants' perception of their college knowledge was measured through self-report using a survey containing five Likert-type scale items, developed by the researcher. The

participants completed the survey twice, before beginning to use Naviance and after the five-week research period. The participants rated their perception on a scale of one to four, with one denoting no confidence and four denoting very confident of their college knowledge. Participants responded to two “yes/no” questions about their previous exposure to a college knowledge type intervention, Advancement Via Individual Determination, and community college-prep programs, at the beginning of the research project.

Procedure

Triple C, met one afternoon per week for five weeks, immediately after-school for 30 to 45 minutes. Attendance was taken at each weekly session. The students responded to two “yes/no” questions about exposure to college knowledge prior to the beginning of the first Naviance sessions. The survey was completed on the same day in order to obtain their perception of their college knowledge. The survey directions were read aloud and the students completed the survey independently.

Naviance is a CACGS that Baltimore County Public Schools purchased licenses for middle and high school students. Each participant in Triple C had a user ID and password assigned to him or her. At each grade level, 9th through 11th, the school counselor goes into the English classes and conducts a lesson; therefore, the level of previous exposure to Naviance varied depending on the level and quality of counseling.

The meeting days for Triple C were announced on the morning announcement and through the use of the Remind app, sending out weekly text messages and e-mails. A school counselor was invited to the first session to introduce or re-introduce the students to Naviance and to provide user IDs and passwords, if needed. Students were allowed to use their cell phones, tablets or the desktop computers that were in the room. Each session lasted 30 to 45 minutes,

depending on when the students arrived. In each session, students were steered toward a different aspect of Naviance, starting with the interest inventory, then career exploration, such as career clusters and Road Trip Nation, and finally videos about various careers, developing their profile, exploring colleges, and exploring college finances. Students were allowed to explore other components of Naviance, if they chose, or to work in pairs. Snacks were provided at each session and there were two sessions in which pizza was provided and one session in which hotdogs were provided. Snacks and food were provided in an effort to encourage students to attend the Naviance sessions consistently.

During the fifth and final session, the students completed the survey. The directions were read aloud and the students independently completed the survey.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study was designed to evaluate the participant perception of their college knowledge after engaging in five sessions working Naviance. The eleven participants in the study completed a survey before and after the five prescribed sessions. The diverse group of participants included eleven students, some first generation college-goers, and some recently immigrated to the United States, as well as, African American students.

Any student that attended the Triple C meetings over the five Naviance sessions was included in the sample. Three students attended the Triple C sessions four times, seven students attended 2 or 3 times and one student participated once. The participants were given the survey on the first session they attended. The initial survey included two yes/no questions. The first asked if the student had or participated in AVID and the second asked if they currently or previous participate in a college readiness programs. Of the eleven students that participated, two were enrolled in AVID and none of the students were participating in a college readiness program outside, or in school. The grade levels ranged from ninth to eleventh grade, and all participants had been previously exposed to Naviance.

The table below illustrates the results of the research. Overall, the participants' not-confident/somewhat confident responses decreased. The numbers for not-confident/somewhat confident with FAFSA decreased, but remained in the highest area where students perceived themselves as not-confident/somewhat confident. Participants perceived themselves as confident in finding information about applying to college, finding information about colleges of interest and knowing information related to the college essays.

These results and their implications will be discussed in the next chapter.

Table 1. Survey Results Before and After The Intervention

Question	% Not Confident/Somewhat Confident (Pretest)	% Confident/Very Confident (Pretest)	% Not Confident/Somewhat Confident (Posttest)	% Confident/Very Confident (Posttest)
I know the information that might be required in completing a college admission application.	54	27	27	36
I can support my parents in completing the FAFSA early or on time.	54	27	36	18
I can find pertinent information about colleges I am interested in attending.	36	45	18	45
I can identify scholarship sources.	36	45	18	45
I know the information that goes into a college admission essay.	54	27	18	45

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This descriptive study was conducted to determine if the student's self perception of their college knowledge is altered by interacting with Naviance, a CACGS. Eleven students completed the pre-survey and seven students completed the post-survey. The attendance was as follows: one attended all five sessions, two attended four of the five, three attended three of the five and five attended two or less of the five sessions. The students had some limited exposure to Naviance, and none that participated had or were participating in outside college readiness activities. Two students were participating in AVID. The composition of the sample group was diverse: African, African American, and Asian. There appeared to be no clear pattern of change in the sample group's self perception of their college knowledge whether it was more confident or less confident.

Table 1 indicates that for all five survey items the number of not-confident/somewhat confident decreases between the pre- and post-surveys. Survey items 1 and 5 indicate an increase in confidence, while items 3 and 4 remained the same. Item 3, supporting parents in completing FAFSA, reflects a decrease in confidence levels between the pre- and post-surveys. Various factors influenced the results, including attendance, interest level, misplaced confidence and relatedness to the researcher. These factors will be discussed later in the chapter.

Implications of the Study

There is an ongoing need for varying opportunities for diverse and underserved populations of students to develop and increase their college knowledge and to have a clear self perception of what they know or do not know about college-going. The results of this study and the researcher's observations indicate a need for the study to take place over an extended time

frame in order to provide more substantial data. An extended time frame would allow for relatedness to develop between the students and researcher. The time frame limited the potential/opportunity to build relatedness between the researcher and the participants. The participants that attended four of the five sessions were those students who the researcher had developed a relationship with beyond the intervention period. The attendance issue raised the question for the researcher as to how the interest of the sample group could have been captivated to encourage consistent attendance. It is not clear whether the five-week period being disrupted by an emergency school closing impacted the participation level. Using the Remind application to text and e-mail students brief informative messages and meeting reminders was not effective in increasing attendance. Additional research might explore the relationship between attendance and frequency of use of Naviance with changes in students' self-confidence levels in the area of college knowledge.

The Naviance website format is text intensive and each window opened is dense; the students spent time searching each window for the headings that led to the information for which they were looking. That format's intensity and density were not considered by the researcher as factors that might impact the students. As a result, students were often overwhelmed, and most were initially lead through the windows despite previous exposure. After the first few minutes of the first session, a few students operated independently exploring and learning. However, most students required direction each session.

In two sessions the students became self-distracted and distractive to others, which required the researcher to speak with students about their social interactions. Talking with students about their social interaction may have a negative impact on the attendance rate.

Using tools such as Naviance provides underserved populations of students independent access to college knowledge information. Two students participating in the study took the initiative to access Naviance from home to search for college information, including following the link to the FAFSA website and reading the information. One student reported sharing Naviance with his parents and searched for historically Black colleges and universities. There is a need for the school to provide a level of exposure to Naviance that allows students to become comfortable with the format and motivated enough to use it without direction from staff.

Threats to the Validity

Considering the diverse population of the school, 35% of 1,600 were students of color; the students in the sample group are not a sufficient representation of the population. The challenges related to the attendance rate make it impossible to conclude whether the sample group's self perception of their college knowledge shifted. The inability to specifically measure the impact of exposure to Naviance or the influence of family members prior to this action research impacts any findings of the study. The researcher questions whether the students' perception of their college knowledge about FAFSA, identifying colleges, and writing a college essay had a concrete basis for their response. When working with Naviance it became evident that these areas were not familiar to most of the members of the sample group.

Connections to Previous Studies/Existing Literature

Relatedness is key to students developing the social and cultural capital that supports them acquiring college knowledge (Chapman et al 2014; Farmer-Hinton, 2008; Kelchen, & Goldrick-Rab, 2015; LaManque, 2009) Underserved populations of students can experience a disconnectedness from their school culture and benefit from interventions directed specifically to them, but not to the exclusion of others. One model for addressing this population of students is

after-school extracurricular college and career readiness programs that focus on college knowledge. The model utilized, an after-school college readiness intervention, providing students with the opportunity to develop relatedness with knowledgeable school staff, creating access to the development of social and cultural capital. Students were sent to their guidance counselor to retrieve their Naviance ID and password and were encouraged to make appointments to meet with their counselor. The school counselors and their secretary were well aware of the after-school group and welcomed the students. One of the guidance counselors and other supportive school staff dropped in to encourage the students.

This study explored an intervention that addresses the needs of underserved student populations, specifically a lack of access to college knowledge, the college-going process and insight into college-going culture. These are the students Parikh sights as an underrepresented group, creating the college enrollment gap (2013). Using Naviance with this diverse population of students provided access to addressing three themes identified in Parikh's analysis of GEAR UP: expansion of career options, development of personal insight, and future orientation, the desire to learn about college and careers. The 11th grade students that participated exhibited greater interest and concern about what they knew or did not know and for their future. The students asked the researcher questions that would have been better addressed to their guidance counselor.

Opportunities also opened up, in which students shared information with their parents and the researcher had an opportunity to talk with a parent about college knowledge, explaining how the parent could access Naviance. Providing parents with access to knowledgeable staff was a bonus of this action research. Parents and family members play an important role in the timely completion of applications to college and applying for financial aid. A parent's lack of

understanding can limit the student's aspirations, influencing the student's planning for the future, and increase the possibility of students applying late for college and completing their

FAFSA late, (Kelchen, & Goldrick-Rab, 2015. LaManque, 2009).

Studies documented the existence of the college knowledge gap for underserved populations, first generation college goers, and diverse student populations including students of color, (Farmer-Hinton, 2008; LaManque, 2009). Community and school programs that hosted after-school activities that focused on developing college knowledge were referred to in chapter two. Those studies address student engagement and response to the program but did not discuss the specific interventions used within the program to support the development of college knowledge. This study evaluates one CACGS to determine if it impacts the students' perception of their college knowledge using pre- and post-self report surveys. The five survey questions identified with areas often specified in the research as deficits. These areas of deficit include understanding college-going, knowing what is expected, timelines, completing FAFSA and finding financial sources to support college.

Implications for Future Research

Baltimore County Public Schools and other school systems invest in Hobson's Naviance websites or similar CACGS to address the need for all students to develop college and career readiness skills. There is research documenting the need for interventions that provide access to underserved student populations to close the college knowledge gap. There are studies that evaluate student engagement and response to the programs directed toward closing the college and career readiness gap, but did not discuss whether CACGS are utilized. Naviance states in its literature based on Hobson's research, that their websites provided benefits to first generation college goers and underserved student populations. An independent study that evaluates

Naviance's students' college knowledge skill gains would be helpful in determining whether it has value to the school system. In conducting such a study, researchers might look at the manner, in which the Naviance curriculum is presented, and the format and frequency of lesson presentations.

Another area of interest that resulted from observation of the sample would be students' independent use of Naviance beyond the school setting. When students downloaded the Naviance application or explored Naviance at home without prompting it is an indication of students having access to college knowledge. The question is how and when does this optimal level of independence in this population occur? What level of intervention, using Naviance, can be provided that would give the result of students independently utilizing the website?

This action research opened up many ideas to this researcher for possible areas of college knowledge acquisition to investigate. Possible research could explore the use of Naviance with parents to increase, which can affect their college knowledge, and their ability to support their students as college goers. Previous research speaks to the limitation of parent knowledge or lack of knowledge of the college-going process, can affect their children's aspirations, LaManque (2009). Another possible area for research that comes out of this study is the students' consistent attendance while participating in an after-school intervention using Naviance. What would have effectively motivated the students to attend regularly? If they had attended, would it have made a difference in their college knowledge?

Conclusion

This descriptive study generated many questions for the researcher about meeting the college knowledge needs of first generation college-goers, students of color and underserved student populations in the high school setting. Naviance provides a great deal of information,

which helps students make informed decisions about their future. However, if this information is not accessible, and if students receive exposure twice per year and do not remember how to locate the website, then the information is not accessible and we have not met the needs of all students. Creating additional opportunities during the school day and more frequently during the school year would be a step in ensuring accessibility.

The five survey questions identified align with areas often specified in the research as deficits for underserved student population. These deficit areas include understanding college-going culture, knowing what is expected and what to expect, clarity about timelines, which includes completing FAFSA. Of these five areas, Naviance seems to be the weakest in helping students understand about the importance of completing FAFSA. Within the Naviance website the student can click the link to FAFSA website, where the student can read about FAFSA or elect to watch YouTube videos. The students' did not gain an understanding FAFSA's use of financial awards and the impact of not following the timeline. Additional discussion was required and is probably still required to reinforce the information presented.

Finding the right motivation to cause consistent attendance was a challenge while implementing the study. Students who knew the researcher beyond Triple C were more likely to stay after-school; their attendance was enhanced by the established sense of relatedness. The researcher learned that the lure of food after-school got students in the room for Triple C, but not necessarily yielded students to utilizing the website as intended. Triple C captured the attention of 11th grade students, and they were more likely to stay on task looking at college requirements and exploring career interest to determine the requirement to enter a given field.

All students did not welcome the use of Naviance; one student stopped attending specifically because he found Naviance to be a bit too much. The visual presentation of the

Naviance and the amount of reading required to move through the website was daunting for some students. It was important to be prepared for some level of handholding with some students, and should be anticipated when presenting Naviance. The researcher had a significant understanding of college knowledge, and was able to address students' questions. The answers to the students questions may have been in Naviance, however, being able to answer the students questions rather than redirecting them to the website, provided some students with the verbal interaction they needed in the moment.

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Appendix

Pre- and Post Survey

Name: _____ Date _____

Triple C – College and Career Club

1. I am in AVID.

Yes No

2. I participate/participated in a college-prep program outside of school.

Yes No

Read each statement below and note your level of confidence using the following scale:

1 - not confident, 2 - somewhat confident, 3 - confident, 4 – very confident

1. I know the information that might be required in completing a college admission application.

1 - not confident, 2 - somewhat confident, 3 - confident, 4 – very confident

2. I can support my parents in completing the FAFSA early or on time.

1 - not confident, 2 - somewhat confident, 3 - confident, 4 – very confident

3. I can find pertinent information about colleges I am interested in attending, i.e. majors offered, application process or admission requirements.

1 - not confident, 2 - somewhat confident, 3 - confident, 4 – very confident

4. I can identify scholarship sources.

1 - not confident, 2 - somewhat confident, 3 - confident, 4 – very confident

5. I know the information that goes into a college admission's essay.

1 - not confident, 2 - somewhat confident, 3 - confident, 4 – very confident