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[Student-to-School Counselor Ratios, School-Level Factors, and Leadership Practices of School Counselors: A National Investigation](#)

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PURPOSE OF THE STUDY Scholars have asserted that when school counselors are able to perform their roles and responsibilities effectively and reach all students equitably, they are more adequately equipped to advocate for students and respond to the unique and evolving needs of the school community; however, school counselors' job demands can hinder their capacity to reach all students equitably. While scholars have clearly explicated the relationship between lower student-to-school-counselor ratios and student outcomes, limited research has examined the relationship between school counselors' caseload sizes and school-level variables of students and school counselors, as well as its association with school counselor leadership practices. Therefore, we examined the relationships between school counselors' sociocultural factors and school-level factors.

HOW THE RESEARCH ADVANCES THE PROFESSION The American School Counselor Association recommends a student-to-school-counselor (SC) ratio of 250:1; however, there is a large disparity in caseloads across the United States. To date, most of the literature highlights the positive impact that lower ratios have on student outcomes, yet scant literature has explored the potential relationships between SCs' caseload and ecological contextual factors. This study examined the association between student-to-SC ratios and school level and school counselor demographics, perceived school climate, and leadership practices. Results, based on a national sample of 639 school counselors revealed that school counselors' racial identity (i.e., identifying as a White school counselor), school level variables (i.e., percentage of students with disabilities, percentage of students who are bi/multilingual, percentage of White students, percentage of White faculty members) were significantly associated with school counselors' odds of meeting a 250:1 student-to-SC ratio. School counselors with a 250:1 ratio scored slightly lower in leadership practices.

GUIDANCE FOR PRACTICING SCHOOL COUNSELORS This study provided multifaceted implications that may require school counselors' and administrators' critical awareness, as well as potential structural/policy changes in schools and beyond. First, results regarding White student percentage, school counselors' racial/ethnic identity, and bi/multilingual student percentage seemed to illustrate inequitable access to school counselors across student groups and schools. We see potential to advocate for school counseling specific resources (e.g., increased positions; intentional school counseling programs) in schools and districts featuring high ratios of students and school counselors of color in urban settings. ASCA provides clear delineation of appropriate school counselor roles, responsibilities, and standards; however, school counselors may continue to struggle with advocating for themselves and for the profession due to the systemic lagging of understanding, resources, and supports. School counseling practitioners and training programs may benefit from advocacy guidelines by professional organizations such as ASCA. In line with advocacy, this study suggests that bi/multilingual students may risk lower odds of accessing school counseling services. It is critical that the students receive supports

from all academic, career/college and social-emotional levels. For instance, school counselors may advocate for the students to receive language training support as well as the opportunities for them to enroll in advanced classes when ready (Perez & Morrison, 2016).

EQUITY DIMENSIONS This study investigated the relationships between school counselors' sociocultural factors (i.e., race/ethnicity; socioeconomic status; age) and school-level factors (i.e., percentage of students with disabilities; percentage of bi/multilingual students; racial/ethnic makeup of students and faculty). School counselors who reported as White, serving higher percentages of White students and students with disabilities were associated higher odds of meeting the ASCA recommended ratio of 250:1. In contrast, higher percentages of bi/multilingual students and White faculty composition were associated with school counselors' lower odds of meeting the recommended ratio. This study offers implications of these results and recommends advocacy at various levels.