INVESTIGATING A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE
DURING COVID-19 IN NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOLS

A Dissertation
by
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Abstract

INVESTIGATING A COLLEGE-GOING CULTURE
DURING COVID-19 IN NORTH CAROLINA HIGH SCHOOLS

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The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) on the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture in North Carolina public high schools. This study examined a college-going culture's creation and sustainability using habitus as a supportive theoretical framework with a mixed-methods methodology. The nine principles of a college-going culture (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et al., 2002) provided the foundation for studying the creation of a college-going culture during COVID-19. Utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design, data collection occurred in two phases. A survey was employed first to satisfy the quantitative requirements and interviews following the survey to satisfy the qualitative requirements. This study focused on North Carolina public high school counselors, teachers, and principals.

Using the data from the survey and interview datasets, participant-created definitions for *college-going*, *college*, and *college-going culture* were established. A thematic analysis of

the datasets revealed four major themes. The four major themes were: *lack of shared language*, which highlighted the lack of commonality in the understanding of a college-going culture's concepts; *lack of actualization of the nine principles*, which distinguished between the observable and unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a college-going culture; *lack of normalcy during COVID-19*, which examined the overall impact of COVID-19 on a college-going culture; and *lack of shared responsibilities during COVID-19*, which explored the lack of collaboration to create a college-going culture among school personnel during COVID-19. While this study discerned that COVID-19 did negatively affect the creation of a college-going culture in North Carolina high schools, this study also revealed areas for improvement so high schools can work to advance their college-going culture.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Alma Bennett of Clemson University and Scott Michael Squibb. Fate brought me to Dr. Bennett as a freshman at Clemson University, when I signed up for her senior-level/graduate-level Holocaust literature course as a mere second-semester freshman. From that moment on, I took any class Dr. Bennett was teaching and even did two study abroad trips to Italy with her. She took me under her wing and became my professor, mentor, and friend. Scott Squibb was one of my closest friends, and he never let me give up on myself. He always knew what to say to make me smile and to cheer me on. He made me promise to finish this dissertation. When the challenges of writing this dissertation seemed overwhelming, the promise I made to him propelled me forward. Both of these wonderful souls lost their battles to cancer, and both of them were monumental influences in my life, which is why I dedicate this dissertation to them.

To the stars!

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, Roy Cooper, Governor of North Carolina, issued Executive Order No. 117 (2020), closing K-12 schools on March 14, 2020. This order required all school districts in North Carolina to immediately implement fully online instruction until further notice. All teachers, administrators, staff, students, students' guardians, and others had to adjust to a new normal as it became clear that the schools would not reopen for the 2019-2020 academic year.

As the 2020-2021 academic year approached, schools were still left with uncertainty as they tried to plan how the school year would look based on Governor Cooper's options for school districts: traditional face-to-face classes at full capacity (Plan A), face-to-face instruction implemented through social distancing requirements with sanitation requirements in place (Plan B), or 100% virtual (Plan C) (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NC DPI], 2020). No matter what option a school district adopted for the 2020-21 academic year, the "normal" way of high school instruction would no longer be the norm for the foreseeable future.

As a result, public high schools in North Carolina adapted and adjusted their college-going culture. A *college-going culture* (CGC) is a relatively new concept. A CGC is a culture embedded into the school's environment where school personnel uphold the belief that *all* students are capable of attending a postsecondary institution after high school graduation and take the steps necessary to help students attend a postsecondary institution (College Board, 2006; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; McClafferty et al. 2002; Oakes 2003). In the current literature, a majority of the studies focus on how public and private K-12 schools, particularly urban and suburban high schools, create a CGC in a face-to-face setting

(Martinez et al., 2019; McDonough, 1997; McKillip et al., 2012; Schneider, 2007). The nine principles of a CGC, which are discussed at length in chapter two, detail where and how high school environments integrate the CGC message that all students are capable of going to a postsecondary institution (McClafferty et al., 2002).

Research Problem and Rationale

This study sought to examine the collaborative nature of the nine principles of a CGC (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et al., 2002) by focusing on how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced the creation and sustainability of the nine principles of a CGC. Previous CGC studies have been conducted in a traditional, seated-classroom setting (Bosworth et al., 2014; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Jarsky et al., 2009; Martinez et al., 2019; McClafferty & McDonough, 2000; McClafferty et al., 2002; McKillip et al., 2012; Schneider, 2007). The changes brought on by COVID-19 meant a CGC had to be reconfigured and reconfigured quickly without any research to determine best practices. The purpose of this study was to understand how high schools in North Carolina define a CGC and to investigate the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the creation and sustainability of a CGC. To address the purpose of this study, the following research questions will be examined:

1. How do North Carolina high schools define college-going, college, and/or a college-going culture?

2. How do school personnel perceive the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture under the influence of the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

Defining a College-Going Culture

McClafferty et al. (2002) established one of the first definitions of a CGC as "a school culture that encourages all students to consider college as an option after high school and prepares all students to make informed decisions about post-secondary options" (p. 3). According to the College Board (2006), a CGC "builds the expectation of postsecondary education for all students—not just for the best students" (p. 2). Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) expanded on the central concept of a CGC's belief that all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary education by including action in the definition. According to Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009):

> [A] college [going] culture reflects environments that are accessible to all students and saturated with ever-present information and resources and ongoing formal and informal conversations that help students to understand the various facets of preparing for, enrolling in and graduating from postsecondary academic institutions. (p. 26)

The Holland and Farmer-Hinton (2009) definition indicates that conversations must occur to create the belief that all students are college-capable. Oakes (2003) incorporated the expectations of a CGC in her definition:

> In a college-going culture, teachers, administrators, parents, and students expect students to have all the experiences they need for high achievement and college preparation. Adults encourage students to exert necessary effort and persistence throughout their educational career, and adults work diligently to eliminate school-sanctioned alternatives to hard work and high expectations. These high expectations are coupled with specific interventions and information that emphasize to students

that college preparation is a normal part of their childhood and youth. Students believe that college is for *them* and is not reserved for the exceptional few who triumph over adversity to rise above all others. (p. 2)

Oakes' (2003) definition is unique because it highlights the role adults play in showing all students they are college-capable. The term *college-capable* is often used in CGC research when referencing the abilities of students to attend a postsecondary institution (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Martinez et al., 2019; McClafferty et al., 2002; Oakes, 2003; Schneider, 2007). A common thread remains in each of these college-going culture definitions: creating an atmosphere where *all* students believe they can attend and succeed in a postsecondary institution.

In this study, the operational definition of a CGC is *creating a culture where all students not only believe they are capable of attaining a postsecondary education (and one not limited to a four-year institution), but also know the steps to take in applying and preparing for that education*. A postsecondary institution in this study's parameters constitutes any institution of higher education where students further their education and includes certificate programs, technical schools, community colleges, or four-year institutions (public or private). This definition aligns with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) 2011 revised definition of postsecondary education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011). Prior to the 2011 revision, the terminology only reflected four-year institutions where students earned bachelor's degrees or higher. After the 2011 amendments, the term came to represent any education where students continued "preparing for labour market entry as well as tertiary education" (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011, p. 43). The "labour market entry" education encompasses

certificate programs, technical school instruction, and community college degree pathways that prepare students for a career. Tertiary education refers to any education after high school and not just one tailored to specific jobs and career fields.

Background of College-Going Culture

The idea of a CGC began to emerge in Patricia McDonough's case study of four high schools, two private and two public, outlined in *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*, published in 1997. That study heavily influenced another study, the "Creating a College Culture Project" (McClafferty & McDonough, 2000; McClafferty et al., 2002). For the "Creating a College Culture Project" study, the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) partnered with The Achievement Council and 24 schools from the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD): two high schools, four middle schools, and 18 elementary schools (McClafferty & McDonough, 2000; McClafferty et al., 2002). McClafferty et al. (2002) discovered that a high number of high school students were not seeking a postsecondary education after graduation. Each year that number continued to increase, especially for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and for students of color (McClafferty et al., 2002).

The "Creating a College Culture Project" study showed middle-class, white students were the predominant student demographic who enrolled in postsecondary institutions (McClafferty et al., 2002). The researchers believed that this demographic could evolve and include more students from minority racial backgrounds and from lower socioeconomic environments (McClafferty et al., 2002). To help create a more diverse postsecondary student demographic, McClafferty et al. (2002) developed the premise of a *college-culture*, now known as a *college-going culture* (CGC), and the nine principles of a CGC. The nine

principles of a CGC, which are discussed at length in chapter two, are as follows

(MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et al., 2002):

1. College talk

2. Clear expectations

3. Information and resources

4. Comprehensive counseling model

5. Testing and curriculum

6. Faculty involvement

7. Family involvement

8. College partnerships

9. Articulation

The nine principles of a CGC outline vital areas where schools can infuse the message that

all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary education into their CGC. The principles

have interlacing purposes that are indispensable to a CGC's creation (McClafferty et al.,

2002). With the nine principles being interconnected, a CGC promotes collaboration between

the participants (Jarsky et al., 2009; McClafferty et al., 2002). For this study, the nine

principles of a CGC provided the framework for examining the CGC in the sampled North

Carolina public high schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Habitus

To help answer the research questions, this study utilized *habitus* as a secondary

theoretical framework. McDonough (1997) used *habitus* as the theoretical foundation for her

work found in *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*.

Habitus considers how a person's environment influences their constructed social reality

(Bourdieu, 1977; Reay, 2004; Webb et al., 2002). The reality a person creates in society is constructed:

> twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside social
>
> agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it is
>
> like a "fish in water": it does not feel the weight of the water and it takes the world
>
> about itself for granted. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 127)

This quote provides imagery for understanding the concept of habitus. In a CGC, the primary objective is for students to view attaining a postsecondary education as the next naturalized step after high school graduation. The "water" in a CGC is the message that all students are capable of attending a postsecondary institution, and the message is so engrained into students, "the fish," that they take it for granted, or "do not feel the weight." In a CGC, the "fish in water" feeling should be created through the individual and collaborative work among the members of a society and through the societal structures (Bourdieu, 1988; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Reay, 2004). For this study, the members of society are school personnel, primarily counselors, teachers, and principals, and those structures are examined primarily using the nine principles of a CGC with habitus acting as a supportive theoretical framework. Chapter two gives a more exhaustive review of habitus.

Methodology

An explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) was selected for this study because it allowed for a multi-faceted understanding of COVID-19's impact on creating and sustaining a CGC. Mixed-methods research creates a complementary relationship between quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). As Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) acknowledge, "quantitative results can net

general descriptions of the relationships among variables, but the more detailed understanding of what the statistical tests or effect sizes actually mean is lacking. Qualitative data and results can help build the understanding" (p. 9).

To fulfill the purpose of this study, data collection was conducted in two phases during the fall 2020 semester. Each phase focused on one research method, with the second phase of the research expanding on the data collected during phase one (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018):

- Phase One- quantitative methods:
    - To satisfy the quantitative aspects of the design, a survey (see Appendix A) hosted on Qualtrics was sent out to school personnel using convenience and snowball sampling methods. Through coding the open-ended questions and analyzing the findings, an understanding of the creation and sustainability of the nine principles of a CGC during COVID-19 was determined.
- Phase Two- qualitative methods:
    - Phase two consisted of interviews conducted over Zoom that fulfilled the qualitative methods needed for this mixed-methods design. The interview questions (see Appendix B) were designed based on the survey results and were focused on gaining a further understanding of how COVID-19 impacted the creation and sustainability of the nine principles of a CGC.

Parameters of the Study

This study focused on a small sample of counselors, teachers, and principals in public high schools around North Carolina. North Carolina contains eight school districts: North Central, Northeast, Northwest, Piedmont-Triad, Sandhills, Southeast, Southwest, and

Western (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NC DPI], 2021a). Figure 1, an image from the NC DPI (2021a) website, illustrates the eight school districts' locations. In those eight districts, there are 415 public high schools (grades 9-12) (NC DPI, 2021a). According to the embedded GPS in the Qualtrics, survey respondents were from the North Central, Northwest, Piedmont-Triad, Southeast, Southwest, and Western districts.

Figure 1

Eight North Carolina Public School Districts
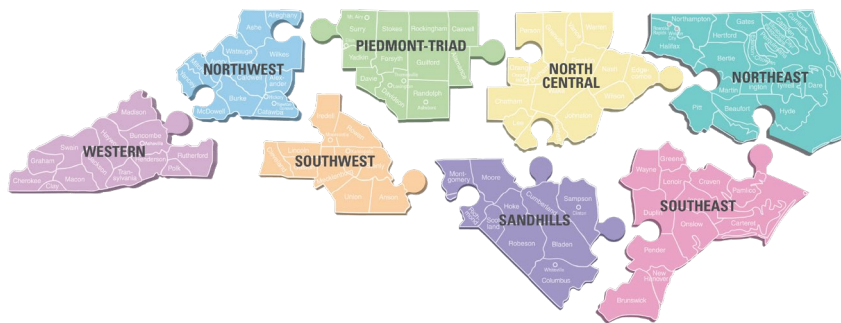
Note. This figure is from the "District and Regional Support" section on the NC DPI (2021a) website.

Even though a CGC is meant to be articulated throughout K-12, high school students are at the precipice of deciding whether or not to enroll in a postsecondary institution (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2014; Curry & Milsom, 2017). Many adolescents do not understand the amount of education needed for a particular career (Schneider, 2007). Furthermore, many adolescents situate their postsecondary education opinions on "fantasies constructed from movies and television" (Schneider, 2007, p. 5). A CGC can help students gain a more realistic understanding of their postsecondary education options and the work required for those options (Schneider, 2007). Although all K-12

students benefit from a CGC, high school students are the ones who see the most immediate benefits from a CGC as they are the ones enrolling in postsecondary institutions and need to make timely, informed decisions.

To gain those realistic understandings, school personnel need to work together collaboratively to create a CGC. For this study, three school personnel roles were identified as study participants: counselors, teachers, and principals. These three roles were chosen because they are directly involved in realizing a school's CGC (McClafferty et al., 2002; McKillip et al., 2012). To uphold the nine principles of a CGC, counselors, teachers, and principals must engage in individualized actions and enlist the help of each other and other school personnel to execute the collaborative nature of the nine principles (McClafferty et al., 2002). Under the strain of COVID-19, these roles' collaboration to uphold their school's CGC was tested and was also more crucial than ever.

Limitations

By only including North Carolina public high schools, this study's scope was limited to one state's population. Utilizing convenience and snowball sampling further limited this study's scope. As detailed in chapter three, the sampling occurred by sending emails from the Reich College of Education at Appalachian State University graduate and doctoral programs listservs and from an email list provided by a recent Appalachian State University Higher Education Leadership graduate. The sampling methods resulted in 27 survey responses and two interview participants.

The global positioning system (GPS) embedded into Qualtrics showed that responses were concentrated in the state's western area. Furthermore, the embedded GPS showed that 77.78% of the survey responses came from rural locations, and the two interview participants

were located in western North Carolina rural school districts. North Carolina has the second-largest rural student population for K-12 public schools in the United States, and 39.4% of K-12 public school students in North Carolina live in rural counties (Showalter et al., 2019). Since a large portion of North Carolina K-12 schools are classified as rural, it is not unanticipated that a majority of the survey responses came from rural locations.

If data collection had continued beyond the fall 2020 school semester, the response rate might have increased because of the time extension and the increased number of schools returning to in-person learning. It is important to note that a time extension and the return to in-person learning would have yielded different results because of the mix of educational delivery methods (online and in-person). When data collection began, the influence of COVID-19 on the spring 2021 school semester remained unknown. In order to gain an accurate snapshot of the impact of COVID-19 on North Carolina's CGC, it was imperative to gather information before the end of the fall 2020 semester due to the uncertainty of how COVID-19 could impact the spring 2021 semester. The time constraint did not allocate for an abundance of data collection, primarily since data collection occurred during two separate phases and both of those phases were collected during one semester.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are used throughout this study and are defined to ensure clarity:

- **college-going culture (CGC):** The operational definition of a college-going culture (CGC) is creating a culture where all students not only believe they are capable of attaining a postsecondary education (and one not limited to a four-year program), but also know the steps to take in applying and preparing for that education. This definition encompasses aspects of the official College Board (2006) definition,

Holland and Farmer-Hinton's (2009) definition, McClafferty et al.'s (2002)

definition, and Oakes' (2003) definition.

- **habitus:** According to Bourdieu (1977), habitus consists of predisposed beliefs a person has created for themselves and their social status based on their environment, which consists of physical elements and the shared language of that environment (Bourdieu 1977, 1991).

- **postsecondary education:** For this study, postsecondary education constitutes any program of higher education where students further their education and includes certificate programs, technical schools, community colleges, or four-year institutions (public or private). This definition used in this study aligns with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) 2011 revised definition of postsecondary education (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011).

Summary

This study's purpose was to understand how North Carolina high schools defined, created, and sustained a CGC during COVID-19. A CGC upholds the belief that all students are college-capable, meaning they are capable of attaining a postsecondary education. This study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design with *habitus* as the supporting theoretical framework. To answer the two research questions outlined in this chapter, two phases of data collection occurred through the deployment of a survey and subsequent interviews. The nine principles of a CGC provided the basis for the survey and interview creation and served as the foundation for data examination. The nine principles helped articulate the individual responsibilities of school personnel in a CGC and the collaborative nature of a CGC. For this study, the participant focus remained on counselors,

teachers, and principals. The literature in chapter two provides a more robust discussion of a

CGC, a deeper understanding of the nine principles of a CGC, an overview of the role

counselors, teachers, and principals undertake in creating a CGC, and an explanation of the

theoretical framework habitus.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Educational institutions, such as public and private K-12 schools, are tasked with creating a college-going culture (CGC) that encourages the belief that all students can attain a postsecondary education. To thoroughly examine the impact of COVID-19 on the creation and sustainability of a CGC in North Carolina public high schools, this literature review explores how schools traditionally (pre-COVID-19) created a CGC and how schools utilize the nine principles of a CGC to help create a CGC. Historically, the majority of these principles are sustained in a physical setting or a face-to-face environment: meetings in classrooms, visits to postsecondary institutions, decorations in school hallways, and the like. By understanding how the nine principles of a CGC are traditionally created, the impact of COVID-19 on a CGC will be easier to identify when analyzing this study's data. To help clarify the intent of this study, a distinction between *college-going culture* and *college readiness* will be established. Once a clear understanding of the differences between a CGC and college readiness are established, the creation of a CGC will be examined, particularly how the nine principles of a CGC inform K-12 schools on the key markers of a CGC (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et al., 2002). To further examine the creation of a CGC during COVID-19, the school personnel's role in establishing and maintaining a CGC in a physical setting will be outlined.

An overview of Bourdieu's (1977) *habitus* is also given in this literature review. Habitus, the supportive theoretical framework used in this study, has also been used in previous fundamental CGC studies, particularly McDonough's (1997) *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*. The section on habitus focuses on how

a person's environment and social culture impact their personal belief of their social status and identity.

College Readiness versus College-Going Culture

It is imperative to point out that a CGC is not the same as college readiness. College readiness prepares students academically for a baccalaureate program, whether enrolling directly into a four-year institution or transferring into a program from a community college (Conley, 2007, 2008). A CGC, on the other hand, upholds the belief that all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary education and not one limited to a baccalaureate program. The major components of college readiness revolve around formidable academic expectations. North Carolina implements college readiness measures for public high school students who are enrolled in the Future-Ready Course of Study (FRC) (NC DPI, 2021b). The FRC track is meant to prepare public high school graduates to be career- or college-ready (NC DPI, 2021b). The "college-ready" piece of the FRC track aligns with the college readiness' idea of students needing to meet benchmarks to be considered "ready."

College readiness, unlike a CGC, has several benchmarks for success in place, such as the number of students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses, student scores on standardized college-placement tests (ACT/SAT), and grades and grade point averages (GPAs) of students (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; Conley, 2007, 2008). By placing success measurements solely on students' academic achievements, college readiness theorizes that only students who achieve academically will be ready for the rigors of college (Byrd & MacDonald, 2005; Conley, 2007, 2008). College readiness' limited focus on just academic performance does not fully encapsulate the academic process and growth students undergo throughout their K-12 education, particularly during their high school years (Hooker &

Brand, 2010). A CGC works to help close the educational achievement gap by postulating that *all* students can attain a postsecondary education. The message that all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary education is constantly reinforced because all school personnel "make it their personal responsibility" to encourage students and help direct students to a postsecondary institution match (Schneider, 2007, p. 8). To help support the goal of a CGC, McClafferty et al. (2002) created the nine principles of a CGC. The principles reject the singular focus on academic achievement and instead encompass all aspects of college preparedness.

The Nine Principles of a College-Going Culture

The nine principles of a CGC include the following: (1) college talk, (2) clear expectations, (3) information and resources, (4) comprehensive counseling model, (5) testing and curriculum, (6) faculty involvement, (7) family involvement, (8) college partnerships, and (9) articulation. The nine principles support McClafferty et al.'s (2002) premise that a positive school environment empowers all students to believe they are capable of attaining a postsecondary education and are also capable of making informed decisions on what institution works best for their educational goals. The principles are defined as follows (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et al., 2002):

1. **college talk**: ensuring that students understand all aspects of what it takes to be admitted to and attend a postsecondary institution from taking a standardized test, filling out an application, and procuring financial aid.
2. **clear expectations**: making sure that all students create a set of goals to help them attain a postsecondary education.

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3. **information and resources**: providing readily available information to students about postsecondary education options. Even though counselors possess a plethora of postsecondary education information and resources for students, teachers should also maintain similar information and resources for students in their classroom.

4. **comprehensive counseling model**: synthesizing the traditional counselor role with that of a college counselor. A college counselor is knowledgeable of the steps for attaining a postsecondary education and helps students make the best decision for their postsecondary education aspirations.

5. **testing and curriculum**: preparing students for standardized tests. The preparation includes test preparation as well as financial help for testing fees.

6. **faculty involvement**: including college talk in lesson plans and having the knowledge and informational materials to help students. For example, English teachers assign college admission essays as writing assignments.

7. **family involvement**: keeping families and guardians informed on their student's postsecondary options. Schools need to set up opportunities, such as assemblies or individual family meetings with the school counselor, to involve family members and guardians in the postsecondary education attainment process.

8. **college partnerships**: engaging in partnerships with local postsecondary institutions, not exclusively the four-year and community colleges. The partnerships include organizing campus tours for students and hosting college fairs in the high schools. For the sake of clarity, the term college fairs is used due to the commonality of the term when describing an event where postsecondary

institution representatives are in attendance in order to present information about their institution to attendees.

9. **articulation**: beginning postsecondary talks as soon as the students enter elementary school with talks continuing through high school. As the students progress through their K-12 education, the amount of information increases and becomes more specific to the students' needs.

It should be noted that the terms *college culture* and *college-going culture* can be used interchangeably. For this literature review, the terminology will be *college-going culture* (CGC). Despite the slight differences in terminology, the goal of a CGC remains the same: for all students to realize a postsecondary education exists as an option after their high school graduation as well as to know the steps needed to attain that education (Jarsky et al., 2009; Martinez et al., 2019; McClafferty et al., 2002). Part of a CGC is also helping students realize that postsecondary education is not limited to just four-year programs, but instead, postsecondary education has a wide breadth of options (Martinez et al., 2019). The nine principles of a CGC encourage school personnel to work together and actualize the goal of postsecondary education for all students.

A school's culture and how it is shaped predominantly influence how students perceive what is valued academically and what is expected of them after graduating high school (Peterson & Deal, 1998). The "structure and agency" of a school and the expectations of school personnel, especially counselors and teachers, "are integral to the earliest decisions they [students] will make about college" (McDonough, 2004, p. 23). The nine principles of a CGC work with the school's environment and its "structure and agency" to ensure students have postsecondary aspirations and know how to achieve those aspirations.

The culture of a school influences students' decisions regarding their postsecondary education (Corwin & Tierney, 2007). A CGC sets out to influence students' perceptions of themselves in hopes of diminishing self-limiting beliefs that prevent them from considering and pursuing postsecondary education. A CGC's influence and sustainability rely on all school personnel collaborating together, which creates an overlap in each of these principles. Each principle is "meant to be understood as a highly integrated, complementary system of ideas that draw from and benefit from each other" (McClafferty et al., 2002, p. 10). By having a "complementary system," the principles create a normalization of a CGC (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). The normalization of a CGC means creating a system of beliefs among students, parents/guardians, and school personnel wherein going to a postsecondary institution becomes a natural "next step" for students to take after completing high school (McClafferty et al., 2002; Robinson & Roksa, 2016; Schneider, 2007). Since this study focuses on how school personnel perceive the creation and sustainability of their school's CGC during COVID-19, this chapter later reviews the collaboration school personnel need to sustain to uphold the nine principles of a CGC.

History of the Nine Principles of a College-Going Culture

The creation of the nine principles of a CGC transpired during the "Creating a College Culture Project," where the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) and The Achievement Council partnered with 24 local schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD): two high schools, four middle schools, and 18 elementary schools, nicknamed "The Cluster" (McClafferty & McDonough, 2000; McClafferty et al., 2002). The Cluster was comprised of 25,000 students with approximately 44% Latino, 33% Black, 17% White, and 5% Asian American students (McClafferty & McDonough, 2000). The majority

of the students came from immigrant families with limited English proficiency, and half of

The Cluster students were from low-income families (McClafferty & McDonough, 2000).

The "Creating a College Culture Project*"* set out to ensure that schools put an equitable

amount of time and resources into making college a viable option for all students regardless

of race or socioeconomic status.

A main undertaking of the project was the implementation of college coaches in

middle schools and high schools. A college coach is a counselor dedicated to ensuring equity

of resources among the students. College coaches also ensure students and their

parents/guardians receive guidance in choosing a postsecondary institution, understanding

the application and financial aid process, and addressing any questions or needs that may

arise in regards to postsecondary institutions (McClafferty & McDonough, 2000;

McClafferty et al., 2002; McDonough, 1994, 1997). In an ideal setting, the college coach is

meant to be a separate position from the traditional school counselor; however, a school

counselor can fulfill both roles as a traditional counselor and a college coach.

Role of School Personnel in a College-Going Culture

A common misconception in establishing and maintaining a CGC is that it is solely

the counselors' responsibility; however, counselors alone cannot sustain a CGC. McClafferty

and McDonough (2000) posited, "One solitary professional can not [sic] carry a school's

college resource infrastructure. The responsibility resides school-wide" (p. 5). As previously

mentioned, the nine principles of a CGC create intertwined responsibility among school

personnel to uphold a successful and impactful CGC in a school's infrastructure. A school's

infrastructure is layered, and within each layer, school personnel must build upon a CGC's

message that all students are capable of postsecondary education attainment (Martinez et al.,

2019). A CGC's positive impact on students heavily relies on school personnel's postsecondary expectations of the students and the personnel's ability to engage in postsecondary education discussions with the students (Bryan et al., 2017; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Martinez et al., 2019).

To fully embody the culture and its ideology, the roles of principal, counselor, and teacher must successfully present a unified message that all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary education, and the school personnel must invest in collaborative and individual social capital (Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Martinez et al., 2019; Schneider, 2007). Even if students do not directly engage with all school personnel, they are still indirectly impacted by the actions and beliefs of the whole personnel's collective beliefs (Martinez et al., 2019). This collective belief makes a complete buy-in by the personnel into the message that all students are able to attain a postsecondary education vital. Figure 2 depicts how principals, teachers, and counselors perform individual roles and also engage in collaborative roles in a CGC and embody the idea that "students need multiple and intersecting streams of information [about postsecondary institutions] from school adults" (Bryan et al., 2017, p. 104). School personnel can support students with any aspect of the postsecondary application and enrollment process by working collaboratively.

Figure 2

College-Going Culture Collaboration Needed between Counselors, Teachers, and Principals

Counselor's
Individual
Role

Counselor
and Principal
Collaboration

Counselor
and Teacher
Collaboration

Counselor,
Teacher,
and Principal
Collaboration

Principal's
Individual
Role

Teacher's
Individual
Role

Teacher
and Principal
Collaboration
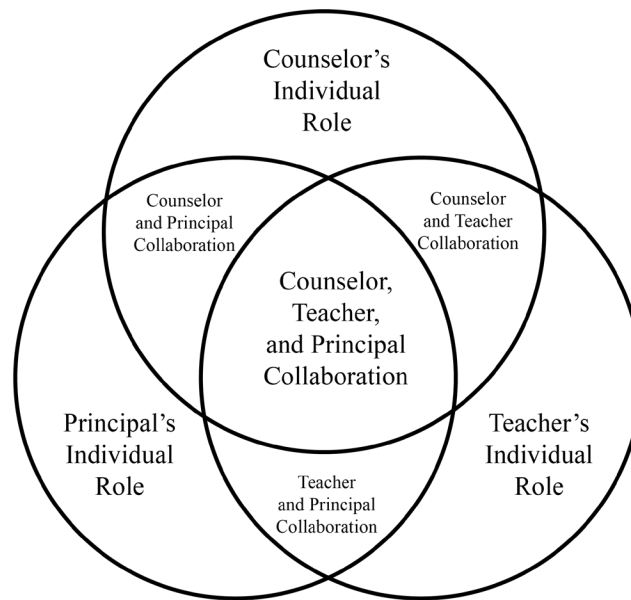
Note. Despite their smaller appearance in the diagram, the collaborative efforts make up a

prominent part of CGC. The collaboration, as illustrated, exists in multiple manners among

the school personnel.

Role of the Counselor

Counselors often predominate as the primary support in navigating the application

and financial aid process, especially for first-generation students and those students whose

parents/guardians lack college-going knowledge (Bryan et al., 2011; Deslonde & Becerra,

2018; McClafferty et al., 2002; Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Counselors prevail as the only

school personnel to influence all nine of the CGC principles. Counselors gather and maintain

college materials and help create partnerships with colleges (Corwin & Tierney, 2007;

Engberg & Gilbert, 2014; McClafferty et al., 2002; Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Since

counselors uphold an influential impact on a CGC, their complete buy-in to the belief that all

students are capable of postsecondary education attainment remains essential (Belasco, 2012).

When counselors engage in postsecondary education attainment conversations with students, those students continue to return to get help in the postsecondary education selection and admissions process (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Visiting the school's counseling office increases students' chances of applying for and attending a two- or four-year college (Bryan et al., 2011; Robinson & Roksa, 2016). This statistic is particularly true with the Latino/Hispanic student population, who historically do not pursue a postsecondary education (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). It is important to note that this statistic is not universal to all high schools. The statistic applies more to schools with an established CGC (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Theoretically, as a school's CGC grows, the counselors' influence expands.

The influence counselors possess on students' postsecondary enrollment increases as soon as students begin to visit the counselors. Students who begin visiting the school counselor in the tenth grade appeared more likely to apply to and enroll in a postsecondary institution than the students who waited to seek postsecondary education counsel their senior year (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). This statistic supports the CGC principle of *articulation*. The articulation principle states that the sooner students begin to hear the college-going message, the more likely they are to seek a postsecondary education (Bryan et al., 2011; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Engberg & Gilbert, 2014; McClafferty et al., 2002; Robinson & Roksa, 2016).

In an optimal setting, schools would employ counselors solely to fulfill the role of college coaches. The implementation of college coaches into the school system harkens back

to McDonough's 1997 case study *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*. After observing students with varying academic abilities in public and private schools, McDonough (1997) concluded, "The guidance process impacts students through subtle and unobtrusive controls.…Whatever college choice assistance the guidance office offers enhances or detracts from students' cultural capital" (p. 91). At the conclusion of her study, McDonough (1997) postulated that school counselors needed to become more aware of the impact they make on a school's "organizational arrangements and processes and the linkages between high school and colleges" and should stimulate students more in the college-choice process (p. 157). As McDonough (1997) continued her research into the role of school counselors, particularly during the "Creating a College Culture Project" (McClafferty & McDonough, 2000), she developed the idea of a singular college coach to help students maneuver the various facets of attaining postsecondary education. It should be stressed that even though the "Creating a College Culture Project" did focus on the materialization of college coaches in the schools, the project also concentrated on figuring out how to structure a CGC. A college coach managed to persist as one feature of the CGC structure. Many schools cannot afford to employ another fully-funded position, causing school counselors to take on the college coach's responsibilities as well as their traditional duties.

Role of the Teacher

The classroom is where a CGC is reinforced daily by teachers during classroom activities (Schneider, 2007). Students interact with teachers every day, which means the teachers' integration of a CGC carries significant weight on the culture's influence. Research shows that teachers who create a CGC in their classroom impart a positive impact on their

students (Bosworth et al., 2014; Corwin & Tierney, 2007). If a teacher incorporates a college-going climate in the classroom, students possess a 12% higher chance of enrolling in a postsecondary institution (Roderick et al., 2011). If high school students develop trust in their teachers, they are more likely to ask their teachers for postsecondary advice than the school counselor (Kolluri et al., 2020). Much of that trust comes from the day-to-day classroom interactions students have with their teachers (Kolluri et al., 2020). To create such a drastic, positive impact on postsecondary enrollment, teachers need to fundamentally incorporate the principle of *college talk* into their speech and assignments (Kolluri et al., 2020; MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et al., 2002). Integrating postsecondary education discussions as an integral part of a lesson plan alleviates the feeling that discussion diminishes from instructional time (McClafferty et al., 2002). The *college talk* principle also goes beyond lesson plans and assignments and includes visual representation and informal talks with students about postsecondary education attainment (Kolluri et al., 2020).

Teachers can engage with the *college talk* principle through visual means by hanging their college diploma(s) on the wall, putting up posters that cover various postsecondary education topics or that spotlight local postsecondary institutions, wearing shirts from their alumni institutions, and the like (MacDonald & Dorr 2006; Martinez et al., 2019). The visual aspects of *college talk* in the classroom are also important because they create a "visual reality" of postsecondary education for students (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006, p. 3). The act of engaging in verbal postsecondary education discussions also consists of sharing appropriate personal college experiences to make the concept of attending a postsecondary education institution more tangible or assigning essays that align with college application prompts (College Board, 2006; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et

al., 2002). To effectively engage with the *college-talk* principle, teachers need to establish "relational trust" with their students (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; McKillip et al., 2012; Schneider, 2007). This trust remains founded on mutual respect (teacher for student/student for teacher), competence (teachers seem prepared and knowledgeable), personal regard for others (teachers go out of their way to help their students), and integrity (teachers' actions support teachings) (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; McKillip et al., 2012). If teachers establish trust with their students, students become more likely to believe and act upon the message behind a CGC: that all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary education.

To be strong agents for promoting a CGC, teachers must be critically conscious of their own biases of whom they think should or should not attend a postsecondary institution. Teachers must engage in self-reflection to make sure they are not subconsciously sending negative messages to students about their postsecondary education abilities (Martinez et al., 2019; Welton & Williams, 2014). Students perceive when teachers label students as slackers or high-performing and feel that teachers only invest in students they have deemed high-performing (Martinez et al., 2019). Often, teachers who do not teach advanced placement (AP) courses subconsciously have lower expectations for their students and do not frequently engage in postsecondary education discussions (Kolluri et al., 2020; Martinez et al., 2019; Schneider, 2007). Once teachers self-reflect and acknowledge any biases they may hold, they can build a stronger relational trust with their students, which will strengthen the message that all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary education.

Role of the Principal

Much of the published literature on CGC does not focus on principals, but instead groups them into the catch-all classification of "administrators." For this study, principals are

singled out from this classification because their offices are in the high school building. Traditionally, a school principal occupies three central roles: managing school personnel, engaging in parent and community collaboration, and creating a positive school climate (Cisler & Bruce, 2013). While those traditional roles continue as part of a principal's functions, aspects of CGC accompany those duties. Principals influence a school's CGC by establishing a CGC as a norm within the school (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017; Martinez & Everman, 2017). Part of instilling a CGC in schools means principals also ensure that all school personnel understand and uphold the values of a CGC (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017; Martinez & Everman, 2017).

When supervising school personnel, principals maintain clear communication among personnel to create a conducive learning environment (Cisler & Bruce, 2013; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Martinez & Everman, 2017). While maintaining open communication with school personnel remains key in establishing a CGC, the principal also establishes the relationship between staff at various postsecondary institutions and cultivates those relationships through open communication (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017; Kim et al., 2020; Martinez & Everman, 2017). By engaging in open communication with school personnel and postsecondary education staff, the principal also avoids creating a CGC based on their own beliefs of what the students need to successfully enroll in postsecondary institutions (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017; Kim et al., 2020). If not engaging in open communication, the principal could create a CGC founded on biases, which would result in a less inclusive CGC. Open communication creates a check and balance between school personnel, which in return, creates a more inclusive CGC (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017; Kim et al., 2020). Open communication also influences a variety of facets within a

school. Part of the communication entails influencing the school's teaching methods (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017; Martinez & Everman, 2017). Holding workshops and enabling professional development opportunities increases the strength of a CGC (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017; Martinez & Everman, 2017). Creating an interactive environment that engages students is another way principals can foster a CGC (Martinez et al., 2019). An example of an interactive environment is designing and placing bulletin boards in high traffic areas that showcase students who have been accepted to postsecondary institutions (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017), which would also align with the visual criteria for the *college talk* principle.

Principals also help organize college fairs and invite college representatives to their schools (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017; Martinez & Everman, 2017). The relationship with postsecondary institutions is vital in creating a CGC because schools need to organize campus tours and college fairs to help fulfill the *college partnerships* principle (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; Martinez & Everman, 2017; McClafferty et al., 2002). Establishing communication with postsecondary institutions also falls under the "parent and community collaboration" duty of a principal (Cisler & Bruce, 2013, p. 10). Despite the implications of the term *community*, this duty actually focuses on the students' parents and guardians. The main focus of this duty is to involve "parents [and guardians] into the decision-making process as key leaders in their child's education" (Cisler & Bruce, 2013, p. 10). A CGC recognizes that many parents/guardians, especially in lower socioeconomic areas, might not understand the college application process's nuances (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; McClafferty et al., 2002). A principal, along with the school counselor, can ensure that the school offers workshops, gives informational materials, and conducts meetings with students'

parents/guardians to help them become more aware of their student's postsecondary

education options (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Martinez

& Everman, 2017). These actions help educate parents/guardians on how to encourage their

student(s) to pursue a postsecondary education and to help their student(s) make an informed

decision on postsecondary education choices (Convertino & Graboski-Bauer, 2017; Corwin

& Tierney, 2007; Martinez & Everman, 2017).

Furthermore, principals can positively influence the counselors to engage in college

coaching behaviors. When principals support the *comprehensive counseling model* principle,

they potentially increase their students' chances of enrolling in a postsecondary institution by

22% (Kim et al., 2020). As mentioned previously, students who see a counselor early on are

more likely to enroll in a postsecondary institution (Bryan et al., 2011; Robinson & Roksa,

2016). With principals supporting their counselors and encouraging them to engage in

college coaching with students, more students are positively influenced to attend a

postsecondary institution after graduation (Kim et al., 2020). To create this positive outcome,

principals and counselors need to work together to set postsecondary expectations for their

students (Kim et al., 2020). Also, by developing a closer working relationship with their

schools' counselors, principals can better understand a counselor's role and help support their

counselor in creating the time needed to engage in college coaching behaviors (Kim et al.,

2020).

The Influence of Habitus on a College-Going Culture

While the nine principles of a CGC provide the main framework for examining the

creation and sustainability of a CGC during COVID-19, this study also utilized Bourdieu's

(1977) *habitus* as a secondary framework. Although appearing in a multitude of his works,

the main text on habitus remains Bourdieu's (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice.*
According to Bourdieu (1977), *habitus* is a collection of predisposed dispositions or notions
people have created for themselves and their social status based on their environment. The
environment consists of physical, observable aspects and nonphysical, unobservable aspects,
such as shared language and understanding created in the environment (Bourdieu 1977,
1991). Habitus can be examined as a "multi-layered concept, with more general notions of
habitus at the level of society and more complex, differentiated notions of habitus at the level
of individual" (Reay, 2004, p. 434). This "multi-layered concept" aligns with a CGC because
a CGC is also multi-layered. As mentioned earlier, McDonough's (1997) case study
presented in *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*
became a foundational text for the development of a CGC. For the study's theoretical
framework, McDonough (1997) used Bourdieu's (1977) concept of habitus and how habitus
influences cultural capital to frame the observations in her case study. In her study, she
defined habitus as a "set of subjective perceptions held by all members of the same group or
class that shapes an individual's expectations, attitudes, and aspirations" (McDonough, 1997,
p. 9).

Duality exists in habitus because it examines how society and social class are created
through the perceptions held by those within that society (Bourdieu, 1990; Reay, 2004). How
a person perceives their place in society is through social interaction with the structures
embedded into their family and communities (Bourdieu, 1990; Reay, 2004). For this study,
the duality being examined is how school personnel engage with the nine principles of a
CGC to create observable and unobservable actions used to uphold the nine principles of a
CGC.

Bourdieu typically applied habitus to family units and communities to consider how those entities influence a person's sense of self and social status (Bourdieu, 1998; Huang, 2019). According to Bourdieu (1998), families propel their social beliefs and structures onto the upcoming generations. Those beliefs encompass "fertility strategies, matrimonial strategies, successional strategies, economic strategies, and last but not least, educational strategies" (Bourdieu, 1998, p.19). In brief, families become the foundation for how a person perceives themself and their station in society. The influence of the family is particularly important in education. Bourdieu (1977) claims:

> the habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of school experiences (in particular the reception and assimilation of the specifically pedagogic message), and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlines the structuring of all subsequent experiences (e.g. the reception and assimilation of the message of the culture industry or work experiences), and so on, from structuring to restructuring. (p.87)

To summarize, families with a higher value on education tend to give their children a more in-depth understanding of education's importance (Bourdieu 1977, 1998). The opposite is also true. If a family does not value education, the student is less likely to grasp the importance of attaining a postsecondary education (Bourdieu 1977, 1998). Therefore, a student's educational values are directly tied to their family.

In terms of education, Bourdieu believed schools' social structures were programmed to help students who already had access to a higher cultural status—those students with high GPAs and college ambitions (Webb et al., 2002). In essence, a CGC is building on that belief by expanding the structure to include all students, not just a select few. Habitus' focus on

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how status and social belief are constructed and reinforced through a person's environment aligns with the belief system upheld by a CGC: all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary education. That belief is socially constructed through the implementation of a CGC. If the school's environment is not conducive to sustaining a CGC, not all students would realize their postsecondary education potential.

Summary

This study's nascent nature arises from dealing with two new research areas: creating and sustaining a CGC in high schools and the impact COVID-19 had on fulfilling the nine principles of a CGC. As showcased in this literature review, the nine principles of a CGC established a foundation for creating a CGC in a school system and outlined the roles of school personnel in a CGC. This literature review accentuated the role of counselors, teachers, and principals in a CGC since they are the focus of this study's data collection. Finally, habitus, examined as a supportive theoretical framework, was also reviewed in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine how a small sample of North Carolina public high schools defined a college-going culture (CGC) and how they were creating and sustaining their CGC during the COVID-19 pandemic. For this study, counselors, teachers, and principals provided insight into how their schools defined a CGC and how they were taking action to create and sustain their CGC during COVID-19. Using Bourdieu's (1977) habitus as a supportive theoretical framework, the nine principles of a CGC (McClafferty et al., 2002) remained the main framework for examining the schools' CGC. Even though COVID-19 forced schools' CGC to undergo alterations, researching how a CGC was created and sustained during COVID-19 provided new and viable ways to create a richer CGC going forward. Previous CGC research focused on how schools create the culture in a traditional atmosphere: a physical school building with hallways, counselor offices, and classrooms (Bosworth et al., 2014; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Jarsky et al., 2009; Martinez et al., 2019; McClafferty & McDonough, 2000; McClafferty et al., 2002; McKillip et al., 2012; Schneider, 2007). To understand the impact of COVID-19 on the creation and sustainability of a school's CGC, the following research questions were examined:

1. How do North Carolina high schools define college-going, college, and/or a college-going culture?

2. How do school personnel perceive the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture under the influence of coronavirus (COVID-19)?

These questions were examined using a mixed-methods research design in two phases, known as an explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), with phase one

being quantitative and utilizing a survey for data collection, and phase two being qualitative and utilizing interviews for data collection. The phases and the data collection methods are described in detail later in this chapter.

Context for Study: North Carolina Coronavirus School Plans

To understand how the public high school educational environment was altered due to COVID-19, plans made by and actions taken by North Carolina that impacted educational procedures need to be addressed. North Carolina declared a state of emergency on March 10, 2020, and on March 13, 2020, an executive order issued by Governor Roy Cooper declared that all K-12 schools would be closed until March 30, 2020 (Exec. Order No. 117, 2020). That executive order was extended on March 23, 2020, and officially closed the North Carolina school systems for the remainder of the academic year (Exec. Order No. 117, 2020).

North Carolina's school closures were not a unique phenomenon; across the world, schools closed, with those closures impacting 82.8% of the world's student population by the end of March 2020 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2020). With abrupt school closures, school personnel were left uncertain on how to proceed in these unprecedented times. Counselors had to figure out how to support students in a virtual environment; teachers had to take a year's worth of planning and modify it practically overnight for a virtual platform; and principals had to keep their staff and students safe during this pandemic. During the summer break, uncertainty loomed over whether students would or would not physically return to schools for the 2020-2021 academic year, leaving school personnel unable to solidify plans. The State Board of Education and NC Department Public Institution partnered with the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services to produce a document, *Light Our Way Forward: North Carolina's Guidebook for Reopening Public Schools*, that

outlined, in detail, the three plans for the fall semester: Plan A: Minimal Social Distancing;

Plan B: Moderate Social Distancing; and Plan C: Remote Learning Only. Table 1 gives a

brief overview of the three plans.

Table 1

Outline of the Three North Carolina Educational Plans for Fall 2020

Plan	Description
Plan A: Minimal Social Distancing	- All students would be returning to school simultaneously at the beginning of the school year. - The school would be prepared to switch to a blending learning environment if necessary. - Extra health precautions would be put into place (i.e., the school cafeterias not operating at full capacity). - Social distancing protocols would not be implemented but would be encouraged as recommended by the state's health authorities.
Plan B: Moderate Social Distancing	- Schools would be opening at 50% capacity. - Teaching would be done in a blended learning environment. - Social distancing would be required. - This plan includes multiple options.
Plan C: Remote Learning Only	- Students would not be returning to the physical school building. - All education would be done remotely.

At 3:00 p.m. on July 14, 2020, Governor Cooper announced that schools' openings

would transpire under one of the Plan B options with the ability also to carry out Plan C,

effectively eliminating Plan A as an option for the fall semester (Cooper, 2020). If schools

opened under Plan B protocols, remote learning options had to be available for all students if

requested (Cooper, 2020). Governor Cooper announced the following implemented protocols

to help schools open in a safe manner (Cooper, 2020):

- Face coverings became mandatory for all K-12 teachers, staff, and students;
  - Five reusable masks were supplied for teachers, staff, and students.

- The number of people in the school building was limited to create six feet of social distancing;

- Symptom screenings occurred daily, and schools had to be able to isolate students who showed symptoms;

- The school's schedule allowed for frequent hand washing as well as to undergo regular cleanings;

- Teachers were encouraged to limit the sharing of items among themselves, other staff, and students;

- Outside activities and visitors became limited; and

- No assemblies or large group gatherings were allowed.

Governor Cooper said Plan B was the "baseline," but districts could opt for Plan C to maintain the students' safety (Cooper, 2020). Upon making the announcement, Governor Cooper added that if spikes continued, Plan C, fully remote learning, would be implemented (Cooper, 2020). At the conclusion of this study, schools were still operating under Plan B or Plan C; fully remote learning statewide had not occurred. Since schools were not required to implement full remote learning mid-semester, this study did not have to address operational changes mid-semester.

Research Design

The data collection methods were predetermined, making this study a fixed mixed-methods design, operating under an explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in a mixed-methods design created a "more robust analysis" due to the complementary nature of the methods and the ability to delve deeper into the research questions (Ivankova et al., 2006, p. 3). Furthermore,

by using an explanatory sequential design, methodological issues of research type priority, data collection order, and research phases are circumvented (Ivankova et al., 2006). These issues are avoided due to the explicated steps for conducting an explanatory sequential design mixed-methods study, which outlines the sequence of quantitative and qualitative data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Figure 3 illustrates the progression of an explanatory sequential design mixed-methods study as found in *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this design, research is conducted in two phases to build upon concepts discovered during phase one of a study. Each phase involves analysis of the data with phase two involving two analyses: individual analysis of the quantitative data and a connective analysis comparing the two data sets.

Figure 3

Explanatory Sequential Design for a Mixed-Methods Study
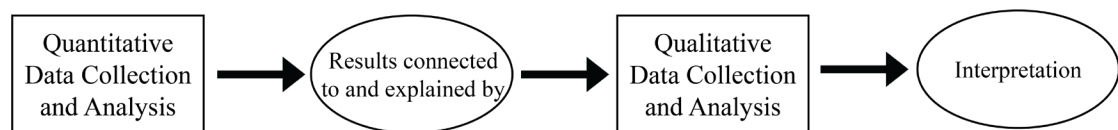
Greene, Caracalla, and Graham (1989) identified five major reasons to utilize a mixed-method design:

- **triangulation**: uses more than one research method to examine the same research question(s) (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Triangulation helps to circumvent bias that occurs not only from the research subjects, but also from the

researcher by "ultimately fortify[ing] and enrich[ing] a study's conclusions" (Hesse-

Biber, 2010, p. 3);

- **complementarity**: elaborates and clarifies outcomes from one research method by

  utilizing a second research method;

- **development**: utilizes the first research method to inform the second research method

  to increase the construct validity;

- **initiation**: examines any contradictions that arise during the two research methods;

  and

- **expansion**: seeks to expand on preexisting research by using two research methods.

These five reasons allow not only for expansion of knowledge, but also locate new ways to

engage in research of a new topic (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Greene et al., 1989; Hesse-

Biber, 2010). For this study, the survey data analysis directly impacted the knowledge being

sought during the interviews. The interview questions also reflected the complementary

reason because the questions elaborated on the survey results. Triangulation, which is

particularly helpful for a single researcher, provided a check and balance system for

researcher bias.

Survey Design

Phase one, a survey, focused on three roles: counselors, teachers, and principals. The

survey questions are found in Appendix A. Even though some questions were specific to

counselors, principals, or teachers, the majority of the questions strived at gaining an

overarching view of a CGC's creation during COVID-19. Generally, survey questions tend to

explore three major areas of a target population: behaviors, attitudes/opinions, and

demographics (Glasow, 2005; Nardi, 2018). Depending on the data being collected, a survey

might not need to incorporate all three areas of behaviors, attitudes/opinions, and demographics (Nardi, 2018). For this study to gain a full perspective of how COVID-19 impacted the creation and sustainability of a CGC, all three areas were utilized in this study's survey design. Behavior questions explored actions being taken by survey respondents, and attitude/opinion questions examined the feelings respondents have towards the topic being researched (Nardi, 2018). Demographics collected did not reflect survey respondents' personal traits, such as age or gender, but did include questions to better understand their education positions, such as years taught in the school or other positions held in education. The survey, created in Qualtrics, used Likert scale, multiple-choice, and open-ended questions to gain information on each of the three survey areas.

In the case of this study, having questions dedicated to a particular counselor, teacher, and principal role allowed for a broader understanding of how COVID-19 impacted all aspects of a school's environment, not just the classroom, hallways, or offices. The survey included questions for all of the respondents and questions for each individual role. All survey respondents were asked to rank how they believed their school fulfilled the nine principles of a CGC during COVID-19.

The survey relied on a Likert scale to address each one of the nine principles of a CGC. The Likert scale allowed for the intensity of feelings to be expressed through options that spanned between *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* or other similar structures (Glasow, 2005; Nardi, 2018). In the survey, each component of the nine principles of a CGC was addressed, which helped to actualize the behavior aspect of the survey research. Each principle was listed in the survey, asking respondents to rank from 1) *Actions to fulfill this principle have yet to be acted on* to 5) *The school not only fulfills this principle, but it is also*

fully integrated into the school's routines. The purpose of this Likert scale was to get an exhaustive understanding of how the schools created each CGC principle.

Open-ended questions helped to gain an understanding of the survey respondents' opinions and attitudes on a subject by allowing them to answer in their own words with no predetermined choices (Glasow, 2005; Nardi, 2018). Two questions in the survey directly addressed COVID-19 and a CGC: *Please elaborate on how you believe your school is using the nine principles of a college-going culture to create a college-going culture during COVID-19?*; and *What, if anything, hinders your school from creating a college-going culture during COVID-19?* Furthermore, using open-ended questions to gain definitions for *college* allowed for an understanding not only of how participants defined the terminology associated with a CGC, but also indirectly, how that terminology influenced their view of a CGC.

Ethnographic Interview Practices

Phase two consisted of an ethnographic interview. An ethnographic interview, typically used in more anthropology-focused studies, centers on gathering information about a particular culture (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This interview type looks into the rites and rituals that certain groups perform to help create a culture (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The ethnographic interview used in this study centered on counselors, teachers, and principals and the actions they took to create and sustain a CGC during COVID-19. The interviews intended to fulfill the seven key features of an interview: knowledge as produced, knowledge as relational, knowledge as conversational, knowledge as contextual, knowledge as linguistic, knowledge as narrative, and knowledge as pragmatic (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 63-65):

- **knowledge as produced**: The knowledge was produced from the questions targeted at gathering a further understanding of how the schools created a CGC through utilizing the nine principles of a CGC;

- **knowledge as relational**: The relationship knowledge falls under two subsets—inter-rational and inter-subjective—and comes from the researcher's relationships with the subject matter and the interviewees (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). For this study, the relationship with the subject matter was established through a literature review, and the relationship with the interviewees was established initially through the survey invitation email and further established through interview invitation emails;

- **knowledge as conversational**: The conversational knowledge was established through the interview questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Having a semi-structured interview process allows for a more in-depth narrative to develop; thus, it was chosen for this study to encourage richer data;

- **knowledge as contextual**: The context of the interview was examining a CGC. Information not related to the creation and sustainability of a CGC was not examined as it did not pertain to the context of this study;

- **knowledge as linguistic**: The language of the interview was shaped around the nine principles of a CGC. The interviewees were familiarized with the language, not only through the survey, but also through a confirmation email to confirm interview times. The email contained a brief description of this study's working definition of a CGC and included an attachment that contained an outline of the nine principles of a CGC;

- **knowledge as narrative**: The narrative was developed by encouraging interviewees to share specific examples of how COVID-19 had impacted the creation and sustainability of the CGC at their school; and

- **knowledge as pragmatic**: The pragmatic knowledge occurred during the analysis stage of the interviews because it was during this time that the knowledge was "perform[ing] effective actions" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 65). The interviews acted as further support for the survey data, helping to create a complete picture of how these high schools created a CGC during COVID-19.

By following the key knowledge features, the structure of this study's interviews was guaranteed to remain ethnographical in nature because each knowledge feature helped focus the interview in order to gather information about the creation and sustainability of a CGC. Ethnography focuses on understanding and describing cultures in a scientific manner (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016); in this study, a CGC during COVID-19 was the culture attempted to be understood and described.

Interview Protocols for This Study. The interviews operated under a semi-structured protocol. A series of questions were prepared for the interviews with probing questions occurring throughout the interviews to gain further understanding when deemed necessary. Interview questions, found in Appendix B, were finalized after the analysis of the survey data. By waiting until the survey data analysis was complete, the questions were targeted at gaining a deeper understanding of the CGC creation and sustainability during COVID-19 in North Carolina public high schools. The prepared questions consisted of introductory questions, transition questions, key questions, and closing questions (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Introductory questions allowed for basic interviewee knowledge to be

gained (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Castillo-Montoya, 2016). For these interviews, the introductory interview questions inquired about employment history in education. As the name suggests, the transition questions allowed for a transition from the introduction to the main topic of the interview (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). For these interviews, transition questions also helped to understand the breadth of knowledge the interviewees had about a CGC. For example, *When and how did you learn about the concept of a college-going culture* was a transition question. During the interviews, personalization was added to the question to help with a smoother transition. A phrase referencing the interviewee's current position and time held in the position prompted the transition (i.e., "During your 15 years as a math teacher, when and how…").

The interviews' key questions focused on how the interviewees perceived the creation and sustainability of their school's CGC during COVID-19. To remain ethnographical and to obtain a deeper understanding of a CGC, the key questions were focused and descriptive. In this study, focused questions centered on the nine principles of a CGC and how those nine principles were realized during COVID-19. A focus question example is *Please elaborate on how your school is using the nine principles of a CGC to create a CGC during COVID*. Descriptive interview questions aimed to gather detailed understandings of the interviewees' experiences and feelings (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). To illustrate, the question *Please elaborate on why you do or do not believe all students are college-capable* gathered information on an interviewee's opinion of the core belief of a CGC; gathering this opinion allowed for a deeper understanding of the buy-in into a CGC.

Finally, closing questions allowed for the interviewees to express any opinions that might not have arisen during the interview (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). The main closing

question for this interview revolved around asking the interviewees to elaborate on any points regarding the impact of COVID-19 and education, particularly in terms of a CGC, they had not had a chance to express during the interview process. Probing and follow-up questions arose from the semi-structured nature of the interviews and allowed for elaboration on a topic during the interview (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015; Castillo-Montoya, 2016). These questions were not predetermined and instead manifested as the interview took place. Utilizing these types of questions caused a deeper understanding of how COVID-19 impacted that interviewee's particular role in education and how they felt about creating a CGC during COVID-19.

Data Collection

During phase one, survey data were collected with interviews being conducted after survey analysis was completed for phase two. The survey opened for responses on October 15, 2020. The survey did not officially close until the end of the fall semester, with the last survey response occurring on November 23, 2020. Even though three interviews were scheduled, two interviews occurred. The first interview took place utilizing Zoom on December 8, 2020, and the second interview took place also utilizing Zoom on December 9, 2020.

Sampling

Participants were recruited for this study by utilizing convenience and snowball sampling methods. These sampling methods rely on willing participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). Convenience sampling allowed this study to extend its reach and gain insight from public high schools in North Carolina. The convenience arose from using connections from the Reich College of Education at

Appalachian State University. Recruitment emails, as seen in Appendix C, were emailed to various stakeholder groups connected to the Reich College of Education at Appalachian State University. The email did not encourage forwarding this study's survey link, but several respondents sent emails inquiring if they could forward the recruitment email to potential participants. Due to the survey's anonymous nature, it is impossible to distinguish between respondents who took the survey from the initial recruitment email or from those who took the survey after it was forwarded to them. Using the GPS location embedded in each Qualtrics survey response showed that the responses were primarily from the western part of the state with a concentration of responses occurring around the Lenoir area. Table 2 exhibits the recruitment groups along with the number of email addresses in each group and the total survey responses acquired from each group as well as the number of usable responses.

Table 2

Overview of Convenience Sampling Groups

Source	Number of Email Addresses	Demographic of Group	Number of Total Responses	Number of Usable Responses
Appalachian State Reich College of Education doctoral email list	109	Mixture of faculty, current doctoral students, and recently graduated doctoral students	18	8
Appalachian State Reich College of Education Master's email list	143	Mixture of faculty—not just Reich College of Education faculty— and current education Master's students	36	12
List from Dr. E. C, recent Appalachian State University Higher Education Leadership graduate and middle school counselor	12	Mixture of principals, teachers, and counselors	8	7

Participants volunteered to be interviewed for this study during the recruitment process. The recruitment emails asked for people willing to participate in interviews to email their information to the researcher. The researcher received three responses from people willing to participate in interviews, but could only conduct two interviews. Two of the responses came from the original recruitment emails; an overview of their background is given later in this chapter. The third interviewee, an English teacher, came from a recommendation by the teacher interviewee participant. Despite engaging in email communication and setting a Zoom interview timeframe, the third interview participant did not join the Zoom call for their interview. Due to the anonymity of the survey, it was not possible to connect the interviewees to their survey responses.

Sample

This section gives an overview of the survey respondents' demographics and of the interview participants. Prior to analyzing the survey dataset, the survey responses underwent a cleaning process.

Data Cleaning

Overall, the survey received 62 responses, and cleansing the data of responses that did not meet study criteria left 27 usable responses. First, to clean the survey responses, people who did not work in a high school ($n = 15$) were removed from the dataset. Next, cleaning occurred of respondents who indicated they did not have a counselor, teacher, or principal role in their high school ($n = 6$). Surveys with incomplete responses were also cleaned ($n = 8$). An incomplete response was considered any survey that did not have responses beyond question six of the 34 question survey. Questions one through six consisted of demographic questions. Survey respondents who did not answer beyond

question six did not answer any questions regarding a CGC and COVID-19. Finally, survey responses not from a North Carolina public high school were cleaned ($n = 6$). After data cleaning, 27 survey responses aligned with this study's focus on counselors, teachers, and principals in North Carolina public high schools.

Survey Respondent Demographics

The final dataset contained 27 usable responses; three from counselors, 21 from teachers, and three from principals or assistant principals. Table 3 indicates demographic information for respondents. As seen in Table 3, 20 respondents (74.07%) came from rural populations. The counselor respondents had been employed as high school counselors between two to ten years; the teacher respondents had been employed as high school teachers between six and 21+ years; and the principal respondents had been employed as a high school principal or assistant principal for less than a year to five years.

Table 3

Survey Respondent Demographics by Role

		Counselors (*n* = 3)	Teachers (*n* = 21)	Principals (*n* = 3)
		f	*f*	*f*
Location	Rural	2	16	2
	Suburban	1	2	1
	Urban	0	3	0
Years in Current Position	0 - 1	0	0	1
	2 - 5	2	0	2
	6 - 10	1	6	0
	11 - 15	0	5	0
	16 - 20	0	6	0
	21+	0	4	0
Years at Current School	0 - 1	0	1	1
	2 - 5	2	6	1
	6 - 10	1	3	0
	11 - 15	0	4	0
	16 - 20	0	5	0
	21+	0	2	1
Primary Grade Level Taught (Teachers Only)	9th	n/a	3	n/a
	10th	n/a	3	n/a
	11th	n/a	2	n/a
	12th	n/a	5	n/a
	6th - 12th	n/a	2	n/a
	9th - 12th	n/a	4	n/a
	Other	n/a	2	n/a

Even though the locations (i.e., rural, suburban, and urban) in Table 3 were self-identified, the embedded GPS in Qualtrics showed that respondents were mainly from the western side of the state. Figure 4 shows a North Carolina map with the GPS locations pinpointed. As indicated by Figure 4, responses were received from the North Central (*n* = 1), Northwest (*n* = 11), Piedmont-Triad (*n* = 5), Southeast (*n* = 1), Southwest (*n* = 5), and Western (*n* = 4) school districts. Lenoir, North Carolina, had the highest concentration of responses with seven responses from that area.

Figure 4

Map of North Carolina Marking Qualtrics GPS Location
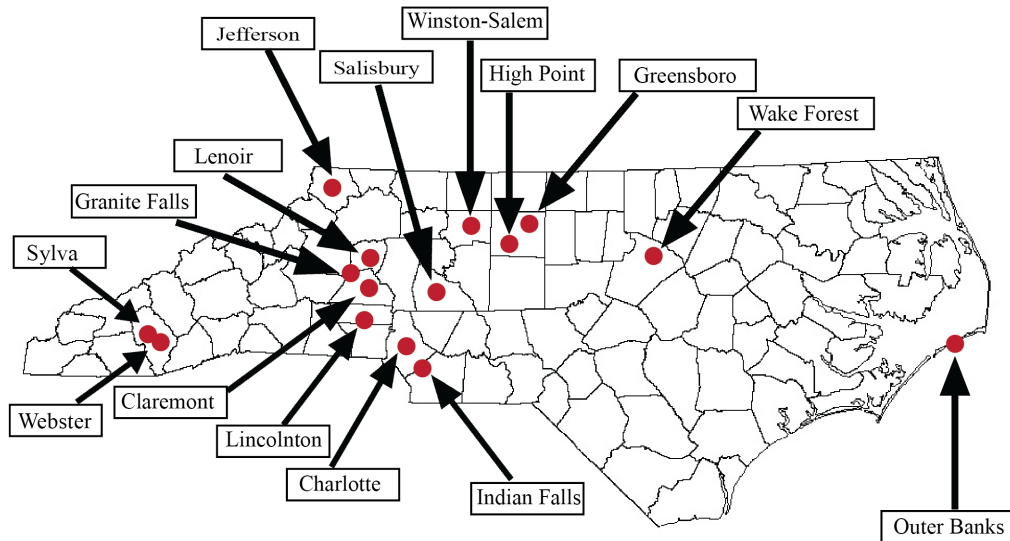
Note. The location indicated by the Qualtrics GPS function denotes only the location where the respondent completed the survey and does not necessarily reflect the location of the respondent's high school.

In terms of school operations during the time of this study, 21 of the respondents reported to be operating under Plan B, a hybrid of in-person and virtual learning. Five respondents reported that their school was operating under Plan C. Only one school, located in a rural location, claimed to be operating under a "mix" of both Plan B and Plan C, but did not elaborate on what was meant by a "mix" in their survey response.

Counselors. Out of the three counselor respondents, two came from rural locations and one from a suburban location. All of the counselors' schools employed Plan B at the time of this study. Also, all of the counselors indicated they had only worked in a high school setting with one respondent having previously worked as a high school teacher. Another

noteworthy feature of the counselor responses was that two of the respondents did not answer the open-ended question that asked respondents to *Please elaborate on how you believe your school is using the nine principles of a college-going culture to create a college-going culture during COVID*. As mentioned in chapter two, counselors influence all of the nine principles of a CGC. While the lack of response was not detrimental to the overall study, it was detrimental to the counselor analysis. Overall, the question had a 70.37% response rate, giving valuable insight into how the nine principles of a CGC were utilized during COVID-19.

Teachers. Teacher responses ($n = 21$) made up 77.78% of the overall response rate. Out of the 21 teacher respondents, three were from urban locations, two from suburban locations, and 16 from rural locations. Two of the urban respondents worked in schools operating under Plan B, and one urban respondent's school utilized Plan C. Both of the suburban respondents worked in schools operating under Plan C for the fall 2020 semester. Out of the 16 rural respondents, 13 respondents' schools operated under Plan B, two respondents' schools operated under Plan C, and one respondent's school operated under a "mix" of Plan B and Plan C. The respondent did not elaborate on what constituted as a "mix" of Plan B and Plan C.

Teaching experience ranged from 2 – 21+ years with six of the respondents indicating 6 - 10 years of teaching experience and six of the respondents indicating 16 - 20 years of teaching experience. At 23.80%, five of the teacher respondents indicated they primarily taught 12th grade. Even though 9-12th and 6th-12th were not original response options in the survey, six respondents entered those ranges in the *Other* text box. Two rural school respondents also put responses in the *Other* text box: *All of my classes are a mixture,* and

Exceptional Children. Out of the 21 teacher respondents, 18 of the teacher respondents indicated they had taught other grades. As Table 4 indicates, Career and Technical Education (CTE) at 23.80% (*n* = 5), Language Arts at 19.05% (*n* = 4), and Arts (such as band, chorus, and theater) (*n* = 3) at 14.29% were the top three subjects primary subjects being taught by the teacher respondents.

Table 4

Primary Subject Taught by Teachers (n = 21)

Subject	*f*
Arts	3
Career and Technical Education	5
Exceptional Children	2
Foreign Languages	0
History/Social Studies	2
Language Arts	4
Math	2
PE/Health	1
Science	2
Other	0

Teachers were also asked to indicate if they taught any other subjects. Out of the respondents, only three rural teachers indicated that they taught other subjects: a teacher who primarily taught in the arts also taught CTE classes, a teacher who primarily taught math also taught science, and a teacher who primarily taught language arts also taught Exceptional Children (EC).

Principals. For this category, three usable responses were identified: one principal and two assistant principals. When referring to the respondents under this category, the

general term *principal* will be utilized. All of the respondents in this category were operating under Plan B. The principal respondent indicated they worked in a suburban location, and the two assistant principals indicated they worked in rural locations. The principal respondent had previously worked in a middle school setting and had also worked as an assistant principal. Both of the assistant principal respondents indicated they had only worked in a high school setting. One of the assistant principal respondents had previously worked as a "district beginning teacher mentor," and the other assistant principal respondent had previously worked as a teacher.

One principal and one assistant principal did not answer the last two questions of the survey: *Please elaborate on how you believe your school is using the nine principles of a college-going culture to create a college-going culture during COVID*, and *What, if anything, hinders your school from creating a college-going culture during COVID*? Despite two-thirds of the respondents not answering those questions, a principal perspective of a CGC was gained because all respondents in this category responded, using a Likert scale, on how their school fulfills each principle of the nine principles of a CGC during COVID-19. The results from that question will be discussed in chapter four.

Interview Participants

Interviews took place over Zoom with consent to conduct the interviews being gained verbally at the beginning of each interview and then a consent form signed virtually by each interviewee. Appendix D contains the consent form. The first interview took place on December 8, 2020, with the second interview taking place on December 9, 2020. Both interviewees were female, and both had worked or were currently working in a public high school.

The first interviewee, who will be referred to in this study as Elizabeth, had been a public high school math teacher for 15 years and had recently taken a job as the math coordinator for her school district, which was located in a rural district. Elizabeth was supposed to start her coordinator position over the summer, but started before the end of the spring 2020 semester to help finalize the start of the fall 2020 semester under the COVID-19 educational plans. She learned about the concept of a CGC about a year and a half ago while working on her Ed.D. and her administrative add-on license. During one of her Ed.D. courses, Elizabeth based a class assignment on CGC. In her interview, Elizabeth said she found that the featured school in her project was "pushing and supporting students going to a four-year [institution]…and kind of not really looking in the way of anybody going to community college or going into the workforce." Elizabeth did admit she read about the nine principles of a CGC during her project, but she was not exceedingly familiar with them.

The second interviewee, who will be referred to as Kelly in this study, was a special education teacher for 9-12th graders as well as a department chair and Faculty Senate chair. She has taught at her current school for 11 years and had previously worked in a middle school. Overall, she has worked in education for over twenty years. Her current school was located in a rural district. Kelly first heard about a CGC was when she read the recruitment email for this study. Since reading the recruitment email, she talked with her daughter, a student working on her Master's degree in counseling, and her school's personnel about a CGC. Since engaging in dialogue with her school's personnel, she discovered "there are people on staff…at the high school who understand and are trying to facilitate a college-going culture."

Data Analysis

By analyzing survey data first, the interview questions were able to derive more "meaningful explanations" of the data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 234). In total, data analysis occurs three times during an explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018): 1) *quantitative data analysis*; 2) *qualitative data analysis*; and 3) *combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative data*. In this design, each analysis was done in separate stages and not concurrently.

Survey Data Analysis

Survey data analysis utilized descriptive statistics for multiple choice and Likert scale questions. Open-ended questions underwent thematic coding. All of the multiple-choice questions were analyzed using frequency distributions. Results are presented in ungrouped frequency distributions or relative frequency distributions. Likert scale questions also used frequency distribution for analysis.

Likert Scale Analysis. One Likert scale question was analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and mode. The question that used frequency distribution, mean, and mode for analysis asked participants to rank how they believe their school is fulfilling the nine principles of a CGC during COVID-19 on a scale of 1) *Actions to fulfill this principle have yet to be acted on* to 5) *The school not only fulfills this principle but it is also fully integrated into the school's routine*. The question listed each of the nine principles of a CGC and asked respondents to rank each one using the five-point Likert scale.

Though mean and mode might seem simplistic, in this study, those two calculations are very telling. An assumption can be made about each principle's overall strength by obtaining the mean score for each principle's creation. Mode expresses the answer most often

given in a data set (Coladarci & Cobb, 2013; Field & Graham, 2003/2013). A standard deviation was also calculated and presented to ensure the mean created an accurate data representation.

Thematic Coding of Open-Ended Questions. Open-ended questions underwent a thematic coding approach. A thematic approach looks to identify patterns in the data with the patterns working to "capture something important about the data in relation to the research question" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Initial coding occurred during the second stage of analysis and was formalized during the combination stage of analysis. Coding was done manually through a scissor-and-sort method. The scissor-and-sort technique groups relevant sections of the transcripts together using a classification system (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). Coding typically focuses on classifying individual answers, whereas the scissor-and-sort coding method groups together everyone's responses under a classification system. After coding was complete, themes were developed by identifying key phrases, words, or concepts found in the open-ended survey responses. For questions that asked for the definition of a word (i.e., college) to be developed, the key phrases, words, or concepts used the most in the open-ended survey responses were integrated into the definition.

Beyond coding individual open-ended questions and interview data to create an understanding of how respondents viewed a CGC, overarching themes that appeared in the survey and interview data were identified. Those themes were reviewed, resulting in four final themes being named and defined (Braun & Clark, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The four themes established four hindrances to creating and sustaining a CGC in North Carolina public high schools. Chapter four explores those four themes further under the appropriate headings.

Interview Analysis

The interview responses were transcribed using Sonix with an accuracy check conducted by the researcher. Also, during the accuracy check, interpretational characters were added to the transcription. Interpretational characters are added italics, bolded lettering, or notations that indicate the interviewee's mood or personal feelings to the subject (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Adding interpretational characters and notations "highlight nuances of a statement and facilitate communication" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Interview responses were coded individually and together. When coding the interview data, the scissor-and-sort technique was applied. To apply the scissor-and-sort technique, transcribed interview answers were organized by coding category or theme. The codes and themes for the scissor-and-sort methods were derived directly from the codes and themes created during the survey's opened-ended question analysis.

Combined Data Analysis

After separate analyses of the survey data and interview data were conducted, a combined analysis occurred. Initial coding occurred during the two previous analysis stages and was formalized during the combination stage of analysis. This analysis also utilized a thematic approach; though traditionally a qualitative approach, it can be used to analyze the data from two research approaches used in a mixed-methods design (Castro et al., 2010). Furthermore, a thematic analysis also helped to see if patterns arose in the hindrances that keep a CGC from being created and sustained. A combined data analysis recognized four major themes that hinder the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture.

Validity

While validity is imperative to any study, validity in a mixed-methods study is of great importance because if the two research methods are not linked, then validity cannot occur (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Validity was achieved through the triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative data. As mentioned earlier, one reason to utilize mixed-methods research is that the data collected during each phase can be triangulated against one another since both data sets are examining the same research question (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Hesse-Biber, 2010). Furthermore, each method used during the data collection phases was validated individually. Having questions that were specific to a particular respondent role allowed for another layer of triangulation.

Content validity was also used for the survey. With content validity, validation occurs when the subject matter is addressed through research and assessed with the appropriate measures (Fink, 2003; Litwin, 1995). The survey results needed to be examined against research done on CGC and on high school environments to reach content validity. Although the two have not been examined concurrently, key findings were taken from previous studies and compared to this study's findings. Even though this study is COVID-19 specific, previous studies provided an understanding of how a CGC is established and upheld in the high school environment.

Reliability

For reliability to occur in this study, content had to remain harmonious, which occurs when the survey data and interview responses are in agreement (i.e., how a CGC was established during COVID-19 remained consistent in the survey and in the interviews) (Fink, 2003). Consistency occurs when answers between the survey responses and interviews are

not vastly different. For instance, inconsistency would occur if all the interviewees claimed that COVID-19 had no impact on their CGC, and all the survey respondents claimed COVID-19 deeply impacted their CGC. In the case of this study, interviewees' commentary and survey responses were consistent in their views. Consistency was imperative because it allowed for a more rooted understanding of the impact of COVID-19 on a CGC.

Threats

For the survey data, the biased nature of self-reporting was a threat when proving the validity of the results (Glasow, 2005; Nardi, 2018). One way to validate the responses and check for biases was to triangulate the survey claims against each other within the various survey respondent roles. The validity section in this chapter outlined several of the ways triangulation occurred in this study. For interviews, one threat was respondent validity. To check respondent validity, the researcher administered a member check. A member check relies on the interviewee for validity as it occurs when interview results are written up and sent back to the interviewee for feedback and clarification (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Summary

Through convenience and snowball sampling, a small size of counselors, teachers, and principals in North Carolina public high schools participated in a survey and interviews focused on the creation and sustainability of a CGC during COVID-19. The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to capture how North Carolina high schools created and maintained their CGC during COVID-19. Even though CGC is still a fairly modern topic, it is a robust research area. The literature review in chapter two examined how a CGC is traditionally created, which allows for a deeper understanding of how COVID-19 has disrupted that creation. This study based its data collection and analysis on the nine

principles of a CGC. Analyzing the survey data with descriptive statistics created an image of

the typical CGC during COVID-19 and allowed for in-depth comparison to previous CGC

studies. The findings also informed the questions asked during the interviews, which gave

further insight into how COVID-19 has impacted the creation and sustainability of CGC.

Interview responses were coded based on key codes and themes using a scissor-and-sort

method. Finally, the data from the survey responses and interview responses were analyzed

together.

Chapter 4: Results

To address the purpose of this study, which was to understand how high schools in North Carolina define a CGC and to investigate the changes that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the creation and sustainability of a CGC, the following research questions were examined:

1. How do North Carolina high schools define college-going, college, and/or a college-going culture?

2. How do school personnel perceive the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture under the influence of the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

To examine the proposed research questions, this study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design. Data collection occurred in two phases; survey data were collected first, followed by interviews being conducted after initial survey data analysis was completed. In total, analyses occurred in three stages: survey data analysis, interview data analysis, and combined analysis of survey and interview data. The nine principles of a CGC provided the framework for examining the data with habitus acting as a supportive framework.

To address research question one, the collective definition of the terms *college-going*, *college*, and *CGC* are presented first in this chapter to establish the research participants' understanding of foundational terms and beliefs about a CGC. Following the definitions of key terms created using participants' responses, how COVID-19 impacted the creation of the nine principles of CGC is examined. The impact COVID-19 had on the principles is presented through mean, standard deviation, and mode. Once the creation of the principles of a CGC has been established, the four major themes that arose from both

datasets, which address the sustainability of a CGC during COVID-19, will be examined. The four major themes are *lack of shared language, lack of actualization of the nine principles*, *lack of normalcy during COVID-19,* and *lack of shared responsibility during COVID-19*.

During this study, the nine principles of a CGC are presented in the same numeric order. To help align principles with their numeric order, their number will be presented in parenthesis at the end of the principle's name. To illustrate, the first principle is *college talk*, and will appear as *college talk* (1) when being referenced.

Research Question One: Defining College-Going, College, and College-Going Culture

Research question one sought to define *college-going*, *college*, and *CGC*. After analyzing survey and interview data, it became apparent that a definition for *college* needed to be established before defining *college-going* and *CGC*. The way participants understood *college* directly impacted the way they defined and viewed *college-going* and *CGC*. It is important to note that the definitions established and the perceived understanding of a CGC presented in this study only reflect the sample size of this study and do not reflect the understanding of a CGC by all of the North Carolina public high school personnel.

College

To establish a definition for *college*, the question *How do you define college?* underwent coding from both datasets. After coding the survey question data, five coding categories emerged from the data. The interview responses were then examined using the five coding categories. The five coding categories exhibit the reoccurring terminology beliefs held by the survey respondents. From survey responses and interview analyses, the definition emerged as:

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- **college**: a two-year or four-year educational program of higher education that results in a degree or certificate so students can get a job or start a career.

All 27 survey respondents responded to this question, and each response was coded once (see Table 5). Appendix E contains the survey responses under their respective coding category. Responses in the *higher education/institution* theme claimed college was a place of "higher education" or an "institution of higher learning;" these responses did not indicate if the education occurred directly after high school. Responses that specifically mentioned job or career training were placed in the *career readiness/ training* category. *Certificate/ degree earning* responses mentioned earning a certificate or degree, but did not allude that the certificate or degree was meant to help students obtain employment. The *education with specific parameters* responses included any response that defined college using specific program descriptors, such as a two-year to four-year program, and did not mention degree attainment. *Conceptual* responses do not allude to any degree attainment or career-seeking abilities, but instead focus on personal growth during time spent at college or a postsecondary institution.

Table 5

Codes for Defining College

Coding for Term College ($n = 27$)	
	f
Higher Education/Institution	7
Career Readiness/Training	6
Certificate/Degree Earning	6
Education with Specific Parameters	5
Conceptual	3

The interview responses supported the finding that the term *college* is a two-year or four-year education resulting in a degree to help students obtain a job or begin a career. Elizabeth claimed, "College is preparing you [students] for jobs that require a college degree." To her, college meant attaining a degree in order to be employed. This definition aligns with the themes of *career readiness/ training* and *certificate/ degree earning*. Elizabeth does not mention a two-year or four-year time frame in her definition for college. Kelly had two different definitions for college: one for her own children and one for her students, who fall under the exceptional children category. Both of those definitions mentioned a time frame. For her children, college meant going to a four-year university. For her students, Kelly said, "I guess I would define [college] as a formal institution at a community college level or a four-year university level where they [the students] receive education and training." From this statement, Kelly revealed that *college* is a community college or a four-year university. Community colleges are associated with two-year programs (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011), which would be applicable in this instance as she associated universities with a four-year time frame.

College-Going

In much of the CGC research, the term *college-going* is not often utilized. Instead, *college-capability* is the main terminology utilized when discussing students' abilities to attain a postsecondary education in a CGC (Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Martinez et al., 2019; McClafferty et al., 2002; Oakes, 2003; Schneider, 2007). In hindsight, the first research question should have asked, *How do North Carolina high schools define college, college-capability, and/or a college-going culture?* The survey and interviews sought to understand how study participants understood the concept of *college-capability*, which is

explored when looking at the *lack of shared language* theme that arose from the survey and

interview datasets. In terms of *college-going*, the data indicates the survey respondents and

the interviewees view the concepts of a CGC through a limited lens. The limited lens means

that co*llege-going* is seen by this study's participants as students applying for and attending

two-year or four-year programs, and does not include certificate programs and technical

schools in the idea of postsecondary education attainment.

College-Going Culture

In this study, the operational definition of a CGC, as defined by the researcher, is

creating a culture where all students not only believe they are capable of attaining a

postsecondary education (and one not limited to a four-year program), but also know the

steps to take in applying and preparing for that education. As seen from the operational

definition, the term *college* is meant to encompass all postsecondary education institutions

and not just two-year or four-year programs. As it will become more apparent when

discussing the four themes that arose from both datasets, this study's participants applied

limitations to their understanding of a CGC. They understood a CGC to be students attaining

an education from two-year or four-year programs. The inclusion of certificate programs and

technical schools did not occur in the participants' understandings of a CGC.

Analysis of Findings for Research Question One. An assumption can be made that

participants in this study do not actively think about how they define *college* when creating

and sustaining a CGC in their school. The subconscious application of the limiting *college*

definition to the understanding of a CGC creates a bias towards students attending two-year

to four-year institutions. One counselor survey respondent claimed, "Some students are just

not cut out for college and succeed more in military programs, work/apprenticeship

programs, and/or trade school." As seen in their response, the counselor mentioned examples

of postsecondary institutions that should be included in their understanding of a CGC, such

as a trade school. Their response exhibits how the limiting view of college creates a negative

bias towards students who are not enrolling in two-year or four-year programs. One of the

interviews also indicated bias behavior towards students was occurring. During her

interview, Elizabeth gave an anecdote about how the high school where she used to teach.

She said the school seemed to place students attending four-year colleges "on pedestals,"

leaving those students attending community colleges feeling inadequate. According to

Elizabeth, those students who were enrolling in community colleges began to feel

unimportant by the school personnel's behaviors and celebrations geared only towards

students attending four-year institutions. Feelings of inadequacy can potentially negatively

impact a student's personal beliefs regarding their ability to attain a postsecondary education.

Research Question Two: Creation and Sustainability of a College-Going Culture during COVID-19

Research question two sought to examine how school personnel perceived the

creation and sustainability of a college-going culture under the influence of COVID-19. Data

for research question two focused on the creation and sustainability of a CGC. The nine

principles of a CGC were utilized to explore how school personnel observed the creation of a

CGC in their school during COVID-19. Survey responses provided the data to examine the

creation of a CGC. Once the creation of a CGC had been established, the sustainability of a

CGC was examined. Four considerable themes, which emerged from the combined analysis

of both datasets, showcased the lack of sustainability of a CGC during COVID-19 and

highlighted areas for improvement to create a more sustainable CGC. Habitus was utilized as a secondary framework to help support the four themes that emerged from both datasets.

Creation of a College-Going Culture

The mean, standard deviation, and mode were calculated for each principle. The calculations indicated if schools had been actively using the nine principles of a CGC to create a CGC. A higher mean indicated schools have worked to actively create that principle within their school's environment. Table 6 presents the overall mean, standard deviation, and mode for each principle.

Table 6

College-Going Culture Mean/Standard Deviation/Mode for the Nine Principles

	Overall (*n* = 27)		
	M	*SD*	*Mode*
1.College Talk	3.78	0.80	4.00
2.Clear Expectations	3.41	0.93	3.00
3.Information and Resources	3.81	0.74	4.00
4.Comprehensive Counseling Model	3.78	0.93	4.00
5.Testing and Curriculum	3.88	0.82	4.00
6.Faculty Involvement	3.22	0.85	3.00
7.Family Involvement	3.22	0.75	3.00
8.College Partnerships	4.00	0.83	5.00
9.Articulation	2.89	1.22	3.00

Note. One teacher respondent did not select a value for *testing and curriculum* (5), leaving that principle with 26 responses.

College partnerships (8) had the highest mean at 4.00 (*SD* = 0.83), and *articulation* (9) had the lowest mean at 2.89 (*SD* = 1.22). *Articulation*'s (9) mean was 27.75% lower than

the mean for *college partnerships* (8). As seen from the large standard deviation, discrepancy occurred in this principle. Acting under the assumption that a high mean correlates with high levels of engagement with that principle, *articulation* (9) is a principle that has not been actively cultivated by the schools. *Testing and curriculum* (5) ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 0.82$) and *information and resources* (3) ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.74$) had the second and third highest means. *Comprehensive counseling model* (4) ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.93$) and *college talk* (1) ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.80$) had the same means, making them the fourth and fifth highest means. *Clear expectations* (2) had a sixth highest mean of 3.41 ($SD = 0.93$). *Faculty involvement* (6) ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.74$) and *family involvement* (7) ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.74$) had the same means, making them the seventh and eighth highest means. When a principle's mean and standard deviation are referred to in the rest of this study, the mean and standard deviation referred to will be the overall mean and standard deviation presented in Table 6.

Due to the time constraints of the interviews, time could not be spent to discuss the creation of each principle with the interviewees. The interviewees' overall feelings on creating and sustaining a CGC in their schools are discussed when exploring the four themes that arose from both datasets.

Creation of a College-Going Culture by Role. The creation levels of each principle were also examined by the school personnel's role. Looking at CGC creation by role showcased if the nine principles of a CGC maintained the same highest and lowest means across the various roles. Since teachers ($n = 21$) at 77.78% constituted for most of the respondent rate ($n = 27$), the influence teacher responses had on the overall mean, standard deviation, and mode of the nine principles was observed. Table 7 presents the mean, standard deviation, and mode for each principle by role.

Table 7

College-Going Culture Scores and Mean/Mode for Nine Principles by Role

	Counselor (n = 3)			Teacher (n = 21)			Principal (n = 3)		
	M	*SD*	*Mode*	*M*	*SD*	*Mode*	*M*	*SD*	*Mode*
1.College Talk	4.67	0.58	5.00	3.71	0.64	3.00	3.33	1.53	n/a
2.Clear Expectations	3.67	0.58	4.00	3.38	0.92	3.00	3.33	1.53	n/a
3.Information and Resources	4.33	0.58	4.00	3.81	0.75	4.00	3.33	0.58	3.00
4.Comprehensive Counseling Model	4.00	0.00	4.00	3.81	1.03	5.00	3.33	0.58	3.00
5.Testing and Curriculum	4.00	1.00	n/a	3.95	0.69	4.00	3.33	1.53	n/a
6.Faculty Involvement	3.33	0.58	3.00	3.29	0.90	3.00	2.67	0.58	3.00
7.Family Involvement	3.00	1.00	n/a	3.33	0.73	3.00	2.67	0.58	3.00
8.College Partnerships	4.67	0.58	5.00	3.95	0.80	4.00	3.67	1.54	3.00
9.Articulation	3.00	1.00	n/a	2.95	1.28	3.00	2.33	1.54	3.00

Note. One teacher respondent did not select a value for *testing and curriculum* (5), leaving that principle with 20 responses.

As seen in Table 7, *college partnerships* (8) maintained the highest mean across the roles with counselors at $M = 4.67$ ($SD = 0.58$), teachers at $M = 3.98$ ($SD = 0.80$), and principals at $M = 3.67$ ($SD = 1.54$). It should be noted that for counselors, *college talk* (1) also had a mean of 4.67 ($SD = 0.58$), and for teachers, *testing and curriculum* (5) also had a mean of 3.98 ($SD = 0.69$). *Articulation* (9) maintained the lowest mean across the roles with counselors at $M = 3.00$ ($SD = 1.00$), teachers at $M = 2.95$ ($SD = 1.28$), and principals at 2.33 ($SD = 1.54$). Though the highest and lowest principal means remained the same by role, the larger teacher sample's impact was evident when looking at the means of the remaining principles. The teacher role's means from highest to lowest principle closely aligned with the overall principle means. For the teacher role, *family involvement* (7) ($M = 3.33$; $SD = 0.73$)

was the principle with the seventh highest mean and *faculty involvement* (6) ($M = 3.29$; $SD =$ 0.90) was the principle with the eighth highest mean. For the counselor role, *college talk* (1) ($M = 4.67$; $SD = 0.58$) had the second highest mean. Also, for the counselor role, *comprehensive counseling model* (4) ($M = 4.00$; $SD = 0.00$) and *testing and curriculum* (5) ($M = 4.00$; $SD = 1.00$) had the fourth and fifth highest mean. For the principal role, five of the principles maintained the same mean of 3.33, and two of the principles maintained the same mean of 2.67. For the principal role, *college partnerships* (8) ($M = 3.67$; $SD = 1.54$) and *articulation* (9) ($M = 2.33$; $SD = 1.54$) were the only two principles not to have the same calculated mean as another principle.

Sustainability of a College-Going Culture

Four themes emerged from the combined analysis of both datasets, which enhanced the understanding of how the sampled schools sustained a CGC during COVID-19. Though the data tended to indicate that COVID-19 had a detrimental impact on the sustainability of a CGC, the themes also indicated that COVID-19 was not the only reason schools represented in this study were not creating a fully realized CGC. The first theme, *lack of shared language*, explored the idea that school faculty and staff are operating with varied, and sometimes inaccurate, understandings of core CGC concepts. The second theme, *lack of actualization of the nine principles*, highlighted observable and unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC and how schools engage with the observable aspects of the principles. The third theme, *lack of normalcy during COVID-19*, explored how the lack of normalcy created by COVID-19 impacted the creation and sustainability of a CGC. The final theme, *lack of shared responsibility during COVID-19*, indicated that school personnel are

not engaged in collaboration to create a CGC during COVID-19 and are instead leaving the responsibility solely to counselors and/or college advisors/liaisons.

Lack of Shared Language. This theme highlighted that this study's participants do not share an understanding of the core concepts and terms utilized in a CGC. To examine this theme, the participants' understanding of *college-capable* was explored. Earlier in this chapter, the participants' definition for *college* was established, which arose from the survey and interview datasets. The participants' definition for *college* was "a two-year or four-year educational program of higher education that results in a degree or certificate so students can get a job or start a career." When examining how survey participants define *college-capable*, it becomes apparent that respondents viewed the term *college-capable* through their limited definition of *college.* Survey respondents were asked to indicate from *Definitely Yes* to *Definitely Not* if they thought all students were *college-capable*. Table 8 presents a frequency count of the survey responses by role.

Table 8

Frequency Count of College-Capability Beliefs by Role

	Counselor ($n = 3$)	Teacher ($n = 21$)	Principal ($n = 3$)
	f	f	f
Definitely Yes	1	5	1
Probably Yes	1	7	2
Maybe	0	4	0
Probably Not	0	4	0
Definitely Not	1	1	0

As seen in Table 8, 62.96% of the survey respondents selected *Definitely Yes* ($n = 7$) or *Probably Yes* ($n = 10$) when indicating if they believe students are *college-capable*. When looking at the open-ended question that asked survey respondents to explain their beliefs on students' college-capabilities, clearly defined *yes* and *no* reasons did not develop during the coding. Out of the 27 survey respondents, 24 respondents elaborated in an open-ended question about their beliefs on students' college-capabilities. It should be noted that all three counselor respondents answered this question, and only two of the principal respondents responded to this question. Out of the 21 teacher respondents, 19 responded to this question.

Upon examining the responses to the open-ended follow-up question, respondents indicated they viewed the term of *college-capable* under the lens of their college definition. As mentioned above, the participants' definition of *college* is a two-year or four-year educational program of higher education that results in a degree or certificate so students can get a job or start a career. This viewpoint means that survey respondents are looking at the term *college-capable* and asking themselves, *Are students capable of attending two-year or four-year programs*?, and not asking *Are students capable of attending any program of higher education after high school*? As seen in Table 9, the responses for the open-ended question underwent coding. Due to the more complex nature of the responses, a single response could fall under more than one category. The survey responses under their respective coding categories can be found in Appendix F.

Table 9

Coding for College-Capable Reasoning

	f
Need for Desire and Motivation	10
Lack of Resources and Support	10
Limited Definition of Postsecondary Education	5
Lack of Academic Abilities	3

Lack of academic abilities responses cited students with learning disabilities as unable to succeed in pursuing a postsecondary education; none of the *lack of academic abilities* responses cited low GPA or low academic performance as a reason for not being college-capable. The *lack of resources and support* responses supported the notion that students are college-capable if they have ample resources and support. Respondents recognized that external factors, such a home life, kept students from having resources and support for attaining a postsecondary education. Respondents cited negative and positive views of desire and motivation for the *need for desire and motivation* category. These respondents believed that students are college-capable, but they must have the desire and/or motivation to be successful in a postsecondary institution. The notion that desire and motivation impact college-capability has not been explored in previous CGC literature. Chapter five further examines the concept of desire and motivation in relation to college-capability.

The *limited definition of postsecondary education* responses applied educational limits of a two-year or four-year program to the idea of college-capable. Two teacher survey response examples of the *limited definition of postsecondary education* category are:

- "Depends on the level of postsecondary education you are talking about. 4 year college, not everyone. 2 year college yes;" and

- "To believe that all students will graduate from a two year [sic] or four year [sic] college is just not realistic."

Certificate programs or trade schools are not included in the understanding of college-capability. The limitations applied to the concept of college-capable are concerning. As chapter one highlighted, even though the verbiage is *college*, the concept is meant to encase all postsecondary institutions. A lack of shared language does not allow for a shared societal belief to form (Bourdieu, 1991). If a shared understanding of terminology and language cannot occur among participants in a CGC, then the beliefs of a CGC and the nine principles of a CGC cannot be embedded into the school's environment.

> ***Analysis of Lack of Shared Language Findings***. Participants stated that students are college-capable, but the students must have the desire and/or motivation to be successful in a postsecondary institution. The question arises if students truly lack the desire and motivation to attend a postsecondary institution or if school personnel perceive students as lacking in desire and motivation because not all students are applying to two-year or four-year programs. This survey response, from a counselor, showcases how the perceived lack of desire and motivation could be contributed to a school's environment:

> In a perfect world, they [students] would be [college-capable]….I feel that the low expectations and high amount of hand-holding we have to do to graduate a lot of students leaves them in a situation where they lack the individual motivation to push themselves and would not be capable of a college-level workload with appropriate rigor.

This respondent indicates that schools contribute to the lack of student motivation due to maintaining low expectations for the students, but they also indicate that schools are not preparing students for "college-level workload with appropriate rigor." This statement accentuates how a school's environment impacts how students view themselves, which aligns with habitus. As previously mentioned, habitus examines how a person views themself as directly linked to their environment and the societal beliefs held by people in that environment (Bourdieu, 1977). If the society, in this case the sampled high schools, views their CGC as students only attending two-year or four-year programs, then the students will begin to limit their own views of what constitutes postsecondary education attainment. That limitation could result in students feeling they cannot achieve a postsecondary education.

Lack of Actualization of the Nine Principles. This theme showcased the dichotomy of the observable and unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC. A closer look at the data shows that the sampled high schools are engaging in the observable aspects of the CGC, but are struggling to sustain the unobservable aspects of a CGC. During COVID-19, the observable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC were compromised due to students either engaging in remote learning or participating in an altered in-person learning environment. The unobservable aspects (i.e., discussions with students about postsecondary education) of the nine principles became even more imperative during COVID-19. To examine this theme, two principles were focused on: *college partnerships* (8) (M= 4.00; SD = 0.83), which had the highest mean for all school personnel roles and *articulation* (9) (M = 2.89; SD = 1.22), which had the lowest mean for all school personnel roles.

College partnerships (8) (M= 4.00; SD = 0.83) indicated that the schools have a strong relationship with surrounding postsecondary institutions. This principle's description

includes students visiting campuses of local postsecondary institutions and attending college

fairs (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et al., 2002). Visiting campuses and attending

fairs are observable aspects of a CGC; campuses are physical locations to visit, and college

fairs are events where students can get materials (i.e., brochures and flyers) about various

institutions. During COVID-19, the observable aspects of *college partnerships* (8) were

compromised. Students could not visit postsecondary institution campuses and could not

participate in college fairs, which would be considered a large gathering. Schools, however,

found ways to virtually engage with observable aspects of college partnerships by

participating in virtual college fairs.

Survey respondents were asked to indicate if their school would hold a virtual college

fair. Out of the 27 respondents, 12 indicated their school would be holding a virtual college

fair. Although not observable in a traditional sense, a virtual college fair still indicated an

action being taken by the schools to fulfill the *college partnerships* (8) principle. The virtual

college tours consisted of either YouTube videos ($n = 3$) or virtual campus tours ($n = 8$). One

respondent knew their school would be hosting a virtual college fair, but was uncertain how

the fair would be actualized.

Open-ended survey responses also indicated that the sampled high schools had a

strong relationship with local postsecondary institutions pre-COVID-19. For example, one

teacher survey respondent lamented that students could not meet with college recruiters or

visit campuses in-person during COVID-19. This response, and other responses similar to it,

alluded to an active relationship established with postsecondary institutions pre-COVID-19.

The interviewees also spoke about active college partnerships pre-COVID-19. Elizabeth

indicated that the high school where she used to work had a college advisor who engaged

students in talks about postsecondary education and arranged campus tours for students. Kelly stated her school took junior and senior class trips to Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, North Carolina, and to Southwestern Community College in Sylva, North Carolina, pre-COVID-19. Kelly indicated it was important for the students to visit the community college campus so "they can see that this [community college] is a viable and affordable option, and then once they're there, understand how easy it is to transfer to a four-year university." Both of these interview responses alluded to active *college partnerships* (8) activities pre-COVID-19.

Articulation (9) ($M = 2.89$; $SD = 1.22$), on the other hand, had the lowest mean out of the main principles; unlike *college partnerships* (8) ($M = 4.00$; $SD = 0.83$), *articulation's* (9) description lacks examples for the principle's creation. The purpose of *articulation* (9) ($M = 2.89$; $SD = 1.22$) is for students to engage in postsecondary education talks throughout their K-12 education, with the level of information increasing as the students progress (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et al., 2002). Literature on the nine principles of a CGC never gave specific examples of how to actualize *articulation* (9), unlike the specific examples cited for other principles (i.e., *college partnerships* (8)) (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et al., 2002), thus giving schools no observable actions in help create *articulation* (9).

Research indicates students should engage in postsecondary education no later than the tenth grade (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Students in the tenth grade who started visiting their school's counselor were more like to attend a postsecondary institution. In contrast, students who waited until the twelfth grade to visit their school's counselor were less likely to attend a postsecondary institution (Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Survey respondents were

asked to speculate what grade level sought the most information about postsecondary education. Table 10 shows that survey respondents believed that seniors were the most likely to seek postsecondary education information.

Table 10

Assumptions on What Grade Level Seeks Postsecondary Education Information

	Counselor (n = 3)	Teacher (n = 21)	Principal (n = 3)
	f	f	f
Freshman (9th)	0	0	0
Sophomore (10th)	0	2	0
Juniors (11th)	0	8	0
Seniors (12th)	3	11	3

If students from the surveyed schools are waiting until their senior year to ask about postsecondary education options, it could be an indicator that *articulation* (9) is not occurring within the high school. If *articulation* (9) is not occurring in the sampled schools, the students would not have been consistently exposed to postsecondary education information throughout the high school grade levels. The students would then not know they need to be engaging in postsecondary education research before their senior year. The interview data did not give insight into the creation of *articulation* (9).

   Analysis of Lack of Actualization of the Nine Principles Findings. By not engaging in the unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC, the schools are limiting the students' abilities to navigate the postsecondary education attainment process. For example, *clear expectations* (2) is described as ensuring students have clear goals for attaining a postsecondary education and understand how to fulfill those goals (McClafferty et al., 2002).

Clear expectations (2) relies heavily on students understanding the nuances of attaining a postsecondary education, which means equipping them with the proper language and understanding to create achievable goals. That understanding is created through shared language, which cannot be observed. Bourdieu (1991) postulates that "individuals from upper-class backgrounds are endowed with a linguistic habitus which enables them to respond with relative ease to the demands of most formal and official occasions" (p. 22). By not equipping students with the language and knowledge to navigate aspects of attaining a postsecondary education, they will falter and not believe in their own abilities to attain a postsecondary education. Language and knowledge are unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC and are needed to help students not falter in their postsecondary education attainment goals.

Lack of Normalcy during COVID-19. This theme established how COVID-19 has created upset in the traditional school setting, thus resulting in an upset in the creation a CGC. The coding of the open-ended question, *What, if anything, hinders your school from creating a college-going culture during COVID-19?*, revealed hindrances to the sustainability of a CGC during COVID-19 (see Appendix G). The question received 20 responses: three counselor responses, 16 teacher responses, and one principal response. Two of the teachers' responses were not included in the coding, leaving 18 responses to be coded; the responses not included were "idk" and "Nothing." As seen in Table 11, the coding resulted in the following categories: *lack of face-to-face interaction*, *lack of engagement*, *lack of time,* and *lack of technology and internet access*. The *lack of engagement* theme included lack of engagement from parents/guardians and the community, whereas the *lack of face-to-*

face interaction included interaction between school personnel and students and between the various personnel employment roles.

Table 11

Coding for Hindrances that Impact the Creation of a College-Going Culture during COVID-19

	f ($n = 18$)
Lack of Face-to-Face Interaction	9
Lack of Engagement	6
Lack of Time	2
Lack of Technology and Internet Access	1

As seen in Table 11, *lack of face-to-face interaction* was cited as the top hindrance COVID-19 had on the creation of a CGC. One principal respondent claimed, "We have limited contact with students in the building, so therefore the time we do have is devoted to pushing curriculum. We aren't doing class meetings to promote the college going culture." A teacher respondent claimed the lack of in-person presence in the schools created difficulties in getting information to students. The teacher wrote, "Presence, the counseling staff is having to work harder to get information to student[s] through the virtual platform."

The interview data supported the idea that lack of face-to-face interaction hindered the creation of a CGC during COVID-19. Kelly claimed that lack of face-to-face interaction caused a lack of connection to be established with students. With students alternating the days they are physically in the school building, Kelly asserted:

We are struggling to continue to build relationships with our kids.... I have one

student who comes in on Mondays and Tuesdays, and then he works full-time

Wednesday through Friday to help his family. I don't have a relationship with him

like I would if we were here five days a week and I got to see him every day. So for

the kids to have a trust in us and believe what we say when we're saying you can do

this, we want you to do this, let's fill out this application, let me help you with this.

They don't have that faith in us right now because we are just not able to build the

relationships.

Kelly's claim suggested that during COVID-19, students would not believe in their abilities

to attend postsecondary institutions when teachers encouraged them to apply because they do

not have the same level of connection and trust in their teachers as they usually would in a

traditional education environment.

Even though both datasets indicated a lack of face-to-face interaction as the main

hindrance creating a CGC during COVID-19, an underlying meaning emerged from the

datasets: a lack of normalcy during COVID-19. In the survey, one counselor respondent

bluntly described the impact COVID-19 had on a CGC:

The entire situation is highly reactive. Our school does not have a school social

worker, so I spend a lot more of my time now helping students and families to meet

basic needs just so they can participate in school. We also have far less contact with

students. This leaves a lot less time for implementing college-going cultural

programming.

As seen in that interview responses, the lack of normalcy left schools in a holding pattern,

unable to create positive changes to their school's CGC. During her interview, Elizabeth

admitted that her school system was in "survival mode." She went on to explain that the new

superintendent, who she indicated was someone "not all about just those high-end kids going

off to Harvard…and wanting more support for students," had started to talk about improving

the school system's CGC. COVID-19 put a "damper" on the superintendent's

implementation of CGC improvements. Kelly echoed Elizabeth's sentiments on COVID-19

hindering the sustainability of a CGC. Kelly declared, "COVID has jacked up everything."

She elaborated that the independent learners had still been thriving under the COVID-19

education plan, but the non-independent learners could not engage in the activities that

helped them succeed. She admitted she was unsure how her school would adjust its programs

to help the students be more successful.

Both data sets' responses showed how environmental changes negatively impacted

the CGC's foundational message that all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary

education because the focus shifted from preparing students for the future to helping them

survive the now. These responses affirmed that COVID-19 created an upset in the CGC

because an upset was created in the traditional setting of a CGC.

Analysis of Lack of Normalcy during COVID-19 Findings. During COVID-19,

schools focused on ensuring that all students survived the school year, which meant a focus

was not being put on creating and sustaining a CGC. This change in the focus did not allow

for engagement with students on what occurs after graduation or for discussion to occur

about postsecondary education options. More high school seniors are already planning on

taking a gap year upon graduation; an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* indicated

that around 35% of high school seniors would be taking a gap year (Hoover, 2020). This

statistic aligns with comments made by interviewee Elizabeth. In her interview, Elizabeth

mentioned that it was not until more seniors started expressing their intentions of taking a

gap year did the topic of CGC get brought back into the COVID-19 educational planning discussions.

As postsecondary education attainment talks decreased, students started to not view postsecondary education as a priority. This change in student and school personnel perceptions aligns with habitus. As McDonough (1997) claimed, habitus is a "set of subjective perceptions held by all members of the same group or class that shapes an individual's expectations, attitudes, and aspirations" (p. 9). COVID-19 has changed the "subjective perspectives," thus altering the "expectations, attitudes, and aspirations" in terms of postsecondary education attainment with students. That change is already showing a negative impact on students' postsecondary education attainment goals and further emphasizes the importance of a CGC and its message that all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary education.

Lack of Shared Responsibility during COVID-19. The final theme indicated that a lack of collaboration was occurring during COVID-19. This lack of collaboration negatively impacted the sustainability of a CGC during COVID-19. In the survey, an open-ended question asked survey respondents, *What, if anything, hinders your school from creating a college-going culture during COVID*? Out of the 27 survey respondents, 21 responded to this question. Only one out of the three counselor respondents responded to the question; only one out of the three principal respondents responded to the question; and 17 out of the 21 teacher respondents responded to the question. One of the teacher responses, which stated "I'm not sure," was not included in the coding of the question.

As seen in Table 12, the coding category with the most themes was *scapegoat*. *Scapegoat* responses indicated that the creation and sustainability of a CGC during COVID-

19 were primarily the job of the high school counselor and/or the college advisor/liaison. In laymen's terms, the sustainability of a CGC was not their job, but was someone else's responsibility. A concerning factor was that these responses put the entire responsibility of the school's CGC on the college advisor/liaison or high school counselor. Out of those *scapegoat* responses, 10 of the responses were teachers. The theme *teachers engage with students* specifically mentioned teachers as the ones to engage with the nine principles of a CGC. This theme is different from the *scapegoat* theme because only teacher respondents cited teachers as contributors to the creation and sustainability of the CGC. None of the counselor or principal respondents singled teachers out as contributors to their schools' CGC. In fact, the one assistant principal and one counselor who did respond mentioned the college advisor was handling most of their school's CGC facets, classifying their response as *scapegoat*. The responses to this question under their corresponding thematic coding are located in Appendix H.

Table 12

Coding for Impact of COVID-19 on the Nine Principles

	f ($n= 20$)
Scapegoat	12
COVID-19 Negatively Impacts Sustainability	5
Teachers Engage with Students	3

Kelly's interview, in particular, supported the notion that collaboration in the creation of a CGC was not occurring among school personnel during COVID-19. Kelly admitted she gave the newly hired college liaison a list of students she wanted him to contact and work with regarding postsecondary education options for her students. She gave him the list

because she knew these students were "not going to get any kind of college speak at home."

She was relying on the college liaison to engage with the students in postsecondary education

research during COVID-19. As she claimed, the college liaison was the one engaging with

the nine principles of a CGC. He was, according to Kelly, "working with these [principles]

very specifically, many of these points, with our senior class during COVID." She

particularly pointed out that he was helping students fill out FAFSA forms, which she would

not know how to do and would not able to help students complete.

Analysis of Lack of Shared Responsibility during COVID-19. A reason for the lack

of shared responsibility could be that schools did not engage in training on how to create a

CGC during COVID-19. Survey respondents and the interviewees were asked if their school

had hosted any CGC sustainability training during COVID-19. For the survey, 18 of the 27

respondents reported they did not engage in CGC training; six reported *a little*, and three

reported *somewhat*. A follow-up question asked respondents to select how many trainings

were conducted. Out of the nine respondents that reported to have undergone training, seven

of the respondents selected one to two as the number of times they engaged in training. Two

respondents selected three to four as the number of times they engaged in training. According

to the responses, if schools did engage in CGC training during COVID-19, the schools did

not do any extensive training as four was the highest potential number for engagement with

COVID-19 and CGC training. Without training, it is understandable that school personnel

would not know what responsibility to take to create and sustain a CGC during COVID-19.

The interviewees indicated that CGC training did not occur either during or before

COVID-19. Elizabeth, who started her administration position early to help with COVID-19

planning, claimed that a CGC was not addressed when trying to figure out the COVID-19

education plan. According to Elizabeth, a CGC has become a more substantial topic of discussion at the district level as principals talk about how students want to take gap years and how fewer students are filling out FASFA applications and scholarship applications. Kelly stated that she has not engaged in CGC concepts during any training, even before COVID-19, and had never heard of the nine principles of a CGC until participating in this study. These responses bring up further discussion about the overall need for CGC training for school personnel even without the influence of COVID-19, which will be discussed in chapter five.

Even though the most foundational CGC studies focused on implementing college counselors in schools to help students realize their postsecondary education abilities (McClafferty et al., 2002; McDonough, 1997), chapter two highlighted how counselors cannot be the sole proprietor of a CGC (McClafferty & McDonough, 2000) and how the nine principles of a CGC are meant to create collaboration among school personnel (Jarsky et al., 2009; McClafferty et al., 2002; Robinson & Roksa, 2016). Research shows that in schools with a lower functioning CGC, counselors' knowledge about the different types of postsecondary institutions remains stagnant; the counselors remain unencouraged to expand their knowledge of various institutions (Engberg & Gilbert, 2014). For change to occur, school personnel must actively engage with one another to create a high-functioning CGC that realizes all the aspects of the principles, observable and unobservable.

Summary

This chapter presented results to answer this study's two research questions. Quantitative results from the survey were presented through descriptive statistics. Coding also occurred for the survey's open-ended questions and the qualitative interview data. The

coding allowed for the formation of the participants' definitions for *college-going*, *college*, and *CGC*. As seen in this chapter, the participants expressed that *college* was limited to a two-year or four-year program and proceeded to apply those limits to their understanding of *college-going*, *college-capability*, and *CGC*. To examine the creation of a CGC for this study's sample, a mean and standard deviation for each of the nine principles were calculated. Four themes, which gave insight into the sustainability of the participants' CGC, arose from the combined data analysis of the survey and interview datasets. The themes were *lack of shared language*, *lack of actualization of the nine principles*, *lack of normalcy during COVID-19*, and *lack of shared responsibility*. Although the data did indicate that COVID-19 had a negative impact on the creation of a CGC, other themes emerged from the data which showcased foundational changes that needed to occur for a CGC to be fully realized.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter examines how the data informed this study's two research questions and what implications can be derived from the findings. A CGC has traditionally been observed in a physical location under typical circumstances (Bosworth et al., 2014; Corwin & Tierney, 2007; Holland & Farmer-Hinton, 2009; Jarsky et al., 2009; Martinez et al., 2019; McClafferty & McDonough, 2000; McClafferty et al., 2002; McKillip et al., 2012; Schneider, 2007), but COVID-19 created an upheaval in how education was conducted. Much of the preliminary educational research that arose from the COVID-19 pandemic focused on how teachers navigated changing their learning environments from in-person to virtual (Dorn et al., 2020; Gewertz, 2020; Krumsvik, 2020; Kurtz, 2020). This study expanded the teacher-centric focus to include counselors and principals. This study examined how counselors, teachers, and principals defined and created a CGC, while also sustaining it during a pandemic educational environment. The two research questions for this study were:

1. How do North Carolina high schools define college-going, college and/or a college-going culture?

2. How do school personnel perceive the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture under the influence of the coronavirus (COVID-19)?

This study indicates that COVID-19 had a negative impact on the CGC of the sampled North Carolina public high schools. This study also suggests that COVID-19 is not the only hindrance to creating and sustaining the sampled public high schools' CGC.

Research Question One: Definitions of College-Going, College, and College-Going Culture

Research question one asked, *How do North Carolina high schools define college-going, college, and/or a college-going culture*? This research question established a baseline understanding of commonly used terminology in a CGC. As chapter four indicated, participants defined *college* as a two-year or four-year educational program of higher education that results in a degree or certificate so students can get a job or start a career. The data did not produce a definition for *college-going*, but did indicate that students were seen as *college-going* if they enrolled in two-year or four-year programs. After completing a combined analysis of the survey results and interview responses, it became apparent that participants' definition of *college* was applied to the overall understanding of a CGC.

Research Question Two: Creation and Sustainability of a College-Going Culture in North Carolina High Schools

Research question two asked, *How do school personnel perceive the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture under the influence of the coronavirus (COVID-19)*? This question sought to understand if COVID-19 had an impact on the creation and sustainability of a CGC. To determine if a CGC was being created in the sampled high schools, the mean, standard deviation, and mode for each of the nine principles of a CGC were calculated. A higher mean indicated school personnel had actively worked to create that principle in their school. *College partnerships* (8) ($M = 4.00$; $SD = 0.83$) maintained the highest mean, and *articulation* (9) (M =2.89; $SD = 1.22$) maintained the lowest mean. When examining the mean, standard deviation, and mode by school personnel role, the impact of the large teacher sample size ($n = 21$) could be discerned.

When a combined analysis of the survey and interview datasets occurred, four themes emerged that explored the sustainability of a CGC: *lack of shared language, lack of actualization of the nine principles, lack of normalcy during COVID-19,* and *lack of shared responsibility during COVID-19.* The *lack of shared language* theme indicated that this study's participants viewed college-capability as the students' ability to attend two-year or four-year programs. The encouragement for only attending two-year or four-year programs could directly correlate with another factor related to college-capability: the need for desire and motivation to attend a postsecondary institution. In the *lack of actualization of the nine principles* theme, data revealed that schools mainly engaged in the observable creation of the nine principles of a CGC. As the data showcased, the unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC were not fully realized. Without engagement in the unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC, high schools cannot say with certainty that they are creating and sustaining a CGC. The *lack of normalcy during COVID-19* theme highlighted that COVID-19 created a lack of normalcy in the sampled high schools, resulting in postsecondary education attainment discussions to decline. During COVID-19, schools focused on ensuring that all students survived the school year, which meant a focus was not on creating and sustaining a CGC. The *lack of shared responsibility during COVID-19* theme discussed an unanticipated finding: the relinquishing of responsibilities regarding a CGC during COVID-19. The relinquishing of responsibilities had created a collaborative disconnect, which left the responsibility of creating and sustaining a CGC during COVID-19 to the counselors or college advisors/liaisons.

Implications of Data Findings

The mean, standard deviation, and mode calculation for each one of the nine principles of a CGC indicate that respondents' schools are creating a CGC. A closer look at the data, however, indicates areas of improvement for creating and sustaining a CGC. While the *lack of normalcy during COVID-19* theme did indicate that COVID-19 had a detrimental impact on the sustainably of a CGC, the data did also indicate that COVID-19 was not the only fact impairing a CGC's sustainability. As seen from the definitions established to fulfill research question one and in the *lack of shared language* theme, the survey respondents did not understand the core concepts of a CGC, which means they were creating a limiting CGC. Those limitations could potentially create an inherent bias in the creation of a CGC. As seen in chapter four, the potential bias was most prevalent in Elizabeth's story of students attending four-year programs being placed on pedestals. Elizabeth observed that her school's CGC was aimed to support only students attending four-year programs. That limited aim created feelings of inadequacy in the school's student population, especially among the students attending community colleges.

These feelings of inadequacy parallel some of the student experiences in McDonough's (1997) *Choosing Colleges: How Social Class and Schools Structure Opportunity*. Several students in her case study felt their high school counselors were not supportive, which resulted in them not attempting to apply to the local university, but instead enrolling in the local community college (McDonough, 1997). These students felt unsupported because the counselors had a subconscious bias towards the students (McDonough, 1997). The participants in this study could be creating a similar pattern in their

own schools, one where students do not try to attain a postsecondary education because the school personnel only encourage students to attend two-year or four-year programs.

To eliminate bias that could occur during the creation of a CGC, school personnel must be aware of all aspects of the CGC they cultivate in their schools. Bourdieu (1997, 1990) postulated that a person's social reality is created through interactions with their environment. Those interactions consist of the physical interactions and the shared beliefs of an environment's population (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). As the *lack of actualization of the nine principles* theme indicated, the nine principles of a CGC have observable and unobservable aspects. When realized, those aspects of the nine principles create a CGC that is fully integrated into the school's environment. The engagement students have with the observable aspects (i.e., college visits) and unobservable elements (i.e., postsecondary education attainment talks with teachers) directly impact their postsecondary education attainment beliefs.

If the schools have bias ingrained in their CGC, the observable actions and language shared by the school personnel stand to reinforce doubt and negativity into those students' beliefs. To create and sustain a CGC not based on biases, school personnel must collaborate together to engage in all aspects of the nine principles and to create a checks and balances system to bring awareness to potential biases, which was explored in the *lack of shared responsibility* theme.

Recommendations for Schools

The state of North Carolina is fortunate as many programs already exist to encourage CGC development. This section highlights two programs North Carolina public high schools can engage with to help strengthen their CGC: the North Carolina Comprehensive

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Articulation Agreement (CAA) and College Advising Corps (CAC). Professional development is another recommendation for North Carolina public high schools to strengthen the sustainability of their CGC. By engaging in professional development and training, a more authentic understanding of a CGC and its foundational concepts can occur, which would then help school personnel become aware of their own biases. Training and professional development would also help create shared understandings among the school personnel of the core definitions and foundational concepts of a CGC. Once these biases are acknowledged and shared understandings start to occur, the school personnel can become engaged in creating and sustaining a substantial CGC. With training and professional development, a CGC would not, as Elizabeth put it, idolize one postsecondary institution, in this case either two-year or four-year programs, over any other type of postsecondary institution.

Teacher-Focused Professional Development

Teacher professional development is crucial for creating a stronger CGC. Teachers have a profound impact on students' postsecondary education aspirations because teachers engage with students on a daily basis (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; McKillip et al., 2012; Schneider, 2007). By engaging in teacher-focused professional development, teachers would learn how to expand the impact of *college talk* (1) in their classrooms, such as implementing postsecondary education discussions in their lesson plans and assignments. As chapter two outlined, teachers who have high engagement in *college talk* (1) can increase students' chances of enrolling in a postsecondary institution (Roderick et al., 2011). To increase *college talk* (1) in the classroom, professional development should focus on incorporating postsecondary education talks in lesson plans and in homework assignments.

Another benefit of teacher-focused professional development is that by incorporating postsecondary education discussions in the classrooms, teachers would also be supporting *faculty involvement* (6). The description of *faculty involvement* (6) specifically mentions teachers including postsecondary education discussions in their lesson plans (MacDonald & Dorr, 2006; McClafferty et al., 2002). Increasing teacher engagement with *college talk* (1) directly increases their involvement with the other nine principles of a CGC.

Furthermore, teacher professional development focused on helping students navigate postsecondary education research is imperative. If students trust their teachers, they are more likely to seek their teachers' advice rather than see the school counselors (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; McKillip et al., 2012). If *college talk* (1) increases in the classroom, it can be assumed that students will be asking their teachers more questions regarding postsecondary education attainment. Teachers need to be able to guide students in all aspects of the postsecondary education attainment process from researching institutions to filling out the FAFSA form. In her interview, Kelly mentioned she did not know how to fill out a FAFSA form, and she relied on the college liaison to help her students with it. Through professional development, Kelly and other high school teachers could learn how to fill out a FAFSA form and learn about other aspects of the attainment process, which in turn would help them increase their involvement with *college talk* (1), *information and resources* (3), and *faculty involvement* (6).

The North Carolina Comprehensive Articulation Agreement

Articulation agreements between postsecondary institutions and high schools would give high school students direct interaction with a postsecondary institution. Articulation agreements allow students to enroll in postsecondary education courses before they have

graduated from high school. The North Carolina Comprehensive Articulation Agreement (CAA) is a statewide agreement that helps students transfer from a North Carolina community college to one of the 16 North Carolina public universities (The University of North Carolina System [UNCS], 2021). The main focus of this agreement is getting students already enrolled in one higher education program into another program (UNCS, 2021). Even though the agreement between community colleges and public universities is a statewide mandate, a subset of the agreement, which focuses on high school students, has not been fully explored. An example of a high school student focused articulation agreement is the agreement for the Future Teachers of North Carolina (FTNC), which helps students transfer from a North Carolina high school into an educator preparation program at either N.C. A & T, UNC Wilmington, or Western Carolina University (UNCS, 2021). The FTNC allows high school students to participate in two college-level courses before graduation, and those courses align with the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards (UNCS, 2021). To participate in the program, students must be a junior or a senior, must have a 3.0 or higher GPA, and must apply to participate in the program (UNCS, 2021).

The FTNC is not the only high school-focused articulation agreement; it is just one example of agreements high schools can enter into to help encourage postsecondary enrollment for high school students. Schools should investigate articulate agreements with surrounding postsecondary institutions. Many North Carolina community colleges have set up articulation agreements with high schools, particularly with the CTE high school programs (NC Perkins, 2021). Engaging in these agreements allows students to gain more postsecondary education exposure.

College Advising Corps

One possible way to help encourage the collaboration needed to support a CGC would be to engage with College Advising Corps (CAC). According to their website, the CAC "focuses on college enrollment and completion among low-income, first-generation college, and underrepresented high school schools by delivering personalized, knowledge guidance on college admission, financial aid and enrollment." To accomplish this task, the program employs recent college graduates to be placed in high schools as college advisors (CAC, 2021). In their position, these college advisors collaborate with school personnel "to tie college-going into the life of the school" (CAC, 2021). The recent graduates' placement as college advisors could potentially spur the collaboration required of a CGC, especially since the college advisors would work closely with counselors, teachers, and principals to create the "tie" needed to sustain a school's CGC. If schools elect to participate in CAC, they need to be cautious not to make these advisors the sole proprietor of a CGC. Instead, the schools will need to engage in the shared responsibilities and collaboration required of the CAC program.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although this study focused on a CGC during COVID-19, the data revealed areas where a CGC needs to be strengthened. Previous CGC research has focused on the counselor perspective, leaving the student understanding of a CGC and teacher influence on a CGC unexplored. Furthermore, studies exploring the best practices for sustaining a CGC through the use of the nine principles of a CGC have not been conducted. Without establishing best practices, a measure for a successful CGC cannot be developed. This section addresses recommendations for CGC studies that focus on student and teacher perspectives and for a

study that examines how to realize the observable and unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC.

Student Perception of a CGC

Students can perceive when school personnel, particularly teachers, have deemed them as academic achievers or underachievers (Kolluri et al., 2020; Martinez et al., 2019; Schneider, 2007). The label of achiever or underachiever often arises from school personnel's biases (Kolluri et al., 2020; Martinez et al., 2019; Schneider, 2007). If students feel they have been labeled as underachieving or slacking, their postsecondary education aspirations could be negatively impacted. To determine if this bias is occurring during the creation of a CGC, a student-focused study would need to occur. This current study does not include students' beliefs or opinions. Students can discern subconscious bias from school personnel, particularly from teachers as they spend most of their time in a classroom (Kolluri et al., 2020; Martinez et al., 2019; Welton & Williams, 2014). A student-based study could speak to the underlying biases that might be occurring in a CGC and help indicate if schools are limiting their beliefs of a CGC by only espousing students should attend two-year or four-year institutions.

The Impact of Motivation and Desire on Postsecondary Education Attainment

Another area for future research is to examine how desire and motivation influence postsecondary education attainment. While a few survey respondents indicated that desire and motivation were positive traits for students' postsecondary education attainment goals, most survey respondents presented desire and motivation as traits students lack to attain a postsecondary education. As one survey respondent claimed, "It's about motivation, and there are student's [sic] who wouldn't be willing to work." This respondent uncovers a

potential bias that school personnel maintain: students are unwilling to work. This study

raises the question of student lack of motivation versus a perceived lack of motivation by

school personnel. The perception by school personnel that students are unmotivated or

unwilling to work could result from underlying biases within the CGC.

Studies have been conducted on factors that influence student motivation. Research

indicates that teachers directly impact student motivation, which affects the level of student

work produced (Ahn et al., 2021). This motivation could impact students positively or

negatively, which means students would produce higher quality work under positive

motivation and lower quality work under negative influences (Ahn et al., 2021). The

motivation's positive or negative implications depend on how teachers have subconsciously

labeled their students as high or low performing (Martinez et al., 2019; Welton & Williams,

2014). A future study could help determine if motivation is an actual hindrance to

postsecondary attainment or if preconceived notions about the student population have

unfairly labeled students as unmotivated. The impact of desire and motivation to attend a

postsecondary institution has not been explored in alignment with a CGC and its impact on

the nine principles of a CGC.

Teacher Engagement with a College-Going Culture

The lack of teacher and classroom focus in CGC studies is concerning since students

spend most of their time in the classroom. As mentioned above, teachers greatly influence

students' motivation and perceptions of their ability to attain a postsecondary education

(Bosworth et al., 2014; Corwin & Tierney, 2007). Teachers are in a unique position to

engage with the observable and unobservable aspects of a CGC by implementing of *college*

talk (1) in the classroom. For example, in the classroom, they can hang posters that align with

college talk (1) and can engage with *college talk* (1) in lesson plans and homework assignments. The more engagement teachers have with *college talk* (1), the more likely students are to engage in postsecondary education talks with their teachers and to feel more confident in their postsecondary education abilities (Kolluri et al., 2020). Research focusing on teachers' engagement with *college talk* (1) could help realize how to balance the observable and unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC and how increased engagement with *college talk* (1) increases relational trust between teachers and students.

Realization of the Observable and Unobservable Aspects of the Nine Principles of a College-Going Culture

As this study unveiled, the observable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC had higher engagement levels, while the unobservable aspects had lower engagement levels. A potential reason for the lack of research on this topic could be due to the lack of a valid measure for a CGC. Without knowing how to measure the success of a CGC, schools are potentially unaware they are not fully realizing the nine principles of a CGC. A valid measure for a CGC cannot be determined until best practices for a CGC are established. Best practices, however, cannot be established until a complete understanding of the observed and unobserved aspects of the principles of a CGC occurs. A study that explores how schools engage with creating the unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC could lead to the formation of best practices for creating and sustaining a CGC and subsequently to a tangible measurement tool for monitoring CGC within schools.

Virtual Creation of a College-Going Culture. As more virtual high schools are put into commission, examining how a CGC is created in a permanent virtual educational environment would be another future research area. Virtual high schools face unique

challenges in establishing a CGC, especially with the unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC. Observable aspects in a virtual high school are still achievable. The observable aspects can be fulfilled in a virtual setting through social media posts, email posters, learning management systems communications, and the like. The unobservable aspects may be harder to engage with due to the amount of asynchronous learning that occurs in a virtual environment. Research highlighting the unobservable actions taken by the virtual high schools to establish a CGC could help public high schools increase their CGC by giving examples of how to engage the unobservable aspects of the nine principles of a CGC.

Limitations

One limitation of this study was the sample size and method. Since the sampling occurred through convenience and snowballing, a generalized sampling could not occur. This study was not able to examine CGC inferentially due to sample size limitations, and thus, generalizable conclusions about CGC creation and sustainability statewide could not be made. Another limitation is that a validated measure for a CGC does not exist. Since CGC is a reasonably new concept, very little empirical research has been conducted on a CGC or on the nine principles of a CGC. Although studies seemingly agree on the core concepts of a CGC, such as believing all students are capable of attaining a postsecondary education, statistical validation of implementation of those concepts cannot yet occur. Without validation, a true CGC cannot be determined. As more schools engage with a CGC, more empirical research would hopefully occur, giving rise to a validation measure.

Summary

This study sought to define key terms associated with a CGC and to examine how COVID-19 impacted the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture in North

Carolina public high schools. The literature review in chapter two provided a foundation for understanding how a CGC functions under "normal" classroom settings and how COVID-19 has upset those settings. Chapter three outlined the study's two research phases, which were conducted utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design. Chapter four presented the findings in relation to how they supported research question one and research question two. Chapter five investigated the implications of the data and presented recommendations for North Carolina high schools and for future CGC research.

Through analysis of the interview and survey datasets, this study established how the participants defined *college-going, college*, and *CGC*. The study indicated that the sampled school personnel were not operating under shared definitions for the terms *college,* which created limitations in the understanding of *college-going* and *CGC*. Combined data analysis of the survey dataset and interview dataset revealed four major themes: *lack of shared language, lack of actualization of the nine principles, lack of normalcy during COVID-19,* and *lack of shared responsibility during COVID-19.* The themes, particularly the *lack of normalcy during COVID-19* and *lack of shared responsibility during COVID-19*, highlighted areas where COVID-19 disrupted the creation and sustainability of the sampled respondents' CGC. The themes, especially *lack of shared language* and *lack of actualization of the nine principles*, indicated areas where the sampled schools struggled to sustain a CGC pre-COVID-19. One teacher survey response sums up the findings of this study perfectly, "It [the CGC] wasn't terrible in the first place but it wasn't great. COVID has made it horrible."

It is crucial for schools to fully realize a CGC, as it helps all students realize their postsecondary education potential. To help schools create and sustain a CGC, this study recommends that North Carolina public high school personnel, particularly teachers, engage

in professional development to improve school personnel's collaborative efforts and create a shared understanding of a CGC. This study also recommends that North Carolina public high schools take advantage of the North Carolina Comprehensive Articulation and engage with programs such as College Advising Corps. To further understand a CGC and lead to potential best practices, further research on a CGC needs to occur. For future research, this study proposes conducting studies on the students' perspectives of a CGC to see if a CGC is being fully actualized in the schools and to see if students discern any underlying biases in schools' CGC. Teacher-focused research should also occur as teachers heavily influence students' postsecondary education attainment beliefs. Moreover, the impact desire and/or motivation have on students' postsecondary education attainment beliefs needs to be investigated. Understanding how the unobserved aspects are sustained in a CGC will lead to the development of a strong CGC and possibly to the creation of best practices for creating a CGC.

In the last 25 years, the idea of creating a CGC and establishing the belief that *all* students are capable of pursuing postsecondary education has been brought to light (McDonough, 2002). The research on creating a CGC in schools is still in its infancy, and the onset of COVID-19 presented new challenges to researchers and schools as they were establishing a CGC in schools. The fate of schools as they have been traditionally known is still uncertain at the conclusion of this research study. Despite the uncertainty of how education in North Carolina will develop in the future, especially as online learning is becoming more prevalent due to COVID-19, the need to establish best practices using the nine principles of a CGC remains a constant to ensure the success of all students in attaining a postsecondary education.

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Appendix A

Survey Questions

1. Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to answer any question for any reason. There is no required length for your responses. The survey should take around 15 minutes to complete.
Responses will remain anonymous.
If you have any questions about this research study, you may contact Carrie Hodge at murraycr@appstate.edu.
What are possible harms or discomforts that I might experience during the research?
To the best of my knowledge, the survey will have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.
What are the possible benefits of this research?
There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help inform how high schools create a college-going culture.
This study has been determined exempt from IRB oversight by the Appalachian State University Institutional Review Board (IRB).
By agreeing to participate in this survey, you are acknowledging that you are at least 18 years old and have read the information above.

- I agree to participate in this study.
- I do not agree to participate in this study.

2. The purpose of this survey is to gather information on how high schools are creating and sustaining a college-going culture during the Coronavirus (COVID) pandemic. The survey should take around 15 minutes to complete and is a mixture of multiple choice, Likert scale, and open-ended questions.
Your answers will remain confidential.

- I do not work in a high school.
- I do work in a high school.

3. Please indicate your school's classification.

- Public
- Private
- Charter

4. Please indicate your school's location.

- Rural
- Suburban
- Urban

5. If you are working in a North Carolina high school, what plan is your school currently operating under at the time you are completing this survey?
- Plan B
- Plan C
- Private School. Please explain your school's plan.
- Not a North Carolina high school. Please indicate your school's location.
- Other. Please explain

6. Please select the category that best describes your position at this school.
- Counselor
- Principal
- Teacher
- Other. Please explain.

7. What grade do you primarily teach? Please select just one.
- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade
- Other. Please explain.

8. What other grades have you taught in the past? Please check all that apply.
- 9th grade
- 10th grade
- 11th grade
- 12th grade
- Other. Please explain.

9. What subject do you primarily teach? Please select just one.
- Math
- Science
- Language Arts
- History/Social Studies
- Foreign Languages
- Exceptional Children
- Career & Technical Education
- PE/Health
- Arts (such as band, chorus, theater)
- Other. Please explain.

10. What other subjects do you teach? Please select all that apply.
- Math
- Science
- Language Arts
- History/Social Studies
- Foreign Languages
- Exceptional Children
- Career & Technical Education
- PE/Health
- Arts (such as band, chorus, theater)
- Other. Please explain.

11. How long have you been working in your current position?
- 0-1 years
- 2-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21 plus years

12. How long have you worked at this school?
- 0-1 years
- 2-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- 21 plus years

13. What other grade levels have you worked with? Please select all that apply. (If you have only worked at the high school level, please select high school.)
- Elementary
- Middle
- High School

14. Excluding your current position, what other roles have you held while working in education? Please select all that apply.
- Assistant Principal
- Counselor
- Principal
- Teacher

- None
- Other. Please explain.

15. How do you define college?

16. How do you define postsecondary education?

17. For the rest of this survey, the term postsecondary education will be used. For this survey, the term postsecondary education means any education beyond high school. This term encompasses certificate programs, community colleges, four-year institutions, and any other institution of higher learning.

18. What types of postsecondary education materials do you have in your classroom or office available for students? Please select all that apply.
- College diploma(s) on the wall
- Posters on the wall
- Swag (pencils, pens, etc.)
- Brochures. Please explain the topics covered in the brochures.
- Handouts. Please explain the topics covered in the handouts.
- Other. Please explain.

19. How often do you research postsecondary education information for students? (i.e., Search on a school's website about admissions requirements or what forms need to be completed for financial aid.)
- 1= Not at all
- 2= A little
- 3= Somewhat
- 4= A lot
- 5= Frequently

20. How often do your students need information about the following regarding postsecondary education? (Rank from 1=*Not at all* to 5=*Frequently*)
- Guidance in researching postsecondary options
- What the admission requirements are for an institution
- How to navigate the application process
- How to apply for financial aid
- Help finding and applying for scholarships
- Other. Please explain.

21. Giving your best guess, what grade level seeks the most information about postsecondary education?
- Freshmen (9th grade)

- Sophomores (10th grade)
- Juniors (11th grade)
- Seniors (12th grade)

22. For the following, the term college is used since college fairs is the common term used when describing an event where postsecondary institution representatives are in attendance in order to present information about their institution to attendees.

23. Will your school host a virtual college fair?
- Yes
- No
- I don't know

24. How will your school try to host a virtual college fair during COVID?
- Through pre-recorded YouTube videos
- Through live video calls
- Through virtual campus tours
- Other. Please Explain.

25. What types of institutions will be invited to participate in your school's college fair? Please select all that apply.
- Four-year institutions
- Community colleges
- Certificate programs
- Other. Please explain.

26. How often do you mention postsecondary education in your classroom?
- Every day
- Once a week
- Twice a week
- Several times a week
- Less than once a week
- Other. Please explain

27. The following questions are for teachers.
In what capacity do you mention postsecondary education in your classroom? Please check all that apply.
- When mentioning the future (i.e., "When you attend college, your instructor will...)
- In homework assignments. Please explain.
- One-on-one conversations with students.

- In lesson plans. Please explain.
- Other. Please explain.

28. Did your school engage in virtual training on how to implement a college-going culture during the changes implemented due to COVID?
- 1= Not at all
- 2= A little
- 3= Somewhat
- 4= A lot
- 5= Frequently

29. If your school did engage in virtual trainings, how many virtual trainings were held on how to implement a college-going culture during COVID?
- 1-2
- 3-4
- 5-6
- 7-8
- 9-10
- 10 plus

30. Please indicate how often the following methods of communication are use with students' parents/guardians and with students. (Rank from 1=*Not at all* to 5=*Frequently*)
- Email
- Automated Phone Call
- Text Message
- Social Media
- Updates on the School Website
- School's Educational Platform (Canvas, Moodle, Blackboard, etc.)
- Other. Please Explain.

31. Do you believe all students are college-capable?
For this survey, the terms college-capable embodies the belief that all students, regardless of background or demographic characteristics, can attend and succeed at a postsecondary institution.
- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Maybe
- Probably not
- Definitely not

32. Please elaborate on your answer on why you believe or do not believe all students are college-capable.

33. The following question asks you to rank how you believe your school is fulfilling the nine principles of a college-going culture during COVID. (Rank from 1=*Actions to fulfill this principle have yet to be acted on.* to 5=*The school not only fulfills this principle, but it is also fully integrated into the school's routines.*)

The nine principles of a college-going culture help create a culture where going to any postsecondary institution is a natural "next step" for students to take after completing high school.

- College talk: that students understand all aspects of what it takes to get into and attend a college from taking a standardized test, filling out an application, and obtaining financial aid.
- Clear expectations: making sure that all students are knowledgeable about all of their postsecondary education options as well as have set goals to help them obtain a postsecondary education.
- Information and resources: providing readily available information to students and their families about postsecondary education options.
- Comprehensive counseling model: synthesizing the traditional counselor role with that of a college counselor. A college counselor is knowledgeable in all the steps of obtaining a postsecondary education and helps students make the best decision for their postsecondary education aspirations.
- Testing and curriculum: preparing students for standardized tests such as the ACT or SAT. The preparation includes test prep work/workshops as well as financial help with testing fees.
- Faculty involvement: includes multiple avenues of collaboration to maintain the college culture at the school. This principle also includes college talk in lesson plans and having the knowledge and informational materials to help students.
- Family involvement: keeping families informed on their student's postsecondary options. Schools need opportunities, such as assemblies/workshops or individual family meetings.
- College partnerships: engaging in partnerships with local colleges, both four-year and community colleges. The partnerships include organized campus tours for students and college fairs help at the high schools.
- Articulation: beginning postsecondary talks as soon as the students enter elementary school with talks continuing through high school. As the students progress through their k-12 education, the amount of information would increase and get more specific to the students' needs.

34. Please elaborate on how you believe your school is using the nine principles of a college-going culture to create a college-going culture during COVID.

35. What, if anything, hinders your school from creating a college-going culture during COVID?

Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What is your position at this school?
2. How long have you been in your position at this school?
3. How long have you been in education?
4. What other roles have you had in education?
5. How do you define college? Postsecondary education?
6. When and how did you learn about the concept of a college-going culture?
7. Are you familiar with the nine principles of a college-going culture?
8. Please elaborate on how your school uses the nine principles of a college-going culture to create a college-going culture.
9. What motivated you to start implementing a college-going culture in your school? What has motivated you to continue implementing a college-going culture during COVID-19?
10. How do you incorporate a college-going culture into your classroom?
11. How would you explain your impact on a college-going culture outside of the classroom?
12. Please elaborate on why you do or do not believe all students are college-capable.
13. How would you say your school is creating a college-going culture during COVID-19?
14. What, if anything, hinders your school from creating a college-going culture during COVID-19?
15. How has your school adapted postsecondary outreach during COVID-19?
16. How has your school adapted the delivery of information about FAFSA and scholarships to students during COVID-19?
17. What would the ideal college-going culture look like to you?
18. Do you have any closing remarks about a college-going culture?

Appendix C

Recruitment Emails

Sent to Appalachian State Listservs

Subject line: Request to Participate in Dissertation Study on College-Going Culture

Hello,

My name is Carrie Hodge, and I am a doctoral student in Appalachian State University's Higher Educational Leadership Ed.D. program. Dr. Jennifer McGee, Associate Professor Educational Research and Evaluation in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at Appalachian State University, is the dissertation chair for the dissertation study outlined in this email. I am conducting my dissertation study on college-going culture in high schools during a pandemic. This study had been IRB approved (IRB number 20-0036).

For this study, the operational definition of a college-going culture is creating a culture where all students not only believe they are capable of a postsecondary education (and one not limited to a four-year institution), but also know the steps to take in applying and preparing for that education. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do high schools define college-going, college, and a college-going culture?
2. How do high school personnel perceive the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture under the influence of coronavirus pandemic?

Due to COVID, I have had to alter my study numerous times. I am hoping to defend my dissertation in the spring and graduate in May 2021. At this time, I have been unable to locate participants for my study. I received your contact information from the College of Education, and I am emailing to ask if you work in a high school setting, would you please participate in my study by taking a survey. The survey, hosted on Qualtrics, will take around 15 minutes to complete, and the results will remain anonymous. I might also be conducting follow-up interviews, and the interview data would also remain anonymous when written up for the study.

The survey link is: [link inserted here]

I would appreciate it greatly if you would be willing to participate in my study. If you have any questions, please email me at murraycr@appstate.edu or call at [cell phone number inserted here].

Thank you so much,

Carrie Hodge

Sent to Dr. E. C. Email List

Subject Line: Dissertation Study Participation Request

Hello,

My name is Carrie Hodge, and I am a doctoral student in Appalachian State University's Higher Educational Leadership Ed.D. program. I got your name from Dr. [insert name here]; she believed you might be able to help me with my dissertation study. I am conducting my dissertation study on college-going culture in high schools during a pandemic. This study had been IRB approved (IRB number 20-0036).

For this study, the operational definition of a college-going culture is creating a culture where all students not only believe they are capable of a postsecondary education (and one not limited to a four-year institution) but also know the steps to take in applying and preparing for that education. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do high schools define a college-going, college, and a college-going culture?
2. How do high school personnel perceive the creation and sustainability of a college-going culture under the influence of coronavirus pandemic?

Due to COVID, I have had to alter my study numerous times. I am hoping to defend my dissertation in the spring and graduate in May 2021. At this time, I have been unable to locate participants for my study. Would you please participate in my study by taking a survey? The survey, hosted on Qualtrics, will take around 15 minutes to complete, and the results will remain anonymous. I might also be conducting follow-up interviews, and the interview data would also remain anonymous when written up for the study. If you are willing to participate in a follow-up interview, would you please send me your information, and I will be in contact after the survey collection period?

The survey link is: [inserted link here]

I would appreciate it greatly if you would be willing to participate in my study. If you have any questions, please email me at murraycr@appstate.edu or call at [cell phone number inserted here].

Thank you so much,

Carrie Hodge

Appendix D

Interview Consent

Consent to Participate in Interview

Information to Consider about this Research

Title: Examining College-Going Culture in North Carolina High Schools During COVID
Principal Investigators: Carrie Hodge
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Jennifer McGee
Department: Higher Education Leadership
Contact Information: murraycr@appstate.edu; (864) 884-5041

You have been selected to participate in an interview examining the creation of a college-going culture during COVID. You do not have to complete the interview. Your answers will be anonymous. Your affiliation, such as school area (urban, suburban, or rural), grade level, subject level(s), and position, may be included for the purpose of meaningful research, but no other personal information will be stated.

Participating in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you decide to participate now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You may choose not to answer any question for any reason. There is no required length for your responses.

If you have any questions about this research study, you may contact Carrie Hodge at murraycr@appstate.edu.

You will complete this interview through Zoom. The interview will be recorded and last approximately 30 to 50 minutes.

What are possible harms or discomforts that I might experience during the research?

To the best of my knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

What are the possible benefits of this research?

There is no guarantee that you will get any benefit from taking part in this study. Your willingness to take part, however, may, in the future, help inform recommendations that may improve the creation of a college-going culture in North Carolina high schools.

Signature:_____

Name Printed:_____

This appendix includes all the responses under their coding heading to the survey question *How do you define college*? All 27 survey respondents answered this question. Please note that all spelling, capitalization, and the like are reproduced exactly as they appeared in the survey response.

Coding and Responses for the Term *College*:

Higher Education/Institution
- higher education
- Higher education
- Higher education (Post Secondary)
- Institution of higher learning
- A higher institution that provides a higher education for ones who chose to obtain it.
- a higher level educational institution
- An educational institution offering post secondary education

Career Readiness/Training
- Training to decide what path you want to take
- An institution that provides higher education for students in professional and technical careers (i.e., teachers, lawyers, doctors, nurses, scientists.)
- post secondary education that is more specified to a career
- A post high school institution where students specialize in career focused education.
- Postsecondary work to lead to a degree and ultimately to a career
- Academic training in a class setting

Certificate/Degree Earning
- Any education after high school. Usually resulting in a degree or certificate.
- A postsecondary institution that awards associates and bachelor's degrees
- A place of secondary education where a degree is earned
- Any formal education that leads to a degree or certificate
- Additional coursework past the grade 12 where one's goal is to attain a Bachelor's or higher degree.
- Higher education leading to a two or four year degree

Education with Specific Parameters
- 2 or 4 year educational program beyond high school
- Any 2-4 university where students attend to gain knowledge and skills necessary for a career.
- 2 or 4 college
- post-secondary education can include community, trade school, 4 year university
- going to university/college/community college

Conceptual
- Environment in which you enroll, possibly live in
- Place of growth to find what is passionate in life. First chance of true freedom.
- Not for everyone. It is also not the 4 year program everyone thinks of. There are many different options to help someone better their life and career possibilities.

Thematic Coding for College-Capable

This appendix includes all the responses under their thematic coding heading for the survey question which asked respondents to expand on their belief on students' college-capabilities. Out of the 27 survey respondents, 24 respondents answered this question. Due to the complex nature of the responses, they could be coded under more than one theme. Please note that all spelling, capitalization, and the like are reproduced exactly as they appeared in the survey response.

Need for Desire and Motivation
- College-capable is determined by the student and their desire. I am happy to assist in anyway possible.
- Everyone has the ability to learn
- I believe all students have the capacity to attend college, however, it is their choice on whether to attend or not. Some students may choose alternative routes based on their personal feelings regarding their abilities, financial stress, and support system.
- Every student has conditions or items that may make achieving college possible. It depends on the students ability to overcome those obstacles and push forward. I do believe it is accessible to all students. It takes more for certain groups to access that ability over other groups.
- It's about motivation, and there are student's who wouldn't be willing to work.
- I do think all students are capable of post secondary education of some sort, but they need to have a true interest in persuing
- Some students are just trying to naviaget high school and get thru it to move on to the work force, etccc. Especially ESL kids, OCS students, etc..
- Capability requires some want and desire to go and many don't have that at all. They would not do what is required so not capable.
- Some are not ready or have the interests of attending and that is ok. As long as they find a passion they care about, I don't see the reason why everyone needs to be college capable.
- Not all high school students work hard, try and/or attempt at applying themselves. Social media and peer pressure is a big deterrent.

Lack of Resources and Support
- With the right levels of support, this can be achieved.
- I believe there is a program beyond high school for all my students. Accessing the money is often the issue, but I believe that if every student can get accepted to a program, they can be successful.
- I believe all students are college-capable if they are provided the resources
- I believe all students have the capacity to attend college, however, it is their choice on whether to attend or not. Some students may choose alternative routes based on their personal feelings regarding their abilities, financial stress, and support system.
- Every student has conditions or items that may make achieving college possible. It depends on the students ability to overcome those obstacles and push forward. I do

believe it is accessible to all students. It takes more for certain groups to access that ability over other groups.

- Some students with severe or profound learning disabilities are not served in post secondary settings. In addition, there are outlying circumstances like life events that prevent students from being college capable. 99% of students are college capable and deserve the opportunity to pursue post graduate studies.
- Most students are capable of attending some type of post-secondary education. There are few that have special needs that I feel that would not be able to make it through postsecondary, unless there are programs that specifically work with them on needed skills. ALL students have the capability to do some type of program but a lot do not have the push, the will, the want, or the motivator at home. There are a lot of students where I work that have been told that they will never make it to college and they believe that. If they had support at a younger age, I truly believe that things could have been different for a great deal of them.
- Students in this area are often encouraged to go straight into a minimum wage job from high school by their families. We, at the high school, work hard to show them opportunities, but the culture of accepting less is predominate
- I think student success depends on the support systems they have in place. If every student could be strategically placed in the institution that is the best fit for him or her and be guaranteed strong support systems to help them, it is possible for them to be successful.
- In a perfect world, they would be. I do believe all students are capable of postsecondary education, but I feel that high schools face financial and political pressure to graduate as many students as possible. As a result, I feel that the low expectations and high amount of hand-holding we have to do to graduate a lot of students leaves them in a situation where they lack the individual motivation to push themselves and would not be capable of a college-level workload with appropriate rigor. There is no one cause, it seems to be a combination of factors.

Limited Definition of Postsecondary Education
- Some students are just not cut out for college and succeed more in military programs, work/apprenticeship programs, and/or trade school
- Depends on the level of postsecondary education you are talking about. 4 year college, not everyone. 2 year college, yes
- Postsecondary institutions can be varied. For example, some may continue life skilled for disabled students.
- I believe that all students are capable of learning and attaining a post high school education at some level but not all students are prepared for the academic demands of college. To believe that all students will graduate from a two year or four year college is just not realistic.
- I don't believe all students need to attend a university or even a degree program. Jobs that don't require post secondary education have to be filled by someone. Also, some students have no desire to go to college and will not be successful without the motivation.

Lack of Academic Abilities
- Some students with severe or profound learning disabilities are not served in post secondary settings. In addition, there are outlying circumstances like life events that prevent students from being college capable. 99% of students are college capable and deserve the opportunity to pursue post graduate studies.
- Most students are capable of attending some type of post-secondary education. There are few that have special needs that I feel that would not be able to make it through postsecondary, unless there are programs that specifically work with them on needed skills. ALL students have the capability to do some type of program but a lot do not have the push, the will, the want, or the motivator at home. There are a lot of students where I work that have been told that they will never make it to college and they believe that. If they had support at a younger age, I truly believe that things could have been different for a great deal of them.
- I believe all students are inherently capable of continuing their education past high school to varying degrees. There are done students with mental and/or physical disabilities that may limit the level they can complete. For example, a student in our severely profoundly handicapped program might be able to attend a certificate job training program but most likely will not be able to succeed in a degree program

Appendix G

Coding for Hindrances that Impact the Creation of a College-Going Culture during COVID-19

This appendix includes all the responses under their thematic coding heading to the survey question *What, if anything, hinders your school from creating a college-going culture during COVID?* Out of the 27 survey respondents, 20 respondents answered this question. Two of the responses were included in the not coding process. Please note that all spelling, capitalization, and the like are reproduced exactly as they appeared in the survey response.

Lack of Face-to-Face Interaction
- devoted to pushing curriculum. We aren't doing class meetings to promote the college going culture.
- The fact that students can't meet recruiters or go to campuses in-person is difficult, but I don't think we've been hindered.
- Distance learning
- Convenience to drop by and ask about college specifics is no longer available.
- Seeing our students regularly as some are taking all inline classes due to the pandemic.
- Wearing a mask all day deters everyone.
- Presence, the counseling staff is having to work harder to get information to student through the virtual platform.
- I think the face-to-face engagement and interaction are the biggest hindrances.
- Lower expectations such as workload and attendance; fully remote students are not taking advantage of college resources; parents play a larger role than the school counselors so if a student does not have a parent support at home, he or she is often confused about the process and miss out on financial aid opportunities

Lack of Engagement
- Participation for students and parents.
- Lowered expectations such as workload and attendance; fully remote students are not taking advantage of college resources; parents play a larger role than the school counselors so if a student does not have a parent support at home, he or she is often confused about the process and miss out on financial aid opportunities.
- A lot of the families in this area are not college educated so there is not a big push for that. That's not COVID related, that's all the time. Students are working and helping their families instead of focusing on school work.
- Community response to activities at school and students' financial situations
- Many of our students are not completing assignments on remote learning days, some are even working almost full time hours. They are not mastering the material and we are not able to cover the curriculum. The gaps they will have in their educational background may make it difficult for them to be successful.
- Poverty and community attitude of accepting less and working minimally-not tying to improve their skills, employability or education

Lack of Time
- The entire situation is highly reactive. Our school does not have a school social worker, so I spend a lot more of my time now helping students and families to meet basic needs just so they can participate in school. We also have far less contact with students. This leaves a lot less time for implementing college-going cultural programming.
- Not enough time. We are treading water.

Lack of Technology and Internet Access
- Access to internet in our community. Student/family involvement. Many students are more interested in gap years as they wait to see what happens with COVID.

Appendix H

Thematic Coding for Impact of COVID-19 on the Nine Principles of a College-Going Culture

This appendix includes all the responses under their thematic coding heading to the survey question *Please elaborate on how you believe your school is using the nine principles of a college-going culture to create a college-going culture during COVID.* Out of the 27 survey respondents, 21respondents answered this question. One response was not included in the coding. Please note that all spelling, capitalization, and the like are reproduced exactly as they appeared in the survey response.

Scapegoat
- Our counselors and college / career readiness counselor are still helping students with their colllege guidance, signing students up for testing, and organizing virtual college fairs and meetings with recruiters.
- We are barely scraping by. I know counselors have had sessions with juniors and seniors to discuss this. That's all I know.
- Guidance leads and if they don't initate then the students ask, probably being prompted by parents
- We have an incredibly counseling staff that is working diligently to encourage students to attend sessions with colleges and universities.
- Student services helps students with college applications. FASFA, scholarships, and recommendations IF asked. Many teachers who have seniors also help students with the college process and discuss options with students.
- We are lucky enough to have a college advisor supplied through UNC_Chapel Hill. Her main purpose is to work with the school counselors and students to complete the nine principles at HHS.
- We are utilizing our college advisor to facilitate meetings, virtual campus tours, help with FAFSA, etc.
- There are on campus college advisors for the UNC System of schools and for the Community College
- We have a grant funded thru Appalachian for a full time individual to meet with each senior about their plan for college and how they plan to make that happen.
- Our school has a college transition advisor and a community college liaison who meet wit students and usually plan college visits and help students enroll in community college courses, test prep, and completing financial aid firms. I am not sure if they are doing college visits this year.
- We have a good relationship with a local community college and a university. We have a new college liaison who is helping fulfill many of these principles by reaching out to students and providing FAFSA help. The focus is on seniors
- Since we are a hybrid model with students taking community college courses beginning in their freshman year within three different career interests, we have a full integrated system where we continually discuss both career options and education needed to obtain those goals based student interest.

COVID-19 Negatively Impacts Sustainability
- We're doing the best we can amongst having to readjust our lives and normal teaching routines. COVID is causing much extra work that tires normalcy and routines.
- It wasn't terrible in the first place but it wasn't great. COVID has made it horrible.
- We are barely scraping by. I know counselors have had sessions with juniors and seniors to discuss this. That's all I know.
- there's lots of college stuff posted in Canvas and on Social Media for parents/ students and Guilford County Schools is also doing a series of metings
- Using the technology resources to make a better platform of learning for the educational experience.

Teachers Engage with Students
- Student services helps students with college applications. FASFA, scholarships, and recommendations IF asked. Many teachers who have seniors also help students with the college process and discuss options with students.
- We are having conversations with our students as well as having events for students to learn more about college. Our teachers talk to students about choices. I believe we also need to emphasize more trade programs because some of our students need that instead of university or even community college.
- We believe that all students can go to college and provide resources for them to do so.

Vita

Carrie Hodge received her B.A. (2005) and M.A. (2007) in English from Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina. Several years after receiving her M.A., Dr. Hodge began to teach at the community college level. She taught Developmental English and freshman composition courses for five years. In 2014, Dr. Hodge became the Writing Center Coordinator at Pitt Community College in Greenville, North Carolina. She left that position in 2017 to pursue an Ed.D. in Higher Education Leadership at Appalachian State University in Boone, North Carolina. During her time in the program. Dr. Hodge taught freshman composition as an adjunct at Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina, worked as a Program Evaluation Specialist for the Center for Analytics and Research Education (CARE) at Appalachian State, and obtained an internship with the National Council for Community and Education Partnerships (NCCEP). Currently, Dr. Hodge lives in Kentucky and works for the Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) as a Senior Associate for the Data & Advanced Analytics division.