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## Educational and Career-related Help-seeking in High School: An Exploration of Students' Choices

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined patterns of help-seeking for educational and career planning issues in a sample of 483 students in grades 11–12 from two schools in southern Ontario. Although counsellors were the most common source of support for educational issues, very few students sought their assistance for career issues, choosing to turn to family members instead. Logistic regression revealed that males and students with lower occupational aspirations were more likely to avoid seeking assistance from counsellors for educational planning issues, while males, students with lower educational aspirations, and students with parents who attained higher levels of education were least likely to see counsellors for career planning. These results indicate that it is important to more fully explore student, counsellor, and contextual influences on help-seeking in the career domain, in order to design alternative intervention strategies for individuals who do not seek assistance from their school counsellors.

### RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude a examiné les tendances de demandes d'aide relative aux questions scolaires et de planification professionnelle dans un échantillon de 483 élèves de 11<sup>e</sup> et 12<sup>e</sup> années dans deux écoles du sud de l'Ontario. Bien que les conseillers aient été la source la plus courante d'information sur les questions scolaires, très peu d'élèves leur demandaient de l'aide au sujet des questions de planification professionnelle, car ils préféraient s'adresser aux membres de leur famille. La régression logistique a révélé que les élèves de sexe masculin et les élèves ayant de faibles aspirations professionnelles étaient plus susceptibles d'éviter de demander de l'aide aux conseillers pour planifier leur cheminement scolaire, et que les élèves de sexe masculin, les élèves ayant de faibles aspirations scolaires, et les élèves dont les parents avaient atteint des niveaux supérieurs de scolarité étaient les moins susceptibles de rencontrer des conseillers au sujet de la planification de leur parcours professionnel. Ces résultats indiquent qu'il est important d'explorer plus à fond les influences qu'exercent l'élève, le conseiller, et le contexte sur les demandes d'aide dans le domaine de planification de carrière afin de concevoir des stratégies d'intervention différentes pour les individus qui ne recherchent pas l'aide des conseillers de leur école.

For many individuals, school-based guidance services are one of the few sources of formal career counselling that they will encounter prior to entering the world of work. Although the effectiveness of career counselling has been well documented (for reviews, see Brown & Ryan Krane, 2000; Dagle & Salter, 2004; Whiston,

Sexton, & Lasoff, 1998), such services are only useful to those students who obtain assistance from counsellors for their educational and vocational planning needs. Early identification of individuals who fail to access these services may allow more active delivery of career development services to these students, and more efficient targeting of alternative programming to those individuals who are least likely to avail themselves of individual career counselling. The present study sought to identify student characteristics in Grades 9–10 that predicted Grades 11–12 students' failure to seek assistance from counsellors and other guidance professionals. Additionally, this study addressed the question of to whom high school students turn for assistance, when they encounter educational and vocational planning difficulties.

There have been recent calls within the school counselling community to improve services to the entire student body through the use of additional modes of service delivery to supplement individual counselling sessions. For example, Green and Keys (2001) promote the idea of indirect service delivery (e.g., advocacy, and consultation and collaboration with other school personnel and parents). Gyspers (2001) has suggested implementing guidance activities in the classroom rather than the counselling office. Research has also established that parents and adolescents form mutual career development goals, and act and communicate to achieve those goals over time (Young, Marshall, et al., 2006; Young, Valach, et al., 2001). Finally, numerous career development specialists have promoted the idea of involving parents to a greater degree in the career counselling process. Proponents of this approach have included Hall (2003); Sinacore, Healy, and Hassan (1999), who have developed specific strategies that families can use to support and foster various aspects of adolescent career development; and Middleton and Loughhead (1993), who have described ways that career counsellors can incorporate parents into their ongoing work with adolescents. Other authors have developed and tested programs for training parents to be the primary source of support for adolescents, in rural settings (Jeffery, Lehr, Hache, & Campbell, 1992) and in cities (Palmer & Cochran, 1988).

Schools and career development practitioners have responded to these calls for action by developing a wide range of career-related services and interventions, offered in a variety of modalities (Feller, 2003; Flores et al., 2003). Unfortunately, systematic research into the effectiveness of career development services, particularly the mechanisms by which treatment interventions bring about change, has not kept pace with their development or implementation (Dagley & Salter, 2004; Lalande, Hiebert, Bezanson, & Magnusson, 2005). As Bernes and Magnusson (2004) describe it, the field of adolescent career development is currently at a stage where “the proliferation of one new product after another may be putting the field at risk of not attending to more complex but necessary tasks” (p. 4).

One such task is the early identification of students who are the least likely to utilize career counselling services in senior high school. No matter how powerful an intervention is, it is of little benefit to students who fail to avail themselves of it by not seeking help from guidance professionals for their educational or career planning problems. Identification of such individuals in early high school may allow schools to engage in preventative service delivery so that, by the time

these students approach the end of high school, they will be more comfortable seeking professional guidance for their career development. Therefore, exploring the issue of help-seeking (who do adolescents seek assistance from; what kinds of students are least likely to seek help from guidance counsellors and other career development specialists in the future) is an integral part of understanding career counselling within a school context.

Although a large body of literature on adolescent help-seeking exists, the vast majority of the literature has examined help-seeking in relation to psychological and socio-emotional problems (e.g., Ballon, Kirst, & Smith, 2004; Barker & Adelman, 1994; Gasquet, Chavance, Ledoux, & Choquet, 1997; Raviv, Sills, Raviv, & Wilansky, 2000; Rickwood & Braithwaite, 1994; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996; Sears, 2004; Sheffield, Fiorenza, & Sofronoff, 2004), rather than career development. In the domain of educational and vocational planning concerns, research has revealed that students are far more likely to seek assistance from non-professional sources, especially family, than from school counsellors or other guidance personnel. High school students have ranked counsellors as having less influence on their vocational aspirations than either parents or same-sex friends (Paa & McWhirter, 2000). Same-sex parents, in particular, have been shown to exert more influence than career educators in 14- to 18-year-olds' choice of career (Kniveton, 2004). Furthermore, in a 10-year longitudinal study of students' occupational aspirations from Grade 2 to Grade 12, Helwig (2004) discovered that students perceived their schools as being only marginally useful for their career preparation. The pattern of seeking assistance from parents rather than guidance professionals appears to be present throughout the high school years. In a large sample of Albertan Grades 7–9 students, 80% reported that they felt comfortable approaching their parents for career planning assistance, while only 12% reported approaching their school counsellor (Bardick, Bernes, Magnusson, & Witko, 2004). Similarly, Dick and Rallis (1991) found that two to three times as many Grade 12 students identified their parents, rather than counsellors, as an influence on their vocational aspirations.

Additionally, research examining the proportion of secondary students who seek assistance for educational and vocational problems indicate that relatively few students turn to career and guidance professionals. For educational issues, Mau (1995) found that 35%–40% of students seek assistance from counsellors for educational planning, while only 8% of the sample in Bolarin's (1989) study of Nigerian secondary school students sought help from counsellors. For vocational issues, approximately 30% of students seek help from counsellors (Kotrlík & Harrison, 1989; Mau; Stratton, 2001). There is some evidence that, as students age, an increasing proportion of them feel comfortable with approaching school counsellors for career-related assistance (Bardick et al., 2004). Overall, however, it is evident that the services of counsellors and other guidance professionals are greatly underutilized.

Unfortunately, most of the existing research on help-seeking for vocational and educational planning has not addressed the issue of individual differences: what kinds of students are more, or less, likely to turn to counsellors for assist-

ance with these issues? This gap in the literature leaves practitioners with very little useful information about which of their students are most in need of other modes of career development service delivery. Therefore, it is necessary to refer to relevant studies from other areas of life. Gender has consistently been shown to be an important influence on adolescents' help-seeking, with boys being less likely to seek help from counsellors for physical health needs (e.g., Booth et al., 2004; Zimmer-Gembeck, Alexander, & Nystrom, 1997), mental and socio-emotional problems (Ballon et. al, 2004; Gasquet et al., 1997; Schonert-Reichl & Muller, 1996; Sears, 2004), and academic difficulties (Nelson-LeGall, DeCooke, & Jones, 1987; Ryan, Patrick, & Shim, 2005). Gender is expected to predict help-seeking for educational and career planning, as well.

Some research also suggests that adolescents are more likely to engage in help-seeking for problems that are more severe and distressing (Raviv et al., 2000; Sheffield et al., 2004). For career and educational planning, a factor that may overlap with problem severity is students' educational and occupational aspiration levels, in the sense that the higher a student's aspirations, the more challenging it is to successfully attain those aspired careers and education levels. Therefore, it was decided to explore educational and occupational aspirations as possible predictors of future help-seeking. Specifically, it was hypothesized that lower aspiration levels in early high school would be associated with the choice to not seek assistance from counsellors in subsequent years.

Two other variables were included in the current study as possible influences of students' help-seeking in the career and educational planning domains in particular—parental education levels, and academic achievement. Parents with higher levels of education may be better able to provide sufficient assistance for their children's educational and career planning. Therefore, it was expected that higher parental education will decrease the likelihood of seeking assistance from counsellors. Finally, students with lower academic achievement are likely to require the most assistance with educational planning, although these students may also be the most reluctant to seek help from professional sources. To examine this possibility, this study included academic achievement as one of the variables of interest.

In summary, this study asked two questions related to high school students' help-seeking for educational and career planning issues. From whom do students seek assistance (counsellors, other school staff, peers, and/or family)? What kinds of student characteristics best predict whether or not an individual will seek assistance from counselling professionals (from a pool consisting of gender, educational aspirations, occupational aspirations, academic achievement, and parental education levels)?

## METHOD

### *Participants and Setting*

The research sample was composed of 242 male and 241 female high school students. These participants were drawn from a longitudinal data set collected

from two secondary schools near a small city in southern Ontario. One school was in a suburban area, while the other was located within the city. In both schools, the student populations were predominantly Anglophone Caucasians, but with a substantial variation in socio-economic status. The majority of participants were middle to upper-middle class, but there were also many adolescents from urban working-class families and farming communities in the sample.

At the time this study was conducted, all guidance counsellors at the participating schools had a minimum of two years' experience in those positions. In order to qualify for a position as guidance counsellor, each of them would have completed part one of the additional qualification course for guidance counselling (AQG) in Ontario. This course involves some training in basic counselling skills and program planning, instruction in the provincial career and guidance curriculum, an introduction to theories of human development and career development, and ethical and legal issues in guidance and counselling (Ontario College of Teachers, 2004a). Several counsellors would also have completed part two of the AQG, which provides more advanced training in guidance program delivery, and the application of knowledge gained from part one (Ontario College of Teachers, 2004b). The head of the guidance program in each school would also have completed part three of the AQG. This course builds on the previous two, emphasizes leadership skills in guidance programming, and leads to the designation of Guidance Specialist (Ontario College of Teachers, 2004c).

### *Procedures*

The questions used in this study were embedded within a larger longitudinal study assessing numerous interpersonal and psychological variables related to students' achievement at three points in time: Grades 9–10, Grades 11–12, and Grade 13 to one year after graduation. Questions for the present study were embedded in the first two administrations of the questionnaire. For these two administrations, questionnaires were group-administered to students during morning classes in February. Less than 2% of students from those classes declined to participate in the study. Additionally, information on academic performance was obtained from students' provincial school records. For more details on sample characteristics and data collection procedures, see Shapka and Keating (2003).

Non-parametric tests of difference were applied to determine whom participants regarded as sources of support when they encountered problems with educational and career planning. Logistic regression was then used to determine the best set of variables that predicted non-help-seeking from counsellors.

### *Measures*

Patterns of help-seeking were identified from open-ended responses to the questions, "Who are you most likely to rely on for advice or support for information on courses, education?" and "Who are you most likely to rely on for advice or support for career or job plans?" The specific individuals identified were collapsed into four categories: family members (e.g., mother, sibling, cousin), peers (e.g.,

co-worker, girlfriend, friend), counsellors (e.g., counsellor, school counsellor, guidance counsellor), and other school staff (e.g., teacher, principal). Due to many students' tendency to identify multiple sources of support, responses were coded in a yes/no format, separately for each category.

The pool of variables used to build the regression models was composed of two covariates (School of Origin, Grade Level), and five possible predictors (Gender, Academic Achievement, Educational Aspirations, Occupational Aspirations, Parental Education). Information on School of Origin, Grade Level, and Gender were obtained from the demographic information portion of the Grades 9–10 administration of the questionnaire. Parental Education was created from participants' reports of their parents' highest level of educational attainment, coded on the same 4-point scale as participants' own educational aspirations. For each participant, the mean score of mothers' and fathers' educational attainment, across both administrations of the questionnaire, was used to summarize the overall education level of both parents. Given the questionable validity of self-report measures of academic achievement (Kuncel, Credé, & Thomas, 2005), Academic Achievement was defined as students' average marks for all Grade 9 courses, obtained from official school records.

Educational and occupational aspirations were measured at the first time point, and included in the regression models to test the possibility that lower aspiration levels in early high school would predict a failure to seek assistance from counsellors in late high school. Educational Aspirations were assessed through the question "What level of education do you realistically expect to get?" Participants' responses were coded on a 4-point scale consisting of 1 (*high school diploma*), 2 (*community college diploma/certificate*), 3 (*university degree*), and 4 (*graduate or professional degree*).

Occupational Aspirations were operationally defined responses to question, "If you could have any job or career that you wanted, what kind of job would you like to have?" The aspired occupations were then coded according to the 1998 version of the O\*NET database (a comprehensive database of occupational information maintained by the U.S. Department of Labor). Each occupation in the database is ranked according to its prestige, using "Job Zones" (a 5-point ranking system derived from information such as average salary associated with the occupation, and minimum level of training/education required). For example, O\*NET defined Job Zone 2 as occupations where previous experience and training are beneficial (but not required), usually requiring at least a high school education, and with moderate average income. Sheet metal workers, pharmacy technicians, and retail salespersons would fall into this category. In contrast, in the Job Zone 5 level of prestige, occupations require extensive skill, knowledge, and experience, have bachelor's or graduate degrees as a prerequisite, and are associated with high average income (e.g., engineers, lawyers, surgeons).

Note that, in the present study, the goal was to identify, from characteristics that could be measured earlier, the kinds of senior high school students who fail to seek help from school counsellors in the hopes of intervening with them prior to their

entry into Grade 11. Consequently, co-variables and most predictor variables were obtained from the first administration of the questionnaire (participants in Grades 9–10), and the outcome variables were obtained from the second administration (participants in Grades 11–12).

## RESULTS

The numbers of participants who reported seeking assistance from each source of support are summarized in Table 1, separated by gender and type of issue. Cochran's  $Q$  tests (a nonparametric, omnibus test of differences between related, dichotomous scores) revealed significant differences between the support categories, for both the educational domain (male students' Cochran's  $Q = 77.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ; female students' Cochran's  $Q = 184.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and the career domain (male students' Cochran's  $Q = 333.26$ ,  $p < .001$ ; female students' Cochran's  $Q = 266.19$ ,  $p < .001$ ). That is, for both males and females, there are differences in the kinds of people that participants tended to seek out for their educational and career planning needs. As can be seen from Table 1, the most common source of support for educational issues was counselling professionals, especially for female students. In contrast, relatively few students sought assistance from counsellors for career-related issues (males = 13.6%; females = 27.8%), with the vast majority of students, irrespective of gender, turning to family members instead.

Table 1.

*Numbers of Participants Who Identified Seeking Assistance from Different Kinds of People, by Gender and Type of Issue*

	Educational				Career-related			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Counsellor	101	41.9	152	63.1	33	13.6	67	27.8
Other school staff	42	17.4	31	12.9	13	5.4	7	2.9
Family	80	33.2	82	34.0	176	72.7	174	72.2
Friends and peers	16	6.6	14	5.8	16	6.6	32	13.3

*Note.* Some students reported seeking assistance from multiple sources, resulting in numbers that exceed the total sample size.

A series of hierarchical logistic regression models were fitted to determine the set of predictors that most efficiently predicted whether or not a student sought assistance from counsellors. Data were screened for input errors, excessive missing cases, and multicollinearity prior to conducting the analyses. No substantive problems were identified. Separate regression analyses were run for educational planning and career planning. For each type of issue, an "all-subsets regression" strategy was used to determine the predictors of help-seeking, after controlling for the effects

of School of Origin and Grade Level. That is, School of Origin and Grade Level were entered into the regression in one step. Then, a separate regression was run for every possible combination of Gender, Academic Achievement, Educational Aspirations, Occupational Aspirations, and Parental Education entered at the second step. This identified the variables that contributed to prediction of help-seeking, and revealed whether any of them had a suppressor effect on the model. Finally, variables that had no significant effect on the final model (as direct predictors or as moderators of other variables) were removed from the model.

No suppression effects were found for either outcome variable. After controlling for School of Origin and Grade Level, Gender and Occupational Aspirations significantly predicted the likelihood of seeking versus not seeking support from counsellors for educational planning (-2 log likelihood = 523.60,  $\chi^2 = 37.95$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Table 2 summarizes the influence of each variable in the model. Specifically, male students and students who had lower occupational aspirations in Grades 9–10 were less likely to seek assistance from counsellors for educational planning issues in Grades 11–12. However, it should be noted that, after the effects of Gender and School of Origin were controlled for, this model accounted for only approximately 8% of the total variance in education-related help-seeking.

Table 2.

*Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Not Seeking Assistance from Counsellors for Educational Planning (N = 407)*

Variable	Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	SE	Wald	Exp(B)
Step 1	.04				
School of origin		.74	.20		
Grade level		.07	.20		
Step 2	.12				
School of origin		.67	.21	10.03**	1.95
Grade level		.08	.21	.17	1.09
Gender		.90	.21	18.61**	2.46
Occupational aspirations		-.24	.17	4.16*	.79

Note. Gender coded as 0 = female, 1 = male.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

The prediction model for career planning, after the control variables were accounted for, included Gender, Educational Aspirations, and Parental Education (-2 log likelihood = 393.44,  $\chi^2 = 25.10$ ,  $p < .001$ ). As can be seen from Table 3, male students, students with lower educational aspirations, and students with more highly educated parents were less likely to seek assistance from counsellors for career planning issues. This final model accounted for a moderate amount (7%) of the total variance in vocation-related help-seeking, once Grade Level and School of Origin were controlled.



Table 3.

*Summary of Logistic Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Not Seeking Assistance from Counsellors for Career Planning (N = 416)*

Variable	Nagelkerke R <sup>2</sup>	$\beta$	SE	Wald	Exp(B)
Step 1	.02				
School of origin		.48	.25		
Grade level		.15	.25		
Step 2	.07				
School of origin		.44	.26	2.8	1.55
Grade level		.19	.25	.55	1.21
Gender		.73	.26	7.77**	2.08
Educational aspirations		-.48	.23	4.32*	.62
Parental education		.51	.18	8.26**	1.66

Note. Gender coded as 0 = female, 1 = male.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

#### DISCUSSION

The results of the first analysis are consistent with the weight of evidence from previous research, and demonstrate that participants have a clear preference for seeking assistance from family members for their career planning needs. As Table 1 reveals, a disturbingly low number of students in this sample, especially male students, reported seeking assistance for career-related issues from counsellors or other educators. This raises questions about the quality of the support that students are receiving for their career development, and reinforces Green and Keys' (2001) and Gyspers' (2001) suggestion that school-based counselling professionals need to consider additional modes of service delivery. Programs designed to enlist parents and other family members in supporting their children's career development (e.g., Jeffery et al., 1992; Palmer & Cochran, 1988; Sinacore et al., 1999) appear to hold great potential for maximizing service delivery, given students' natural tendency to turn to them rather than professional counsellors.

In contrast, counsellors were the most frequently cited source of support for students' educational planning needs. Unfortunately, the present study was unable to explore why participants sought assistance from counsellors for educational planning needs, but not career-related needs. Perhaps students associate counsellors primarily with school-related issues, and are unaware of the career guidance services that are available to them. It may be the case that some students, particularly students who do not plan to pursue post-secondary education, may have the perception that counsellors do not have the interest or expertise to provide relevant guidance for their lives outside school. In light of the limited time and resources that many school districts allocate to counselling services (for example, Helwig's [2004] study reported a student-counsellor ratio of 400:1 in the Denver-area high schools that were a part of his study), it is possible that some school counsellors feel

the need to prioritize more immediate issues, such as course planning, academic failure, or discipline problems, over students' longer-term career development. Finally, as Gordon, Couture, and Drefs (2000) have suggested, there may be a discrepancy between students' and school staff's perceptions of what kinds of career development skills are needed the most in high school. Evidently, there is a need for research that explores why so many students are not seeking assistance from their counsellors for career planning issues, despite the fact that they do seek assistance from counsellors for educational issues.

The results of the logistic regression analyses revealed that gender, aspirations, and parental education were key predictors of the failure to seek assistance from counsellors. Academic achievement was not an important predictor in either model. Intriguingly, *educational* aspiration levels predicted career-related help-seeking, while *occupational* aspiration levels predicted educational help-seeking. This result was unexpected, and suggests that there is a complex dynamic underlying the relationships between educational aspirations, occupational aspirations, and seeking assistance for planning about the future. This dynamic is important to explore in greater depth, to fully understand patterns of help-seeking in high school. If future studies were designed to explore this dynamic (rather than to identify predictors of subsequent failure to seek help from counsellors), they would benefit from having all their variables measured at the same time point (Grades 11–12).

One specific direction for exploration would be to more fully delineate students' subjective understanding of the links between their education and their career. Perhaps students with low educational aspirations perceive school counsellors to be less interested in addressing their needs than the needs of students who intend to pursue post-secondary education. Perhaps students with lower occupational aspirations have less motivation to seek educational assistance, due to a perception that their educational choices and performance are simply not relevant to their future work. Alternatively, in light of the finding that most students seek assistance from families, perhaps students with higher aspirations need the specialized skills and knowledge that only a trained professional can provide, while students with lower aspirations obtain sufficient support and assistance from their families. Another important direction for future research would be to confirm the finding that educational aspirations did not predict educational help-seeking, and occupational aspirations did not predict occupational help-seeking. If this is a generalizable result (rather than an artefact of the sample, or the way that career and occupational help-seeking were measured), then it will become a priority to understand why aspirations in one domain are not related to school-related help-seeking in that same domain.

Nonetheless, this study provides sufficient information to guide counsellors' decisions about who may have the greatest need for non-traditional guidance services: Grade 9–10 students who are male have lower future aspirations, and whose parents have higher educational levels are less likely to seek assistance from counsellors when they are in Grades 11–12. Identifying and actively pursuing these students in early high school may increase their help-seeking behaviours as they approach the

end of high school. This could be accomplished through formal programming (e.g., an information campaign, targeted at these particular students and their families, to highlight the usefulness of the counselling services available) and informal efforts (e.g., having school counsellors pay particular attention to these individuals in their daily interactions with students). It is worthwhile to educate all students about the assistance that is available to them through school counselling services, and how to access this assistance, but educating those individuals who are least likely to seek such services for themselves may be particularly important.

However, it is necessary to recognize that student characteristics are only part of the story. Although it is possible to predict who will fail to utilize school counselling services in senior high school from student characteristics obtained two years earlier, the prediction models accounted for only a small to moderate amount of the total variance in help-seeking. Other factors may also be important influences on the decision to seek assistance from a counsellor, and need to be examined in more detail. In particular, research has revealed that high school guidance counsellors are sometimes perceived in a negative light by students who have made the transition to university (Ciccocioppo et al., 2002; Helwig, 2004). Perhaps we need to consider our own role in facilitating or hindering student help-seeking. Research has revealed that perceptions of practitioner trustworthiness, honesty and respectfulness are important factors in determining adolescents' help-seeking behaviours (Ginsburg, Menapace, & Slap, 1997; Tatar, 2001). Exploring the role of the counsellor and students' perceptions of the quality of services that they will receive from us, in determining students' help-seeking choices, are important ways to extend this study. One way to accomplish this would be to include these counsellor characteristics and behaviours in the prediction models, to identify what counsellors should be doing more or less of, to encourage student help-seeking. Another way would be to use qualitative research approaches, such as phenomenology or the critical incident technique, in order to gain a deeper understanding of students' positive and negative perceptions, beliefs, and experiences with their own school counsellors.

Another direction for future research is to examine the developmental consequences of seeking educational and career planning support from different kinds of people. What are the long-term outcomes of seeking assistance from counsellors versus friends and family, in terms of individuals' educational attainment, career choice, and eventual job satisfaction? Underlying this study, and many school-based career development services, is the implicit assumption that receiving career guidance from counsellors is better than seeking assistance from non-professional sources alone. Although the effectiveness of career counselling has been established, the long-term consequences of only turning to family for assistance with educational and career planning have yet to be fully delineated. In addition to the existence of parent-based career development interventions and programs (Hall, 2003; Jeffery et al., 1992; Middleton & Loughhead, 1993; Palmer & Cochran, 1988; Sinacore et al., 1999), there is evidence demonstrating that parents, in their everyday interactions with adolescents, have an important role in

fostering adolescents' career aspirations and decidedness (Grant, 2000; Marjoribanks, 1986; McNair & Brown, 1983; Silbereisen, Vondracek, & Berg, 1997) and promoting career-related exploration and action (Kracke, 1997, 2002; Young et al., 2006; Young, Valach, et al., 2001). This research strengthens the possibility that some students do not seek assistance from counsellors because they have no need of such assistance, and raises another question that both researchers and practitioners should be asking: in light of limited resources for career guidance and counselling in schools, what kinds of students will benefit the most (and the least) from these services?

One of the limitations of this study is the narrow grade range of the participants. Grades 11–12 students were selected because future educational and occupational plans should be very salient at that age. Given the possibility that rates of help-seeking may change over time, it would be premature to assume that the same patterns exist at other ages. Future research, preferably using longitudinal designs to track changes over time, is required to determine the predictors of help-seeking in younger students and university-age students. Similarly, all data were collected from two schools within a single region of southern Ontario, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other regions or provinces. Larger-scale replication, using a nationally representative sample, is needed to confirm the results of this study.

Another limitation is the use of self-reported, rather than observational, measures of help-seeking. Although there is little reason to suspect that adolescents systematically misrepresent whom they seek assistance from, this study is technically an exploration of reported help-seeking, rather than help-seeking behaviours.

Given the overlap between educational and career planning in high school, another potential limitation with this study is that some participants may not have made a distinction between seeking help for career and educational planning. If career-related and educational help are not distinct in the minds of the participants, this may have had a confounding effect on the results. Further exploration of the degree to which students distinguish these two types of help-seeking may clarify the present findings.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that the School of Origin control variable was a significant predictor of help-seeking for the domain of educational planning. Although its effects were controlled for in the logistic regression analysis, this result suggests that there are important aspects of the school environment that this study could not evaluate (such as the educational planning programs that were in place, or specific qualities of the counsellors at those locations), and which would require a larger sample of schools in order to make more general inferences. Further exploration of these school-related factors may improve understanding of help-seeking, and have benefits for appropriate delivery of counselling services.

Despite these limitations, this study provides useful information for understanding adolescent help-seeking in a particular community context. Additionally, the importance of attending to gender, aspiration levels, and parental education in determining who will be likely to avoid turning to counsellors for educational

and career planning assistance has been revealed. These results provide a useful starting place to more fully explore student, counsellor, and contextual influences on help-seeking in the career domain.

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