

SCHOOL COUNSELORS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR CULTURAL COMPETENCE
WHEN DELIVERING SERVICES IN CULTURALLY DIVERSE SCHOOL
SETTINGS

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Jimmy and Carol Hensley, who passed away before I completed my dissertation. My parents always encouraged me to reach for the stars and instilled in me the belief that I can do anything I set my mind to do. I am forever grateful for their love and support.

ABSTRACT

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Cultural competence continues to be a topic that has affected school counselors when delivering services in culturally diverse schools. Literature has suggested that school counselors who demonstrate cultural competence are more responsive within diverse school settings (Holcomb-McCoy, 2008). Even though counselor education programs have encouraged counselors-in-training to embrace and celebrate diversity, the average school counselor may not feel well versed in cultural competency when delivering services to students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Constantine, 2001). This phenomenological study examined school counselors' perceptions of their cultural competence when delivering services in culturally diverse school settings. The results of this study yielded three major themes that described the phenomenon. The themes included (a) multicultural preparation, (b) multicultural practice, and (c) multicultural experience. Implications of this study include increased professional development in multiculturalism for school counselors and building relationships with all relevant stakeholders to strengthen the comprehensive school counseling program.

Keywords: Cultural competence; Counseling services; Culturally diverse school settings; Comprehensive school counseling program; Phenomenological; Relationships

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

As the population of diverse individuals has increased in the United States, so has the population of culturally diverse students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). As of 2016, approximately 323 million individuals resided in the United States, with White individuals representing 76.9% of the total population, followed by Hispanic/Latino (17.6%), African American (13.3%), Asian (5.6%), biracial (2.6%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (1.2%) individuals (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Smith-Adcock et al. (2006) predicted that by the year 2050, culturally diverse students will represent 60% of the student population in U.S. schools and pointed to a need for culturally competent school counselors. Marbley et al. (2006) reported that this unprecedented demographic change in schools with students from varied cultures has changed how school counselors prepare to meet students' needs. Often, school counseling services have been underutilized or not used by culturally diverse students because they were not aware that a school counselor was available (Smith-Adcock et al., 2006). Schmidt et al. (2011) reported that the cultural landscape of school environments has continually changed. As the number of students who have entered public schools has become more diverse, school counselors must be prepared to be more culturally competent (Nelson et al., 2008).

ASCA's (2015) position statement on cultural diversity referred to a set of competencies based on the ASCA ethical standards (2016) that encouraged counselors to advocate on behalf of students through school/community collaboration and systems advocacy to resolve issues rooted in environmental and systemic factors. To recognize diversity training, several professional organizations created ethical standards to highlight

the necessity of cultural competence (American Counseling Association [ACA], 2005; American School Counselor Association [ASCA] 2010; Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs [CACREP], 2009). Additionally, researchers have highlighted the importance of school counselors' cultural competence and the usage of culturally appropriate techniques and interventions when working with culturally diverse students (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008; Matthews et al., 2018; Nelson et al., 2018; Person et al., 2020; Ponterotto et al., 2008).

Schmidt et al. (2011) studied school counselor preparedness when working with diverse populations. This study suggested that students were often limited in knowledge and skills regarding diverse populations in school counselor preparation programs. Nelson et al. (2013) have recommended that it is incumbent on school counselor programs to ensure that school counselors-in-training are exposed to multicultural issues in schools and have time to reflect on how they will develop their cultural competence.

School counselors who pursued additional training with the focus on (a) awareness of one's worldview and how one is a creation of cultural training, (b) knowledge of diverse students, and (c) the essential skills needed for working with culturally diverse student populations demonstrated high levels of cultural identity development and demonstrated an appreciation of culturally diverse student populations (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001). Additionally, Constantine (2002) suggested that the development of professional training focused on counseling diverse students and the importance of acknowledging and appreciating cultural similarities and differences be designed with school counselors in mind.

Cultural competence allows school counselors to possess awareness and knowledge of their own culture and that of their students; this, in turn, allows them to be skilled at tailoring counseling interventions that impact the quality of services provided to culturally diverse students (Matthews et al., 2018). Ratts and Greenleaf (2018) stated that when counselors understand how their self-awareness and students' worldview influence the counseling relationship, they can make informed decisions on how to proceed with student services and are more globally responsive and culturally competent in the current social and educational environment.

Evans et al. (2017) surveyed services provided by school counselors and identified activities that increased awareness, equity, advocacy, validation of cultural heritage, and diversity. However, studies have questioned the adequacy of counseling services school counselors provide for the growing number of culturally diverse students (Smith-Adcock et al., 2006).

The Statement of the Problem

Researchers in multicultural education have consistently called attention to the need for school counselors, counselor educators, and school counselors-in-training to develop and maintain their cultural competence through real-world experiences to understand students' culture better and reduce counseling barriers in school settings. Although research exists examining school counselor training programs and cultural competence, by using PsychINFO, EBSCO, ERIC and School Counseling Journal, I found no studies examining the relationship between the delivery of services in culturally diverse school settings and school counselors' cultural competence. Additionally, although there has been research that examined relationships between students, parents,

teachers, and school counselors in culturally diverse schools, I found very little research on how these relationships impacted the delivery of services in culturally diverse school settings (Constantine, 2001, Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2010; Nelson et al., 2008; Ockerman et al., 2012). There is a need to study school counselors' perception of their cultural competence and how it affects the delivery of services in culturally diverse school settings and provide valuable information to counselor education, school counselors-in-training, school counselors, school administrators, and directors of guidance.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to explore school counselors' perceptions of their cultural competence when providing services in culturally diverse school settings.

The Significance of the Study

This research study may benefit counselor educators, school administrators, directors of guidance, and school counselors in delivering services in culturally diverse school settings. The results of this study may provide information to school counselors on multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001; Camp et al., 2019). Additionally, by studying how school counselors perceive their cultural competence, this study may provide evidence of the benefit of school counselors collaborating with other educational stakeholders (teachers, school administrators, and parents) in creating a culturally diverse school setting, as suggested by other researchers (Beck & Wikoff, 2020; Nelson et al., 2013).

Definition of Terms

This section defines terms using the established professional literature relating to cultural competence.

American School Counselor Association (ASCA). An organization that focuses on providing professional development, enhancing school counseling programs, and researching effective counseling practices. It expands school counselors' image and influence through advocacy, leadership, collaboration, and systemic change. ASCA empowers school counselors to promote student success with the knowledge, skills, and resources (ASCA, 2019).

School Counseling. School counseling is a profession with the behavioral sciences, the applied fields of counseling, and education as its foundation of learning (Parikh Foxx et al., 2017).

School Counselor. A school counselor is an individual who works in primary or secondary schools to provide academic, college, career, and social-emotional competencies to all students through a school counseling program (ASCA, 2020).

Multiculturalism. Multiculturalism encompasses factors (e.g., gender, ability status, race-ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, spirituality). It is an essential factor in forming behaviors, attitudes, strengths, beliefs, and values (Hays, 2016).

Diversity. Diversity is a mixture of different identities, backgrounds, experiences, beliefs, ages, gender, demographic structures, physical abilities, educational levels, family status, and personal orientation in any group, community, or organization (Saylik et al., 2016).

Responsive Services. Responsive services are activities intended to meet students' immediate needs and concerns. Responsive services may include individual, small group settings, or crisis response counseling (ASCA, 2020).

Equity. Equity refers to fairness and justice for all students, considering their unique situations and experiences (ASCA, 2020).

Self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the belief in one's ability to perform a given task. Self-efficacy requires possessing specific skills and beliefs and using those effectively (Bandura, 1993).

Cultural Competence. The demonstration of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors based on diverse and relevant cultural experiences is grounded in personal exposure and experiences with diverse groups (Schmidt et al., 2011).

Multi-tiered Counseling. Refers to the process of providing interventions that vary in focus and intensity aligned with individual students' needs (ASCA, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory provides the theoretical framework for this dissertation. Bandura (1995) stated in his book, *Self-Efficacy in Changing Societies*, that self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment levels. Self-efficacy influences the choices individuals make and the course of action they pursue. Self-efficacy involves an

individual's belief that they can perform certain tasks to accomplish specific goals. Individuals with high self-efficacy set higher goals, showed higher motivation levels, and persevered in achieving those goals (Ernst, Bardhoshi, & Lanthier, 2017). Additionally, individuals with strong self-efficacy set challenging goals for themselves; they face difficulties head-on and recover quickly when faced with failure. Self-efficacy has been a substantial variable in attaining success in schools, work, and home (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008).

Counseling Self-efficacy. A counselor's belief about their ability to work effectively with clients (Constantine, 2001). Additionally, counseling self-efficacy is partly responsible for determining a counselor's decision to provide counseling services during a given session (Constantine, 2001). Studies have suggested that school counselors with teaching experience reported higher overall school counseling self-efficacy than those with no teaching experience (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008). Finally, counseling self-efficacy is positively related to counselors' training level, supervision, and counselor development (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008).

Multicultural Self-Efficacy. A predictor of school counselors' abilities to perform certain tasks and overcome obstacles effectively. Additionally, understand school counselors' motivation and capabilities to perform tasks relevant to culturally diverse student populations (Guzman et al., 2013; Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008). Ernst et al. (2017) stated that counselors with higher self-efficacy set higher goals and show higher levels of motivation and perseverance. Research has shown that school counselors who completed multicultural courses reported higher multicultural self-efficacy than counselors who had not completed these courses (Johnson et al., 2018).

Research Question

What are school counselors' perceptions of their cultural competence when providing services in culturally diverse school settings?

Limitations

My research was limited to participants who meet the criteria of being a certified school counselor in one geographical location and may not be transferable to other geographic locations. The findings were contingent upon discussions and responses to questions asked in the semi-structured interviews. The findings of this study are limited by the interview questions used to ask school counselors about their perceptions of cultural competence.

Delimitations

I chose to interview participants who work in an urban school district in the southern part of the United States. I choose certified school counselors who are currently working in a public school. I choose to interview participants with more than five years of experience as school counselors. Future studies might include school counselors who work in rural school districts, have less than five years' experience or no longer working in an educational setting.

Assumptions

For this study, I relied upon four assumptions. First, I assumed that all participants would be honest and forthcoming with their answers. Second, the data analysis accurately reflected the participant's experience. Third, I assumed that the essence of the experience would incorporate the "what" school counselors have experienced and "how" they experienced it. (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Finally, the methodology selected offered a

logical and appropriate design for understanding the essence of school counselors' cultural competence.

Organization of the Study

My dissertation is divided into five chapters. In the preceding chapter, Chapter 1, contains the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the significance of the study, definition of terms, theoretical framework, research questions, limitations, delimitation, and assumptions. Chapter 2 reviewed the literature relevant to comprehensive school counseling programs, school counselors' role, responsive services, and cultural competence. Chapter 3 discussed the phenomenological methodology used for this paper, including the research design, selection of participants, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, and trustworthiness. Chapter 4 contained a description of the demographic data and the results of the qualitative analyses. Chapter 5 included a summary of the research, a discussion of the results, implications of my research study for counselor educators, school counselors, school administrators, and directors of guidance, and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Cultural competence continues to be an influential and controversial topic that affects school counseling (Holcomb-McCoy, 2008). Evidence suggests that school counselors who demonstrate high cultural competence levels are more culturally responsive within diverse school settings (Holcomb-McCoy, 2008). Even though counselor education programs encourage counselors-in-training to embrace and celebrate diversity, the average school counselor may not feel well versed in cultural competency (Constantine, 2001). School counselors who lack training and cultural responsiveness may inadvertently serve as barriers to students from diverse backgrounds (Mayorga et al., 2013; Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2010).

The literature on school counselors' cultural competence is limited to the ethical standards that mandate school counselors to make responsible and ethical decisions (ACA, 2005; ASCA, 2019). Cultural competence among school counselors helps to facilitate culturally responsive services for the needs of all students. All students' needs are addressed through the comprehensive school counseling program in which school counselors have a tremendous impact on students' academic, career, and social/emotional development. The development of culturally responsive services encourages and promotes a culturally competent school environment. The literature emphasis on culturally responsive services is limited despite ASCA's position statement encouraging school counselors to ensure culturally diverse students have access to services to promote all students' academic achievement (ASCA, 1993). An extensive plunge into the existing literature generated four areas that are explained in this chapter: (a) comprehensive

school counseling programs, (b) the role of school counselors, (c) culturally responsive services, and (d) cultural competence.

Comprehensive School Counseling Programs

For most of the 20th century, school counseling was referred to as “guidance” counseling and was delivered in a disorderly fashion. This resulted in school counselors delivering services to only a fraction of the students on school campuses. (Mason, 2010). From the late 1950’s school counseling focused on developmental theories and academic guidance, resulting in increased popularity in guidance curriculum and group counseling (Rodriguez et al., 2018). In the 1980s, comprehensive school counseling programs were conceptualized to serve all students (Mason, 2010; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). As comprehensive school counseling programs have evolved, they have become tied to the school’s academic mission and are based on student competencies in the academic, career, and social/emotional domains (Mason, 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2018; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). Hatch and Chen-Hayes (2008) stated that the necessary components of comprehensive school counseling programs include goal development, student proficiencies addressed through specific school counseling programs and consultation with the administration for program improvement.

For school counselors, comprehensive school counseling programs define counselors’ responsibilities, reduce non-counseling duties, integrate with the school’s mission (Pyne, 2011), and validate the school counselors’ role in facilitating school-family-community partnerships. A downside of comprehensive school counseling programs is that school counselors may be required to take on multiple roles based on their needs identified through school data (Moore-Thomas & Day-Vines, 2010).

However, Ziomek-Daigle et al. (2016) reported that the increased national emphasis on comprehensive school counseling programs over the last decade has positively affected school counselors' interactions with all students and has promoted data-driven program design and decision making in school counseling (Bryan et al., 2010).

CACREP Standards

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) provides leadership that promotes excellence in professional preparation through accreditation of counseling and related programs (CACREP, 2016). The 2016 CACREP standards serve as a framework for counselor education programs in developing school counselors-in-training professional identities (Dixon et al., 2010). CACREP specified that school counseling students experience curricular activities that will help them explore the implication of sociocultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity relevant to their school counseling experience (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001; Mayorga et al., 2012-2013). The CACREP Standards identify outcome-based research and program evaluation to improve counseling effectiveness. Standards for school counseling programs require students to have academic experiences and demonstrated knowledge and skills to plan, develop, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive school counseling program (Brott, 2006).

School counseling programs comprise 36% of all CACREP- accredited programs, 10% more than clinical mental health counseling programs (CACREP, 2016a). In the past, CACREP's school counseling credit hour requirements may have contributed to school counselor role confusion, suggesting that school counselors were not as well trained as clinical mental health counselors. In establishing the same credit hour

requirements for all counseling programs, CACREP has stated that school counselors should be as well prepared as their clinical mental health colleagues. Such an affirmation supports school counselors' professional standing in counseling (Merlin et al., 2017).

The ASCA National Model

The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs is the standard for professional school counseling, offering K–12 counselors a framework to guide their activities, interventions, and services (Sink, 2016). The ASCA National Model, first published in 2003, is now in its fourth edition and has provided the school counseling profession with a unified vision, voice, and identity regarding school counselors' roles (ASCA, 2019; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). This landmark document has paved the way for school counselors to navigate the chaotic landscape of education in more comprehensive, consistent, and systematic ways (Hatch, 2014). The ASCA National Model has been observed as a flexible template for school districts to create comprehensive school counseling programs that reflect their own needs and accountability (Foxx et al., 2017). The ASCA National Model incorporates four themes: leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. Each theme outlines the role that school counselors play in promoting equality and enhancing students' social, emotional, academic, and career outcomes (ASCA, 2019; Paolini & Topdemir, 2013). The ASCA National Model provides school counselors with consistency nationwide, creating unity and focusing on improving student achievement and supporting student development (ASCA, 2019). Within the ASCA National Model, leadership, social justice, and advocacy are addressed within a K-12 framework for program implementation (Goodman-Scott et al., 2016). Finally, The ASCA National Model

recommends that school counseling programs be comprehensive and results-oriented in design (ASCA, 2019; Carey & Dimmitt, 2012).

ASCA Professional Standards

The ASCA's first position statement in 1988 challenged school counselors to be more reflective about equity and diversity issues (Anderson, 2010; ASCA, 2015). In 1997, the National Standards were proposed for academic, career, and personal/social development (Campbell & Dahir, 1997). The ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards and Competencies outlined the mindsets and behaviors of school counselors needed to meet the school counseling profession's rigorous demands and the needs of pre-K-12 students (ASCA, 2019). The standard and competencies help ensure school counselors are equipped to establish, maintain, and enhance school counseling programs addressing academic achievement, career, planning, and social/emotional development (ASCA, 2019).

ASCA's (1993) position statement advocated for school counselors to ensure students from culturally diverse backgrounds have access to services and opportunities which promote the student's maximum development. This statement signaled that school counselors should respond appropriately to ethnically diverse student populations and their needs (Constantine, 2002; Holcomb-McCoy, 2001; Mayorga et al., 2012-2013). However, ASCA's expansive definition of the expectation for school counselors' cultural competence does not address the cultural competence of school counselors directly; instead, it suggests that school counselors should "have the skills necessary to foster increased awareness and understanding of cultural diversity" (p.2) in the school setting (ASCA, 2012; Holcomb-McCoy, 2001).

The ASCA Ethical Standards (ASCA, 2016) stated in its preamble that “school counselors are advocates, leaders, collaborators, and consultants who create systemic change by providing equitable educational access and success by connecting their school counseling programs to the district's mission and improvement plans” (p.1). The ethical standards (ASCA, 2016) also state that school counselors develop awareness, knowledge, and skills in how prejudice, power, and various forms of oppression affect self, students, and stakeholders (ASCA, Ethical Standards, B.3., 2016). Therefore, school counselors must be culturally competent in the current educational and social environment (ASCA, 2016).

The Texas Model

The Texas Education Agency’s (TEA) *A Model Comprehensive, Developmental Guidance and Counseling Program for Texas Public Schools, A Guide for Program Development Pre-K-12th Grade* was developed to help ensure that all students benefit from high-quality counseling programs that meet the differing needs of students in Texas public schools (TEA, 2004). The Texas Counseling Association (TCA), in collaboration with the Texas Education Agency (TEA), completed the current revision, *The Texas Model for Comprehensive School Counseling Programs (Texas Model)* (2018). The Texas Model is similar to the ASCA Model. It is intended to serve as a model for all Texas schools regardless of size, the school counseling program's maturity, or characteristics of communities (TEA, 2018; Cox, 2018). Additionally, the Texas Model is intended to provide a framework for transforming district-level school counseling programs to maximize all students' achievement. The Texas Model is for all stakeholders who seek to validate and improve the school counseling programs' effectiveness in their

districts and campuses (TEA, 2018). Through The Texas Model, school counselors' unique position in schools allows them to impact student success through the systematic delivery of a comprehensive school counseling program (Rodriguez et al., 2018). However, the Texas Model does not specifically address school counselors' cultural competence or serve diverse student populations best.

School Counseling Advisory Council

The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019) and the Texas Model (TEA, 2018) recommend that school campuses and school districts develop an advisory council that is made up of a broad range of stakeholders; teachers, administrators, parents, and community members (Dimmitt & Carey, 2007; Hines et al., 2020). Advisory councils are formed to guide school counselors with school counseling program development and make recommendations that best serve the students and all campus stakeholders (TEA, 2018). Advisory councils are expected to understand the comprehensive school counseling program model's philosophical basis and its organized method for delivering services to students (Hines et al., 2020). The advisory council aims to advise and assist the school counselor with campus-wide school counseling program development and improvement (ASCA, 2019; Dimmitt & Carey, 2007). Advisory councils work together to eliminate systemic inequities, develop counseling services, and focus on students' academic, career, and social/emotional success (Hines et al., 2020). School counselors are responsible for explaining school counseling program data and annual student outcome goals (ASCA, 2019).

Responsive Services

School counselors promote all students' success (ASCA, 2005; TEA, 2018). One prominent vehicle to reach this goal is delivering evidence-based, responsive services (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2011). Responsive services involve those school counseling activities designed and performed by school counselors to meet students' immediate needs (Sink, 2011). Typically, responsive services fall into three levels of school counselor response (a) prevention, (b) remediation, and (c) crisis to the needed critical situation. Responsive services may include consultation with teachers, parents, and other stakeholders who assist students with problematic concerns. The assistance and support of teachers and administrators and referral to community services are essential for successful implementation (Sink, 2011; TEA, 2018).

CACREP highlighted that school counselors advocate for school policies, programs, and services that enhance a positive school climate and are equitable and responsive to diverse student populations (Dixon et al., 2010). Responsive services fall under a small group, individual counseling, consultation, and specialized interventions within the comprehensive school counseling program. In recent years, school counseling has shifted from providing reactive services to providing effective, direct services for all students rather than a few students and using data to affect systemic change in schools (Dixon et al., 2010). Responsive services have gone from being narrow in scope (individual and group counseling) and addressing the isolated problems of a few students to addressing students' more complex needs, especially those who are culturally diverse, have special learning needs, or have behavioral concerns (Erford, 2019). The value of

these services for culturally diverse students and those with special learning and behavior needs remains ambiguous at best (Sink, 2011).

Culturally Responsive Services

Culturally responsive services are structured to make relevant connections between evidence-based interventions and the student's learning environment (Moore-Thomas & Day Vines, 2010). Culturally responsive services provide equal access to students from various cultural backgrounds for academic, career, and social-emotional goal development (Lee, 2001; Smith-Adcock, 2016). Culturally responsive services were conceived so school counselors could identify and blend evidence-based interventions with school counseling standards to help students from all backgrounds (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009). School counselors who engage in culturally responsive services challenge students from varied backgrounds to reach high academic standards (Foxx et al., 2020). However, developing culturally responsive evidence-based services to meet students' needs from diverse cultural backgrounds is critical because these students traditionally have not performed well in school as their White peers (Smith-Adcock et al., 2016).

As the number of minority students grows in the United States, school counseling programs are being called upon to provide culturally responsive services that will ensure adequate counseling services and increase all students' academic, career, and social/emotional achievement (Smith-Adcock et al., 2016). School counselors who engage in culturally responsive services challenge students from all backgrounds to reach academic and career success (Parikh Foxx, Saunders, et al., 2020). Additionally, culturally responsive services can function to make the educational system more

responsive to culturally diverse students while at the same time increasing the level of participation by all stakeholders (Lee, 2001). Infusing culturally responsive services into all aspects of school counseling ensures that all students receive services that celebrate and are inclusive of their diverse identities (Parikh Foxx et al., 2020). School counselors' challenge is to develop culturally responsive services that connect parents and schools and implement evidence-based Multitiered support systems that positively impact educational outcomes (Better-Bubon & Schultz, 2018).

ASCA Recommendations

ASCA recommends that school counselors demonstrate cultural responsiveness by collaborating with stakeholders to create a school and community climate that embraces cultural diversity and promotes academic and social/emotional success for all students (ASCA, 2015). Grothaus (2012) explained that culture is a powerful and pervasive influence on school counselors' attitudes and behaviors. Grothaus (2012) stated, "school counselors have tremendous challenges and also terrific opportunities presented to them by the increasing diversity in ... schools and communities" (p.37). Lee (2001) asserted that culturally responsive guidance programs ideally acknowledge that all children can learn, and cultural differences are real and cannot be ignored. School counselors can regularly teach tolerance and address nonviolence and social justice issues through comprehensive school counseling programs. (ASCA, 2015). However, sections of the ASCA National Model only allude to the importance of multicultural competence but fail to note specifics regarding the school counselors' roles in promoting multicultural competence (Ponterotto, Mendelowitz, & Collabолletta, 2008).

Evidence-Based Practices

More than a decade ago, the U.S. Department of Education (2005) aimed to transform education, including school counseling, into an evidence-based field. Evidence-based education interventions are those or teaching methods used within a school with empirical support (Erford, 2019). ASCA's professional standards and competencies call for school counselors to use evidence-based practices to address student challenges and maximize student success (ASCA, 2019b). School counselors engage in Evidence-based practices when they use data to prioritize needs, select strategies supported by research, and evaluate their interventions' efficacy (Dimmitt et al., 2007). School counselors, through responsive services, deliver evidence-based practices, ranging from classroom guidance, group counseling, and individual counseling (Sink, 2016). Although the school counselor's role concerning evidence-based practices is aligned with The ASCA National Model (2019) seems to be a natural fit with a comprehensive school counseling program (Erford, 2019; Hatch, 2014). There is a shortage of research on school counselors' contribution to evidence-based practices.

Multi-Tiered Systems to Support

A multi-tiered system of support (MTSS), including Response to Intervention (RTI), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and Restorative Practices (RP), have been utilized by public schools (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). School counselors are crucial in students' learning and social/emotional development and are invested in early interventions at the root of comprehensive school counseling programs. MTSS aligns with the ASCA's National Model; both are designed to facilitate systemic change, intervention, prevention, and improve student achievement (Betters-Bubon et al.,

2016; Sink, 2016; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). Over the last few decades, school counselors have been instructed to move from a positional approach to a programmatic and systemic (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018). MTSS is a programmatic approach requiring school counselors further to refine their skill set (Sink, 2016).

MTSS programs are implemented in the educational setting using three tiers of intervention to improve student learning and social-emotional-behavioral functioning (Sink, 2016). These data-driven, evidence-based practices promote positive student academic and behavioral outcomes and safe and favorable school climates (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). Sink (2016) stated that school counselors' roles and functions in MTSS correspond with ASCA's (2012b) School Counselor Competencies and CACREP (2016) Standards. Additionally, as school leaders, school counselors play an integral role in developing and implementing MTSS frameworks (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). Like the MTSS framework, school counselors deliver their services in a tiered fashion to reach the greatest number of students through school-wide interventions such as drug and alcohol prevention activities, bullying prevention programs, and behavior management systems (Ockerman et al., 2012). Although school counselors' roles in MTSS have become integral to its implementation, most school counselors indicate that they require more training on MTSS and evidence-based practices (Sink, 2016).

Response to Intervention. The No Child Left Behind Act (2002) stressed that educators have unique opportunities to provide early intervention, quality instruction, and data-driven decisions for all students (Hawes et al., 2020). Response to Intervention (RTI) is an approach that schools use to help all students, including struggling learners. According to TEA (2020), the RTI approach gives students opportunities to learn and

work at their grade level. This framework designed in 2004, has evolved over the years and has expanded to include behavioral and social interventions that are school-wide and individual and small groups to respond to students with varied development (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). Many school districts have adopted an RTI approach to address academic and behavioral needs as an alternative to the traditional special education assessment model (Gruman & Hoelzen, 2011). RTI programs also address students' behavioral issues; they focus on improving children's academic development and performance through high-quality instruction (Sink, 2016). Through RTI, students receive supports that allow them to remain in general education classrooms and reduce the rate of unnecessary referral to special education services (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). School counselors have been identified as integral members of RTI teams by using behavioral observations to determine services' responsiveness and effectiveness. Studies reveal that school counseling interventions using tiered approaches, such as guidance lessons and small groups, have increased student achievement and motivation (Gruman et al., 2013; Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016).

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS). Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) is grounded in the theory of applied behavior analysis, including a tiered system of support that can improve student behavior (Sink, 2016). Data often used within PBIS includes academic achievement, school safety, and behavioral indicators (Bettors-Bubon et al., 2016). PBIS aims to increase students' prosocial behaviors and decrease their problem behaviors while being implemented school-wide, including evidence-based primary, secondary and tertiary prevention (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). According to researchers, one appealing aspect of PBIS is systematic data

collection for monitoring student referrals and PBIS implementation and fidelity (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018). Research has shown that schools implementing PBIS have demonstrated better student academic outcomes. (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016).

PBIS aligns with the ASCA national school counseling model as it focuses on prevention, student academics, and behaviors through an evidence-based, data-driven framework (Cressey et al., 2014). The school counselors' role in PBIS is to help create and implement school-wide interventions addressing student behaviors (Goodman-Scott et al., 2018). School counselors can use student data generated by the PBIS team to determine students' needs and progress in school counselor interventions such as small groups (Ziomek-Daigle et al., 2016). While in PBIS leadership roles, school counselors can collaborate and consult with campus stakeholders and contribute to safe school environments and school-wide reinforcement systems (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016).

Restorative Practices. Restorative practices are a comprehensive MTSS model incorporating a canopy of tools that school staff, faculty, and students can use to generate a culture of care (Smith et al., 2018). Restorative practices address student behavior in schools and repair the harm caused by misbehavior involving the student, teachers, parents, and administrators (Payne & Welch, 2015). Restorative practices use various processes and interventions such as one-on-one relational conversations, problem-solving circles, restorative healing circles, and school climate surveys between administrators, teachers, students, and parents (Smith et al., 2018). Researchers have proposed that restorative practices promote social justice work to open more equitable access for culturally diverse students to meet their social/emotional needs when integrated with comprehensive school counseling programs. Researchers contend that restorative

practices are a natural fit for comprehensive school counseling programs (Smith et al., 2018). However, there is a lack of research on the school counselors' role in restorative practices as part of the comprehensive school counseling program.

Role of School Counselors

Through leadership, advocacy, and responsive services, school counselors promote equity and access for all students by connecting their comprehensive school counseling program to their academic mission and improvement plan. (Hughey, 2011). It also facilitates an environment that helps students successfully navigate the educational system (Parikh et al., 2011). The roles of leader, advocate and first responder are important to school counselors working in schools with large populations of low-income, culturally diverse students (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008). School counselors identify and alleviate the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral barriers to student success and the school-wide environmental conditions (Schellenberg & Grothaus, 2009). Rodriguez et al. (2018) stated that school counselors are uniquely trained and positioned to make an impact on students' academic achievement while working with students, teachers, and parents to create a nurturing and caring school environment (ASCA, 2012; Hatch, 2014; Moore-Thomas and Day Vines 2010; Portman, 2009).

School Counselors as Leaders

School counselors are called upon to take on new roles and serve as school-wide leaders by systematically selecting and delivering activities and interventions (ASCA, 2019; Betters-Bubon & Schultz, 2018; Nelson et al., 2015). As instructional leaders, school counselors play a crucial part in closing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students, regardless of ethnicity, race, or socioeconomic status (Dixon

et al., 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2018). School counselors who utilize leadership skills can create positive change in areas such as crisis response, response to intervention (RTI), and positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) (Betters-Bubon & Schultz, 2018). School counselors can lead administrators, teachers, parents, and community stakeholders to working alliances that do not tolerate students' low expectations (Moore-Thomas & Day Vines, 2010). Erford (2019) stated that school counselors as instructional leaders employ effective evidence-based techniques and practices.

Additionally, school counselors can advocate for student equity and access as instructional leaders. Moore-Thomas & Day Vines (2010) stated that school counselors work with administrators, parents, and teachers to examine infrastructure difficulties such as community resources and personnel availability as instructional leaders. Additionally, through leadership, school counselors address all students' needs and help create a school climate where diversity is celebrated (ASCA, 2005; Hughey, 2011). As instructional leaders, school counselors challenge social inequity, use data to advocate for minority and impoverished students, and develop competencies to operate in diverse communities (Nelson et al., 2008). Betters-Bubon and Schultz (2013) stated that previous research has found that school counselors who utilize leadership skills can positively change crisis response, response to intervention, and positive behavior interventions and supports.

First Responders

School counselors respond to students, parents, and staff members (Gruman et al., 2013). School counselors are tasked with addressing students' various needs in responsive services (Rodriguez et al., 2018). As first responders, school counselors play a key role in planning and implementing school campuses' crisis responses (Erford, 2019). School counselors may fill first responders' roles for students in crisis (Roberts et al., 2019). School counselors in the first responder's role are tasked with working with families who seek a school counselor when a crisis occurs within their family outside of the school environment (Rodriguez et al., 2018).

Additionally, in a crisis, school counselors as first responders help students and teachers process and understand the emotional impact (Phillips, 2015). Through a qualitative study, Roberts et al. (2019) identified that school counselors felt it was part of their job to work with students who are in crisis. Roberts et al. (2019) stated that within the role of a first responder, school counselors use outside resources such as mental health counselors and chaplains to provide students and families with referrals to services that meet their specific needs. School counselors also occupy an important position in offering regular and immediate school-based counseling interventions and supplying an accessible space for these students to seek and gain help.

Advocates

Advocacy is often described as empowering a group of people and contributing to social and systemic change (Arredondo & Perez, 2003). Public education was designed to bridge the inequities of society, and as the United States becomes more diverse, school counselors must take a leadership role in promoting cultural advocacy (Betters-Bubon,

2016; Evans et al., 2018). The ASCA standards include a call to school counselors to collaborate with all relevant stakeholders, including students, parents, and educators, when student assistance is needed (ASCA, 2019; Dixon et al., 2010). The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019) stated that school counselors have an important role in advocating for all students by collaborating with families, teachers, administrators, and other school staff concerning student academic, social/emotional, and career development (ASCA, 2019; Bialka et al., 2020). ASCA's Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2016) call upon school counselors to work as advocates in the school to create equity-based school counseling programs that help close the achievement, opportunity, and attainment gaps (Smith et al., 2018). The Transforming School Counseling Initiative encourages school counselors to accept their roles as advocates (Foxx et al., 2020).

School counselors demonstrate advocacy by becoming members of their local, state, and national professional organizations (Erford, 2019). As advocates, school counselors initiate student support by collaborating with the various professionals in the student's life and providing responsive services to the student, the student's family, and the community (ASCA, 2019; Hamlet et al., 2011). School counselors advocate for students by evaluating the need for intervention within the educational system and determining a plan of action (Bialka & Havlik, 2020). In the role of an advocate, school counselors are well-positioned to help secure services for student and their parents that otherwise might be underutilized or not used at all (Awe & Portman, 2009; Parikh Foxx et al., 2017; Smith-Adcock, 2006). School counselors can begin the advocacy process by emphasizing their unique qualifications to meet students' social/emotional, academic, and career needs (Fye et al., 2018). Finally, through advocacy, school counselors explain to

teachers and administrators how students' cultural, social, and economic background may affect their academic achievement, behavior, and overall performance in school (ASCA, 2019).

Cultural Competence

The emergence of multiculturalism in the mid-20th century was in reaction to oppression and discriminatory sociopolitical forces that had an adverse impact on healthy human development (Brady-Amoon, 2011). Since 1982, the counseling profession has made great strides in improving counselors' effectiveness in working with culturally diverse clients (Ivers & Villalba, 2015). At its core, multiculturalism is the appreciation, acceptance, and promotion of multiple ethnic cultures in society (Brady-Amoon, 2011). Multiculturalism focuses on awareness of one's worldview, knowledge of one's own culture, other cultures, and skills necessary for working with diverse clients (Brady-Amoon, 2011; Ivers & Villalba, 2015). Multiculturalism has sought to provide a conceptual framework in counseling and has gained status as the fourth force in counseling (Pedersen, 1991). Ongoing theoretical advances, dedicated research, and continued advocacy efforts have resulted in the current integration of multiculturalism into all aspects of the counseling profession (Brady-Amoon, 2011). This includes incorporating the American Counseling Association's ([ACA; 2005]) *Code of Ethics*, counseling and advocacy practices, and counselor education programs. Counseling relationships informed by multicultural and social justice awareness can foster an environment where biases can be acknowledged, challenged, and discussed openly (Cook et al., 2019).

The Association for Multiculturalism 1991 stated that cultural competence is the capacity to interact effectively with other cultures (Sperry, 2012). Competency is a skill depending on one's cultural expertise or orientation (Sue et al., 2009). Pedersen (1988) first coined multicultural competence a decade before the broader designation of cultural competence replaced it. Cultural competency grew out of concerns for ethnic minority groups (Sue et al., 2009) and has stressed three domains needed to interact with individuals of different cultures: awareness, knowledge, and skills (Sue et al., 1992). Therapists must be trained to handle the culture-based concerns that their clients bring to counseling, and the level of cultural competence varies from counselor to counselor (Sperry, 2012). Moreover, counselors need to understand how their cultural makeup (e.g., gender, race, age) may impact the therapeutic relationship because of the client's experiences with these issues outside of counseling (Hall et al., 2014).

Acquisition of cultural competence involves in-depth training and supervised experience, as found in developing other therapeutic competencies (Sue et al., 2009). Despite efforts to increase cultural competency, several counselors' education programs overemphasize cultural knowledge and underemphasize cultural action (Sperry, 2012). These concerns were prompted by the growing diversity of the U.S. population, which necessitated changes in the mental health system to meet a culturally diverse population (Sue et al., 2009). The goals of many professional organizations, such as the ACA and ASCA, include equity and fairness in the delivery of services (Sue et al., 2009). Furthermore, counselors' ethical obligation to demonstrate multicultural skills should include those on the same level as specialized therapeutic skills (Sue, Brenier, Duran, et al., 1982). Essential for multicultural competence include understanding, appreciation,

and respect for cultural differences and similarities among culturally diverse groups (Sue & Sue, 2013). Cultural competence evolves over an extended period with individuals and organizations operating at various levels of awareness, knowledge, and sensitivity along a continuum (Sperry, 2012).

Social Justice

Social justice has been defined as efforts to foster equitable access to resources and opportunities for marginalized populations; to reduce disparities in all areas of life that are lower for oppressed populations; and to expand roles for counselors to include advocates, consultants, educators, and change agent (Sue & Sue, 2013). Social justice has always been at the center of the multicultural competency movement. Within counseling, social justice has aimed to develop and promote multicultural competencies (Arredondo & Perez, 2003). Counselors are social justice advocates, collaboratively serving individuals and communities to remove barriers to growth and promote change for the greater public good (Cook et al., 2019). Social justice principles have gained momentum in counselor training and professional practice (Dixon et al., 2010). Social justice is a core value of the ACA and a central focus of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (Dollarhide et al., 2018).

Cultural Competence in School Settings

The disconnection between school and home culture has affected culturally diverse students' educational experiences. They are often under-resourced and experience many challenges (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008). The challenge for schools is to move away from curricular activities that benefit those students whose cultural background aligns with Eurocentric norms and create a system of support that influences all students

(Better-Bubon & Schultz, 2018). Nelson, Bustamante, Sawyer, et al. (2015) investigated bilingual school counselors' experiences in training. The researchers assessed their school's cultural competence when working with at-risk students such as English Language Learners. The study revealed that culturally competent school counselors should promote academic and social success for ethnically diverse students who are at risk of failing or dropping out of school. Cholewa and West-Olatunji (2008) found schools that demonstrate cultural competence exhibited certain characteristics such as forging a sense of community out of cultural diversity, having the same high academic standards for every student, presenting a curriculum that reflects many cultures, and promoting continuous staff development. Additionally, a culturally competent school is a school that promotes inclusiveness and appropriate responses to differences as reflected by policies, programs, and practices (Nelson et al., 2008). Many schools' challenges are supporting and meeting all students' social/emotional and academic needs, especially those from diverse backgrounds while influencing culturally competent change (Parikh Foxx, Saunders, et al., 2020).

School Counselor Training and Development

For school counselors to enter the field prepared to engage in transformative systemic work, counselor education programs must consider innovative ways to incorporate multicultural collaborative skills into school counselor training (Moore-Thomas & Day Vines, 2010). According to the 2009 CACREP standards, an institution must provide instruction that includes “an understanding of the cultural context of relationships, issues, and trends in a multicultural society” (Section II, Code G.2, p. 10). Counselor educators explore how school counselors-in-training can experience and

process multicultural issues and cultural engagement within practicum and internships (Constantine, 2002; Moore-Thomas & Day Vines, 2010).

Graduates of school counseling programs frequently report feeling unprepared to effectively work with culturally diverse students (Hall et al., 2014). School counselors who are knowledgeable about and aware of significant cultural issues may be adept at counseling students from diverse backgrounds (Constantine 2002). With this in mind, counselor educators need to consider meeting the challenge of cultivating cultural competence for counselors in training by increasing skill development (Hall et al., 2014). Constantine (2002) found that academic training in multicultural counseling has positively correlated with self-perceived abilities to work with culturally diverse students. Counselor education programs are responsible for training students to work with clients from all backgrounds (Hall et al., 2014). Professional identity development as a school counselor begins during counselor education (Brott, 2006). Cook et al. (2018) stated that practicum and internship experiences are valuable settings for developing counseling competencies, particularly in culturally and diverse socioeconomic schools. The ASCA (2012b) school counselor competencies encouraged school counselors to continuously self-assess their cultural competence and develop an appropriate professional growth plan. School counselor professional development has evolved from vocational guidance to training on comprehensive programming, leadership skills, and advocacy to create a more cohesive school counseling program (Merlin et al., 2017). Recent literature has called for the development of professional training designed with school counselors in mind. Literature has suggested professional development that focuses on counseling minority students and families and the importance of

acknowledging and appreciating cultural similarities and differences (Constantine, 2002; Holcomb-McCoy, 2001). Training that focuses on instructional techniques, working in urban areas, suicide assessment, and evidence-based practices have advanced school counselors' ability to work with school leaders to support shifts in cultural and instructional environments (Hatch, 2014; Merlin et al., 2017).

The lack of multicultural training in school counseling programs may leave school counselors feeling unequipped to address culturally diverse students' specific mental health needs (Constantine, 2002). Guzman et al. (2013) reported that 67.5% of school counselors reported completing multicultural training outside their school campus. Nearly half reported that MC training is mandatory in their district, 87.6% reported taking a multicultural course in graduate school, and 64.9% had completed a multicultural staff development offered by their school. Ivers and Villalba (2015) discussed that immersion programs, where school counselor interns speak only Spanish, can enhance multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills when working with Hispanic/Latino student populations. Through training and development, counselors may begin to demonstrate an ability to learn and build on students' differing cultural norms and their families and demonstrate the skills needed to provide effective counseling to diverse student populations (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001). However, school counselors may not feel equipped to address culturally diverse students' mental health needs (Constantine, 2002).

Cultural Competence of School Counselors

The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019) calls for school counselors to promote cultural competence to create a safer, more inclusive school environment. School counselors act as change agents who integrate, develop, and implement equitable services and programs (Better-Bubon & Schultz, 2018) in shaping their schools' climate concerning diversity and inclusion. Culturally competent school counselors should help students from various cultural backgrounds develop healthy self-concepts and learn to respect cultural diversity while setting academic, career, and social/emotional goals (Lee, 2001). However, there is still little known about school counselors' self-reported cultural competence and interactions with students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Guzman et al., 2013). While there is existing literature focused on school counselors' ability to serve the specific needs of ethnically diverse student populations, there is little research published that has examined the cultural competence of school counselors and the importance of how one's own culture may affect their interactions with students (Constantine, 2002; Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008; Nelson et al., 2008). Better-Bubon et al. (2016), in a qualitative case study, revealed that school counselors who valued diversity in both theory and practice developed relationships with students from various cultures and intervened within the educational system on their behalf. School counselors who value diversity seem to help eliminate institutional barriers and cultural insensitivities (Lee, 2001; Nelson et al., 2015).

Research has proven that school counselors who have developed their cultural competence are more prepared to appropriately identify culturally diverse students' academic, cultural, and linguistic needs (Dameron et al., 2019). Better-Bubon et al.

(2016) stated that school counselors who value and develop meaningful relationships with students from various cultures were more likely to exhibit high cultural competence levels. School counselors can seek opportunities to attend community-wide events and religious services for multicultural engagement and further their knowledge about diverse communities (Cholewa & West-Olatunji, 2008). Guzman et al. (2013) found that more multicultural counseling courses and participation in research projects concerning diverse populations made a difference in a school counselor's cultural competence. Holcomb-McCoy (2004) stated that the key to becoming an effective school counselor when counseling diverse students is to assess one's cultural competence.

Mayorga et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative study utilizing the Multicultural Counseling Competence and Training Survey-Revised (MCCTS-R; Holcomb-McCoy and Myers, 1999) to determine the cultural competence of school counselors. Although many school counselors viewed themselves as competent in multiculturalism, over 40% of school counselors did not view themselves culturally competent. This result seemed to be that participants had not received adequate training in their counseling programs (Mayorga et al., 2012-2013). Dollarhide et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative, grounded theory study that explored the experiences of twenty-four ethnically diverse school counselors and how they interpreted the school environment. The results suggested that ethnically diverse school counselors perceived themselves as positive role models, provided advocacy and leadership in their school, and had personal connections with parents and students. However, work became difficult if the interactions between ethnically diverse school counselors and school leadership were negative. Although the challenges many ethnically diverse school counselors faced, within this study, they

viewed themselves as “advocates for students and staff members facing oppression” (Dollarhide et al., 2018, p.59).

Social Justice and School Counselors

Social justice in education for all K-12 students can begin with school counselors (Parikh Foxx, Saunders, et al., 2020). With the introduction of the Transforming School Counseling Initiative in the 1990s and the debut of the ASCA’s National Model in 2003, social justice goals have become positioned as foundational to school counselors' identity and practice (Smith et al., 2018). School counseling has transformed from working solely with individual students to collaborating with multiple stakeholders to assist students. This transformation requires school counselors to integrate an understanding of sociocultural and ecological factors inherent to engaging in multicultural counseling and addressing systems of oppression that students might encounter (Cook et al., 2019). Social justice in schools includes educational equity and access to resources, resulting in a school that maintains harmony between individual students' needs and the whole school's needs (Dixon et al., 2010). Within school counseling, social justice aims to reduce the negative impact of oppression on students and improve equity and access to educational services (Novakovic et al., 2020). Cook et al. (2019) stated that school counselors are social justice advocates, collaboratively serving individuals and communities to remove barriers to growth and promote change for the greater good. Furthermore, social justice highlights school counseling's role in advocating for the profession (Havlik et al., 2019). However, research has indicated that some school counselors may be reluctant to take on a social justice advocacy role (Parikh Foxx et al., 2020).

Perceptions of School Counselors

Perception of cultural competence has been defined as how school counselors look at their awareness, knowledge, and skills when working with diverse student populations (Chao et al., 2010). Numerous studies have reported that higher multicultural training and supervision levels were related to higher self-perceived cultural competence among counselors (Constantine, 2001). The literature on cultural competence highlights gaps in the development of skills of counselors. However, the literature does not specify why such gaps exist or contribute to counselors' varying cultural competence levels (Barden & Greene, 2014). Research has explored the perceptions of school counselors' cultural competence and how it may affect their working relationships and attitude toward diverse students (Constantine, 2002; Harris, 2018; Johnson & Williams, 2014). One major challenge with measuring perceived cultural competence is the failure to consider the counselor's cultural background, including ethnicity and gender, and how it affects self-reported competence (Barden & Greene, 2014).

Shen and Lowinger (2007) conducted a quantitative study that asked (a) "How do school counselors perceive their ability to respond to the counseling needs of Asian American students?" (p.69). The researchers surveyed 1,833 school counselors about their multicultural training and experiences working with Asian American students. Most school counselors, who participated in the survey, perceived their awareness and skills for counseling Asian American students to be competent but were unsure of their knowledge of counseling these students. DeCino et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study that explored social desirability, self-perceived multicultural competence, and demographic variables of school counselors in the Midwest United States. Based on the

results, as school counselors enter the field, they perceive themselves as having the necessary cultural competence skills. Still, their perceived multicultural competence decreases as years of experience increase. Additionally, this study discussed that as years of experience increase, there is a significant need for ongoing professional development to maintain multicultural competence (DeCino et al., 2018). These studies concluded that school counselors who did not perceive themselves as culturally competent were less likely to develop meaningful relationships with students from cultures different from their own (Holcomb-McCoy, 2001).

Researchers have suggested that school counselors aware of personal values and biases can better understand how their beliefs might affect their students' perceptions and, consequently, youth development outcomes (Cook et al., 2019). Holcomb-McCoy (2001) discussed that most school counselors rated themselves competent on multicultural terminology and awareness factors when examining school counselors' perception of cultural competence. School counselors who perceived themselves as culturally competent provided advocacy and leadership in their schools and had a positive relationship with parents and students. Furthermore, school counselors who perceived themselves as self-efficacious in their knowledge of diverse student populations consistently engaged in more interventions and collaborative partnerships with stakeholders on behalf of this student population (Camp et al., 2019).

Summary

The literature suggests that as U.S. schools become more diverse, many school counselors are faced with the challenge of supporting and meeting the academic, career, and social/emotional needs of all students, especially those from diverse backgrounds

(Foxx et al., 2020). There is a gap in the literature on school counselors' cultural competence, providing responsive services, implementing evidence-based practices, and impacting diverse counseling students (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008; Nelson et al., 2015). While existing literature focuses on school counselors' ability to serve the specific needs of ethnically diverse student populations, there is a gap in the literature considering school counselors' cultural competence and their abilities to provide culturally responsive services to diverse student populations (Camp et al., 2019). As a result, little is known about school counselors' perceptions of their cultural competence when providing responsive services to students from culturally diverse backgrounds related to working in an urban school district in the southwest.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

My study aimed to explore school counselors' perceptions of their cultural competence when providing responsive services to students from culturally diverse backgrounds. This chapter contained the methods I sought to answer the following research question: What are school counselors' perceptions of their cultural competence when providing responsive services to students from culturally diverse backgrounds? This chapter outlines the research methodology of this proposed phenomenological study of school counselors' experiences. The components of this chapter are (a) research design, (b) participants, (c) trustworthiness, (d) instrumentation, (e) data collection, (f) data analysis, and (g) summary.

Research Design

A phenomenological study aimed to describe the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). I collected data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon and developed a combined description of the essence of the experience for all the participants. "This description consists of 'what' they experienced and 'how' they experienced it" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p.75). For my study, phenomenology was the appropriate method to investigate the cultural competence of school counselors. More specifically, phenomenology has often been used to explore cultural and diversity issues (Hays & Wood, 2011). Based on the literature review, limited qualitative studies focus on cultural competence.

Transcendental Phenomenology. My research design was a transcendental phenomenological study of school counselors' perceptions of cultural competence when delivering responsive services. A phenomenological approach was deemed appropriate in this study because it afforded insight into understanding the participants' perceptions and produced accurate descriptions (Creswell & Poth, 2018). My goal for the research was to collect descriptions from these individuals to deduce the perspectives of the phenomenon into a composite description (Maxwell, 2013).

Transcendental phenomenology offers a depth of possibilities for describing lived experiences (Butler, 2016) and is a prominent phenomenological approach (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Transcendental phenomenology is based on the philosophical work of Edmund Husserl (Butler, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). A paradigm tries to explain the nature of things. A transcendental phenomenology is a systemic approach to analyzing and understanding the complexities of lived experiences and finding meaning surrounding the phenomenon (Fuster, 2019). Transcendental phenomenology focuses on searching for the essence and wholeness of an experience (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). The researcher observes the experience and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). The researcher then analyzes the data by reducing the information to significant statements and combining them into themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The steps to conducting transcendental phenomenological research, according to Moustakas (1994), is rigorous yet accessible to qualitative researchers. The researcher describes their own experiences (epoche), identifies significant statements from participants, and clusters these statements into meaning and units (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Next, the researcher integrates the

themes into a description of the individuals' experiences (textural and structural descriptions) and then constructs a description of the essence and meaning of the experience (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). One statement about what is textural and one statement about structural. Moustakas (1994) specified the following steps to conducting transcendental phenomenological research: Epoche, transcendental-phenomenological reductions, and imaginative variation.

Epoche

Moustakas (1994) stated that the epoche is the most fundamental requirement for applying the transcendental phenomenological method. Moustakas (1994) explained, “Epoche requires the elimination of suppositions and the raising of knowledge above every possible doubt” (p. 26). The epoche is the researcher's approach at the beginning of a study so that they can dismiss their views of the phenomenon (Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell, 2004). Butler (2016) described bracketing, as the most frequently accessed metaphor within epoche, as a continuous self-constraint process. When the researcher's experiences have been eliminated (bracketed), the participants' voices be heard and interpreted (Butler, 2016). Epoche is essential in this study, especially when identifying school counselors' cultural competence and then refraining from adding my judgments and biases.

Peer debriefing was utilized to bracket and reflect my overall experiences throughout the research process for my study. Lincoln and Guba (2012) noted that peer debriefing allows another check outside a designated research team. Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2008) explained that peer debriefing helps the researcher undertake an external evaluation of the research process. Peers can be colleagues, classmates, or

individuals in which the phenomenon is being investigated. Peers serve a role in challenging the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 2012).

Transcendental-Phenomenological Reduction

Moustakas (1994) outlined that the second step in the research process is transcendental-phenomenological reduction. Moustakas explained transcendental-phenomenological reduction is to describe in textual language what one sees in terms of the external object and the internal act of consciousness with the qualities of the experience become the focus (Moustakas, 1994). To incorporate a transcendental-phenomenological reduction in my qualitative study, I utilized reflexive journaling to record how the research process affected me personally and professionally throughout the research process (Hays and Singh, 2012). The use of journaling allows us to explore our actions embedded in the complex interactions between self and others within specific experiences (Banks-Wallace, 2008)

Imaginative Variation

Following transcendental-phenomenological reduction, the next step in my research study was to engage in imaginative variation. Moustakas (1994) stated that imaginative variation enables the researcher to derive themes from the textual descriptions obtained through phenomenological reduction (Moustakas, 1994). Applied to my study, imaginative variation sought to understand the emerging themes connected to how school counselors view cultural competence.

Synthesis of Meanings and Essences

The final step in the phenomenological process was integrating the textural and structural descriptions into an essence statement of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Hays and Wood (2011) explained that the researcher's sole purpose of phenomenology is to describe the depth and meaning of the participants' lived experiences. As the researcher, I clustered themes to describe the experience's textures (meaning and depth). Next, I grouped meanings in the textural description and created a structural description (Hays & Wood, 2011).

Positionality

The nature of qualitative research sets the researcher as the data collection instrument. It is reasonable to expect the researcher's beliefs and cultural background to be important variables that may affect the research process (Bourke, 2014). I am a school counselor with 28 years of public education experience, 17 years as a classroom teacher, and eleven years as a school counselor. My experiences included working with diverse students in public education. This led to my interest in conducting qualitative research to learn more about school counselors' cultural competence experiences. As the researcher, I was mindful that my biases might influence the participants, their responses, and my observations and interpretations, but so may the very nature of this study (Bourke, 2014).

Participant Selection

I used purposeful sampling to understand the research problem and central phenomenon for this study (Maxwell, 2013). Maxwell (2013) explained that purposeful sampling is the primary sampling method used in qualitative research. Additionally, Creswell and Poth (2018) explained using purposeful sampling is appropriate when (a)

participants have experience with the phenomenon, (b) participants are intensely interested in understanding its nature and meaning, and (c) participants intentionally and consciously think about their experience.

My study participants were school counselors working in an elementary, middle, or high school in a moderately sized urban public school district in the southwest United States. I included participants based on the following criteria: (a) who were certified school counselors, (b) who currently worked as a school counselor, and (c) who had at least five years' experience as a school counselor.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) stated that 10-12 participants should give the researcher ample information for a phenomenological study. My goal was to interview 10-12 participants for this phenomenological study until it reached saturation. Hays and Singh (2012) stated that saturation refers to the point in data collection where the researcher no longer finds any new ideas, themes, or significant statements. The idea is to gather enough information to saturate until no further insight is gained (Creswell & Poth, 2018). I collected demographic data such as race, ethnicity, sex, and age. I sent a recruitment letter to potential participants through an email containing a detailed explanation of my study.

Instrumentation

Bourke (2014) explained that research represents a shared space between participants and the researcher. Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that gathering data from participants by using in-depth interviews are appropriate and can lead to a textual and structural description of the experiences with the phenomenon of cultural competence. The researcher and the participants can influence the research process

(Bourke, 2014). I used a semi-structured interview protocol that employed non-leading questions conducted in a confidential location chosen by the participant. I asked seven questions but allowed for exploration of the data during the interview. As the researcher, I was essentially the main instrument of the study. I was responsible for creating a climate where the participant felt comfortable and responded openly and honestly (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Miles & Huberman, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

Interview questions were designed to learn the following information from participants: (a) current feelings about /her cultural competence, (b) personal experiences with multiculturalism throughout their life, (c) individual definitions of cultural competence, and (d) individual demonstration of cultural competence with students, parents, and staff. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the researcher.

Interview Questions

Moustakas (1994) stated the interview involves an informal, interactive process and utilizes open-ended questions.

1. Describe any multicultural training or preparation you had during your graduate program.
2. What multicultural training or preparation have you had beyond your graduate program?
3. Describe how you incorporate your multicultural training or preparation when implementing responsive services.
4. Describe any relationships you may have with students or parents who are culturally different from yourself.

5. Describe how you build relationships with staff (teachers and administrators) who are culturally different from yourself.
6. Describe your thoughts and feelings regarding your cultural competence when providing services for culturally diverse students.
7. What additional thoughts or comments would you like to share related to implementing responsive services or how you would build relationships with students, parents, and staff, who are culturally different from you.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

The validity of a research study is strengthened by its trustworthiness and credibility. This is a vital component of the qualitative research process. Trustworthiness refers to the degree of sureness in data, interpretation, and methods used so the researcher can develop the protocols and procedures necessary for the correctness or credibility of a study (Amankwaa, 2016; Connelly, 2016; Maxwell, 2013). I used multiple strategies for establishing trustworthiness and credibility that ensured the rigor in this study, such as an audit trail, member checking, triangulation, providing thick, rich descriptions, clarifying researcher bias, and peer debriefing sessions (Hays & Singh, 2012; Maxwell, 2013).

Audit Trail. I used an audit trail to verify my study results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I maintained an audit trail to provide a collection of evidence regarding the research process for an auditor (Hays & Singh, 2012) that consisted of the transcripts, memos, field notes, and my reflective journal entries that validated the rigor of my study and certified data collection (Hays & Singh, 2012; Maxwell, 2013).

Member Checking. Member checking determines the accuracy of the qualitative findings by taking the descriptions or themes back to the participants and determining

whether they feel accurate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). After the interviews had been transcribed, I contacted the participants to “test goodness of fit” (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 206) and an opportunity to comment and verify the accuracy of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Member checking was used as an integral technique to ensure the study credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and improved the rigor and validity of the results (Maxwell, 2013). Each participant was asked to review and verify their interview transcripts for accuracy, clarification, and additional insight for this study.

Triangulation. Maxwell (2013) described triangulation as “collecting information from a diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods” (p.128) such as notes, journals, formal and informal interviews, and questionnaires. Triangulation examined evidence from different sources to support a single conclusion (Maxwell, 2013). Throughout my study, I solicited feedback from my committee when forming generalizations from my data. This helped identify any biases that could threaten the conclusions of my study.

Thick, Rich Descriptions. I used thick, rich data to convey the findings of the study. This strategy added to the validity of the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Thick, detailed descriptions are a detailed account of the research process and outcome (Hays & Singh, 2012). Hays and Singh (2012) describe thick, rich descriptions to go beyond simply reporting the details of the study. I conducted intensive interviews that enabled me to collect thick, richly detailed, and varied data to provide a full and revealing picture of the phenomenon (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Peer Debriefing Sessions. Hays and Singh (2012) described peer debriefing as an external check outside the study. Peer debriefing is one way to obtain and use reflexive

data from the researcher and allows the researcher to evaluate initial hunches with a colleague (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2008). Creswell and Poth (2018) defined the role of a peer debriefer as a “devil’s advocate” (p.263) who asks questions about methods, meanings, and interpretation. Regular peer debriefing was utilized after each participant interview between a colleague and me to enhance the accuracy of the study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I used a peer debriefer, another school counselor with experience in an urban school district working with diverse student populations.

Bracketing and Reflexivity. In qualitative research, researchers reflect on how their role in the study, personal background, culture, and experiences can potentially shape their data interpretation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Creswell and Poth (2018) explained that the researcher discloses their understanding of their biases, values, and experiences that they bring to a qualitative research study. I clarified my role in the research process. I bracketed myself out of the study by discussing my personal experiences and background with the phenomenon. This did not take me completely out of the study, but I set aside my experiences to focus on the participants' experiences in my study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, I completed field notes and journaling throughout the study to bracket my biases and assumptions (Hays & Singh, 2012). These notes included observations about the process of data collection, hunches about what I learned, and concerns about participants' reactions to the research process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Data Collection

Prior to collecting data, I got approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at a state university in a southern area of the United States. Based on purposeful sampling, I began recruiting participants who were current school counselors for this study. I sought participants for this study through email. Participants spent no more than 45 minutes involved with the study, including informed consent (Appendix A) before beginning the study and a demographic questionnaire (Appendix B) for completion.

Data collected for this study was face-to-face interviews through Zoom. Interviews are where “knowledge is constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p.4). Hays and Singh (2012) explained that interviews allow participants to describe what is meaningful to them using their own words. I followed the procedures for preparing and conducting interviews described by Creswell and Poth (2018). First, I developed open-ended, general questions that focused on understanding the central phenomenon of my study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Second, I identified interviewees based on the purposeful sampling criteria. Third, I conducted face-to-face interviews, believing this would get the most useful information to answer the research question. Fourth, the interviews were audiotaped. Fifth, I designed and used an interview protocol. This included seven open-ended questions, and observations were documented in my field notes. Sixth, I obtained consent from the interviewees to participate in the study by completing a consent form approved by the IRB. (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

I took multiple measures to ensure that the data I collected remained secure. Based on Hays and Singh's (2012) recommendations, I protected all electronic documents

with a password, and that information that may be identified in the participants' names by a pseudonym was stored separately from the actual data. I will destroy all the data when the study is completed.

Data Analysis

The data analysis method I followed was the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method modified by Moustakas (1994). This approach follows the procedures of analyzing data for significant phrases, developing meanings, grouping them into themes, and presenting a description of the phenomenon. First, I described my personal experiences with cultural competence. Next, I used verbatim cultural competence transcripts and considered each statement for significance to describe the experience.

- a) Recorded all relevant statements.
- b) Listed all invariant horizons that included nonrepetitive and nonoverlapping statements.
- c) Related and clustered the invariant meaning into themes.
- d) Synthesized the invariant meaning into a description of the experience using verbatim examples.
- e) I reflected on my textual description and constructed a description of the structures of my own experience.

Finally, I completed the steps with each of my participants to create an individual textual-structural description of the experience that constructed a composite textual-structural description of the meanings and essences of the experience that represented the group as a whole (Moustakas, 1994, p.122).

Summary

In this chapter, I described the methodology and the design of my study. This phenomenological study explores school counselors' perceptions of their cultural competence when providing services in a culturally diverse school setting; the participants were recruited using purposeful sampling. I designed the demographic questionnaire and the semi-structured interview protocol. The interview protocol was open-ended questions that encouraged participants to describe meaningful and relevant cultural competence perceptions. I followed the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method as modified by Moustakas (1994). This approach followed the procedures of analyzing data for significant phrases, developing meanings, grouping them into themes, and presenting a description of the phenomenon. I utilized member checking, triangulation, an auditing system, researcher bias, providing thick, rich descriptions, and peer debriefing sessions to ensure trustworthiness and credibility.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This study aimed to explore school counselors' perception of their cultural competence when providing services in culturally diverse school settings. Specifically, I attempted to understand school counselors' perception of their cultural competence when providing services to culturally diverse students, parents, and staff. This study further explored the usage of culturally appropriate services when working in a culturally diverse school setting. A phenomenological research design was used to explore the experience and perceptions of the participants that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The data was organized using Moustakas' (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method for phenomenological data. This study addressed the research question: What are school counselors' perceptions of their cultural competence when providing services in culturally diverse school settings? The themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews were (a) multicultural preparation, (b) multicultural practice, and (c) multicultural competence.

Participant Demographic

Ten school counselors from the southwestern region of the United States participated in this study. All the participants were given a demographic survey (Appendix B) before their interview. The survey contained information regarding age, gender, race, certifications, and licenses obtained, the number of years they have worked in public education, and years as a school counselor. The survey asked participants to indicate what school level (elementary, middle school, or high school) they currently worked in and whether their school was a Title, I school. Of the ten participants, nine

described themselves as female and one as male. The ages of the participants ranged from 38-63, with a mean age of 47.1 years. Five of the ten participants stated their race as Black/African American. Five out of the ten participants identified their race as White, and four indicated they were Hispanic/Latino/a/x. All the participants were school counselors, three of whom were Licensed Professional Counselors. The number of years they have worked in public education ranged from 14-to 40 the average number of years was 22 years. As a school counselor, the average number of years was 12.4 years, with 7-26 years. Nine of the participants worked in a Title I school.

Regarding the level of schools, the participants worked in, they included six elementary schools, two intermediate schools, and two high schools. To ensure anonymity, each participant was given a pseudonym to preserve confidentiality. A detailed table of the participants' demographics is included in Table 1.

Table 1*Demographic Information*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Race	License/ Certification	Number of years in Education	Number of years as a School Counselor
Tresee	52	Female	Black African American	School Counselor	30	14
Lisa	46	Female	Black African American	School Counselor	20	8
Rosie	63	Female	Black African American	School Counselor	40	26
Mary	46	Female	Hispanic/ Latino/a/x	LPC, School Counselor	14	8
Ryan	49	Male	Black African American	LPC, School Counselor	16	11
Fatima	38	Female	Hispanic/ Latino/a/x	School Counselor	16	11
Jane	50	Female	Hispanic/ Latino/a/x	LPC, School Counselor	24	7
Joy	39	Female	Hispanic/ Latino/a/x	School Counselor	18	10
Sara	38	Female	Black African American	School Counselor	15	8
Annie	50	Female	White	School Counselor	27	21

Participant #1. Tresee was a 52-year-old African American female. She has worked in public education for more than 30 years, and out of those years, she has been a school counselor for 14 years. She listed her licensures or certifications as Elementary Education grades 1-8, English as a Second Language, and School Counselor PK-12. She worked at a Title 1 School in an urban school district. She worked in an elementary school setting.

Participant #2. Rosie was a 63-year-old African American female. She had worked in public education for 40 years, and out of those years, she had been a school counselor for 26 years. She listed her licensure or certifications as Elementary through 8th-grade Generalist, Elementary through High School for English, Elementary through High School for History, and PK through High School Counselor. She worked in a Title 1 school in an urban school district. She worked in an intermediate school setting.

Participant #3. Lisa was a 46-year-old African American female. She had worked in public education for 20 years, and out of those years, she has been a school counselor for eight years. She listed her licensure or certifications as a classroom teacher and school counselor. She worked at a Title 1 school in an urban school district. She worked in a high school setting.

Participant #4. Mary was a 46-year-old White or Caucasian female of Hispanic or Latino/a/x descent. She had worked in public education for 14 years, and out of those years, she has been a school counselor for eight years. She listed her licensure or certifications as School Counselor, Generalist EC-4, Special Education, Bilingual, and LPC. She worked at a Title 1 school in an urban school district. She worked in an elementary school setting.

Participant #5. Ryan was a 49-year-old Black African American Male. He had worked in public education for 16 years, and out of those years, he had been a school counselor for 11 years. He listed his licensure or certifications as Certified School Counselor and LPC. He worked in a Title 1 school in an urban school district. He worked in an intermediate school setting.

Participant #6. Fatima was a 38-year-old female of White or Caucasian and Hispanic/ Latino/a/x descent. She had worked in public education for 16 years, and out of those years, she had been a school counselor for 11 years. She listed her licensure or certifications as EC-4 Bilingual Teacher and Bilingual School Counselor. She worked in a Title 1 school in an urban school district. She worked in an elementary school setting.

Participant #7. Jane was a 50-year-old White or Caucasian female of Hispanic/ Latino/a/x descent. She had worked in public education for 24 years, and out of those years, she has been a school counselor for seven years. She listed her licensure or certifications as Certified School Counselor, LPC, and National Certified Counselor. She worked in a Title 1 school in an urban school district. She worked in an elementary school setting.

Participant #8. Joy was a 39-year-old White or Caucasian female of Hispanic/ Latino/a/x descent. She had worked in public education for 18 years, and out of those years, she had been a school counselor for ten years. She listed her licensure or certifications as a school counselor. She worked in a Title 1 school in an urban school district. She worked in an elementary school setting.

Participant #9. Sara was a 38-year-old Black African American female. She had worked in public education for 15 years, and out of those years, she had worked for eight years as a school counselor. She listed her licensure or certifications as a school counselor. She worked in a Title 1 school in an urban school district. She worked in an elementary school setting.

Participant #10. Annie was a 50-year-old White female. She had worked in public education for 26 years, and out of those years, she had worked for 21 years as a school counselor. She listed her licensure or certification as a school counselor. She did not work in a Title 1 school. She worked in a high school setting in a rural school district

Emerged Themes

For my study, phenomenological themes were identified based on data gathered from participants. The data yielded three major themes and eight subthemes (see Table 2), with major themes being: multicultural preparation, multicultural practice, and multicultural experience.

A. Multicultural Preparation

- a. Graduate school
- b. Professional development and conference
- c. Self-Motivation

B. Multicultural Practice

- a. Relationships with students, parents, and staff
- b. Learning from others
- c. School counseling services
- d. Integrate students' culture into a school counseling program

C. Multicultural Experience

a. Self-understanding and self-acceptance

Table 2

Summary of Results

Theme	Sub Theme
Multicultural Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Graduate school• School district training and support• Self-motivation
Multicultural Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationships with students, parents, and staff• Learning from others• School counseling services• Integrate students' culture into the school counseling program
Multicultural Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-understanding and self-acceptance

Multicultural Preparation

The first theme identified was multicultural preparation. This theme included participants describing their preparation and training experiences while in graduate school and as school counselors. All ten participants described how each experience contributed to their knowledge of current trends in multiculturalism and ways to maintain their awareness and understanding of different cultures. Each participant's experience in graduate school, in professional trainings, and through their research contributed to their perceived cultural competence. There were three sub-themes identified, (a) graduate school, (b) school district training and support, and (c) self-motivation.

Graduate School. The first sub-theme identified was graduate school. At the beginning of the interviews, all ten participants were asked to describe any multicultural training or preparation they received during their graduate program, what they remembered learning in their multicultural course, and how it contributed to their perceived cultural competence. Each school counselor remembered they took a multicultural course in their master's program. Six participants shared they took at least one multicultural class in their master's program, and four shared they took two multicultural classes. Participants shared that these multicultural courses nurtured their professional growth and understanding of multicultural issues from others who are culturally different. Participants reflected that some of the assignments asked them to reflect on their own culture and the potential needs of students in their school who were from culturally diverse backgrounds. The participants reported that the assignments in the multicultural course contributed to their awareness, knowledge, and skills of different cultures, and they gained a deeper understanding of their own culture.

Tresee and Sara shared what they remembered about their multicultural class in graduate school. They distinctly remembered taking two multicultural classes. They learned about how to interact with students from another culture and ways to show sensitive understanding. Sara shared that she “was required as part of the program requirements ... to take two multicultural awareness classes.” Tresee shared that her class had presenters who visited their class and presented about different cultures and nationalities.

Tresee reported,

We had some actual presentations about that so that we could be more aware of some things that we were doing in our culture that might be offensive to other cultures if we were to have clients of that ethnic background.

Two of the participants shared that they were required to complete a project about the community and the different stakeholders they might interact with as a school counselor as part of the multicultural course. Jane shared, “I had an actual class on multicultural studies and diversity. We...had to do an intensive project during that class

Similarly, Rosie remarked,

I had to do a project on areas of the neighborhood, ... how do you as a counseling program meet the needs of the kids in that area, depending on ... their socioeconomic level and mine was, the ... area around the ... University.”

Fatima commented that she took one multicultural course while in graduate school and it was online. Mary also discussed that she was in a cohort system where different students were grouped together in the different classes in the program. She said, “I think these groups were intentionally grouped in a certain way based on the applicants.

Mary added,

That gave me just some, you know, face-to-face and one-to-one interaction with people from different cultures in addition to the classes that we took just to understand how culture played a role in how people acted or thought about certain things, why some individuals had more struggles and difficulties embracing the culture here in America and basically just some of these classes just outlined what was best practices and how we could honor and appreciate differences in different people.

Three of the participants were part of a bilingual school counseling cohort. As part of her graduate programs, Jane recalled, “we had to do a study on what it was like to be bilingual and ... [the] need ... in our community.” Joy had a similar experience adding, “I actually had a whole semester, in addition to the regular degree. I was part of a bilingual counseling program, so we actually did have courses.”

Sara reported,

I also did some bilingual classes that focused on being bilingual, and I had to do a project for that class and actually got something. It got published in a magazine, so we had to do a study on what it was like to be bilingual and what in our community and the needs for bilingualism in our community.

When considering if these extra courses contributed to their cultural competence, each participant expressed that these courses provided them with an opportunity to become culturally aware of the different ethnicities that were different from their own culture in preparation for the students they would work with as a school counselor. Additionally, these participants shared that these projects, activities, and additional courses contributed

to their understanding of different cultures. The experience of researching other cultures added to their knowledge of cultures different from their own and developed their perceived cultural competence.

School District Training and Support. The second sub-theme identified was school district training and support. All the participants were asked to describe the multicultural training or preparation since graduating from their master's program and how this training contributed to their perceived cultural competence. Participants described how the training and preparation they have received in their school district has helped keep them abreast of the students' culture in their school district. The participants shared that understanding student culture and the needs of their students motivated them to attend training to learn more about those cultures and ways to address specific student needs. Eight of the ten participants shared that many of the professional developments they attended in their school districts intertwined students' culture with their socio-economic status, background, and ways to integrate this information into their school counseling program. These school district trainings provided education on respecting and honoring the perspective of students and parents.

These participants reported that since graduating from their master's program, the professional development in their school districts have kept them up to date with current research or trends in multicultural counseling. Four of the participants reported they had attended training that addressed the specific needs of the students in their school district. Rosie remarked, "I think [my district] does a good job of meeting the multicultural needs of its students and training the teachers so that they can meet those needs as well."

Similarly, Sara reported,

Well, I work in a very multicultural district, so I would say there's lots of on-the-job training. Since graduating, I've taken several professional development courses through my district and also through other platforms that focused on increased multicultural awareness, especially in recent years; with the given climate of the world and what's happening, there seems to be a greater emphasis on that.

Mary shared,

So, the district does make an effort to ensure that counselors and staff and anyone who touches the lives of the students is culturally trained so that we are educated on respecting and honoring the parents' perspectives and the students' perspectives. So, every year there are numerous different training where we touch on culture and how we integrate it into our programs. Not just the counseling program through activities and so forth, but academically and how do we expand the students'...what's it called, knowledge on different people with different customs and different ways of thinking.

Four of the ten participants reported that they chose professional developments that were focused on multiculturalism. Ryan shared, "so a lot of the time I will choose multicultural or culturally based PDs to participate in, trying to keep me abreast, ... [of] things I need to be aware of or be culturally sensitive to." A high school counselor, Annie shared that she has worked in an extremely low socioeconomic school and has participated in Ruby Payne training and Capturing Kids' Hearts, a program focused on children's social-emotional well-being and relationship-driven campus culture. She remarked that these

trainings have “helped [ed] with cultural diversity within the school and how to communicate with families.”

Annie also shared,

I would say, as strange as it may sound, a lot of the training I've had, even with college admissions learning about first-generation, and that the FAFSA is not the only thing. There's a TASFA. There is specific financial aid information for students, even specifically for Hispanic students. Just learning how to kind of the same thing as Ruby Payne for elementary purposes, but on the flip side is how to help students who have never left their city, their home, and they're going to be the first ones to have that opportunity around that.

Similarly, Jane shared,

I ... have actually taken some that were more directed to ... how boys learn differently than girls. I think there's been a lot of focus on African American boys ... how they learn, how they don't ... they're not always going to respond the same way as a non-African American child.

Rosie shared,

And whenever I feel deficient in any kind of area in terms of cultural diversity or anything having to do with my students, I'm always going to make sure that I fix that deficiency by either going to a staff development that deals with that.

Through these experiences, the participants each shared that being trained and prepared through professional development prepared them to work with different cultures and contributed to maintaining their own perceived cultural competence.

Two participants shared that they felt the school district they currently worked in does not provide multicultural training for school counselors. If an event occurred, they shared the school district responded with training to address the event. Fatima shared, “It's not much of a multicultural training that I have received from the district that I work at.” Jane expressed that there needs to be more focus on multicultural training. She followed up with, “we ... had a two-day professional development through our counseling program, and it would have been good to start talking about some of the different cultures that not everyone's aware of.”

Self-Motivation. The third sub-theme identified was self-motivation. Four of the ten participants shared that to maintain cultural competence they had either attended professional conferences or done their research. The participants shared that they are motivated to learn about the cultures of their students at their school. These participants expressed a desire to see more professional development in their school districts that focused on the students' cultures in their school district. It is important to note that all ten participants reported the value of school counselors researching the different cultures represented at their schools and collaborating with teachers and school administrators so that everyone is aware and knowledgeable about the students' culture.

Fatima shared,

I've gone to conferences such as ASCA or the Texas Counseling Association Conferences. I do look for multicultural training. So maybe within the years that I've been a school counselor, I would say I've had maybe like five trainings that dealt with multicultural.

Lisa, Tresee, and Sara commented that there was not a lot of multicultural training available in their school district, and they have had to take it upon themselves to do their research. Lisa summed up her feelings by saying, “I kind of have to be intentional about what I decide that I want to learn. Tresee further added, “I think you have to take it upon yourself to do more research ... about the language, the culture, you know, because you want to be respectful.” Sara shared, “I really do make efforts to research the things that I don't know about and talk to different types of people. Through their self-motivation, these school counselors have continued to work on their understanding, awareness, and development of their cultural competence.

Brief Summary. This section focused on how school counselors experienced their multicultural preparation. This section was broken down into three sub-themes, including (a) graduate school, (b) school district training and support, and (c) self-motivation. All ten participants shared that the multicultural courses they received in the counselor education program contributed to their professional growth and understanding of multicultural issues faced by students, parents, and staff who are culturally different from themselves. Eight participants described the training and development in their school district. Those professional developments have kept my study participants abreast of students' culture in their school district. Four of the ten participants shared how they felt a lack of multicultural training and took it upon themselves to learn about the cultures represented in their school.

Multicultural Practice

The second theme identified was multicultural practice. Nine of the ten participants reported that they each worked on a school campus that was culturally diverse. Most of the participants shared at least 20-30 different cultures on their school campus. The participants shared that although they may be school counselors and have received training in multiculturalism, they felt there is always more to learn about the different cultures represented at their particular school. The participants reported that understanding how students, parents, and staff from different cultures think and why they think that way was important. Four sub-themes were identified: (a) relationships with students, parents, and staff, (b) learning from others, (c) school counseling services, and (d) integrating students' culture into the school counseling program.

Relationships with Students, Parents, and Staff. Participants were asked to describe any relationships they have with students, parents, and staff who are culturally different from them. All ten participants discussed how important it is to know and learn from the students, parents, and the teachers they work with. Mary described how she had built relationships with new students. She shared.

If I don't speak their native language, I would ask a staff member to help me do the tour for these kids and just touch base as to what they want to see and what they're missing, and we go around the school, and we even talk about food and how they are going to adjust to those processes.

As a school counselor, Ryan commented that he had benefited differently from his relationships with students from different cultures.

Ryan shared,

Building relationships is more so my strong suit. I think students are very well aware of how you treat other students in the building, so if I'm in a group setting or I'm in the cafeteria supervising, trying to utilize this time that may not necessarily be slated for what counselor's responsibilities should fall under but using that as a way to get to know students or talk to two or three students at one time, talking about things that they like to do outside of school, you may find that you have some commonalities there that you can share with them, attending their extra-curricular activities.

Tresee shared,

I always ... can build that rapport ... with the student(s) no matter what their race is because they are a child. As you talk to them more and more and get to know them a little bit better and build that relationship, you can pick up on those nuances of differences, and then you just pivot and adjust to that. So, it's all about building relationships.

Rosie discussed how she had built relationships with students through her school's mentoring program,

I always choose a student, for the most part, who is different from me. I want to be able to work with students in a one-on-one capacity. I... want to always choose someone that's different so that I can meet their needs on a personal level can work with all the different diverse ethnicities in our school.

Similarly, Sara remarked,

I have several relationships with students ... who are culturally different from myself. My school that I work at has a majority Burmese population and also a

very high Hispanic population, and so I ... work regularly with those families. There is some research that I put in on my end to get a better understanding of what they're dealing with. Some of them are refugees, and so they've come here with, you know, a set of issues that maybe some of the kids who were born here don't have.

Five of the participants described how they had built relationships with their parents. They shared that they look for ways to improve communication with parents. Fatima commented, "in building relationships, making [parents] feel welcomed by showing that the communication is in their language helps a lot."

Annie shared,

I think that I have a good relationship with my families. I always look for ways to improve communication and helpful ways to help because everybody's working. And so ... seeing ... what their needs are and what information they need about ... trade school, college, training to complete their goals.

Rosie commented that she had built relationships with parents through programs focused on the parents' culture.

She remarked,

Those programs that we meet with the parents and interact with the parents definitely deal with their cultural background and how they, how we make it through our school year, and the stuff that we have to offer them to help them help their children. And all of it is culturally based.

Tresee shared,

I have relationships with all different backgrounds of families. So, we may not be able to perfectly communicate, but we do communicate. I even have one parent of another background who ... brings Starbucks or ... smoothies. So that lets, you know ... that they appreciate the relationship and there's some type of comradery, ... for him to do that, to actually spend money, ... and to take the time to be able to do that. So those are some types of relationships that I have with other families.

Mary remarked,

So, meeting with these parents ... its life-changing for my counseling program. It gives me feedback for improvement and so forth. So, we just try, as counselors and staff, we try to build these relationships with parents because they are so powerful when it comes to their child's education.

Four of the participants described how they build relationships with staff. Annie remarked, "We all support each other. It doesn't matter your background, your part of that family."

Fatima shared,

I do ask a lot of different questions ... it's usually during lunchtime pre-COVID, of course, ... we would eat together. And that breaking of bread is a big deal for me as in my culture. So, I would ask, hey, what are you eating or what is this? And I think their food, I made a lot of connections during that lunchtime period. I think the first thing that you have to show respect to that culture. I do like to ask a lot of questions, especially of those that my staff members that reflect the cultures that we see in my school. So just having that exposure and that respect for everybody else's culture help build that relationship.

Tresee echoed similar experiences by saying,

I know our hospitality committee is very good with having all types of different activities throughout the year where we can all collaborate together; it's not just about business, but it's about having time to fellowship with each other, and it's not always with the same people. So, you're doing different things with different groups of people and not just during the holidays, but throughout the year. We have different activities where we can just sit down and ... have fun ... have different luncheons ... where we can come together and just talk about regular stuff, not just work-related activities.

Rosie summarized how she had built relationships with staff members:

I like the fact that also, for a large part of our staff, ... is just as close as we can be, as culturally diverse as the students that go there. I'm always going to be working with somebody who may very well be from a different cultural background. It is really cool how the school and the different departments of the school fit the culturally diverse students that go to the school. I go out of my way to work with them because I need them. I need them because my kids need them, and so my relationship with them is based on that premise that we are all gonna be together for the kids.

Learning from Each Other. The second sub-theme identified is learning from each other. Four of the ten participants shared how they have learned about different cultures from students, staff, and teachers during their interviews. The participants shared that they can better assist and support the students, parents, and staff by learning from each other. Sara, an elementary school counselor who came from a multicultural

background, stated, “everybody benefits from learning from each other. And when we do that with each other, it helps us ... [with] students that we serve.”

She also shared,

I think the key is to highlight the differences and make people aware. A lot of times, people are just unaware. They weren't, in my opinion, fortunate enough maybe to grow up in a very diverse population of people or go to a school that was very diverse.

Joy commented,

I worked at a very diverse school, so we have ... many different cultures. I think just building those relationships and ... continuing to learn from them so that you could better assist them and know how to support them. So, I think that the key is building those relationships and learning.

Mary stated that “culture affects how we act and behave; it affects our thinking and even our emotions at times.”

Mary continued to add,

We are trying to embed a lot of SEL information into our guidance lessons ... so that we are educated on how ... to respect each other and honor those values that each person has. And the counseling program it's a good starting point to lead in opening those opportunities for students and teachers. Not just for the students but ... where teachers can learn about something.

Mary summarized that she has asked parents if they “think [their] culture is being honored and respected in the school community.” She shared that as a school counselor who has worked with so many different cultures, she has asked parents “for ideas as to

how ... to break ... generalizations and highlight great things about [they are] culture[s].” Through her parents' feedback, she reported, “we present how we could implement an action plan where they can ... be an active participant in changing [the] culture in our school where we are more educated about each other.” Like Mary, Tresee described the importance of learning from students, parents, and culturally diverse staff.

She stated,

I can connect, and I can build rapport with anyone, but I know that there are certain standards that other families may have if they come from a different country, that there are certain ways that they think that may be different from ours, but for the most part, when you start talking to them, you can kind of get to know what their priorities are and what they deem important and what ... [are] the dynamics of their culture and their family. It's all about talking to people, listening to people, and being open-minded. And so, when I'm dealing with students, the basic of a child is a child.

School Counseling Services. School counselors play an instrumental role on school campuses by implementing school counseling services. Eight of the ten participants shared how it is important to them to be familiar with the culture of their students to provide appropriate school counseling services. Ryan, in his interview, stated, “one of the things I try to do is make sure that I am familiar with students before working with them in any kind of responsive way.” Annie shared, “I look for resources that would be helpful and who they might respond best.” Three participants discussed the importance of bringing culture into their conversations to provide the best school counseling services.

Lisa shared,

I've learned about the different cultures, how to engage with the students, seek to understand and really listen and not put any biases on how to help them, just allow them to express whatever is going on and just meet them where they are.

Mary shared,

We learn about what's happening around our neighborhood, and our community is the different student populations we serve. We also talk about just basic traditions and cultural definitions of different subcultures.

Jane summarized her experience by sharing,

I'm always looking at the whole person, so the more I know about them, the better I can help them. So, if I happen to know that they're Vietnamese or that they are Hispanic, I'm trying to bring some of their cultures into our conversation.

Three of the participants in the study shared the importance of utilizing outside resources such as Communities in Schools. This program offers outreach services on the school campuses, the campus parent center, and outside community clinics to provide services to students and parents from a different culture.

Fatima shared,

I've been very fortunate enough to have our Communities in Schools person be Asian. So that has really helped me understand the multicultural aspect of the Asian community and just help provide services, even if she's translating in their language, which is mostly Vietnamese. And then, of course, being a bilingual counselor, I'm able to provide those response services to the Latino community in their own language.

Sara shared a similar experience by saying,

We work with our parent center and try to make sure that our different demographic of parents know that we are aware of their concerns, their individual concerns that might be specific to whatever issues they're dealing with culturally, and that we are able to, and willing to support them in that.

Tresee stated,

Whenever I am offering responsive services to any of my ... students that I serve and their families, I always try to keep their backgrounds at the forefront of my mind. So, when I am referring to them outside referral organizations, I try to make sure that I link them up with their background.

Integrate Student Culture into the School Counseling Programs. The fourth sub-theme identified was integrating student culture into the school counseling program. Four of the ten participants described the importance of understanding the country or culture their students come from and how their cultural competence contributed to their awareness of what is important to their students. These participants shared that learning about the different cultures at their schools and integrating this knowledge into their school counseling program has contributed to integrating what they know about students' cultures into their counseling program. Mary said, "I'm taking all that information into my counseling program and ... integrating it. She went on to say, "we try to embed a lot of these ... main traditions ... so that [students] feel like they're welcome."

Mary went on to share,

When [I] do... guidance lesson[s], and I know that there is like a national holiday in that particular part of the world ... I would research about it. Then I would ask

a student to dress up or just bring some traditional clothing, any pieces that would teach us more about that particular culture. It's important that we learn about some of those customs, and we can embed those into the program.

Rosie shared a similar experience by saying,

I design our whole counseling curriculum around the multicultural needs of our students. The subjects that I do or the topics that I do in counseling are unique to the diverse cultural population that I have at [my school]. All of the different guidance programs deal with the cultural background of our students and how they manipulate the world that they live in at school.

Sara shared,

I can think of ... the lessons ... my partner and I do ... where we specifically target [guidance] lessons where students are learning about different cultures, that's kind of ties in with the multicultural unit that we do.

Ryan shared, "The ways ... I do guidance lessons that have ... to do with something that [is] ethnically motivated or culturally based, gender-based, [comes] be from [student] demographics." Ryan described a guidance activity called "walk the walk" as a way to integrate culture into his counseling program. He stated,

All students are on one side of the room. Students will be asked the same exact three questions, and any student may respond ... as they see fit. I may say: ... if you consider yourself biracial, multicultural, or have a multicultural family, walk to the other side. [The] first question ... is what do you not like to hear about your group ... that you're in? The second question [is] what are you proudest of being in your group? And the last question is, what do you want or need from other

people...? It is a student-driven conversation per se, in a sense of they do most of the talking in this particular activity.

Brief Summary. This section focused on the participant's multicultural practice. The participants shared their knowledge, awareness, and skills as they have worked with different cultures and why that was important to them. Four sub-themes were identified: (a) relationships with students, parents, and staff, (b) learning from others at work, (c) school counseling services, and (d) integrating students' culture into the school counseling program. All ten participants expressed the importance of developing relationships with students, parents, and staff. Four of the ten participants shared that they can better assist and support the students, parents, and staff by learning from each other. Eight of the ten participants shared how it is important to them to be familiar with the culture of their students to provide appropriate school counseling services. Four participants discussed integrating what they know about students' culture into their counseling program.

Multicultural Experience

The third theme identified was a multicultural experience. All participants described how their personal and professional experiences contributed to their cultural competence, awareness, and understanding of the cultures represented at their school. These multicultural experiences contributed to their ability to provide appropriate services to the different cultures represented. All participants provided the interviewer with details about how they felt about their cultural competence, awareness, and understanding. One sub-theme was identified: self-understanding and self-acceptance.

Most participants reported that their multicultural experiences played a vital part in creating a more intimate culture within their school where students, parents, and staff feel they belong and are respected. Of the ten participants, five described how their experiences as school counselors contributed to their perceived cultural competence when working in a culturally diverse school setting. Ryan explained that his experiences prepared him to work with different cultures.

Ryan shared,

I think it is a counselor's responsibility on their own to be as familiar with the population in which they work with. Do I feel like I know everything about every student and every place from which they come? Absolutely not. But I think one of the most important things that [I] try to do in order to circumvent that is to let students know that the only way I am going to find out and know ... something ... [about] things that [they] have experienced in [their] culture is through them.

Jane shared,

I think you also take as a counselor; you take all your personal experiences in life. And, you know, I grew up in Florida, so that were different cultures there. And when I came here, ...it was much more diverse, all the different countries that are represented in our school [district]. So, I think that you ... bring in all your background and all your knowledge and just who the different people you've been dealing with.

Joy reported that she feels lucky to have traveled the world. It has contributed to her multicultural experience and familiarity with cultures that most people may not know. She went on to describe her experience by saying,

I ... lived abroad in the Middle East for two years. So, I feel like I learned a lot, and I've been exposed to a lot of cultures traveling the world. So, I feel like that's an advantage that I have that I could relate and connect with ... families and ... students ... that come from a brand-new country. If it's a country I've been to, I'm able to connect with them, even if it's just talking about ... where they're from, some of the places that they come from ... I possibly might have been to. So, I feel like that helps me build a connection with them.

Sara shared,

I grew up in a very multicultural setting around a different culture, so I don't feel that it's difficult for me to relate to or reach the multicultural population. I think we need to all learn from each other and learn the cultural differences. I feel like that's been my environment my whole life.

Mary shared,

what I do when presented with an opportunity where I feel challenged, I would be the first one to admit it. And I listen to the student, and if there is something that I do not understand, I seek information, and then I don't hesitate to admit that I ... may not understand their perspective but that I'm seeking to understand it better. I may have all this training, but I may not know it all, especially when it comes to culture and understanding how you think and why you think that way. And I am just not hesitant to admit it. I do say. I don't understand that, can you provide more information?

The participants of this study shared that their background, personal perspectives, and training played a key part in developing their perceived cultural competence.

Self-Understanding and Self-Acceptance. The sub-theme that was identified was self-understanding and self-acceptance. Five of the ten participants discussed how their perceived cultural competence contributed to their self-understanding and self-acceptance of diverse cultures when working in a culturally diverse school setting. Ryan shared, “I think you have to be aware of what you know, and what you don’t know to some extent, and whatever it is that I may not know, I truly want to learn from others.” Like Ryan, Lisa shared her way of understanding students, parents, and staff from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Lisa shared that,

just listening to what [students are] saying ... seek to understand where they’re coming from and try to address their needs. And ... just meet them where they are. And that’s been the biggest help for me ... in terms of how I’m able to move throughout my day and be successful ... with students as well as staff members. I don’t always get it right, but I definitely try to just understand where they’re coming from.

Fatima shared,

just understanding that different cultures will react differently to certain things. And I think we’re not used to that. We know that a lot of cultures will not seek the school counselor and look at counseling ... as something that [is] taboo. But ... as school counselors ... we reach out to a lot of people in our community. We need to show that counseling ... is not a taboo thing, that it’s very necessary. They feel like they can fix it somewhere else, or that’s just not something we’re going to talk about.

Mary summarized her self-understanding and self-acceptance by saying,

What I do when presented with an opportunity where I feel challenged, I would be the first one to admit it. I listen to the student, and if there is something that I do not understand, I seek information. Then I don't hesitate to admit that I may not know their action or may not understand their perspective but that I'm seeking to understand it better. I say, "I don't understand that, can you provide more information?" And then, if I still don't understand ... I try to do more research and seek more information so that I can better serve my students and staff.

Jane summarized her experience by saying,

I think it helps that I love trying different foods and trying different things because then that's a whole other awareness, you know, what foods do you eat? How do you live? And I think all that helps to make my awareness and my acceptance, and even being able to put myself in their shoes as they're taking time to have that empathy for their culture and openness to their diversity and to be sensitive of it.

Through their interviews, these school counselors conveyed that they can share that information with staff and administration by understanding their students and parents. They noted that listening to the students, staff, and parents, their training about different cultures, and their own culture was instrumental in their developed understanding and awareness.

Brief Summary. This section focused on participants' personal and professional experiences and how that has contributed to their cultural competence, awareness, and understanding of the cultures represented at their school. Of the ten participants, five

described how their experiences as school counselors contributed to their perceived cultural competence when working in a culturally diverse school setting. One sub-theme, self-understanding and self-acceptance, was identified through the participants' stories. Five of the ten participants discussed how their perceived cultural competence contributed to their self-understanding and self-acceptance of different cultures when working in a culturally diverse school setting.

Summary

In Chapter IV, I discussed the themes that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. This research aimed to describe the perceptions of school counselors' cultural competence and diverse school settings. Ten participants described their experiences working in diverse school settings with students, parents, and staff. All participants made statements about their training and development, relationships with students, parents, and staff from different cultural backgrounds, how they implement counseling services, and their own perceived cultural competence. Multicultural preparation, multicultural practice, and multicultural experience revealed three major themes. In Chapter V, a discussion of the results and the implications for additional research are provided, as well as suggestions for school counselors, school administrators, directors of guidance, and counselor educators regarding school counselor training, professional development, and implementing counseling services in culturally diverse school settings.

CHAPTER V

Summary Discussion, and Conclusions

In this phenomenological study, I explored the experiences and perceptions of professional school counselors regarding how they provide services in culturally diverse school settings. Following is a summary of the study, a discussion of the findings, implications, recommendations for future research, and conclusions. A detailed discussion of the findings regarding each theme that emerged from the current literature is included to foster a deep understanding of school counselors' perceived cultural competence when delivering services in culturally diverse school settings.

Summary of the Study

In the review of literature, several researchers (Better-Bubon et al., 2016; Dameron et al., 2019; Dollarhide et al., 2018; Roberts et al., 2019; Matthews et al., 2018; Watkinson et al., 2019) have conducted qualitative studies investigating the importance of school counselors' cultural competence when working in culturally diverse school settings. Cultural competence allows school counselors to possess awareness and knowledge of their own culture and that of students, parents, and staff; this, in turn, allows them to be skilled at tailoring counseling interventions that impact the quality of services provided in culturally diverse school settings. Additionally, researchers have stated that school counselors who have developed their cultural competence are more prepared to appropriately identify culturally diverse students' academic, cultural, and socio-emotional needs. Finally, school counselors who valued and developed meaningful relationships with students, parents, and staff from various cultures were more likely to develop their cultural competence. However, there are few studies regarding school

counselors' perception of their cultural competence when providing services in culturally diverse school settings.

Based on the gap in the literature, the primary research question for my study was: what are school counselors' perceptions of their cultural competence when providing services in culturally diverse school settings? To answer this question, I interviewed ten school counselors using a semi-structured interview protocol to gather information about school counselors' perceived cultural competence when working in culturally diverse school settings. I utilized a phenomenological research design that Moustakas (1994) modified from the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method to identify themes detailed in Chapter IV. Data were obtained from participants' responses to the demographic questionnaires (Appendix B) and face-to-face interviews. Three primary themes emerged from the data analysis process and were discussed in detail. Each primary theme captured portions of the phenomenon of the ten participants' interviews, therefore representing significant underlying meanings of the participants' experiences and were presented to provide information and resources to individuals affiliated with public education, specifically school counselors, as well counselor educators, directors of guidance, and school administrators.

My literature review served as the foundation of this phenomenological study and outlined critical concepts in the school counselors' experiences of their perceived cultural competence when working in culturally diverse school settings. Specifically, the review of relevant literature included the following factors: (a) comprehensive school counseling models, (b) responsive services, (c) the role of school counselors, and (d) cultural competence. Three primary themes emerged from the current study, which included (a)

multicultural preparation, (b) multicultural practice, and (c) multicultural experience. The themes depicted in the literature review and the themes from the present study bear some similarities and differences.

The theoretical framework for my study was Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy theory. Bandura (1995) stated in his book, *Self-Efficacy in Changing Societies*, that self-efficacy is the belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainment levels. Self-efficacy influences the choices individuals make and the course of action they pursue. Self-efficacy involves an individual's belief that they can perform certain tasks to accomplish specific goals. Individuals with high self-efficacy set higher goals, showed higher motivation levels, and persevered in achieving those goals (Ernst, Bardhoshi, & Lanthier, 2017).

Additionally, individuals with strong self-efficacy set challenging goals for themselves; they face difficulties head-on and recover quickly when faced with failure. Self-efficacy has been a substantial variable in attaining success in schools, work, and home (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008). As the theoretical framework for my study, self-efficacy was used to predict school counselors' abilities to perform certain tasks and understand school counselors' motivation and capabilities to perform tasks relevant to culturally diverse school settings (Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008). In the following section, I present how each theme from this study is either connected or disconnected from the concepts covered in my literature review.

Discussion of the Findings

Three themes and eight sub-themes emerged that captured the essence of the ten participants' perception of their cultural competence when providing services in culturally diverse school settings. This section will include a discussion of each theme related to the current body of literature.

Multicultural Preparation

The first theme of multicultural preparation captured the participants' awareness, knowledge, and skills in their initial and ongoing development as school counselors. This theme was present in all ten participants' interviews. The theme aligns with the concept of school counselor training and development discussed in my literature review. The first sub-theme, graduate school, aligns with the relevant literature, suggesting that experiences help school counseling students explore the socio-cultural, demographic, and lifestyle diversity relevant to their future school counseling experience (Mayorga et al., 2012-2013). School counselors who are knowledgeable about and aware of significant cultural issues may be adept at counseling students from diverse backgrounds (Constantine, 2002). Tresee shared her graduate school experience, "we had some actual presentations ... so that we could be more aware of some things that we were doing in our culture that might be offensive to other cultures." School counselors that participated in practical, carefully planned, feedback-rich activities throughout their training reported feeling better prepared (Barna, 2020). As a result, school counselor graduate programs are responsible for training school counselors-in-training to work with students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Hall et al., 2014).

My review of the literature suggested that counselor education programs must consider in-depth training, supervised and multicultural collaborative experiences in school counselor training (Barna, 2020; Constantine, 2002; Moore-Thomas & Day Vines, 2010; Rodriguez et al., 2018; Sperry, 2012). In addition, Hall et al. (2014) suggested counselor preparation programs are responsible for training school counselors-in-training how to work with students from all backgrounds, including a focus on gaining multicultural awareness and knowledge connected to working with students from diverse backgrounds. Kim and Lyons (2003) reported that experiential activities (guest speakers, projects, films) for school counselor-in-training classrooms were more valuable than lectures and suggested that incorporating experiential activities challenged students to examine their values and restructure their beliefs. All ten participants shared stories that echoed the current body of research. For example, Jane shared, “we had to study what it was like to be bilingual and ... [the] need ... in our community.” Joy expressed, “I actually had a whole semester and the regular degree.” Fatima added that “it was just one class, and I believe it was online.” Mary also discussed that she was in a cohort system where different students were grouped together in the different classes in the program. She said, “I think these groups were intentionally grouped in a certain way based on the applicants. The sub-theme, graduate school, aligns with my review of the literature supporting the importance of school counselor-in-training multicultural training and development, contributing to understanding, appreciation, and respect for the cultural differences and similarities within culturally diverse school settings (Sue & Sue, 2013).

The theme of multicultural preparation had a second sub-theme, school district training, and support. This sub-theme aligns with my literature review that multicultural

training significantly contributed to school counselors' overall multicultural counseling competency. The importance of professional development beyond the graduate school experience was discussed in my literature review. Eight of the ten participants reported that they had attended a school district professional development to keep well-informed of current research or trends in multicultural counseling. Four of the participants reported they work in a culturally diverse school district, and they attended professional development that focused on multiculturalism. School counselor professional development has evolved from vocational guidance to training on comprehensive programming, leadership skills, and advocacy to create a more cohesive school counseling program (Merlin et al., 2017). Sara remarked that she worked in a very multicultural district and that there is a lot of on-the-job training. "Given the world's climate and what's happening, there seems to be a greater emphasis on training and development." Sara shared that since graduating, she has taken several multicultural professional development courses in her district that focused on increased multicultural awareness. Research published on professional training for school counselors that has focused on instructional techniques, working in urban areas, suicide assessment, and evidence-based practices has advanced school counselors' ability to work with school leaders to support shifts in cultural and instructional environments (Hatch, 2014; Merlin et al., 2017). Toporek & Pope-Davis (2005) suggested that having various training (e.g., multicultural workshop) opportunities were related to greater sensitivity to diversity in racial/ethnic issues.

The third sub-theme identified was self-motivation. School counselors keep current and achieve continuous professional growth in several ways, such as attending

conferences, enrolling in distance learning, reading professional journals, books, and reports, and listening to audio lectures (Parikh Foxx et al., 2017). However, comparatively little research has been conducted on the ongoing professional development needs of practicing school counselors and the importance of ongoing professional development of school counselors (Beck & Wikoff, 2020). This is a new finding of my study revealing that school counselors often rely on their own research to provide appropriate services to culturally diverse students. Four of the ten participants shared how they maintain their cultural competence through their own research in their interviews. Lisa and Tresee shared how they felt there was not a lot of multicultural training available, and they had to take it upon themselves to do their research. Lisa summed up her feelings by saying, “I have to be intentional about what I decide that I want to learn.” Tresee further added, “I think you have to take it upon yourself to do more research ... about the language, the culture, you know, because you want to be respectful.” Sara shared, “I really do make efforts to research the things that I don't know about and talk to different types of people. Through their self-motivation, my study participants have continued to work on their understanding, awareness, and development of their cultural competence.

Multicultural Practice

The second theme, the multicultural practice, was present in all ten participants' interviews. Nine of the ten participants reported working on a culturally diverse campus with 20-30 different cultures. Many cultures represented at their school affected each school counselor's multicultural practice. This aligns with my literature review, which suggested that school counselors have played a powerful role in creating a culturally

sensitive school setting for students (Nelson et al., 2008). Grothaus (2012) stated, “school counselors have tremendous challenges and also terrific opportunities presented to them by increasing diversity in ... [their] school and communities” (p 37). For example, school counselors promote their multicultural practice through guidance programs, small groups, parent training (Lee, 2001), social/emotional development (Better-Bubon et al., 2016), and some studies suggest school counselors generate a culture of care, challenge social inequity, advocate for minority and impoverished students, and develop competencies to operate in diverse communities (Hughey, 2011; Moore-Thomas & Day Vines, 2010; Nelson et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2018).

The first sub-theme, relationships with students, parents, and the staff, was prevalent throughout all ten participants’ interviews. In my review of the relevant literature, little information was available on this sub-theme concerning how building relationships is a key component in delivering services in culturally diverse school settings. I bridged this sub-theme with the relevant literature on school counselors as instructional leaders and first responders. The ASCA standards encouraged school counselors to collaborate with all relevant stakeholders, including parents and teachers, when they needed student assistance (Dixon et al., 2010). In the current study, school counselors felt that building relationships was a strength and encouraged students, parents, and teachers to use them to address issues they’re not sure how to approach. Fatima commented, “In building relationships, making [parents] feel welcome by showing that the communication is in their language helps a lot.” Annie shared, “seeing... what their needs are and what information they need about ... trade school, college, training to complete their goals.” Rosie shared, “for a large part of our staff, ... is

as culturally diverse as the students who go [to my school]. I'm always going to be working with somebody who may very well be from a different cultural background.”

School counselors initiate student support by developing relationships with the various professionals (Hamlett et al., 2011; Barrow & Mamlin, 2016) to help secure services for students and their parents that otherwise might not be used at all (Awe & Portman, 2009). Dixon et al., 2010 stated that as instructional leaders and first responders, school counselors play a crucial role in closing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students, regardless of ethnicity, race, or socioeconomic status. Rodriguez et al., 2018 stressed that school counselors in the first responder role are tasked with working with families who seek out a school counselor when a crisis occurs within their family outside of the school environment. Betters-Bubon et al. (2016) stated that school counselors who valued diversity in both theory and practice developed relationships with students from various cultures and intervened within the educational system on their behalf. The participants' ideal of building relationships with all stakeholders involved the development of a counseling advisory committee, more parent workshops, and meeting with classroom teachers and administrators on how best to implement services in their schools.

The second sub-theme, learning from each other, was present in four of the ten interviews. This sub-theme is different from my review of the relevant literature concerning how school counselors learn from students, parents, and staff as a strength to school counselors when delivering counseling services in culturally diverse school settings. I bridged this sub-theme with the relevant literature on school counselors' role definitions. The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2019) states that school counselors have

an important role in advocating for all students by collaborating with families, teachers, and administrators regarding student academic, social/emotional, and career development (Bialka et al., 2020). The participants in my study expressed that by learning from relevant stakeholders, they could build student, parent, and staff connections. Sara shared how “everybody benefits from learning from each other. And when we do that with each other, it helps ... [with] students that we serve.” Joy, who works in a very diverse school, explained, “so we have ... many different cultures. I think just ... continuing to learn from them so that you could better assist them and know how to support them.”

Mary shared,

We had ... 20 students that came from Syria, and our teachers who were receiving these kids were just ... not understanding how we were going to teach these kids because they spoke very little English and just everything about what they did and said was just not really known to us. It was a lot of learning for all of us.

These three counselors shared that being open to learning from students, parents, and staff has increased their cultural competence when working with the different cultures represented at their schools. Hamlet et al. (2011) stated that school counselors initiate student support by learning from the various parents and professionals in the student’s life to provide the appropriate counseling services to students. School counselors who use an approach of learning from others and can explain to teachers and administrators how students’ cultural, social, and economic background may affect their academic achievement, behavior, and overall performance in school (ASCA, 2019) and develop innovative practices that include building relationships with multiple stakeholders (Militello et al., 2011).

The third sub-theme identified, school counseling services, was present in eight out of ten participant interviews. These participants had similar experiences regarding providing services to culturally diverse students. This sub-theme aligns with my review of relevant literature; school counseling services are part of the comprehensive school counseling program and are performed by school counselors to meet students' needs (Erford, 2019). The participants stressed the importance of being familiar with the students and their culture to meet the needs of students appropriately. Direct student services are in-person interactions between school counselors and students (ASCA, 2019). Furthermore, school counseling services provide equal access to students from various backgrounds for academic, career, and social-emotional goal development (Lee, 2001). The ASCA model has recommended that school counselors spend 80% of their time in direct or indirect student services to achieve the most efficient delivery of the school counseling program (ASCA, 2019). School counselors who infused culturally responsive practices into all aspects of the comprehensive school counseling program ensured that all students received services that celebrated their diverse identities (Foxy et al., 2020).

Ryan shared, "one of the things I try to do is make sure that I am familiar with students before working with them in any responsive way." While Annie reflected, "I look for resources that would be helpful and who they might respond best to." These findings agree with the literature that supports ASCA's position statement that advocates for school counselors to ensure students from culturally diverse backgrounds have access to services and opportunities which promote the student's maximum development (Constantine, 2002; Holcomb-McCoy, 2001; Mayorga et al., 2012-2013).

Erford (2019) reported that school counseling services have gone from being narrow in scope and addressing the isolated problems of a few students to addressing the more complex needs, especially those who are culturally diverse. Ziomek-Daigle et al. (2016) reported that the increased national emphasis on comprehensive school counseling programs over the last decade has positively affected school counselors' interactions with all students. The participants' experiences in this study agree with the literature review; Lisa shared, "I've learned about the different cultures is how to engage with the students ... and not put any biases on how to help them." Mary expressed her experiences by sharing, "We learn about what's happening around our neighborhood and our community, the different student populations we serve. Jane shared, "I'm always looking at the whole person, so the more I know about them, the better I can help them."

The fourth sub-theme identified, integrating students' culture into the school counseling program, was present in four out of ten participants' interviews. This connects with my literature review, which suggested that school counselors serve a powerful role in creating culturally diverse school environments through comprehensive school counseling programs (Nelson et al., 2008). Grothaus (2012) stated, "school counselors have tremendous challenges and also terrific opportunities presented to them by increasing diversity in ... [their] school and communities" (p37). For example, school counselors promote the integration of student culture through guidance programs, small groups, parent training (Lee, 2001), social/emotional development (Betters-Bubon et al., 2016), and some studies have suggested school counselors generate a culture of care, challenge social inequity, advocate for minority and impoverished students, and develop

competencies to operate in diverse communities (Hughey, 2011; Moore-Thomas & Day Vines, 2010; Nelson et al., 2008; Smith et al., 2018).

Researchers have suggested that school counselors respond appropriately to ethnically diverse student populations and their needs (Constantine, 2002; Holcomb-McCoy, 2001; Mayorga et al., 2012-2013). Hughey (2011) discussed that school counselors address specific needs and help create a school climate where diversity is celebrated. Packer-Williams et al. (2010) stated that for school counselors to understand diversity, they must understand the different ways their students function; as individuals, with their peers, within their environment, with their families, and ultimately in the broadest sense. This aligns with the participants in the present study who integrate what they know about students' culture into their counseling program. Fatima shared, "it was very interesting to see how ... different Asian cultures were portrayed and how our staff... really poured in their culture into our school during that month." Mary shared, "I'm taking all that information into my counseling program and ... integrating it." Mary described how she researches different holidays in other countries and will ask those students to dress up or bring traditional clothing. She expressed how important it is to her counseling program to learn about those cultures and customs. Sara shared, "I can think of ... [guidance] lessons where students learn about different cultures, that ... ties in with the multicultural unit."

Multicultural Experience

The third theme, the multicultural experience, was present in all ten participant interviews. Research has been published on school counselors' ability to serve the specific needs of ethnically diverse students; however, there is little research that has

examined the cultural experiences of school counselors and the importance of how one's own culture may affect their interactions with students, parents, and staff (Constantine, 2002; Holcomb-McCoy et al., 2008; Nelson et al., 2008).

Holcomb-McCoy (2004) stated that school counselors who assessed and developed their cultural competence were more prepared to appropriately meet the needs of students in culturally diverse school settings. However, there is still little known about school counselors' multicultural experiences and interactions with students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Guzman et al., 2013). Each participant in the study shared how their personal and professional experiences and exposure to different cultures contributed to their cultural competence. Additionally, their experiences with students, parents, and staff contributed to their competence when working in a culturally diverse school setting. Betters-Bubon et al. (2016) stated that school counselors who valued various cultures were more likely to exhibit high cultural competence levels. For example, Ryan stated through his experiences that his competence is high because he takes it upon himself to be familiar with the populations that he works with.

Ryan shared,

Do I feel like I know everything about every student and every place from which they come? Absolutely not. But I think one of the most important things that [I] try to do in order to circumvent that is to let students know that the only way I am going to find out and know ... something ... [about] things that [they] have experienced in [their] culture is through them.

Two participants shared that research and years of experience contributed to their cultural competence. Sara shared that growing up in a multicultural setting contributed to

feeling competent when working with students, parents, and staff from diverse backgrounds. Sara stated, "I don't feel that it's difficult for me to relate to or reach the multicultural population. I feel like that's been my environment my whole life." Counselor educators might consider how school counselors-in-training cultural experiences have contributed to their skill development and cultural competence (Hall et al., 2014).

The sub-theme, my understanding, and my acceptance aligned with the relevant literature, which established that school counselors integrate an understanding of sociocultural factors inherent to engaging in multicultural counseling (Cook et al., 2019). Lisa shared, "just listening to what [students are] saying ... seek to understand where they're coming from and try to address their needs." Mary shared, "I'm seeking to understand... I do say; I don't understand that, can you provide more information?" Additionally, Mary stated that she had asked the parents if they feel their culture is being honored, asked all stakeholders for ideas on breaking generalizations, and highlighted the great things about those cultures in her school. Jane summarized, "I think all that helps ... my awareness and my acceptance ... being able to put myself in their shoes ... to empathize with their culture." In reviewing relevant literature, the key to becoming an effective school counselor when counseling diverse students is continually assessing one's competence (Mayorga et al., 2013). The current body of research agreed with school counselors in my study who felt that listening to gain a deeper understanding, demonstrating an understanding of students, parents, and staff's culture, and being willing to admit when they do not understand something contributed to their self-understanding and self-awareness.

Implications

Implications for School Counselors. As the number of culturally diverse students in U.S. schools has increased (Smith-Adcock et al., 2006), school counselors have contributed to creating culturally sensitive school settings for students to deliver services that meet the needs of all students (Marbley et al., 2006). Dameron et al. (2019) stated that school counselors who have developed cultural competence are more prepared to appropriately identify students' academic, social-emotional, and cultural needs. Participants in my study talked about the importance of their cultural competence, their relationships with all stakeholders, and how they provide direct and indirect services to students from culturally diverse backgrounds. As data obtained from the ten participants in my study can attest, the school counseling profession can perceive several implications that should be considered when interpreting the results of this study.

First, school counselors' multicultural preparation may impact the quality of counseling services students from culturally diverse backgrounds receive. All ten participants agreed that professional training and multiculturalism conferences supported how they implemented the comprehensive school counseling program and their interactions with students from other cultures. The lack of available school counselor-specific professional development and training in multiculturalism leaves school counselors to conduct their research or attend teacher-directed training that is not geared toward the psychosocial needs of students. Participants in my study relied on generic professional development, conferences, and research to maintain their cultural competence. This study implies that school counselors ask school districts to provide multicultural training aligned with their roles and professional obligations as school

counselors when serving students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Beck & Wikoff, 2020). Mayorga et al. (2012-2013) established that school counselors who had not received adequate multicultural training might not have the skills necessary to meet the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds. School districts can plan professional development opportunities so school counselors can collaborate to understand students' needs and cultures represented in their school district. It would be appropriate for school counselors to have conversations with directors of guidance about the importance of having a variety of professional development opportunities related to integrating students' culture into their comprehensive school counseling program.

Second, my study participants indicated that building relationships with the students, parents, and the teachers on their school campus was a key component of their comprehensive school counseling program. Comprehensive school counseling programs provide the framework for school counselors; however, this only works if school counselors build meaningful relationships with all stakeholders. The school counselors in my study indicated that they felt their success came from those meaningful relationships. School counseling programs should be collaborative efforts that benefit students, parents, school personnel, and the community (Smith-Adcock et al., 2006). The ASCA National Model recommended the development of an advisory council as part of the comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, 2019). Advisory councils are formed to guide school counselors with school counseling program development and make recommendations that best serve the students and all campus stakeholders (TEA, 2018). Advisory councils can collaborate with all relevant stakeholders to reflect the community's values, concerns, and interests (Dixon et al., 2010). The representation of

the various cultures on an advisory council may contribute to highlighting the different cultures represented on a school campus.

Third, school counseling has shifted from providing reactive services to providing effective, direct services for all students rather than a few students and utilizes data to create systemic change in schools (Dixon et al., 2010). Lee (2001) stated school counseling services involved providing equal access to students from various backgrounds for academic, career, and social-emotional development. When school counselors are not informed about the diverse cultures represented in their school, school counseling services may not meet the needs of culturally diverse students. My study participants indicated that it was important to them to be familiar with their students' cultures to provide appropriate school counseling services. An implication of this study is the need for school counselors to be aware of the cultures represented on their school campus to identify the appropriate evidence-based curriculum or counseling materials when assessing cultural and social trends in the development of school counseling services. The findings and suggestions from the current study can inform school counselors about school counseling services that are appropriate for students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Finally, Chao et al. (2010) established that cultural competence had been defined as a school counselor's awareness, knowledge, and skills when working with diverse student populations and how it may affect their working relationships and attitudes toward diverse students (Harris, 2018). The participants in my study indicated that their personal and professional experiences contributed to their cultural competence when working with students, parents, and staff from culturally diverse backgrounds. An

implication of the findings is the necessity to enhance school counselors' cultural competence. School counselors can enhance their cultural competence by engaging in the following practices (a) establishing relationships with individuals from all cultural groups; (b) conceptualizing students' concerns from their perspective; and (c) providing direct or indirect services that are culturally sensitive (Baker & Gerler, 2004).

Furthermore, school counselors are encouraged to monitor their cultural competence through ongoing consultation with other school counselors. Finally, new school counselors can consider the current study's findings to reflect on their cultural competence and how their own cultural biases may interfere with their ability to work with students, parents, and staff from cultures different from their own.

Implications for School Administrators and Directors of Guidance. School administrators and directors of guidance can use the findings of school counselors' perceptions regarding their cultural competence to help train new school counselors on the importance of providing counseling services that are culturally appropriate as determined by the ASCA National Model. The results of this study can also assist school administrators and directors of guidance in being aware that professional development on multiculturalism is not a size fits. School counselors would benefit from professional development with multicultural content (Pietrantonio & Glance, 2019). School administrators and directors of guidance can use these findings to collaborate with school counselors to assess the most pressing needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds to develop effective, comprehensive school counseling programs at their schools.

Implications for Counselor Educators. Counselor educators can use the current study findings to consider ways to incorporate more direct involvement and experiences for school counselors-in-training with culturally diverse students to increase their awareness, knowledge, and skills (Barden & Greene, 2015). Counselor educators should prepare school counselors-in-training how to provide needed counseling services in areas identified as important to the educational success of culturally diverse students (Smith-Adcock et al., 2006).

Recommendations

Recommendations for School Counselors. This study contributed to the gap in the literature concerning the perception of school counselors' cultural competence when delivering services in culturally diverse schools. Understanding school counselors' perception of their cultural competence helps implement direct and indirect counseling services provided to students from culturally diverse backgrounds. The following recommendations can inform best practices concerning school counselors' cultural competence and delivery of counseling services.

School counselors would benefit from attending professional development and conferences that target culturally diverse students' specific counseling needs. This professional development would maintain school counselors' knowledge, awareness, and skills when working with students, parents, and staff from diverse cultural backgrounds. The results of this study support that school counselors who have developed their cultural competence, particularly those working in culturally diverse schools, can apply their multicultural skills when collaborating with stakeholders to create a school climate that embraces cultural diversity (ASCA, 2015). The findings also appear to support the

effectiveness of multicultural training in contributing to school counselors working with diverse cultural populations (Constantine, 2001).

The implementation of advisory councils to foster the development of relationships with students, parents, and staff. School counselors who collaborate with families and community agencies through advisory councils can support and advance student and family wellness.

Recommendations for School Administrators and Directors of Guidance.

School administrators and directors of guidance would benefit from collaborating and coordinating with school counselors in their school district to address the unique needs of culturally diverse students in their school district to support their well-being and close the achievement gap. School administrators and directors of guidance working with school counselors are encouraged to intentionally identify through the comprehensive school counseling program the school counseling services appropriate for the cultures represented in their school district.

Recommendations for Counselor Educators. Counselor educators can consider that school counselors-in-training's cultural background contributes to their skills and perceived cultural competence. Counselor educators can include presenters, projects, and immersion experiences of different cultures in practicum and internship classes to build school counselors-in-trainings knowledge, awareness, and skills when working with students in culturally diverse school settings.

Recommendations for Future Research. The current study's findings highlight the significance of school counselors' cultural competence and their contributions to promoting equity and diversity on school campuses. Although similar studies have

investigated school counselors' cultural competence, the literature does not reflect the perceptions of cultural competence when delivering services in culturally diverse schools. Qualitative research in this area is scarce and crucial, given that U.S. schools are becoming more culturally diverse. Qualitative research studies are needed to explore further how school counselors perceive their cultural competence and how this impacts the delivery of counseling services to students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Based on the findings, it is recommended that more research be conducted on how the relationship between school counselors' cultural background and years of experience impact how school counselors perceive their cultural competence when delivering services in culturally diverse schools. Second, a replication of this study using qualitative phenomenological methodology examining school counselors who have less than five years' experience versus school counselors who have more than five years' experience would contribute to the literature on how new school counselors perceive their cultural competence when delivering direct and indirect counseling services in culturally diverse schools. Finally, research on advisory councils and how they contribute to building relationships with all stakeholders would fill a gap in the literature regarding how school counselors build and maintain relationships with students, parents, and staff from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Conclusion

This study suggests that the cultural competence of school counselors impacts their relationships with students, parents, and staff and the implementation of direct counseling services. Participants reflected that it is important for them to be familiar with their students and their culture to implement counseling services effectively.

Additionally, participants reflected on how their cultural backgrounds and experience contributed to their cultural competence. The results of this study offer information regarding how school counselors' cultural competence is influenced by their preparation, experiences, and backgrounds. The participants' shared experiences will offer insight related to the experiences and events that were instrumental in helping these school counselors develop as school counselors. By giving voice to the experiences of school counselors, school administrators, directors of guidance, and counselor educators will gain insight into school counselors' cultural competence when providing counseling services in culturally diverse schools.

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APPENDIX A

Consent Form

Sam Houston State University Consent for Participation in Research

Why am I being asked?

You are being asked to participate in a research study about school counselors' perceptions of cultural competence when delivering responsive services by the researcher (Teri Hensley Marrow). She is conducting this research under the direction of Dr. Chi-Sing Li. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are a School Counselor in Texas, employed in a Texas public school, and may be eligible to participate. The researcher asks that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the research.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Sam Houston State University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Why is this research being done?

This research is being conducted to understand school counselors' perceptions of cultural competence when delivering responsive services. You will be asked to fill out a demographic survey and participate in a Zoom interview, which will take approximately 45 minutes to 1 hour. The interview will be about school counselors' perceptions of cultural competence when delivering responsive services. All of your personal information will remain confidential, and you will not be identified in the research. You will be given a pseudonym and your identification code to protect your identity in all correspondence. All files will be saved on an encrypted password-protected flash drive to which only the researcher will have access. The researcher will send an encrypted email of the interview transcription to you after the interview. You will have the opportunity to make clarifications or changes to the transcription that you deem necessary. Transcription changes will be incorporated into the analysis.

What is the purpose of this research?

This research aims to explore school counselors' perception of cultural competence when delivering responsive services.

What procedures are involved?

If you agree to be in this research, the researcher asks you to do the following things:

- 1) Informed Consent – given verbally before the interview begins.
- 2) Complete the demographic questionnaire.

- 3) Participate in an audio-recorded 45-minute to 1-hour interview with the researcher.
- 4) Verify transcripts and give any corrections/clarification to the researcher.

Approximately 12-15 participants may be involved in this research at Sam Houston State University.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?

Minimal risk or discomfort associated with this research study.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?

There are no benefits to participating in the research. Your participation is your contribution.

What other options are there?

You may choose not to participate in the study.

Will I be told about the new information that may affect my decision to participate?

During the study, you will be informed of any significant, new findings (either good or bad), such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participation in the research or new alternatives to participation, which might cause you to change your mind about continuing in the study. If new information is provided to you, your consent to continue participating in this study will be re-obtained.

What about privacy and confidentiality?

The only people who will know that you are a research participant are members of the research team. No information about you or provided by you during the research will be disclosed to others without your written permission, except:

- If necessary to protect your rights or welfare (for example, if you are injured or need emergency care or when the SHSU Protection of Human Subjects monitors the research or consent process); or
- If required by law.

The audio recordings themselves will be de-identified when they are created, and the researcher will use a pseudonym to identify each digital audio recording rather than the participants' names. The transcripts of the audio recordings will also be de-identified when they are created; the participants' names will be de-identified by renaming each with a pseudonym. Two digital recorders will be used for audio recordings. The files will be transferred to an encrypted, password-protected flash drive. The files on both recording devices will be erased after being transferred.

The digital audio recordings will be uploaded to an encrypted password-protected flash drive that only the researcher will have access to, then be placed in a locked cabinet inside the researcher's office. Any information obtained in connection with this study that

can be identified with the participant will remain confidential and be disclosed only with the participant's permission or as required by law.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There is no cost to you for participating in the research. Your participation is your contribution.

Will I be reimbursed for my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?

You will not be reimbursed for any of your expenses during your participation in this research, nor will you be paid for participating in this research study.

Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?

You may choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and remain in the study. The researcher may withdraw you from this research if circumstances warrant doing so.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The researcher conducting this study is Teri Hensley Marrow. She is working with Dr. Chi-Sing Li, a professor in the Counselor Education Department at Sam Houston State University. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact the researchers.

Teri Hensley Marrow's Contact Information

Phone: 281-686-6985

Email: thm013@shsu.edu

Dr. Chi-Sing Li's Contact Information

Phone: 936-294-1935

Email: dcl001@shsu.edu

What are my rights as a research subject?

If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Office of Research and Special Programs- Sharla Miles at 936-294-4875 or email ORSP at sharlamiles@shsu.edu.

You may choose not to participate or stop your participation in this research at any time. Your decision on whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Sam Houston State University.

If you are a student, this will not affect your class standing or grades at SHSU. The researcher may also end your participation in the research. If this happens, your class standing or grades will not be affected.

If you are a staff person at SHSU, your participation in this research is in no way a part of your university duties, and your refusal to participate will not in any way affect your employment with the university or the benefits, privileges, or opportunities associated with your employment at SHSU.

You will not be offered, nor will you receive, any special consideration if you participate in this research.

Agreement to Participate

I have read the above information. I have been allowed to ask questions, and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research.

Consent: I have read and understood the above information, and I willingly consent to participate in this study. I understand that if I should have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I can contact Teri Hensley Marrow at 281-686-6985 or by email at thm@shsu.edu. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant

Date

Printed name of participant

Signature of person obtaining consent

Date

APPENDIX B**Demographic Questionnaire****Participant Pseudonym** _____ **Date:** _____

1. Age: _____
2. Gender: _____
3. Which of this best describes your race?
 - a. American Indian or Native American
 - b. Asian American or Pacific Islander
 - c. Black African American
 - d. White or Caucasian
 - e. Multiple Heritage
 - f. Other (Specify) _____
4. Are you of Hispanic or Latino descent?
 Yes or No
5. List type of licensure or certification(s): _____

6. Number of years as an educator?
 0-5
 5-10
 10-15
 15 or more
7. Number of years as a school counselor?
 0-5
 5-10
 10-15
 15 or more
8. Do you work at a Title 1 school? Yes or No
9. What school setting are you in? elementary intermediate middle school ,
high school
10. Did you attend a CACREP accredited program for your degree? Yes or No

APPENDIX C

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. Describe any multicultural training or preparation you had during your graduate program.
2. What multicultural training or preparation have you had beyond your graduate program?
3. Describe how you incorporate your multicultural training or preparation when implementing responsive services
4. Describe any relationships you may have with students or parents who are culturally different from yourself.
5. Describe how you build relationships with staff (teachers and administrators) who are culturally different from yourself.
6. Describe your thoughts and feelings regarding your competence when providing services for culturally diverse students.
7. What additional thoughts or comments would you like to share related to implementing responsive services or how you would build relationships with students, parents, and staff who are culturally different from you?

APPENDIX D**IRB Approval Letter**

Date: Jun 29, 2021 10:12:10 AM CDT

TO: Teri Marrow Chi-Sing Li

FROM: SHSU IRB

PROJECT TITLE: School Counselors Perceptions of Their Cultural Competence when Delivering Responsive Services

PROTOCOL #: IRB-2021-126

SUBMISSION TYPE: Initial

ACTION: Approved DECISION DATE: June 29, 2021

ADMINISTRATIVE CHECK-IN DATE: June 29, 2022

EXPEDITED REVIEW CATEGORY: 6. Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes. 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK: To access the survey, click [here](#). It only takes 10 minutes of your time and is voluntary. The results will be used internally to make improvements to the IRB application and/or process. Thank you for your time.

Greetings,

The above-referenced submission has been reviewed by the IRB and it has been Approved. This study received expedited review, and the IRB determined that a renewal submission is needed, but only in the form of an administrative check-in submission. You will receive an email notification on the anniversary of this study approval, which will be on June 29, 2022. This study approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a

project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Since Cayuse IRB does not currently possess the ability to provide a "stamp of approval" on any recruitment or consent documentation, it is the strong recommendation of this office to please include the following approval language in the footer of those recruitment and consent documents: IRB-2021-126/June 29, 2021/June 29, 2022.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Modifications: Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please submit a Modification Submission through Cayuse IRB for this procedure.

Incidents: All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. Please submit an Incident Submission through Cayuse IRB for this procedure. All Department of Health and Human Services and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

Study Administrative Check-In: Based on the risks, this project does require a renewal in the form of an Administrative Check-In procedure. This means you are required to administratively check in with the IRB on an annual basis. June 29, 2022 is the anniversary of the review of your protocol. **To get started with your next Administrative Check-In procedure, you will submit a Renewal Submission through Cayuse IRB. A reminder email will be sent to you on the anniversary of your most**

recent approval of *School Counselors Perceptions of Their Cultural Competence when Delivering Responsive Services*.

Please note that all research records should be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project. If you have any questions, please contact the Sharla Miles at 936-294-4875 or irb@shsu.edu. Please include your protocol number in all correspondence with this committee.

Sincerely,

Chase Young, Ph.D.

Chair, IRB

Hannah R. Gerber, Ph.D.

Co-Chair, IRB

VITA

Teri Hensley Marrow

EDUCATION

PhD in Counselor Education (In Process), Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX,
(CACREP accredited program) Expected Graduation August 2022

MS in Counseling, University of Houston- Clear Lake, Houston, TX, May 2010

BS in Deaf Education, Stephen F. Austin State University, Nacogdoches, TX, August
1993

LICENSES AND CERTIFICATIONS:

Licensed Professional Counselor, Supervisor, Texas State Board of Examiners of
Professional Counselors, No 71530

National Certified Counselor, National Board for Certified Counselors

Texas Teacher Certificate PK-12; School Counselor

Texas Teacher Certificate PK-12; Hearing Impaired

Texas Teacher Certificate PK-12; English as a Second Language (ESL)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Clinic Coordinator at University of St. Thomas, Houston Counseling Training Clinic,
November 2021 - present

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas
2021-2022

Online Therapist, Talkspace, December 2020-present

School Counselor, Alief Independent School District, Houston, TX,
August 2010 – 2021 (retired)

Classroom Teacher, Alief Independent School District, Houston, TX,
August 1993 –May 2010

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Sam Houston State University

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas (2022)
Course Co-Taught: COUN 6376 Supervised Practicum in Counseling

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas (2022)
Courses Taught: COUN 3332: Therapeutic Play Skills

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas (2021)
Courses Taught: COUN 3332: Therapeutic Play Skills

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas (2020)
Courses Co-Taught: COUN 5399: Career Counseling Across the Lifespan –
Online Course

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas (2019)
Courses Co-Taught: COUN 5399: Play Therapy Basics

PROFESSIONAL PRESENTATIONS

State Conferences

Marrow, T. H. (November 2019). Is It Rude, Mean, or Bullying? Presented at the Lone Star State School Counselors Association State Conference, Arlington, TX.

Marrow, T. H. (February 2019). Is It Rude, Mean, or Bullying? Presented at the Texas School Counselors Association 14th Annual School Counselor Conference, San Antonio, TX.

Marrow, T. H. (November 2018). Is It Rude, Mean, or Bullying? Presented at the Lone Star State School Counselors Association State Conference, Arlington, TX.

Marrow, T. H. (February 2018). Is it Rude, Mean, or Bullying? Presented at the Texas School Counselor Association 13th Annual School Counselor Conference, Galveston, TX.

School District Training

Marrow, T.H. (June 2019). Career Link, Developing Career Events for your School. A 3.5-hour staff development for school counselors in Alief Independent School District, Houston, TX.

Marrow, T.H. (June 2019). Mindful Practices for Counselors. A 3.5-hour staff development for school counselors in Alief Independent School District, Houston, TX.

Marrow, T.H. (June 2019). *Is It Rude, Mean, or Bullying?* A 3.5-hour staff development presented for school counselors and classroom teachers in Alief Independent School District, Houston, TX.

Marrow, T. H. (June 2018). *Is It Rude, Mean, or Bullying?* A 3.5-hour staff development presented for school counselors and classroom teachers in Alief Independent School District, Houston, TX.

HONORS / AWARDS

TSCA CREST Award, presented by the Texas State School Counselors Association for Counselors Reinforcing Excellence for Students in Texas, February 2022.

TSCA CREST Award, presented by the Texas State School Counselors Association for Counselors Reinforcing Excellence for Students in Texas, February 2021.

TSCA CREST Award, presented by the Texas State School Counselors Association for Counselors Reinforcing Excellence for Students in Texas, February 2020.

TSCA CREST Award, presented by the Texas State School Counselors Association for Counselors Reinforcing Excellence for Students in Texas, February 2019.

MEMBERSHIP/AFFILIATIONS

Texas Counseling Association (TCA) and several divisions within TCA (2010 -present)
American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (2010 – present)
Texas Retired Teachers Association (2021)

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Cultural Competence of Professional School Counselors

The Effectiveness of Bullying Prevention Programs

The Experiences of School Counselors and Homelessness