A Survey of School Counselor Multicultural Education

Behaviors and the Obstacles that Impede Them

Clare Merlin-Knoblich
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Jason A. Chen
College of William & Mary

Abstract

In this study, researchers examined the frequency with which school counselors enact multicultural education behaviors and the obstacles preventing those behaviors. Using theoretical dimensions and approaches to multicultural education, they developed an instrument measuring school counseling multicultural education behavior. After pilot testing the instrument ($n = 114$), they distributed a refined instrument to a state school counselor database, and 594 school counselors participated in the primary data collection. Researchers used exploratory factor analysis to determine five factors comprising 72% combined variance of school counselor multicultural education behaviors. Participants enacted behaviors in two factors (Classroom Guidance with Multicultural Education Emphases and Human Relations) *occasionally* and behaviors in three factors (Professional Development with Multicultural Education Emphases, Knowledge Construction, and Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different) *rarely*. The most common obstacles preventing behaviors were *not enough time* and *not needed*. Researchers discuss implications for engaging in and promoting multicultural education in schools.

Keywords: school counseling, multicultural education, multicultural competence

A Survey of School Counselor Multicultural Education

Behaviors and the Obstacles that Impede Them

Professional school counselors aim to assist all students in their academic, social/emotional, and career development by removing barriers to their success (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012; Erford, House, & Martin, 2007; McMahon, Mason, & Paisley, 2009). Helping all students involves serving an increasingly diverse population, in which the term *diversity* can describe a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, disability levels, races, ethnicities, languages, genders, and sexual orientations (Banks, 2013; Sleeter & Grant, 2009). Students in nearly all types of minority populations comprise a greater percentage of school students, and research suggests that diversity will continue to increase (United States Department of Education [U.S. DOE], National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2012). For example, in 2011, 48.3% of the student population was made up of students of color, compared to only 20% of students in 1980 (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2013). There are also more economically disadvantaged students in schools now than in the 20th century. In 2000, 38.3% of U.S. public school students were served by free and reduced lunch programs, yet in 2010, 48.1% of students were served these programs. Lastly, the number of students with disabilities served in U.S. schools has increased in the 21st century, as well, from 8.3% in 1976, to 13.8% in 2004 (U.S. DOE, NCES, 2012).

As minority populations increase in the United States, some research suggests that discrimination has also increased. A 2012 Associated Press poll found that racial prejudice increased in a survey research study with participants compared to a similar 2008 study about racial attitudes. Among individuals surveyed in 2012, 51% expressed

explicit anti-Black attitudes, compared to 48% in 2008. A similar 2011 Associated Press survey found that 52% of Caucasians in the United States expressed anti-Hispanic sentiments (Associated Press, 2012). Research on sexual minorities also reveals common discrimination in K-12 schools. In 2011, approximately 8,500 students who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender completed the National School Climate Survey. More than 80% of participants reported previously being verbally harassed, 38.3% reported being physically harassed, and 18.3% reported being physically assaulted (Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2011).

Hate crimes serve as another example of discrimination, whether motivated by race, religion, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Recent current events appear to be associated with an increase in reported hate crimes across the United States, including in K-12 schools. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) (2016) collected information on hate crimes reported in the media, as well as those reported directly to their center website in the 10 days following the 2016 presidential election. They counted 867 hate incidents, and noted that these incidents, "almost certainly represent a small fraction of the actual number of election-related hate incidents that have occurred … [as] The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that two-thirds of hate crimes go unreported to the police" (para. 10). Of the incidents reported, K-12 schools were among the most common contexts in which they took place, representing 21% of the hate incident locations. Motivations for the hate incidents included anti-immigrant (32%), anti-Black (22%), and anti-Semitic (12%) sentiments. Qualitative data from the SPLC report suggested that the hate incident victims did not experience such discrimination prior to

the 2016 presidential election, implying an increase in discrimination behaviors (SPLC, 2016).

School counselors are obligated to help create environments in which students from all multicultural backgrounds can be successful, particularly in light of these increases in both discrimination and student diversity in schools (Nelson, Bustamanta, Wilson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2008; Owens, Bodenhorn, & Bryant, 2010). School counselors serve in powerful roles in which they can create multiculturally sensitive environments for students (Nelson et al., 2008; Tadlock-Marlo, Zyromski, Asner-Self, & Sheng, 2013). As leaders and advocates in their schools (ASCA, 2012), school counselors "have a professional, ethical, and humanistic responsibility" to build socially just atmospheres (Nelson et al., 2008, p. 209). In this study, researchers examined how school counselors can use their role to address increasing diversity and discrimination through multicultural education behaviors.

Multicultural Competence

Enacting multicultural education behaviors requires that school counselors possess a foundation of multicultural competence (Merlin, 2017). Since Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis published the first widely accepted set of multicultural counseling competencies in 1992, researchers have studied counselor multicultural competence, one's "culmination of awareness, knowledge, and skills" (Tadlock-Marlo et al., 2013, p. 236). Focus on school counselor multicultural competence has been strong, beginning with Lee's (1995) vision of a culturally responsive school counselor (Robinson & Bradley, 2005). In recent studies on school counselor multicultural competence, researchers have examined a range of characteristics associated with the construct,

including the development of instruments measuring school counselor multicultural competence (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Tadlock-Marlo et al., 2013), examinations of relationships between school counselor multicultural competence and other constructs (Bidell, 2011; Chu-Lien Chao, 2013; Fallon, 2013; Owens et al., 2010), and multicultural competence in school environments (Nelson et al., 2008).

Despite extensive research on school counselor multicultural competency, to date, no researchers have examined the multiculturally competent behaviors of professional school counselors. This type of research was called for more than a decade ago when Holcomb-McCoy (2005) wrote, "The extent to which counselors' perceived multicultural competence transfers to actual practice is unknown and is therefore a logical next step for future research" (p. 417). One reason for the absence of this research may be the theoretical differences between one's multicultural competence and one's multicultural behaviors. Although multicultural competence is defined as the skills, knowledge, and awareness needed to successfully work with diverse people (Guzmán, Calfa, Van Horn Kerne, & McCarthy, 2013; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992), this definition does not include the practical behaviors that school counselors can enact in schools to address the multicultural needs of their students. Despite that school counseling researchers have yet to outline such behaviors, scholars in a related field of study—multicultural education—appear to have done just that.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a field of study in which scholars examine how educators can reduce prejudice and create equal opportunities for all students (Banks & Banks, 2010). Although multicultural education has historically been focused on

teachers, the goals of professional school counselors (e.g., removing barriers to student success, working with all students [ASCA, 2012]) align with those of multicultural education (Merlin, 2017). Multicultural education is comprised of five dimensions (prejudice reduction, knowledge construction, content integration, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture [Banks & Banks, 2010]) and five approaches (teaching the exceptional and culturally different, human relations, single group studies, multicultural education, and multicultural social justice education [Sleeter & Grant, 2009]). Taken together, these dimensions and approaches outline multicultural education behaviors that can increase opportunities for students (Merlin, 2017).

Although the dimensions and approaches of multicultural education were studied among teachers (Banks, 2010; Sleeter & Grant, 2009), they represent relevant meaningful behaviors for school counselors as well (Merlin, 2017). For example, the first dimension of multicultural education, Content integration, can be addressed by school counselors any time classroom guidance lessons are conducted. School counselors can include information about a variety of ethnic groups in these lessons. Knowledge construction can also be integrated into school counseling through classroom guidance lessons. Counselors can facilitate discussions with students encouraging them to explore where their content knowledge in schools comes from (e.g., textbooks, teachers). School counselors can address equity pedagogy in small group counseling by using specific techniques that research has shown to be effective with students in marginalized groups. School counselors can also lead professional development sessions for teachers about such techniques. Prejudice reduction can be addressed by school counselors by creating classroom guidance or small group curricula that guide

students through activities in which they consider their own experiences with prejudice, then gradually consider those same experiences for other classmates. Lastly, school counselors can use their role as advocates and leaders to address empowering school culture. They can also attend to this dimension by working with diverse students in individual counseling and empowering them to overcome obstacles (Banks, 2010; Merlin, 2017).

The approaches to multicultural education are also relevant to school counseling. A school counselor using the teaching the exceptional and culturally different approach, for example, would work to assimilate students from minority cultures into the larger school culture. The human relations approach could involve school counselors developing interventions to promote unity among students. A school counselor taking the single group studies approach could create a school counseling core curriculum with in-depth lessons on minority cultures, such as women, African Americans, or sexual minorities. The multicultural education approach could involve delivering classroom guidance lessons on diversity and equity. Finally, a school counselor taking the multicultural social justice education approach could deliver professional development workshops on creating an equitable environment for students (Sleeter & Grant, 2009).

Literature About School Counselors and Multicultural Education

Although no prior researchers have empirically examined school counselor multicultural education behaviors, some literature highlights school counselor efforts to improve intergroup relations among students, akin to the prejudice reduction dimension of multicultural education. For example, *Fairness for All Individuals through Respect* (FAIR) is an experiential learning curriculum with five lessons for school counselors to

conduct with students to spur them to critically think about prejudice related to race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Merlin, 2017; Zimmerman et al., 2005). Similarly, *Allies Against Hate* is a program in which school counselors coordinate counselors-in-training to lead psychoeducational counseling groups on diversity with high school students (Nikels, Mims, & Mims, 2007). Although the FAIR curriculum includes no evaluative component, results from informal evaluations of Allies Against Hate program indicated that participants had higher multicultural awareness after the program than they did before the program (Nikels et al., 2007).

Beyond these initiatives, several scholars have called for school counselors to use other tools to address multicultural education. Kim, Greif Green, and Klein (2006) recommended that school counselors use bibliotherapy to improve students' racial attitudes. Roaten and Schmidt (2009) argued that experiential activities can serve as powerful tools to stimulate adolescent multicultural awareness. These suggestions are realistic behaviors that school counselors might employ to implement multicultural education in schools, yet no empirical research has been conducted on them, representing a gap in research (Merlin, 2017).

In this study, researchers sought to address that gap. Given the diversity of K-12 students, yet the lack of research on school counselor multicultural education behaviors, the purpose of this study was to examine the frequency of perceived multicultural education behaviors of school counselors. Considering the researched discrepancies between school counselors' actual and preferred behaviors (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008), the researchers also examined obstacles impeding school counselors' perceived multicultural education behaviors. To that end, the guiding research questions in this

study were: 1) to what degree are school counselors currently enacting multicultural education in schools? and 2) which obstacles, if any, prevent school counselors from enacting multicultural education behaviors?

Method

Instrument Design

The researchers employed instrument development and survey research methods in this study. To answer Research Question 1 and measure school counselor perceived multicultural education behaviors, they drafted a 68-item instrument in which each item contained school counseling behaviors based on the approaches to and dimensions of multicultural education. Items were paired with a four-point Likert-type scale (never, rarely, occasionally, and frequently), and instructions stated that participants should mark the frequency with which they engaged in each behavior during the past three years to obtain a broad sample of their behaviors.

To answer Research Question 2 regarding obstacles that prevent school counselor multicultural education behaviors, the researchers added an additional component to the instrument. When responding to items, if participants indicated that they did not or rarely engaged in an item listed, they were prompted to complete an additional question, which asked, "which reason best explains why you have not engaged in this behavior?" Answer choices were based on research regarding why school counselors do not conduct their preferred behaviors in schools. Choices were *not enough time*, *lack of training* (Burkard, Gillen, Martinez, & Skytte, 2012)*, administration* (Cisler & Bruce, 2013; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008), and *school culture* (Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). *Not part of my job, not needed, other topics are*

more important, and *other* were also added, given that school counselors have varying levels of multicultural competence (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005).

Instrument Development

Two multicultural education experts reviewed the draft instrument and provided feedback on the validity of the behaviors. These experts have published prolifically on multicultural education and were familiar with the multicultural education dimensions and approaches. Their suggested revisions (e.g., clarifying wording, including gender constructs) were incorporated into the instrument, which was then pre-pilot tested with three practicing school counselors. The researchers used their feedback to make minor instrument revisions (e.g., clarifying additional items, improving format).

Pilot Test

Researchers distributed the instrument to current or former professional school counselors for pilot testing. This group included 141 acquaintances, approximately 150 individuals to whom acquaintances voluntarily forwarded the research request, and 2,941 members of the counselor education listserv, CESNET. Of these 3,232 potential participants, 114 actual participants submitted completed data, which the researchers analyzed by examining item reliability using Cronbach's coefficient alpha. The researchers examined the Cronbach's alpha scale if item deleted statistics and removed items from the instrument if their absence increased scale reliability without reducing variance. They also deleted items if they had a negative reliability coefficient, as such correlations can considerably change the alpha coefficient and lead to inaccurate interpretations of the coefficient (Pett, Lackey, & Sullivan, 2003).

Primary Data Collection

Next, the researchers emailed the revised instrument to a sample of 3,807 school counselors in the *eastern state school counselor database*, a list created by gathering publicly available names and email addresses for school counselors in a large state in the Eastern United States. Five hundred and ninety-four participants submitted usable data, which was analyzed in three ways.

Data Analysis

First, the researchers conducted an exploratory factor analysis with a promax rotation to determine the underlying factor structure of school counselor multicultural education behaviors. They removed items with communalities less than 0.6 in order to improve the resulting factor solution. Next, they conducted a second principal component analysis with a promax rotation and noted that it produced an interpretable factor structure. They removed all items that did not load on the interpretable factor structure. Then the researchers conducted a principal component analysis with a promax rotation again and determined that the resulting factor solution that emerged was the most interpretable factor solution and represented the final instrument items. See the Appendix for a list of factors, corresponding items, factor loadings, and variance.

Second, to assess the degree to which participants enact multicultural education behaviors, the researchers examined the corresponding items for each factor. They calculated the means for participants' behavior frequencies for all items corresponding to each factor. Third, they examined the obstacles that participants indicated impeded them from enacting multicultural education behaviors. They then counted the obstacles

across all follow-up questions and calculated the percentages each obstacle represented among the total number of obstacles.

Results

Five hundred and ninety-four participants participated in the primary data collection. Table 1 contains their demographic characteristics. Participants were predominantly female, middle-class, and worked in suburban schools.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Demographic	Participant Breakdown				
Gender	Female	88%	Male	22%		
Class	Lower class	4%	Middle class	95%	Upper class	1%
Sexual orientation	Straight	97%	Gay/lesbian	2%	Bisexual/other	2%
Highest degree	Bachelor's	1%	Master's	91%	Doctorate/Spc.	8%
Attended CACREP program	Yes	66%	No	19%	Do not know	15%
Had multicultural course	Yes	80%	No	20%		
School location	Suburban	48%	Rural	33%	Urban	19%
School level	Elementary	41%	Middle	24%	High	28%
School free/reduced lunch	Average	42%	Std. dev.	28		
School students of color	Average	38%	Std. dev.	28		
Age	Average	45 yrs.	Std. dev.	11 yrs.		
Years of experience	Average	3 yrs.	Std. dev.	8 yrs.		

Five interpretable factors emerged defining school counselor multicultural education behaviors: Classroom Guidance with Multicultural Education Emphases (Factor 1), Professional Development with Multicultural Education Emphases (Factor 2), Knowledge Construction (Factor 3), Human Relations (Factor 4), and Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different (Factor 5). Factors 3, 4, and 5 corresponded to multicultural education dimensions and approaches, whereas Factors 1 and 2 did not.

Participants indicated that they engaged in the behaviors related to Factors 1 and 4 with highest frequency and Factors 2, 3, and 5 with lowest frequency (see Table 2). These factors accounted for 72% combined variance (see Appendix), which exceeds the 50-60% typically accounted for in social sciences research (Pett et al., 2003).

Table 2

Factors and Mean Frequencies, 1 = never, 2= rarely, 3 = occasionally, 4= frequently

Factor	Mean Frequency
Classroom Guidance With Multicultural Education Emphases	2.95
Professional Development With Multicultural Education Emphases	1.91
Knowledge Construction	1.65
Human Relations	3.41
Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different	2.38

When participants indicated they *never* or *rarely* enacted a behavior, they were prompted to select a reason why that was the case. The two most commonly reported reasons were "not enough time," and "not needed." Table 4 includes an overview of obstacle counts and percentages.

Table 3

Overall Obstacle Counts

Obstacle	Obstacle Counts	% of all Obstacles
Not enough time	784	19.9%
Not needed	659	16.8%
Not part of my job	634	16.1%
Other	597	15.2%
Other topics are more important	370	9.4%
Inappropriate for my level	268	6.8%
Lack of training	218	5.5%
School culture	213	5.4%
Administration	187	4.8%
Total	3,930	100%

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the degree to which school counselors enact multicultural education behaviors and the obstacles that impede those behaviors. Results reveal both consistencies and differences between multicultural education theory and actual practice among a sample of school counselors.

Behavior Frequencies

Using a scale of 1 (never), 2 (rarely), 3 (occasionally), and 4 (frequently), participants indicated their multicultural education behaviors in the past three years. Prior to this study, the degree to which school counselors enacted multicultural education behaviors was unknown. Findings indicate that school counselors are enacting certain multicultural education behaviors occasionally, but others rarely.

On average, participants enacted the first behavior, Classroom Guidance with Multicultural Education Emphases occasionally (M = 2.95). School counselors' rationale for conducting classroom guidance lessons on multicultural education topics may be rooted in the standards on which their curricula are based. When school counselors design school counseling core curricula, these curricula are based on standards, such as the ASCA mindsets and behaviors for student success (ASCA, 2012; ASCA, 2014). Standards such as, "Sense of belonging in the school environment," "Demonstrate empathy," and "Use leadership and teamwork skills to work effectively in diverse teams" (ASCA, 2014) align with emphases in multicultural education, such as creating schools in which all students experience cultural empowerment (Banks, 2010). Furthermore, the frequency of these behaviors among participants may be associated with their frequency of conducting classroom guidance lessons in general. ASCA (2012)

recommended that school counselors spend 15-45% of their time conducting classroom guidance, depending on school level. If these recommendations were followed by the participants in this study, then an occasional frequency of Classroom Guidance with Multicultural Education Emphases behaviors seems logical.

Participants conducted Professional Development with Multicultural Education Emphases rarely (M = 1.91). Janson, Stone, and Clark (2009) asserted that developing and conducting professional development with faculty and staff is a key area in which school counselors can serve as leaders, particularly in professional development related to student diversity. Dollarhide (2003) reiterated that multicultural awareness is a key area in which school counselors can conduct professional development for faculty and staff members. No research has explored school counselors leading professional development, but the infrequency of participants leading professional development on multicultural education may be due to school counselors' barriers to leadership roles in their schools. Despite calls for school counselors to be leaders, many school counselors do not yet serve in leadership roles (Janson et al., 2009). This lack of leadership may be due to a lack of specific leadership training among school counselors (Janson et al., 2009) or because school counselors' leadership roles can conflict with administrators' leadership roles (Odegard-Koester & Watkins, 2016).

Participants enacted Knowledge Construction behaviors at an even lower frequency (M = 1.65, "rarely"). Although it is feasible for school counselors to enact Knowledge Construction behaviors in individual counseling, small group counseling, and classroom guidance (Merlin, 2017), these behaviors, appear the least aligned with the prescribed role of school counselors. Such behaviors are not referenced in the

ASCA National Model nor described in school counseling textbooks, such as

Transforming the School Counseling Profession (ASCA, 2012; Erford, 2007).

Participants conducted Human Relations behaviors with an average frequency of

3.41 ("occasionally"). Literature suggests that school counselors play a critical role in

monitoring and improving school climates (Cobb, 2014; Milsom, 2006). School

counselors are also well-positioned to focus on reducing prejudice and promoting unity

across diverse groups to create positive school climates (Pica-Smith & Poynton, 2014).

The high frequency of Human Relations behaviors among this sample supports

previous research on multicultural education approaches with practitioners. In 1992,

Sleeter studied 30 K-12 teachers in a long-term, professional development program in

multicultural education. She found that the Human Relations approach was the most

commonly adopted multicultural education approach of participants.

Participants enacted the final factor, Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally

Different, with an average frequency of 2.38 ("rarely"). On one hand, this value indicates

that some participants are engaging in a school counselor multicultural education

behavior. On the other hand, Sleeter and Grant (2009) stated that though the Teaching

the Exceptional and Culturally Different approach is better than no multicultural

education at all, the approach is assimilationist and ignores systemic bases of

oppression. They wrote, "By seeing the cultures of people of color, women, and lower-

class people as problems, the approach deflects attention from the majority group and

how it perpetuates discrimination and inequality" (p. 77). Consequently, although

Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different is part of the school counselor

multicultural education construct, it is not a preferred approach.

Behavior Obstacles

Given that participants did not indicate enacting all behaviors frequently, it is necessary to understand why participants did not engage in some behaviors. Insights can be found in the obstacles they noted. Participants in the primary data collection phase of the study marked 3,930 total obstacles in response to prompts when they indicated never or rarely enacting behaviors. Across all instrument items, the obstacle of *not enough time* was marked the most frequently, and *not needed* was marked the second most frequently.

The emergence of *not enough time* as the most common multicultural education behavior reflects previous research indicating that school counselors do not have enough time to complete their desired tasks (Amatea & Clark, 2005; Bryan & Griffin, 2010; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). Researchers have found that time constraints commonly prevent school counselors from initiating preferred counseling behaviors (Bryan & Griffin, 2010; College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, 2011). For example, in a 2011 survey of 5,300 school counselors, the College Board found that 67% of participants would like to spend more time in counseling activities, such as classroom guidance, than on administrative tasks. Often, "scheduling, testing, and other noncounseling duties" (Bryan & Griffin, 2010, p. 84) detract from time that could be spent on impactful behaviors like those of multicultural education.

The prevalence of *not enough time* as an obstacle across factors suggests that more work is needed to advocate for the role of school counselors so that non-counseling duties are reduced, and more time can be spent helping students be successful (Bryan & Griffin, 2010; Scarborough & Culbreth, 2008). School counselors

are often burdened by clerical or administrative tasks assigned by administrators who are overburdened themselves (Amatea & Clark, 2005). These tasks take away from time that school counselors otherwise could spend on direct service activities with students or faculty, including multicultural education behaviors. School counselors would benefit from communicating with their administrators about their potential role in schools and advocating for the removal of tasks inappropriate to their role. Bryan and Griffin (2010) keenly noted, "The time constraints that exist for school counselors are not overcome haphazardly. School counselors must respond to these time constraints intentionally through advocating for time to implement the programs and practices that are congruent with their role perceptions and best practices" (p. 84).

When participants indicated that they chose not to enact some multicultural education behaviors because they were *not needed*, these participants may have been indicating a belief that these behaviors were not needed in their school or that these behaviors were not needed with their students. Yet, multicultural education is arguably needed in all schools. Banks and Banks (2004) note that the concept is appropriate for both disadvantaged students in the minority, as well as for privileged students in the majority. Multicultural education interventions can promote multicultural awareness for privileged students, as well as create more equitable opportunities for disadvantaged students (Merlin, 2017). Some school counselors in homogenous contexts may believe multicultural education is not needed because students encounter diversity infrequently. However, many students will leave high school and enter post-secondary options with more diversity than they encountered in K-12 schools. Students need to be prepared to participate and function successfully in these diverse communities (Nikels et al., 2007).

School counseling leaders can help address these beliefs by educating school counselors and school counselors-in-training about the need to increase multicultural awareness among K-12 students, reduce discrimination in schools, and value multicultural education.

Implications for School Counselors

This study was originally developed claiming the dimensions and approaches of multicultural education serve as a useful blueprint for school counselors to create systemic change in schools, as the ASCA National Model proposes they do. But the findings of this study have illuminated a new framework of multicultural education that appears even more relevant as a blueprint for school counselors to create change in schools. This framework is composed of some multicultural education dimensions and approaches, but also new factors defined by types of school counseling behaviors. For school counseling, a profession already delineated by behaviors (i.e., individual counseling, small group counseling, and classroom guidance), this refined theory of multicultural education presents a more accessible framework for school counselors to use to create systemic change in schools. By grouping multicultural education by behaviors related to classroom guidance (Factor 1) and behaviors related to leading professional development (Factor 2), school counselors can more easily conceptualize how they can incorporate multicultural education into the behaviors they already enact in schools. Because this refined framework is more accessible to school counselors, more school counselors may be willing to engage in multicultural education. An increased focus on multicultural education behaviors could ultimately lead to attainment

of the goals of multicultural education: equal opportunities for all students and increased student multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills.

Practically, the findings of this research question provide useful insights into the work that school counselors are doing now and can be doing in the future. School and district administrators would benefit from reflecting on these findings and considering if the school counselors they supervise are enacting multicultural education behaviors and if their school counselors are being included in conversations about multicultural education. If not, the results in this study suggest a justification for doing so.

In addition, collaborations between classroom teachers and school counselors conducting multicultural education are warranted. If both groups of educators are enacting behaviors focused on similar goals, they would be wise to combine efforts and promote goals collaboratively. School counselors' classroom guidance lessons focused on multicultural education could be assisted by teachers committing to teaching similar lessons around the same time as the counselors' lessons. Teachers could also support human relations initiatives by promoting school counselors' school wide programs in their classrooms. And teachers and counselors with similar multicultural education interests could team up to design professional development workshops for colleagues based on demonstrated needs in their school.

Implications for School Counselor Educators

Findings also suggest important implications for school counselor educators. To address the notion that multicultural education is not needed in schools, school counselor educators can educate future school counselors about inequities, discrimination, and achievement gaps in schools. Given research suggesting that

beliefs are challenged more readily when accompanied by behavior change (Hamre et al., 2012), counselor educators may want to initiate behavior-focused coursework in which school counselors-in-training enact multicultural education behaviors. For example, school counselors-in-training could complete a multicultural education project in their practicum or internship sites to understand the values of the work firsthand.

Limitations

The researchers used convenience samples in both phases of this study, therefore generalizability to other populations is limited. In addition, this study had a considerably high percentage of nonrespondents (44.8%) of the 1,115 participants who opened the questionnaire link did not complete the questionnaire. School counselors may have begun the questionnaire and exited the study due to the amount of time required to complete the questionnaire, a likely circumstance considering the discovery of *not enough time* as an obstacle impeding multicultural education behaviors in this study. If nonrespondents had participated, their responses may have altered the results (Creswell, 2014). Because no procedures were used to check response bias in this study, the bias can be assumed to be a limitation.

Future Research

This study was significant in understanding the multicultural education behaviors of school counselors and the obstacles impeding those behaviors. Researchers would be wise to continue to explore school counselors' multicultural education behaviors, as well as the challenges or attitudes preventing them from engaging in those behaviors. For example, it would be valuable to understand what school counselors mean when indicating that multicultural education behaviors are, *not needed* in their schools.

Moreover, extensive literature has promoted the value of multicultural education (Banks, 2009; Banks and Banks, 2010; Ford, 2014; Sleeter & Grant, 2009) and multicultural competence (Bidell, 2011; Chu-Lien Chao, 2013; Fallon, 2013; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005; Nelson et al., 2008; Owens et al., 2010; Tadlock-Marlo et al, 2013.), but little research has measured the outcomes of those behaviors. Evidence-based practice has been a point of emphasis in school counseling (Whiston, Tai, & Rahardia, 2011), therefore understanding the empirical value of multicultural education behaviors is essential to promoting the behaviors to school counselors. Future research is needed measuring these outcomes.

References

Amatea, E. S., & Clark, M. A. (2005). Changing schools, changing counselors: A

    qualitative study of school administrators' conceptions of the school counselor

    role. *Professional School Counseling, 9,* 16-27. doi:10.5330/prsc.9.1.w6357

    vn62n5328vp

American School Counselor Association (2012). *The ASCA National Model: A*

    framework for school counseling programs, 3rd edition. Alexandria, VA: Author.

American School Counselor Association (2014). *ASCA mindsets & behaviors for*

    student success: K-12 college- and career-readiness standards for every

    student. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Associated Press (2012). Majority harbor prejudice against blacks. Poll conducted by

    the Associated Press, October 27, 2012. Retrieved from http://usnews.nbc

    news.com/_news/2012/10/27/14740413-ap-poll-majority-harborprejudice-

    against-blacks?lite

Banks, J. A. (2009). Human rights, diversity, and citizenship education. *Educational*

    Forum, 73, 100-110. doi:10.1080/00131720902739478

Banks, J. A. (2013). The construction and historical development of multicultural

    education, 1962-2012. *Theory into Practice*, *52*, 73-82. doi:10.1080/00

    405841.2013.795444

Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. M. (2004). Introduction. In J. A. Banks & C. M. Banks (Eds.),

    Handbook of research on multicultural education (pp. xi-xiv). San Francisco:

    John Wiley & Sons.

Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. M. (2010). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (7th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Blackford, K., & Khojasteh, J. (2013). Closing the achievement gap: Identifying strand score differences. *American Journal of Educational Studies, 6*(2), 5-15.

Bryant, J. A., & Griffin, D. (2010). A multidimensional study of school-family-community partnership involvement: School, school counselor, and training factors. *Professional School Counseling, 14,* 75-86. doi:10.5330/prsc.14.1.q447832 251421482

Burkard, A. W., Gillen, M., Martinez, M. J., & Skytte, S. (2012). Implementation challenges and training needs for comprehensive school counseling programs in Wisconsin high schools. *Professional School Counseling, 16,* 136-145. doi:10.53 30/PSC.n.2012-16.136

Chu-Lien Chao, R. (2013). Race/ethnicity and multicultural competence among school counselors: Multicultural training, racial/ethnic identity, and color-blind racial attitudes. Journal of Counseling & Development, 91, 140-151. doi:10.1002/j.15 56-6676.2013.00082.x

Cisler, A., & Bruce, M. A. (2013). Principals: What are their roles and responsibilities? *Journal of School Counseling*, *11*(10), Retrieved from http://www.jsc.montana. edu/articles/v11n10.pdf

Cobb, N. (2014). Climate, culture, and collaboration: The key to creating safe and supportive schools. *Techniques: Connecting Education & Careers, 89*(7), 14-19.

College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, National Office for School Counselor Advocacy (2011). National survey of school counselors: Counseling at a

crossroads. Retrieved from http://www.civicenterprises.net/MediaLibrary/

Docs/counseling_at_a_crossroads.pdf

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*

approaches (4th ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Dollarhide, C. T. (2003). School counselors as program leaders: Applying leadership

contexts to school counseling. *Professional School Counseling, 6,* 304-308.

Education Trust (2013). Improving achievement and closing gaps: Lesson from schools

and districts on the performance frontiers. Retrieved from http://www.edtrust.org/

dc/presentation/improving-achievement-and-closing-gaps-lessons-from-schools-

and-districts-on-the-pe-2

Erford, B. T. (Ed.) (2007). *Transforming the school counseling profession.* Upper Saddle

River, NJ: Pearson.

Erford, B. T., House, R. M., & Martin P. J. (2007). *Transforming the school counseling*

profession. In B. T. Erford (Ed.) *Transforming the school counseling profession*

(pp. 1-12). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Ford, D. Y. (2014). Why education must be multicultural. *Gifted Child Today, 37,* 59-62.

doi:10.1177/1076217513512304.F

Guzmán, M. R., Calfa, N. A., Van Horn Kerne, V., & McCarthy, C. (2013). Examination

of multicultural counseling competencies in school counselors. *Journal of School*

Counseling, 11(7)*,* Retrieved from http://www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v11n7.pdf

Hamre, B. K., Pianta, R. C., Burchinal, M., Field, S., LoCasale-Crouch, J., Downer, J.

T., ... Scott-Little, C. (2012). A course on effective teacher-child interactions:

Effects on teacher beliefs, knowledge, and observed practice. *American Educational Research Journal, 49*, 88-123. doi:10.3102/0002831211434596

Holcomb-McCoy, C. C. (2005). Investigating school counselors' perceived multicultural competence. *Professional School Counseling, 8,* 414-423.

Janson, C., Stone, C., & Clark, M. A. (2009). Stretching leadership: A distributed perspective for school counselor leaders. *Professional School Counseling, 13,* 98-106. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2010-13.98

Kim, B. S. K., Greif Green, J. L., & Klein, E. F. (2006). Using storybooks to promote multicultural sensitivity in elementary school children. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *34*, 223. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2006.tb00041.x

Kosciw, J. G., Greytak, E. A., Bartkiewicz, M. J., Boesen, M. J., & Palmer, N. A. (2011). The 2011 national school climate survey: The experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in our nation's schools. Retrieved from http://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2011%20National%20School%20Climate%20Survey%20Full%20Report.pdf

McMahon, H. G., Mason, E. C. M., & Paisley, P. O. (2009). School counselor educators as educational leaders promoting systemic change. *Professional School Counseling, 13,* 116-124.

Merlin, C. (2017). School counselors and multicultural education: Applying the five dimensions. *Journal of School Counseling*, *15*(6), Retrieved from http://www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v15n6.pdf

Milsom, A. (2006). Creating positive school experiences for students with disabilities. *Professional School Counseling, 10,* 66-72.

Nelson, J., Bustamante, R. M., Wilson, E., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2008). The School-Wide Cultural Competence Observation Checklist (SCCOC): An exploratory factor analysis. *Professional School Counseling*, *20*, 20-32.

Nikels, H. J., Mims, G. A., & Mims, M. J. (2007). Allies against hate: A school-based diversity sensitivity training experience. *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*, *32*, 126-138. doi:10.108001933920701227117

Odegard-Koester, M. A., & Watkins, P. (2016). Collaborative relationships between principals and school counselors: Facilitating a model for developing a working alliance. *Journal of School Counseling, 14*(9), Retrieved from http://www.jsc. montana.edu/articles/v14n9.pdf

Owens, D., Bodenhorn, N., & Bryant, R. M. (2010). Self-efficacy and multicultural competence of school counselors. *Journal of School Counseling, 8*(17), Retrieved from http://www.jsc.montana.edu/articles/v8n17.pdf

Pica-Smith, C., & Poynton, T. (2014). Supporting interethnic and interracial friendships among youth to reduce prejudice and racism in schools: The role of the school counselor. *Professional School Counseling, 18*, 82-89. doi:10.5330/prsc.18.1.u 80765360j5825l0

Pett, M. A., Lackey, N. R., & Sullivan, J. J. (2003). *Making sense of factor analysis: The use of factor analysis for instrument development in health care research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Roaten, G. K., & Schmidt, E. A. (2009). Using experiential activities with adolescents to promote respect for diversity. *Professional School Counseling, 12*, 309-314. doi:10.5330/PSC.n.2010-12.309

Scarborough, J. L., & Culbreth, J. R. (2008). Examining discrepancies between actual

    and preferred practice of school counselors. *Journal of Counseling &*

    Development, 86, 446-459. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6678.2008.tb00533.x

Sleeter, C. (1992). *Keepers of the American dream.* London, England: Falmer Press.

Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (2009). *Making choices for multicultural education: Five*

    approaches to race, class, and gender. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Southern Poverty Law Center. (2016, November 29). Ten days after: Harassment and

    intimidation in the aftermath of the election. Retrieved from https://www.splcenter.

    org/20161129/ten-days-after-harassment-and-intimidation-aftermath-election

Tadlock-Marlo, R. L., Zyromski, B., Asner-Self, K. K., & Sheng, Y. (2013). One school,

    many differences: An assessment tool for school counselors and multicultural

    counseling. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling, 35,* 234-

    250. doi:10.1007/s10447-012-9179-z

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2012). *Digest of*

    Education Statistics, 2011. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/

    d11/ch_2.asp

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2013). *Digest of*

    Education Statistics, 2012. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/

    digest/d12/

Whiston, S. C., Tai, W. L., & Rahardia, D. (2011). School counseling outcome: A meta-

    analytic examination of interventions. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 89,*

    37-55. doi:10.1002/j.1556-6678.2011.tb00059.x

Zimmerman, T. S., Aberle, J. M., & Krafchick, J. L. (2005). FAIR: A diversity and social

justice curriculum for school counsellors to integrate school-wide. *Guidance &*

Counselling, 21, 47-56.

Zirkel, S. (2008). The influence of multicultural educational practices on student

outcomes and intergroup relations. *Teachers College Record, 110*, 1147-1181.

Appendix

Primary Data Collection Factors and Corresponding Loadings

Factor	Items	Factor Loadings	Percent Variance
Classroom Guidance with Multicultural Education Emphases	Have you led a classroom guidance lesson intended to reduce stereotyping among students?	.706	36.3%
	Have you led a classroom guidance lesson that addressed student bullying due to gender?	.904	
	Have you led classroom guidance lessons about diversity and equity?	.750	
	Have you led a classroom guidance lesson that addressed student bullying due to having a disability?	.856	
	Have you led a classroom guidance lesson that addressed student bullying due to race/ethnicity?	.814	
	Have you implemented a classroom guidance lesson with students about valuing others who are different from them?	.674	
Professional Development with Multicultural Education Emphases	Have you given a presentation to teachers or staff about how to best meet the needs of specific groups of students? For example, presenting information about how to best help English Language Learners, individuals in poverty, immigrant students, or students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ).	.848	14.3%
	Have you conducted professional development with faculty or staff about appropriately addressing student diversity? Examples of such topics include discussing harmful stereotypes, promoting the belief that all students can learn, or teaching how to help specific groups of historically marginalized students.	.860	
	Have you organized a professional development event for teachers/staff about understanding cultural differences?	.803	

Factor	Items	Factor Loadings	Percent Variance
Knowledge Construction	Have you presented a classroom guidance lesson to students about where the content they learn in school comes from? For example, have you discussed with students who wrote their textbooks or academic standards?	.748	8.6%
	During a classroom guidance lesson with students (about any topic), have you discussed where the content they are learning originates? For example, have you discussed who wrote the content of the lesson you are teaching?	.893	
	During group counseling, have you initiated a conversation with students about the origins of the content they learn in school? For example, have you discussed with students in group counseling who wrote their textbooks or academic standards?	.850	
Human Relations	Have you implemented an intervention intended to create positive interactions among students? This intervention may take the form of a small counseling group, school-wide project, or other initiative.	.828	6.6%
	Have you implemented an initiative focused on improving or maintaining unity and harmony among students? This intervention may take the form of a small counseling group, school-wide project, or other initiative.	.905	
Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different	When working with diverse students in individual counseling, has your main goal been to help assimilate them into the majority culture?	.990	6.3%
Cumulative Variance Accounted for			72.1%

Biographical Statement

Clare Merlin-Knoblich, Ph.D., is an assistant professor in the Department of Counseling at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in Charlotte, NC. A former high school counselor, Clare researches school counselors and multicultural education, including the ways that school counselors can reduce prejudice in schools.

Jason A. Chen, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of educational psychology at the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg, VA. A former high school teacher, Jason researches the use of technology to motivate students and reduce implicit bias in university faculty members.