

**School Counselors' Work with Immigrants: A Phenomenological Study of
Competence, Social Justice, and Family Language Policy**

DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The biggest educational attainment gap between any two groups is seen between English Language Learners (ELL) and non-ELL students. Of ELL students, the largest majority by far are immigrant students. Because school counselors are in a unique position that enables them to provide essential services to promote immigrant students' well-being, development, and success, it is important to explore school counselors' experiences and perceptions of their work. The purpose of this Phenomenological qualitative research study was to explore: (a) school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and what resources they utilize to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families, (b) school counselors' beliefs and attitudes toward being a social justice advocate and how these beliefs and attitudes affect their support and services to immigrants, and (c) school counselors' perceptions of their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies (FLP) and their perceptions of how FLP influences student outcomes. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews from 13 school counselors who work at schools that have five percent or greater of immigrant students in the state of Ohio, in the United States of America. Seven major themes emerged from the data: (1) They feel competent in addressing immigrants' needs and challenges; however, their personal identities and experience impact their self-perceived competence level, (2) they believe that their training did not include counseling immigrants and was not

sufficient for working effectively with immigrants, (3) they learn best about how to provide counseling services by willingly and intentionally leaving their comfort zones in order to seek out diverse experiences, (4) they need more professional development, language assistance, and collaboration with key stakeholders to improve their work, (5) The more they learn about immigrant students and families, they develop greater awareness of the individual differences in immigrant populations, as well as begin to develop greater humility about both the knowledge they have gained and how much they still have to learn, (6) social justice is at the heart of their work, and (7) They believe immigrant families should speak their native language with their children, and there was a range of opinions of whether or not FLP impacts student outcomes. In addition to the themes, four paradigms were identified based on the participants' perceptions and experiences in working with immigrant students and families: (1) Superficial Awareness, (2) Growing Awareness, (3) Flexibility (in cognition, affect, behavior), and (4) Culturally Competent School Counselor. Each paradigm is explained based on six domains: awareness/dimensionality, competence, affiliation with social justice advocacy, notion of FLP, involvement with translation, and what they think they need to improve. Findings are discussed in terms of their implications for school counselors, counselor educators, educators, and researchers. Recommendations on how to better prepare school counselors in providing effective and efficient services and support to immigrant students and families are presented.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Overview

Annually, millions of people around the world migrate to another country and, due to political and economic crises, this rate is rapidly increasing. For example, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2016), while there were 10.5 million refugees in 2011, the number increased to 19.5 million in 2014. There are more than 59 million displaced people worldwide and 51% of them are under age of 18. In the U.S., racial and/or ethnic minorities, in aggregate, are expected to become the numerical majority within the next few decades (Hernandez, 2004). Therefore, it is essential to ensure the education, health, and well-being of all children across various racial/ethnic, immigrant-origin, and socio-economic statuses to establish a socially just society.

The term migration refers to people's movement to their new temporary or permanent geographical locations (Held, 2016). The immigrant category can be divided into two groups: (a) voluntary immigrants (immigrants who migrated to the U.S. for more opportunities and a better life) and (b) involuntary immigrants (those who are forced to migrate to the U.S. due to untenable conditions in their home country) (Ogbu, 1974). According to the most recent U.S. Census (2014), 13% (41 million) of the U.S. population is foreign born. The number of immigrants increased by 20% from 2000 to 2012, and continues to rise (Esquivel & Keitel, 1990; Grieco et al., 2012). It is estimated

that one in five children in the U.S. have at least one immigrant parent, and this figure is expected to increase to more than one in three children by 2040 (Suarez-Orozco, Onaga, & de Lardemelle, 2010; Watkinson & Hersi, 2014). Trends in immigration and birth rates indicate that soon there will not be any particular ethnic group that is more than 50% of the U.S. population (Crouch, Zakariya, & Jiandani, 2012).

In addition to documented immigrants, according to the Pew Research Center (2015), it is estimated that 11.3 million undocumented immigrants were living in the U.S. in 2014. Many of these people experience severe mental health issues and lack of access to economic and social capital such as health, education, and other services (Chung et al., 2011; Cuevas & Cheung, 2015; Gonzales, 2010; Roblyer, Grzywacz, Cervantes, & Merten, 2015). Feeling insecure and uncertain about their future and the possibility of any family member being deported can create severe mental health problems (e.g., depression, anxiety), low self-esteem, and negative behaviors. Moreover, undocumented students have limited access to post-secondary education because there are very limited financial opportunities available for them. For example, they are not eligible to receive any type of governmental financial aid (Perez, 2010).

Unfortunately, it is inevitable for immigrants to face a variety of unique individual, societal, and systemic challenges. Many immigrant students encounter academic, career, and social/personal issues due to these challenges. Of particular interest to this study, based on current data, the biggest educational attainment gap between any two groups is seen between English Language Learners (ELL) and non-ELL students (APA, 2012). Many immigrant students have to learn a new language as well as adapt to

a new culture and environment at the same time, which is usually a stressor for the majority of immigrants. In addition, many immigrants face mental health problems, racism, discrimination, acculturation issues, and social capital deprivation on a daily basis (Chung et al., 2011; Esquivel & Keitel, 1990; Goh et al., 2007; Malott, 2010; Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004; Suarez-Orozco, Onaga, & Lardemelle, 2010; Villalba et al., 2007; Williams & Butler, 2003).

Entering school without knowing the mandatory educational language makes it hard for students to gain full knowledge, skills, attitudes, and understanding of what is happening around them. Under these circumstances, it is likely that these students will experience severe adjustment, mental health, and motivational issues that directly affect students' well-being and academic success. In addition, being unable to communicate in the dominant language creates social isolation and limited career opportunities. Moreover, when students are not taught in their native language, they may miss the chance to fulfill their potential, which leads to short - and long-term negative consequences (APA, 2012; Colombo, 2006; Gonzales, 2010; Malott, 2010; Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004).

Very few K-12 educators specialize in supporting the ELL population. Because of limited resources and lack of well-trained or experienced school personnel who work with immigrants, many immigrant students do not receive adequate service from schools (Clemente & Collison, 2000; Morganfield, 2012; Vela et al., 2013; Vela-Gude et al., 2009). Therefore, they are forced to move through the educational pipeline without receiving necessary support, making it inevitable that the majority of immigrant students

face high rates of adjustment issues, dropout, and disciplinary incidents, and reduced rates of graduation rates, academic success, college enrollment, and college graduation (Becerra, 2012; Clark, Ponjuan, Orrock, Wilson & Flores, 2013; NCES, 2013; NEA, 2014a; Sheng, Sheng & Anderson, 2011).

After spending 11 years in the school counseling field, it is clear to me that school counselors have the potential to make a difference in immigrant students' lives if they understand and effectively work with the unique needs of immigrant students in culturally responsive ways. For instance, school counselors can lead school personnel to create a safe and welcoming school climate for immigrants. School counselors are capable of employing culturally sensitive resources in school, which have direct positive impact on immigrant student outcomes (Clemente & Collinson, 2000; Cook et al., 2012; Ramos-Sanchez, 2009). Moreover, school counselors can interact with immigrant families to increase their engagement in school. In addition, school counselors are capable of providing necessary academic, career, and social/personal services to help immigrant students successfully complete their adjustment, adaptation, and healthy development processes.

Immigrants' Challenges

Most of the challenges faced by immigrant students are nested in environmental dynamics and arise from intersection of a variety of factors such as race, ethnicity, poverty, culture, language, and psychological factors. Researchers have well documented that immigrants face tremendous challenges that can be categorized into five themes: (1) language difficulties, (2) academic issues, (3) racism and acculturation, (4) mental health

issues, and (5) limited educational and economic capital. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that although immigrant groups share some similarities, there is no doubt that not all immigrants face the same problems (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010). Each student is unique and should be treated as an individual within the context of his/her cultural and family systems (Goh et al., 2007).

Language difficulties. It has been documented that about 85% of foreign-born immigrants speak a language other than English at home and 10% of them do not speak English at all (Grieco et al., 2012). Immigrants who speak languages other than English in the U.S. are required to learn English to “participate in the life of the larger community, get an education, find a job, obtain access to health or social services, and apply for citizenship” (Rumbaut, 2004, p. 1192). Language choice may become an issue within immigrant families because a conflict may arise about whether they should give up their native language and adopt the dominant language or maintain speaking their native language. While native language should be considered as an asset, unfortunately many educators embrace a deficit perspective and believe that immigrants’ native language should be given up or replaced with the dominant language. For instance, although research suggests that speaking mother tongue has positive impact on academic success (Dolson, 1985; Snow, 1990), it is not uncommon to see school personnel encouraging families to speak only the dominant language (Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013).

Academic issues. Research has clearly stated that there is an academic gap between immigrant students and non-immigrant students (APA, 2012; NAEP, 2005; NCES, 2013). For example, although 75% of non-ELL 8th grade students reached proficiency or above in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2005), only 29% of ELL students reached the same level. While, 67% of non-ELL 4th grade students reached proficiency or above in reading on the NAEP, only 27% of ELL students reached the same level. Although 71% of non-ELL 8th grade students reached proficiency or above in mathematics on the NAEP, only 29% of ELL students reached the same level. While 83% of non-ELL 4th grade students reached proficiency or above in mathematics on the NAEP, only 54% of ELL students reached the same level. In other words, ELL students on reading assessment were 36 points below non-ELL students at the 4th grade level, and 44 points below at the 8th grade level in the NAEP (NCES, 2013).

Racism and acculturation. Racism is another important and common issue of immigrants. For instance, Malott (2010) found that Mexican origin immigrant students' greatest perceived challenge that was experienced in the U.S. was racism. Similarly, Williams and Butler (2003) argued that racial labeling and categorization is one of the main issues of immigrant students. Immigrant students experience low self-esteem, low academic achievement, dropout, discipline, and suspension that can result in gang activities as a consequence of racism and discrimination in schools (Villalba et al., 2007). Moreover, immigrant students not only need to learn how to read and do math, they also

have to “navigate their way between two very different worlds as they move between home and school” (Colombo, 2006, p. 3105).

Mental health. Many immigrant students experience mental health issues (Bridges, Andrews, & Deen, 2012; Fazel, 2015; Oppedal, Roysamb, & Sam, 2004; Sirin, Gupta, Ryce, Katsiaficas, Suárez-Orozco, & Sirin, 2013). For instance, Bridges et al. (2012) found that 36% of Hispanic immigrants met diagnostic criteria for at least one mental disorder and 42% of them saw a mental health provider in the prior year. Similarly, 37% of Bangladeshi immigrants were at risk for depression (Patel, Rajpathak, & Karasz, 2012). Moreover, isolation and lack of friendship are immigrant students’ typical experiences in school (Fazel, 2015). Yeh (2003) found that immigrant students’ general mental health is negatively affected by stress.

Limited educational and economic capital. Although immigrant families come from a variety of educational and socio-economic backgrounds (Esquivel & Keitel, 1990), many of them experience financial issues. For example, 19% of immigrants live below the poverty level, compared to 15% of those who are native born, and 31% of immigrant children live below the poverty level, compared to about 21% of native born children (Grieco et al., 2012). As a result, many immigrant students need to work to support their families financially, jeopardizing their academic achievement, likelihood of graduating, and access to postsecondary education (Clark et al., 2013). In addition, the majority of immigrant students and their families have limited educational experiences and capital in the U.S. (Cook et al., 2012). Although the majority encounters multiple barriers in academic settings, some immigrant students face fewer educational challenges

than what might be expected. For instance, Constantine and Gushue (2003) mentioned that high educational level and socio-economic status of parents, a supportive educational environment in family, and an achievement-oriented peer group are some factors that may reduce immigrant students' educational challenges. However, it is important to note that academic success cannot guarantee the healthy psychological adjustment and well-being of immigrant students.

Foundational Concepts

Acculturation and social justice. The fundamental question at the heart of acculturation studies is “what happens to individuals, who have developed in one cultural context, when they attempt to live in a new cultural context?” (Berry, 1997, p. 6). In particular, acculturation theories aim to elucidate whether individuals maintain the same behavioral repertoire in the new cultural context or to what extent they change their behaviors to fit in the new setting through a variety of circumstances and experiences. A second focus of acculturation theory is to determine both short-term and long-term psychological, social, and economic consequences of living in a new settlement.

The definition of acculturation was presented by Berry (2005): “acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (p. 698). The acculturation process is affected by a variety of dynamics such as social and personal factors, cultural characteristics of both the society of origin and the society of settlement, and phenomena that exist both prior to and during the acculturation process.

Acculturation includes group-level changes such as social structures, institutions, and

cultural practices, and individual level changes that are manifested through individuals' behavioral repertoire (Berry, 2005). Therefore, acculturation is a “complex pattern of continuity and change in how people go about their lives in the new society” (Berry, 1997, p. 6).

Although there is a common belief that assimilation is the only type of acculturation, Berry (1997) identified four acculturation strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. These strategies are named differently depend on whether the dominant or non-dominant group is being considered. The following definitions are true for non-dominant groups. *Assimilation* happens when individuals give up their original culture and seek interactions with other cultures. On the contrary, when individuals want to maintain their cultural identity and avoid interactions with people from different cultures, it is considered *separation*. *Integration* strategy is defined when individuals place a value on maintaining their cultural identity and also seek daily interactions with other cultures. Finally, *marginalization* strategy is seen when individuals have little interest in the maintenance of their cultural values and interactions with others (Berry, 2005; Berry, 2009).

Berry (1997) argued that individuals of non-dominant groups have the freedom to choose how they want to acculturate. However, there are some exceptional circumstances and when any of these exceptions is present, new terms are needed to describe the acculturation strategy. For instance, separation is seen when individuals of non-dominant groups have a choice; however, *segregation* occurs when the dominant group forces them to be separate. Although the *Melting Pot* is the appropriate term to describe the situation

of people who choose to assimilate, when they are forced to be assimilated, then the *Pressure Cooker* is the appropriate term to describe the situation (Berry, 1997).

When immigrants use the strategy of integration, they experience more positive outcomes (e.g., less stress, better adaptation) than the other acculturation strategies (Berry, 2005). For instance, Schwartz et al. (2015) found that students who reported high bicultural identity integration score significantly higher on measures of self-esteem, optimism, prosocial behavior, and family relationship than those who have a lower integration score. Berry (2005) argued that choosing the option of integration is predicated on two requirements. The first condition of integration is that individuals of non-dominant groups should have the freedom to choose the integration option. The second requirement is that the dominant society should have a positive orientation toward cultural diversity. This means that individuals of non-dominant groups would embrace basic values of the dominant group, while the dominant group “must be prepared to adapt national institutions (e.g., education, health, labour) to better meet the needs of all groups now living together in the plural society” (Berry, 1997, p. 11).

Berry (1997) created an acculturation framework in order to systematize the process of acculturation and to display major factors that have an impact on adaptation. According to Berry (2009), the acculturation process is fundamentally affected by group- or cultural- level phenomena and individual- or psychological- level phenomena. While group-level phenomena includes predominantly situational variables of the society of origin and the society of settlement, individual phenomena include mainly personal

moderating factors that take place prior to acculturation and during acculturation process (Berry, 1997).

Berry (1997) argued that the acculturation process begins when cultural groups contact each other. This contact brings some changes in their collective features such as political, economic, and social structures; the contact also affects individuals' psychology and behaviors who have experienced the acculturation process. Finally, after going through multiple psychological experiences and changes, adaptation is achieved.

Adaptation is defined as “changes that take place in individuals and groups in response to environmental demands” (Berry, 1997, p. 13). Adaptation might be achieved immediately or after a long period of time. Although short-term changes are sometimes negative in nature, for most people, positive adaptation is achieved after a period of time. Moreover, positive adaptation to a new cultural context takes place when there is cohesion between what the non-dominant group members want and what the dominant group offers in which either assimilation or integration is the chosen acculturation strategy (Berry, 2005). However, when the coherence is absent between what non-dominant group members desire and what the dominant society offers, stress or psychopathology is likely to be experienced (Berry, 1997).

How individual immigrants navigate these changes is often determined by how the immigrant family unit experiences the cultural transition. One way to examine the family's adaptation to the new culture is by understanding family language policy (FLP).

FLP and acculturation. FLP is the explicit and implicit planning of language use within the home and among family members (Armstrong, 2014; King, Fogle, & Logan-

Terry, 2008; King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008). According to Fogle (2013), FLP means “explicit and overt decisions parents make about language use and language learning as implicit processes that legitimize certain language and literacy practices over others in the home” (p. 83). FLP tells us what families actually do with language in their daily interactions, their beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies about language, and their objectives towards shaping language use and learning.

FLP has an impact on student academic outcomes because the level of spoken language influences children’s cognitive development which is directly connected to academic achievement (Dolson, 1985; Snow, 1990). More specifically, when families insist on using weaker language (not their native language), this results in children’s exposure to less complex language that negatively affects children’s linguistic and cognitive development (King et al., 2008).

FLP is shaped by what the family believes will best serve the family members to achieve their goals in life (Curd-Christiansen, 2009). FLP impacts individuals’ acculturation process as well as their educational experiences. When immigrants arrive in a new settlement, they choose the desired acculturation strategy among assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization to position themselves in the new settlement (Berry, 1997). It can be argued that there is a synchronicity between FLP and the selected acculturation strategy because they both are selected and shaped by the family or individuals for their own benefit.

School counselors and social justice. Most school counselors will interact with immigrant students and their families, given the rapidly increasing number of immigrants

across the country. Concurrently, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) positions school counselors to play a significant role within comprehensive school counseling programs to serve all students. It is expected that school counselors receive adequate training and service experiences to provide appropriate and necessary interventions to support all students in school. This includes the ever-increasing percentage of immigrant students. Therefore, school counselors need to have the necessary knowledge, skills, and resources to help immigrant students maximize their educational opportunities. For instance, they should be able to provide a variety of services to help immigrant students utilize education and counseling opportunities. They can provide culturally sensitive mental health services, career counseling, support for academic achievement, and college and career assistance. As a result, increasing attention is needed to inform school counselors about the needs of immigrant students and families.

The simple explanation of why achievement, opportunity, and attainment gaps exist in a society is because society does not provide what is needed to all inhabitants (Bailey et al., 2007). Thus, school counselors should use social justice advocacy to right injustices, increase access, and improve educational outcomes for all students through service and action (Chang et al., 2010). Social justice is a mechanism that empowers others through advocacy for marginalized people. School counselors working as social justice advocates can challenge the status quo for systemic change that is necessary in addition to individual changes. Immigrant students who struggle with poverty, face lower expectations, are taught by unqualified teachers, and experience discrimination, racism,

and language barriers will especially benefit from this social justice advocacy effort (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Ratts et al., 2007). Therefore, it is necessary for school counselors to utilize a social justice approach to better examine, understand, and address immigrant students' challenges. Multiculturally and socially just school counselors are needed to be more effective and efficient working with immigrants because the challenges immigrants encounter usually are multifaceted and multi-causal.

An effective intervention for many of the issues faced by immigrant students is increased access to professionals who offer essential support and other services to this disenfranchised group. Although many immigrant students need mental health services for their healthy development, most of them do not utilize services as often as they would benefit (Abreu & Sasaki, 2004; Bagourdi & Baisman-Tzachor, 2010; Cabassa, Zayas, & Hansen, 2006; Yeh, 2001). As a result, although many challenges are inevitable for immigrant students, the provision of adequate services and support holds potential to positively impact and enhance the experience of students.

Although the available scholarship in school counselors' experiences, competencies development, and perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrant students and families indicates that many school counselors face language and cultural barriers, very little is known about how school counselors develop their competencies, the resources they utilize to develop their competencies, and their perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrant students and families. In other words, there is a need to explore the essence of school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and to examine the resources they utilize to develop their

competencies in working with immigrant students and families. In addition, although social justice has been studied in the school counseling field as a theoretical framework, there is a need to explore to what extent school counselors who work with immigrant students and families perceive themselves as a social justice advocate and to explore the perceived role of social justice advocacy in their support and service to immigrants. Finally, FLP is a common phenomenon among immigrant families. Although scholars have well documented that FLP has a significant impact on student outcomes, school counselors' impact on shaping FLP has not been studied yet. Therefore, it is particularly important to explore school counselors' perceptions of their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies and what they believe about the impact of FLP on student outcomes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore: (a) school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and what resources they utilize to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families, (b) school counselors' beliefs and attitudes toward being a social justice advocate and how these beliefs and attitudes affect their support and services to immigrant students and families, and (c) school counselors' perceptions of their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies and their perceptions of how FLP influences student outcomes. To explore these issues, thirteen participants were recruited from schools that have five percent or greater of immigrant students in the state of Ohio.

Significance of the Study

School counselors are expected to provide a variety of services in academic, career, and social/personal domains to all students (ASCA, 2012a). They are tasked with playing a significant role within comprehensive school counseling programs. Therefore, they should be competent in working not only with mainstream students and their families, but also with marginalized individuals and groups. Due to the high number of immigrants, most school counselors interact with immigrant students on a daily basis. Therefore, it is expected that school counselors receive adequate knowledge, skills, training, and service experiences to provide appropriate and necessary interventions to support immigrant students and families. More specifically, they are encouraged to be competent in providing culturally sensitive and socially just counseling services in academic, career, and social/personal domains to immigrants.

However, the available scholarship exploring school counselors' development and perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrants indicates that school counselors encounter language and cultural barriers, but very little is known about their perceptions of their competencies and what resources they utilize to develop their competencies in working with the population. In addition, although social justice has been studied in the school counseling field, there is a need to explore to what extent school counselors who work with immigrant students and families perceive themselves as a social justice advocate and how being a social justice advocate affects their support and service to immigrant students and families. Moreover, FLP is a common phenomenon among immigrant families. It has been well documented that FLP has an impact on student outcomes, yet the impact of school counselors on shaping FLP has not been

studied. Therefore, it is important to examine school counselors' perceptions of their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies and what they believe about the impact of FLP on student outcomes.

Findings from this study may help school counselors develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families while simultaneously addressing the gap in knowledge related to interactions between school counselors and their immigrant students and families. Moreover, this study will have implications for school counselors and counselor educators to better understand the needs of school counselors in order to work more effectively and efficiently with immigrants. Finally, this study will improve training for school counselors and provide crucial information to school counselors to promote social justice advocacy.

Assumptions

Every study comes with the reality of researchers including biases, experiences, and assumptions that make up who the researcher is. However, it is the job of the researcher to articulate those assumptions so that the reader is aware of them. Below are the assumptions that I brought to this study.

1. I assumed that immigrants come from both low and high socio economic statuses, so that is not the focus of this inquiry.
2. I assumed that phenomenological qualitative method, which seeks to explore life experiences of individuals, is the best methodology to investigate my research questions.

3. My inclusion criteria of the sample were appropriate; therefore, the participants have relevant experiences about the phenomenon that I was investigating.
4. The participants have sincere interest in participating in my study and they do not have any other motives such as monetary incentive, better grades, etc.
5. I assumed that the participants of this study have an investment in facilitating the success of the immigrant students in their schools and that their schools are inclusive educational institutions.
6. I assume that my participants answered the interview questions in an honest and candid manner.

As will be addressed in Chapter 3, trustworthiness measures were put in place to minimize the effects of these assumptions.

Research Questions

The central phenomenon that this qualitative research study aimed to investigate is school counselors' experiences working with immigrant students and families.

Therefore, this research study addressed the following specific questions:

1. What are school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and needs in working with immigrant students and families?
2. What are the resources school counselors perceive to have in order to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families?
3. To what extent do school counselors who work with immigrant students and families perceive themselves to be a social justice advocate?

4. (a) What do school counselors believe about their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies?
- (b) What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of family language policies on student outcomes?

Definition of Terms

Acculturation: the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members (Berry, 2005, p. 698).

Adaptation: changes that take place in individuals and groups in response to environmental demands (Berry, 1997, p. 13).

English Language Learner: who is referred "Limited English Proficient" is an individual:

- (A) who is aged 3 through 21;
- (B) who is enrolled or preparing to enroll in an elementary school or secondary school;
- (C)(i) who was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English;
- (ii)(I) who is a Native American or Alaska Native, or a native resident of the outlying areas; and
- (II) who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English language proficiency; or
- (iii) who is migratory, whose native language is a language other than English, and who comes from an environment where a language other than English is dominant; and

(D) whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing, or understanding the English language may be sufficient to deny the individual —

(i) the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments described in section 1111(b)(3);

(ii) the ability to successfully achieve in classrooms where the language of instruction is English; or

(iii) the opportunity to participate fully in society (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, public Law 107-110, Title IX Part A, Section 9101, 25).

Family Language Policy: explicit and overt decisions parents make about language use and language learning as well as implicit processes that legitimize certain language and literacy practices over others in the home (Fogle, 2013, p. 83). For the purpose of this study I examined FLP only related to education.

Immigrant: the first and second immigrant generations. The first generation means persons born and socialized in another country who immigrate as adults, although the term technically includes the foreign born regardless of their age at arrival. The second generation technically refers to the U.S.-born and U.S.-socialized children of foreign-born parents (Rumbaut, 2004, p. 1165). For the purpose of this study I examined immigrants only related to education. Further complicating the issue of immigration and ELLs is the political issue of undocumented individuals' statuses. However, this study only focuses on immigrant students regardless of their documentation status.

There is no consensus for terms referring to immigrant students in the social disciplines. For instance, while sociological literature uses “immigrant students”,

educational literature adopts “ELL”. It is clear that immigrant students and ELLs are not the same thing – not all immigrants are ELL nor all ELLs are immigrant. For example, while a Native American might be an ELL, he or she is not an immigrant. Similarly, a person may come to the U.S. from Australia, where English is the dominant language, as an immigrant, but he or she may not be an ELL. Although for the purpose of this study my focus is always on immigrants, I used ELL for screening purposes (e.g., Ohio Department of Education) and when gathering data for immigrant students (e.g., National Educational Association).

Phenomenology: seeks meanings from appearances and arrives at essences through intuition and reflection on conscious acts of experience, leading to ideas, concepts, judgments, and understandings (Moustakas, 1994, p. 58). Researchers using phenomenological qualitative research method collect empirical instances to identify common meanings, general constituents, themes, psychological processes, and organizational features (Wertz, 2005, p. 173).

Professional School Counselors: are certified/licensed educators with a minimum of a master’s degree in school counseling, making them uniquely qualified to address all students’ academic, career and personal/ social development needs by designing, implementing, evaluating and enhancing a comprehensive school counseling program that promotes and enhances student success. Professional school counselors are employed in elementary, middle/junior high and high schools; in district supervisory positions; and counselor education positions (ASCA, n.d.).

School Counselor Competencies: the knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes that ensure school counselors are equipped to meet the rigorous demands of the profession and the needs of pre-K–12 students. These competencies help ensure new and experienced school counselors are equipped to establish, maintain and enhance a comprehensive school counseling program addressing academic achievement, career planning and personal/social development (ASCA, 2012c). For the purpose of this study I use school counselor competencies only related to their services and support to immigrant students and families.

Social Justice: scholarship and action designed to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to these tools of self-determination (Goodman et al. 2004, p. 795).

Delimitations

To explore the questions raised in this study, the researcher used a phenomenological qualitative research method. Subjects were recruited from schools that have five percent or greater of immigrant students in the state of Ohio using both purposive sampling and snowball sampling technique to ensure a robust pool of interviewees. Data was collected primarily through semi-structured interviews that were about 60 minutes in length.

Using a social justice framework, this phenomenological qualitative research study provided detailed information about the development of school counselors' competencies in working with immigrant students and families, their perceptions of their competencies, and perceived impact on the FLP and the perceived impact the FLP has on

student outcomes. However, there are some limitations that need to be considered. First, data was gathered from only 13 school counselors in only one state in Midwest, where different regions of the country may have different responses. The generalizability of the study is limited to the participants. Second, the respondents participated in the study on a voluntary basis and they might have been predisposed to provide certain explanations or answers to the questions. Third, none of the respondents were from a rural area. School counselors may have different experiences in rural schools that this study did not capture. Trustworthiness efforts in triangulation with the literature, triangulation among readers, member checking, fidelity to the research methodology (epoche, purposeful sampling, audit trail documentation) were engaged to address these limitations.

Summary

Although most school counselors interact with immigrant students and families due to the rapidly increasing number of immigrants across the country, very little is known about school counselors' competencies development and their perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrant students and families and their impact on FLP. Therefore, using a social justice framework in working with immigrant students and families, the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative research study was to examine the development of school counselors' competencies, their perceptions of their competencies, and perceived impact on the FLP and the perceived impact the FLP has on student outcomes. This study is constructed based on social justice philosophy. In the next chapter, I will examine the theoretical and empirical literature related to social

justice, acculturation, school counselors' work with immigrant students, and family language policy.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter provides a selective review of the literature examining foundational concepts, experiences of school counselors and immigrant students, and family language policy. Specifically, this chapter reviews the literature related to: (a) social justice, (b) experiences of school counselors and immigrant students, and (c) family language policy (FLP) and its impact on student outcomes. This selective review of the literature provides the foundation of the current study.

Using a social justice framework, the purpose of this study was to explore the development of school counselors' competencies working with immigrant students and families, their perceptions of their competencies, their perceived impact on FLP and the perceived impact FLP has on student outcomes. This phenomenological qualitative research study addressed the following specific questions:

1. What are school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and needs in working with immigrant students and families?
2. What are the resources school counselors perceive to have in order to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families?
3. To what extent do school counselors who work with immigrant students and families perceive themselves to be a social justice advocate?

4. (a) What do school counselors believe about their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies?
- (b) What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of family language policies on student outcomes?

Examining the literature from 2005 to 2015, I was able to locate 49 articles that presented theoretical aspects of these topics and 71 articles that conducted empirical examination of these topics. In addition to theoretical and empirical articles, I located 33 other sources of information such as institutions' data or reports (e.g., U.S. Census Bureau, U. S. Department of Education, NCES), associations' resources (e.g., ACA, ASCA, Alzheimer's Association), and books. These numbers also include some important, relevant and/or original studies that were published prior to 2005.

First, the topic of social justice will be addressed in terms of definitions and applications in counseling and school counseling. I examined the literature from 2005 to 2015 and found 19 theoretical articles, 7 empirical articles, and 11 other sources of information. Second, school counseling and immigrant students will be examined. I examined the literature from 2005 to 2015 and located 21 theoretical articles, 35 empirical articles, and 14 other sources of information. Finally, FLP and bilingualism will be discussed. I examined the literature from 2005 to 2015 and found 8 theoretical articles, 29 empirical articles, and 9 other sources of information. I will present the conceptual literature followed by empirical literature for each section.

Social Justice

Social justice involves a theoretical model that values the dignity of all human beings, affirms the right that everyone has to decide what to do, highlights and respects people's right to control their destiny, and asserts service to the community (Lewis, 2011). Social justice focuses on people's strengths rather than their deficits, and prioritizes healthy development for everybody. The core of social justice is to believe that "living a good life is not just a personal responsibility but is a right that must be actively protected" (Lewis, 2011, p. 183).

There is a close connection between social justice and multiculturalism. While multiculturalism emerged in the mid-20th century as a reaction to oppression and discrimination, the multicultural counseling movement started in the late 60s as an effort to increase counselor educators' and mental health providers' "understanding and support for the important impact that clients' racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds and world views have on their mental health and psychological functioning" (Brady-Amoon, 2011, p. 139). Counselors are encouraged to develop multicultural competencies (awareness, knowledge, skills) and to take into consideration their clients' cultural and sociopolitical contexts. Multicultural counseling is perceived as an important prerequisite for social justice counseling (Brady-Amoon, 2011) which is concerned with connecting human development issues with unfair and negative environmental conditions for oppressed people (Ratts, 2009, p. 163). However, although social justice goes beyond multiculturalism to take action to promote wellbeing and healthy development of individuals and groups, Crethar and Ratts (2008) argued that "multiculturalism and social justice are two sides of the same coin" (p.25).

There have been multiple definitions of social justice. Most scholars in the counseling literature defined social justice as the effort to change the status quo to empower oppressed people through culturally responsive practices (Goodman et al., 2004; Miller, 1999). For instance, according to Miller (1999), “social justice has to do with how advantages and disadvantages are distributed” (p. 11). Goodman et al. (2004) defined social justice as “scholarship and action designed to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to these tools of self-determination” (p. 795). Similarly, social justice has been defined as “a fundamental valuing of fairness and equity in resources, rights, and treatment for marginalized individuals and groups of people who do not share equal power in society” (Constantine et al., 2007, p. 24). Competent school counselors utilize awareness, knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and skills to work effectively with immigrants, and meet their complex needs (Arredondo et al., 1996; ASCA, 2012c; Sue et al., 1992). Based on a comprehensive literature review of multiculturalism, Goodman et al. (2004) identified six principles of social justice work: ongoing self-examination, sharing power, giving voice, facilitating consciousness raising, building on strengths, and leaving clients with the tools for social change.

The simple explanation of why achievement, opportunity, and attainment gaps exist in a society is because society does not provide the necessary opportunities for all people (Bailey et al., 2007). Therefore, social justice advocacy is needed to right injustices, increase access, and improve educational outcomes for everybody (Ratts, DeKruyf, Chen-Hayes, 2007). According to Smith (2003), the goal of social justice is to

create a socially just world in which people have access to “adequate food, sleep, wages, education, safety, opportunity, institutional support, health care, and loving relationships” (p. 167). In this context, adequate means “enough to allow [individuals to participate] in the world without starving, or feeling economically trapped or uncompensated, continually exploited, terrorized, devalued, battered, chronically exhausted, and virtually enslaved” (Smith, 2003, p. 167). Moreover, according to Bell (1997), the purpose of social justice is:

... full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. (p. 3)

There is a strong connection between social justice and counseling. Social justice is considered as a core component of counseling because people do not exist independent of society, culture, or context (Chang et al., 2010; Crethar & Ratts, 2008). It can be argued that social justice and counseling cannot be separated because they are both necessary for healthy development and well-being of clients (Chang et al., 2010). Similarly, counselors are “in a position of power and privilege to be a voice for those who historically have been marginalized and oppressed” (Crethar & Ratts, 2008, p. 24) which is what exactly social justice aims to achieve.

Crethar and Ratts (2008) explained the connection between social justice and counseling by four critical principles that guide counselors: equity, access, participation, and harmony. *Equity* means fair distribution of resources, rights, and responsibilities

among all members of any society. *Access* is concerned with the ability that everyone has a fair access to resources, services, power, information, self-determination, and human development. *Participation* includes the right of everyone to be consulted and be a part of decision-making that influences their lives as well as others. *Harmony* is associated with a principle of adjustment that individual decisions and actions should produce the best outcomes for the community as a whole (Crethar & Ratts, 2008).

It has been suggested that the social justice advocacy movement should be a fifth force in counseling to explain human behavior complementary to psychodynamic, cognitive behavioral, existential-humanistic, and multicultural counseling forces (Crethar & Ratts, 2008; Ratts, 2009; Ratts, D'Andrea, & Arredondo, 2004). The social justice counseling paradigm “uses social advocacy and activism as a means to address inequitable social, political, and economic conditions that impede on the academic, career, and personal/social development of individuals, families, and communities” (Ratts, 2009, p. 160). Social advocacy in the counseling profession is defined as “acting with and on behalf of one’s client or others in the client’s system to ensure fair and equitable treatment” (Chang et al., 2010, p. 84). Ratts (2009) argued that social justice has depth, breadth, and a widespread impact on the counseling profession. As a result, social justice is necessary to better address and understand the issues of the equity of marginalized people, and is a growing research topic. Advocacy and activism are becoming central in the counseling profession (Chang et al., 2010; Crethar & Ratts, 2008).

Goodman et al. (2004) argued that because individuals' existing problems come from unjust individual, community, and larger social dynamics, social justice work should exist at micro level, meso level, and macro level. *Micro* level social justice work includes any kind of social justice effort that is made with individuals and families. *Meso* level social justice work consists of social justice activities that take place with communities and organizations. *Macro* level social justice work is manifested by any effort that is made to change social structures, ideologies, and policies (Goodman et al., 2004). Specific to school counseling, Dollarhide and Saginak (2016) argued that advocacy in school counseling should involve "identifying needs, problems, and barriers at the micro and macro levels that directly influence student achievement and school success" (p. 69).

Incorporating social justice into school counselors' work means that they acknowledge that oppression exists and negatively affects individuals' life (Chang, Crethar, & Ratts, 2010). From a school counselor's perspective, social justice is conceptualized based upon the belief that "virtually all students can achieve at high levels and that counselors must be proactive leaders in closing the existing achievement gap in schools" (House & Martin, 1998, p. 285). The contemporary call for school counselors to leave their office to work toward systemic change is very different from traditional school counseling practice (Ratts, 2009). This new call assigns school counselors "to view both the individual and the system as the client" (Ratts, 2009, p. 164). School counselors are encouraged to incorporate classroom, school, neighborhood, and larger community into their practice instead of just working in their office. Research suggests

that marginalized groups are better served when utilizing alternative helping roles and out-of-office interventions (Bailey et al., 2007). Thus, instead of just trying to change individuals, school counselors should aim to change social structures as well because aiming to change social structures at macro level has greater impact on social change (Clark et al., 2013; Goodman et al., 2004; Nilsson et al., 2011).

If a counselor believes that living a good life is a basic human right, then the counselor would conceptualize his or her role differently than the traditional counselor role (Ratts, 2009). For instance, the counselor's attention would be expanded from individuals to environment, institutions, and society. Likewise, social justice counselors believe that affective, behavioral, and cognitive development alone may not explain human development issues (Lewis, Ratts, Paladino, & Toporek, 2011) because the issues are not always caused within people's skin, but rather "environmental factors, such as racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism, can delay people's growth and development and hinder people's ability to reach their potential" (Ratts, 2009, p. 163). For instance, people of color, those who live in poverty, immigrants, linguistically diverse people, and LGBTQ people encounter growth and developmental problems that are caused by a variety of environmental factors. Therefore, counselors need to approach human problems more contextually and try to remove the effect of oppressive environmental barriers.

Further evidence for the potential benefits of these advocacy efforts is the increased likelihood for diverse students (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, economic status, immigrant status, etc.) to reach their academic, career, and

social/personal potential when they are offered equal opportunities (Educational Trust, 2003). School counselors can also prompt systemic change by bringing social justice, equity, and fairness to oppressed and marginalized students (Constantine et al., 2007; Ratts, 2009). However, Bemak and Chung (2005) argued that school counselors may consciously or unconsciously hold a position that perpetuates the status quo. For instance, simply by fulfilling their defined job role that is determined by the system, school counselors may not be advocating to meet the unique needs of immigrant students. However, school counselors are expected to challenge the system with and/or on behalf of their students to create the necessary changes for them to fulfill their potential, regardless of the possibility for personal or professional difficulties caused by resistance or resentment from other school personnel.

Social justice as an ethical and moral obligation. School counselors have ethical and moral obligations to advocate for all students and serve as agents for individual and institutional changes (Bemak & Chung, 2008). These ethical and moral obligations are seen in organizational standards such as the American Counseling Association (ACA) and the American School Counseling Association (ASCA).

ACA and social justice. The ACA Ethical Code Preamble (2014) lists social justice as one of the profession's primary values. The ACA code of ethics, section A.6.a, states that, "when appropriate, counselors advocate at the individual, group, institutional, and societal levels to examine potential barriers and obstacles that inhibit access and/or the growth and development of clients" (p. 5). The ACA accepted its formal Advocacy Competencies (Lewis, Arnold, House, & Toporek, 2002) in 2003. The advocacy

competencies include three levels of advocacy: (1) client/student advocacy, (2) school/community advocacy, and (3) the public arena level of advocacy (Lewis et al., 2002). Each level of the advocacy includes two domains that emphasize advocacy with and advocacy on behalf of people. Based on these competencies, counselors are encouraged to help their clients overcome their issues that are rooted in systemic and environmental factors.

Social justice is a core component of the multicultural counseling competence (Arredondo & Perez, 2003). Multicultural counseling competency development process has been evolving from social justice behavior since the 1950s (Arredondo & Perez, 2003) and the interest in the literature and training programs exploring multicultural attitudes/beliefs, knowledge, and skills has been increased (Arredondo & Perez, 2003; ASCA, 2010; Berger, Zane, & Hwang, 2014; Constantine et al., 2007; Lee, Rosen, & McWhirten, 2014; Lewis et al., 2002; Nilsson et al., 2011; Ratts et al., 2007; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Tate, Rivera, Edwards, 2015). Multicultural competence is defined as the extent to which a counselor utilizes self-awareness, knowledge, and skills while working with culturally diverse individuals (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992). *Self-awareness* involves counselors' attitudes and beliefs about race, ethnicity, and culture, and the counselors' awareness of his/her biases and stereotypes of cultural group membership with regard to privilege, discrimination, and oppression. *Knowledge* entails the information a counselor has about different worldviews along with his or her own worldview, history of oppression for different groups, and culture-specific values with the potential power of sociopolitical influences. The *skills* component of

multicultural competence means culturally-sensitive abilities, intervention techniques, and specific strategies that meet the needs of marginalized and disenfranchised populations (Arredondo et al., 1996; Constantine et al., 2007; Sue et al., 1992).

Multicultural and social justice counseling competencies. The Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development Executive Council, a division of the ACA, endorsed the Multicultural and Social Justice Competencies (MSJCC) on June 29, 2015 (Ratts et al., 2015). The MSJCC revises the Multicultural Counseling Competencies developed by Sue, Arredondo, and McDavis (1992). The association endorsed the MSJCC to provide counselors a framework to implement multicultural and social justice competencies into counseling theories, practices, and research. The MSJCC underscores the intersection of identities and the dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression that influence the counseling relationship. The MSJCC has four development domains: (1) counselor self-awareness, (2) client worldview, (3) counseling relationship, and (4) counseling and advocacy interventions. The MSJCC includes four aspirational competencies: (1) attitudes and beliefs, (2) knowledge, (3) skill, and (4) action. The MSJCC incorporates a socioecological model into the counseling and advocacy interventions domain. According to the MSJCC, privileged and oppressed counselors intervene with and on behalf of clients at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, institutional, community, public policy, and international/global levels in the counseling and advocacy interventions domain.

ASCA and social justice. The ASCA National Model (2012a) offers structure for the design and implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program and

includes four components: delivery, accountability, management, and foundation.

Through the organization provided by these four components, school counselors are encouraged to enhance all students' development across academic, career, and social/personal domains (ASCA, 2012a). The ASCA National Model provides specific strategies to school counselors to effectively address each of these domains. For instance, the delivery component of the Model recommends that school counselors spend 80% of their time delivering direct services such as the school counseling curriculum, individual student planning, and responsive services (ASCA, 2012a). These direct services and other aspects of the school counseling program can be tailored specifically to provide support and address the needs of immigrant students.

School counselors are not only charged with a mission to promote student development, welfare, and success (Goh et al., 2007); they also play an integral role in supporting cultural diversity. According to the ASCA (2010), school counselors: "Monitor and expand personal multicultural and social justice advocacy awareness, knowledge and skills" (E2. a). Moreover, in 2012, ASCA established a position statement on the roles of professional school counseling in fostering increased awareness, understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity in the school and community: "Professional school counselors collaborate with stakeholders to create a school and community climate that embraces cultural diversity and helps to remove barriers that impede student success," (ASCA, 2012b). Based on the position statement it can be said that school counselors are encouraged to ensure that students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds receive services that best serve their development. Through the

delivery of a comprehensive school counseling program designed to be responsive to the specific needs of its building, school counselors are positioned to provide adequate and appropriate interventions that support immigrant students in schools.

Social justice theory may give school counselors insights about how to understand and address immigrant students' unique challenges and needs. Social justice is accepted as a moral and ethical obligation to advocate for everybody in counseling related organizational standards. By using this framework, school counselor can become agents of social justice, empowered to fight for both individual and systemic changes. It is important to note that social justice is a cyclical process, which means there is not an end point, and there is always room for growth (Miranda, Radliff, Cooper, & Eschenbrenner, 2014). One of the goals of this study is to investigate school counselors' believes and attitudes towards being a social justice advocate and how these believes and attitudes affect their service and support to immigrant students.

School Counselors and Immigrants

According to the U.S. Census, 13% (40 million) of the U.S. population is foreign-born (Grieco et al., 2012) and it is expected that 25% of the U.S. public school students will use English as a second language by 2025 (National Educational Association [NEA], 2014b). One in five children in the U.S. have immigrant parents, and this figure is predicted to increase to more than one in three children by 2040 (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Watkinson & Hersi, 2014). Trends in immigration and birth rates indicate that there will not be any particular ethnic group that is more than 50% of the U.S. population for soon (Crouch, Zakariya, & Jiandani, 2012).

Immigrants have some unique challenges and needs that usually are not met in the U.S. As educational settings are not immune to this phenomenon, immigrant students attend schools that are often unprepared to meet their specialized needs. However, professional school counselors' skills, training, and knowledge position them uniquely to competently intervene in such situations (Clemente & Collison, 2000; Morganfield, 2012; Vela et al., 2013; Vela-Gude et al., 2009). Thus, there is an urgent call for professional school counselors to work effectively with immigrant students and families to overcome their individual, societal, and systemic challenges.

School counselors' experiences with immigrants. Many school counselors believe that counseling and addressing the developmental needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students is complex and challenging (Burnham, Mantero, & Hooper, 2009; Clemente & Collison, 2000; Lee, 2001; Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004). More precisely, school counselors encounter language and cultural barriers while working with immigrant students that reduce the number of interactions with the population (Clemente & Collison, 2000). School counselors, therefore, provide limited academic preparation, scheduling assistance, and feedback about academic performance to immigrant students and their instructors (e.g., ESL teachers). However, school counselors who are culturally sensitive and have increased awareness about diversity receive positive outcomes from their students in both academic and therapeutic contexts (Clemente & Collison, 2000).

Schwallie-Giddis et al. (2004), for example, conducted a qualitative study with 13 elementary and secondary school counselors who worked with linguistically and culturally diverse students and families to investigate their challenges and developmental

needs. The challenges school counselors encounter while working with linguistically and culturally diverse families are insecurities about the cultural appropriateness of their interactions; helping parents understand and interact with an educational system that views school and parental responsibilities differently than the educational systems in their home countries; language barriers; and assisting families with economic challenges they encounter in a new country (Schwallie-Giddis et al. (2004). Schwallie-Giddis et al. (2004) argue that working with immigrant families requires specific understanding of family dynamics and family structure. For instance, one of their school counselor respondents stated:

Dealing with parents is different than dealing with children. The children here ... they know the rules, and they know the teacher, and they know how things work. But when parents come in they do not have to abide by certain rules. (Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004, p. 19)

When asking school counselors to identify which culture they feel most and least comfortable to work with, other than their own, the majority disclosed that they feel least comfortable working with people from Middle Eastern cultures and most comfortable working with people from Hispanic cultures (Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004).

Schwallie-Giddis et al. (2004) found which culture their respondents feel most and least comfortable working with; however, their study did not provide clear explanations for this response. The presented study endeavored to give an explanation for why the respondents feel most comfortable working with certain immigrant groups rather than others.

Johnson (2012) conducted a quantitative research study to examine school counselors' perceptions of their ability to work effectively with ELL students. In particular, the purpose of this study was to identify how school counselors' beliefs about their ability to work effectively with ELL students are affected by factors such as school level, U.S. region, the student size, and prior training. The data was collected through an online questionnaire from 202 school counselors who were actively working with ELL students in elementary, middle, or high school settings. The results revealed that the majority of school counselors were confident in their ability to work with ELL students. Moreover, school counselors had a high level of confidence in developing trust and positive relationships with ELL students. However, they had low self-efficacy in communication and interactions with ELL students' families and in their ability to use a second language for communication. According to the study, while Latino/a school counselors had the highest self-esteem level in working with ELL students, White participants had the lowest score of self-esteem. School counselors who speak a language other than English had higher self-efficacy scores in working with ELL students. School counselors who live in the Southern and Western U.S. were more confident in their ability to work with ELL students than those who live in other regions. Finally, the study revealed that school counselors who work with larger ELL student populations had higher levels of self-efficacy in working with ELL students than those who had small numbers of ELL students (Johnson, 2012).

Johnson (2012) identified the factors impacting school counselors' self-perceived ability to work effectively with immigrants. Cazares-Cervantes (2014) conducted a

further investigation to determine the perceived self-efficacy and training needs of school counselors when working with Latino/a students, which is the largest ELL student population in the U.S. (Shin, 2013). The survey data for the inquiry was collected from 238 active school counselors from elementary, middle school/junior high, and high school levels from a Northwestern state. Cazares-Cervantes (2014) found that although most school counseling programs offer a multicultural counseling class, school counselors need additional training to better understand and address Latino/a students and their needs. More specifically, the study revealed that school counselors' top training needs when working with Latino/a students were professional competence, career counseling, school behavior issues, and cultural awareness and sensitivity. In addition, school counselors had high confidence when working with Latino/a students, perceiving the students' culture as an asset rather than deficit and understanding the value of culture and its effect on education. Finally, most of the school counselors identified "anytime web", "in person", and "live web" as the most desirable type of training for learning practical counseling techniques and cognitive development to better serve their Latino/a students (Cazares-Cervantes, 2014).

The factors impacting school counselors' multicultural case conceptualization was investigated. For example, Constantine and Gushue (2003) conducted a quantitative study to investigate to what extent school counselors' ethnic tolerance and racism attitudes contribute to their multicultural case conceptualization with immigrant students by gathering data from 139 school counselors who were randomly selected from the ASCA's mailing list. They found that school counselors' case conceptualization ability

when working with immigrants was significantly affected by prior multicultural training. Moreover, previous academic training in multicultural issues had a significant impact on school counselors' ability to understand the mental health concerns of immigrant students. This study also revealed that school counselors who had higher ethnic tolerance attitudes were capable of addressing existing issues and needs of immigrant students and better conceptualizing the cases (Constantine & Gushue, 2003).

In 2014, Steuernagel continued the discussion on intercultural sensitivity and tolerance by conducting a qualitative study to examine personal and professional factors influencing school counselors' work. The data was gathered from 334 school counselors in international schools in 74 countries. Results from the study showed that school counselors' intercultural sensitivity was positively and significantly affected by their previous coursework in multicultural counseling, professional development in intercultural competence, and length of time studied abroad during their university years. In addition, older school counselors had higher scores on measures of intercultural sensitivity than younger school counselors. Moreover, frequency of personal interactions with culturally different individuals to understand their culture was found to be the most significantly correlated factor of school counselors' multicultural sensitivity (Steuernagel, 2014).

Further evidence that school counselors need additional skills working with immigrant students is provided by Aydin (2011). Aydin (2011) gathered data from 916 school counselors who worked in elementary, middle or high schools to explore their involvement in school, family, and community partnerships with linguistically diverse

families. School, family, and community partnerships are collaborative practices between school personnel, families, community members, community organizations such as businesses, churches, mosques, libraries, social services, and banks (Bryan, 2005; Bryan & Henry, 2012; Mitchell & Bryan, 2007). Aydin (2011) found race, ethnicity, and bilingual status as important factors in the establishment of partnerships with linguistically diverse families. Non-White and bilingual school counselors had higher involvement with the parents than White school counselors (Aydin, 2011; Cook et al., 2013). In addition, school counselors who had higher numbers of linguistically diverse students on their caseload also had higher level of involvement (Aydin, 2011).

The study by Yeh (2001) provided further information exploring school counselors' experiences with and perceptions of counseling Asian students. The data was gathered from 154 school counselors from 113 different schools (elementary, junior high, and high schools levels) on the East Coast. The school counselors reported that Asian students were referred to them by teachers (51%), self-reported (47%), and by parents (27%). While asking to identify Asian students' most common presenting concerns, 91% reported academic pressure/expectations, 51% mentioned family concerns, 42% listed social concerns, 40% reported cultural customs/traditions, and 23% mentioned mental health concerns. Furthermore, most of the counselors used Rogerian therapy techniques, directive counseling, group counseling, and involved social and family networks to address Asian immigrant students' concerns. The school counselors reported a myriad of challenges that impeded their work with Asian students: 39% reported a lack of family involvement, 38% mentioned student stigmatization of counseling, 35% reported

overcoming cultural barriers, 33% mentioned students' lack of self-disclosing, 27% reported language barriers, and around 10% mentioned understanding student mental health concerns (Yeh, 2001). School counselors believed that Asian students used such coping strategies to overcome the presenting issue as internalizing or avoiding the problem, seeking social support, acting out, seeking the school counselor, and focusing on academics. The school counselors described Asian students as hardworking, quiet, other-oriented, intelligent, and responsible.

In 2013, Clark et al. conducted a qualitative study to explore school counselors' and secondary/postsecondary administrators' perceptions of barriers and available resources related to Latino students' postsecondary degree aspirations. The data was gathered from two high school counselors, two high school principals, a director of school guidance service, three college administrators who work on multicultural subjects, and six university administrators in a southeastern state with high number of Latino/a population. The study revealed that the institutional agents lack awareness of Latino male students' existing educational obstacles that led to lack of tailored activities and interventions. Moreover, although all of the practitioners and administrators highlighted the importance of family engagement in school for student success, the families did not participate in school activities as much as they were expected mostly due to the language barrier. It was highlighted that schools could do more to increase family engagement. School counselors and administrators perceived themselves as "information brokers of resources" who help the students and their families learn available opportunities and access them which would increase family engagement (Clark et al., 2013, p. 464). The

study emphasized the importance of increased communication, sharing ideas and resource among schools, colleges and universities for positive student outcomes. Finally, a need for school personnel was determined to increase their communication among each other to better “network about student needs, programs being offered, and referrals for needed services” (Clark et al., 2013, p. 464).

Overall, what has been previously determined about school counselors’ experiences and their perceptions of working with immigrant students and families is that school counselors face linguistic and cultural challenges (Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004). Their beliefs about their abilities to work effectively with immigrant students are affected by the school counselors’ ethnicity, bilingualism, location, and immigrant student population (Johnson, 2012), as well as age, previous coursework in multicultural counseling, and personal interactions with culturally diverse individuals (Aydin, 2011; Steuernagel, 2004). School counselors’ case conceptualization abilities when working with immigrant students are affected by prior multicultural training and their ethnic tolerance level (Constantine & Gushue, 2003). Furthermore, they need additional training in professional competence, career counseling, school behavior issues, and cultural awareness and sensitivity to work more effectively with immigrant students and families (Cazares-Cervantes, 2014).

Studies which have looked directly at school counselors’ perceptions of their self-efficacy in working with immigrant students and families utilized either a quantitative methodology (e.g., Cazares-Cervantes, 2014; Johnson, 2012) or interviewed a very limited number of participants using a qualitative methodology (e.g., Clark et al., [2013]

interviewed only two school counselors). The methodologies adopted in these studies have provided either descriptive information (rather than exploring the essence of school counselors' experiences and perceptions) or exploratory information from a very limited number of participants. Within the context of a social justice framework, the presented study explored school counselors' perceptions and development of their competencies in working with immigrant students and families with phenomenological qualitative methodology (Moustakas, 1994).

School counselors-in-training and immigrants. Many counselors-in-training experience challenges and frustration during their initial experiences working with immigrant students (Burnham, Mantero, & Hooper, 2009; Roysircar, Gard, Hubbell, & Ortega, 2005). Language barriers and lack of information about immigrant students are frustrating factors for counselors-in-training (Roysircar et al., 2005). Moreover, counselors-in-training are worried about immigrant students' personal, social, and academic difficulties, and they are hopeless about both their own professional self-efficacy and the students' future. However, although many counselors-in-training reported negative experiences with immigrant students, early field experience with the population fosters their multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. Involvement with immigrants helps counselors-in-training "develop an intellectual understanding of social problems, sensitivity for these concerns, and commitment to address them" (Nilsson et al., 2011, p. 419).

Burnham, Mantero, and Hooper (2009) conducted a qualitative study with nine graduate-level school counselors-in-training to examine potential benefits of a school

counselor-in-training experiential exercise that combine classroom learning with early field experience. The study also aimed to explore the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of an early field experience on their multicultural sensitivity and awareness when working with ESL students and teachers. The study revealed that field experience prepared prospective school counselors to become culturally sensitive, increased their awareness about diversity, and fostered their counseling skills when working with ESL teachers and students. More specifically, four themes emerged from the study: (1) desire to reach all students, (2) general and unique skill-building, (3) learning unique cultural challenges, and (4) participants' limitations in their experiences. The results indicate that an early field experience allowed school counselor-in-training to develop multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills sooner than is typically expected (Burnham et al., 2009).

Further, Nilsson et al. (2011) conducted a qualitative study to understand counseling trainees' perception and experiences of working in a mental health and outreach program for immigrant individuals. The data was gathered from three master's-level and nine doctoral-level students in a counseling/counseling psychology program. They interviewed twelve graduate students, and the results yielded three categories: development of cultural knowledge, counseling-related skills, and personal growth and reaction. Their results revealed that most participants had developed awareness, attitudes, skills, and confidence "reflecting growth in multicultural competency and social justice advocacy" (Nilsson et al., 2011, p. 419). Although working with the immigrants initially was uncomfortable for some participants, in time, the experience altered their views and

perceptions of others. Many participants acknowledged that there is still much to learn about different cultures and that learning would help them grow both personally and professionally (Nilsson et al., 2011).

In summary, prior research has found that the experiences of counselors-in-training working with immigrant students and families involve language and cultural barriers, frustration due to lack of information about immigrants, and concern about immigrant students' personal, social, and academic difficulties (Nilsson et al., 2011). Although working with immigrants initially is uncomfortable for some counselors-in-training, early field experience with the population fosters their multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and confidence (Nilsson et al., 2011), and prepared prospective school counselors to become culturally sensitive, increased their awareness about diversity, and sharpened their counseling skills (Burnham et al., 2009). These issues counselors-in-training face in interactions with immigrant students and families highlight the need for further examination of school counselors' development and perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrants.

Immigrant Students

Unfortunately, the "standard account of American immigration" is deficit-based which mostly focuses on acculturation and assimilation and perceives immigrants as burdens (Hirschman, 2013, p. 26). The noteworthy contributions of immigrants mostly are ignored or invisible. Although immigrants are not smarter than nonimmigrants, it is argued that immigrants' and their children's "selectivity and marginality may have pushed and pulled those with ability into high-risk career paths that reward creative

work” (Hirschman, 2013, p. 26). Consequently, immigrants have made significant contributions to the U.S. through arts, sciences, and other cultural pursuits that positively impact many institutions “to be more meritocratic and open to innovation than they would be otherwise” (Hirschman, 2013, p. 24). More specifically, immigrants play a major role in many scientific fields. For example, only 41% of mathematics, 40% of physics, and 22% of electrical engineering doctorate degrees in 2006 were earned by native-born Americans (Hirschman, 2013). Likewise, 70% of the forty finalists in the Intel Science Talent Search consists of immigrants or children of immigrants in 2011. Of cancer researchers at America’s best cancer institutions, 42% are foreign-born immigrants (Anderson, 2013). More than 33% of U.S. scientists who received Nobel Prize were immigrants. Non-native born scientists are prominent in elected honorary societies in the U.S. (Hirschman, 2013). However, it is important to know that most immigrants’ contributions take place after they have enough time to settle in (Myers, 2008). Therefore, we should embrace a strength-based approach towards immigrants to acknowledge and appreciate their contributions in arts, sciences, economics, and culture.

Immigrant students’ challenges. Although immigrant groups share some similarities, there is no doubt that all immigrant students do not face the same problems (Suarez-Orozco, Onaga, & Lardemelle, 2010). Each student is unique and should be treated an individual within the context of his/her cultural and family systems (Goh et al., 2007). While some immigrant students have specific concerns related to their original countries’ circumstances, other immigrant students might have some particular financial and social status concerns prior to moving to the U.S. For instance, Williams and Butler

(2003) argued that newly arrived Haitian students might face racism for the first time in their life while students from Kosovo may struggle with the effects of the war they experienced in their country.

Once immigrant families and their children moved to another country, they are exposed to a variety of stressors that make them vulnerable. Consequently, they face tremendous social, emotional, academic, economic, discrimination, adjustment, family and health issues with limited support systems (Esquivel & Keitel, 1990; Goh et al., 2007; Malott, 2010; Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Williams & Butler, 2003; Villalba et al., 2007). The challenges immigrant students face can be categorized into five themes: (1) language difficulties (2) academic issues, (3) racism and acculturation, (4) mental health, and (5) limited educational and economic capital (Note: This section expands on information summarized in Chapter 1).

Language difficulties. About 85% of foreign-born immigrants speak a language other than English at home and 10% of them do not speak English at all (Grieco et al., 2012). One of the greatest challenges immigrants face is language difficulty or English language acquisition. For instance, according to Malott (2010), approximately 97% of Mexican immigrant students speak a language other than English; therefore, English language acquisition is one of their major challenges that leads to low academic achievement, high dropout rate, and limited access to postsecondary education (APA, 2012; Becerra, 2012; Clark et al., 2013; NCES, 2013; NEA, 2014a; Sheng et al., 2011). Although some immigrant students are willing to learn English as soon as possible to integrate into the society, some of them are uninterested in learning a new language. One

of the common reasons why some students do not want to learn a new language is fear of losing their own cultural and familial identity that makes them insecure and intimidated (Cardenas, Taylor & Adelman, 1993). When students confront a language barrier, it is highly likely that they would not be allowed to take classes that match their English ability in school (Cardenas, Taylor & Adelman, 1993). In other words, when students lack English language skills, no matter how smart they are or interested in certain subjects, they are not allowed to take the classes before they achieved a proficiency level of English, which might be a vital obstacle to access postsecondary education.

Academic challenges. It has become axiomatic to state that ELL students do less well than native speakers in school. Researchers have clearly stated that there is an academic gap between immigrant students and non-immigrant students (APA, 2012; NCES, 2005; NCES, 2013). More specifically, the biggest educational attainment gap between any two groups is seen between ELL and non-ELL students (APA, 2012). For example, while 75% of non-ELL 8th grade students reached proficiency or above in reading on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 2005), 29% of ELL students reached the same level. Although 67% of non-ELL 4th grade students reached proficiency or above in reading on the NAEP, only 27% of ELL students reached the same level. In addition, while 71% of non-ELL 8th grade students reached proficiency or above in mathematics on the NAEP, only 29% of ELL students reached the same level. Furthermore, although 83% of non-ELL 4th grade students reached proficiency or above in mathematics on the NAEP, only 54% of ELL students reached the same level. In other words, in reading, ELL students were 36 points below non-ELL students at the 4th grade

level, and 44 points below at the 8th grade level in the NAEP (NCES, 2013).

Unfortunately, it has been documented that ELL students do not close this gap in later grades (APA, 2012). The longer ELL students stay in school, the larger achievement gap between them and non-ELL students becomes.

There are a number of individual and systemic factors that contribute to the achievement and opportunity gaps between immigrant students and native-born students. First, linguistically diverse students may experience academic challenges due to a lack of English language skills and lack of academic preparation in their native language (Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004). Second, teachers and school counselors who can speak a language other than English are underrepresented in the public schools where such language barriers negatively affect student achievement (Colombo, 2006). Third, the limited resources of the schools many linguistically diverse students attend includes having inexperienced teachers, teachers who do not have a degree in the field they teach, and access to few academic resources like computers and college applications (Bailey et al., 2007; Cook et al., 2012). Finally, a majority of immigrant students experience low academic expectations from their teachers and school counselors, lack of college information, and limited academic tracking -- factors likely to further contribute to low academic achievement and underrepresentation in rigorous academic preparation classes (Ratts et al., 2007; Vela, Zamarripa, Balkin, Johnson, & Smith, 2013).

It is not uncommon that many school counselors, teachers, and other school personnel fail to distinguish *social* English, known as basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), from *academic* English, known as cognitive academic language

proficiency (CALP) (Cummins, 1994). According to Cummins (2008), while BICS refers to “conversational fluency in a language”, CALP refers to “students’ ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success in school” (p. 2). In other words, social English is an individual’s ability to engage in informal face-to-face or peer-to-peer conversations that do not require high-level cognitive skills. Academic English, on the other hand, requires comprehensive and analytic level of understanding that is needed, for example, for math problems and technical writing. While BICS takes 1 to 3 years, CALP takes 5 to 8 years on average (Cummins, 1994; Cummins, 1999). It is imperative for school counselors and other educators to recognize and acknowledge that students’ high level of *social* English skills does not necessarily indicate equivalent levels of *academic* English skill development. Therefore, it is vital to exercise great caution before labeling students with motivational or cognitive-ability deficit due to low academic performance in situations in which a concern is potentially related to language difficulty.

Racism and acculturation. One of the most important and common issues immigrant students encounter is racism as it was found to be the greatest perceived challenge among Mexican origin immigrant students (Malott, 2010). Moreover, racial labeling and categorization were found to be the main issues immigrant students face on almost a daily basis (Williams & Butler, 2007). Accordingly, immigrant students experience low self-esteem, low academic achievement, dropout, and discipline and suspension that can lead in gang activities as results of racism and discrimination in schools (Ogbu, 1974; Villalba et al., 2007).

Immigrants usually are given the message that they need to sacrifice some aspects of their culture and identity in order to survive in the U.S. (Villalba et al., 2007). Immigrants receive the message that acculturation to the American way of life is necessary for being successful in the U.S.. Berry (2005) defined acculturation as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (p. 698). Sirin et al. (2013b) argued that acculturation impacts immigrant students’ mental health; when acculturative stress increases, mental health symptoms increase as well. For example, some immigrant students do not know how to deal with school and community, which leads isolation and loneliness. Acculturation is more difficult for individuals who have to deal with stigma of being different based on their skin color, language, ethnicity, etc. (Padilla & Perez, 2003). Immigrant students not only need to learn how to read and do math, they also have to “navigate their way between two very different worlds as they move between home and school” (Colombo, 2006, p. 3105).

Mental health. Mental health issues are common among immigrants (Bridges et al., 2012; Fazel, 2015; Oppedal, Roysamb, & Sam, 2004; Sirin et al., 2013a; Sirin et al., 2013b). For instance, 36% of Hispanic immigrants met diagnostic criteria for at least one mental disorder and 42% of them saw a mental health provider in the prior year (Bridges et al., 2012). Similarly, according to Patel, Rajpathak, and Karasz (2012), 37% of Bangladeshi immigrants were at risk of depression. In addition to mental health issues, immigrant students experience isolation, unhappiness, and lack of friendship (Cardenas et al., 1993; Fazel, 2015). Research found that although immigrant students’ mental health

symptoms decrease over time, increased symptoms are seen around 12th grade. Sirin and his colleagues (2013a) claimed that the prospect of leaving high school, the need for a job, and the school-to-work transition might explain the increased level of anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms.

An effective intervention for many of the issues faced by immigrant students is increased access to mental health professionals who offer essential support and other services. Although many immigrant students need mental health services for their healthy development, most of them do not utilize these services as often as they would benefit (Abreu & Sasaki, 2004; Bagourdi & Baisman-Tzachor, 2010; Cabassa, Zayas, & Hansen, 2006; Sirin, et al., 2013a; Yeh, 2001). The first reason for underused mental health services is cultural stigma and shame over mental health problems (Yeh, 2001). It might be a dishonor for a family to have a child with an emotional problem in some cultures (Esquivel & Keitel, 1990). For instance, Miville and Constantine (2007) found a positive correlation between Asian cultural values and perceived stigma about counseling. In other words, many Asian students do not seek counseling due to cultural stigma. The second reason comes from institutional barriers (Leong, Wagner, & Tata, 1995). Esquivel and Keitel (1990) argued that limitations in assessment procedures, bilingualism, and the language of interview are some institutional barriers that hinder immigrant students benefiting from mental health services. Finally, lack of familiarity with and misconception about mental health services may contribute immigrant students' limited utilization of mental health services (Yeh, 2001).

Limited educational and economic capital. Numerous immigrant families experience financial issues even though they come from a diverse educational and socio-economic backgrounds (Esquivel & Keitel, 1990). For example, 19% of immigrants live below poverty, compared to 15% of those who are native born, and 31% of immigrant children live below poverty, compared to about 21% of native born children (Grieco et al., 2012). Moreover, while poor immigrant children live in poor neighborhoods as a result of poverty, poor White children are more likely to live in middle-class areas (Drake & Jonson-Reid, 2014).

Many immigrant students jeopardize their academic achievement, likelihood of graduating, and access to postsecondary education by working to support their families financially (Clark et al., 2013). Moreover, they have limited educational experiences and capital in the U.S. (Cook et al., 2012). For instance, they are unfamiliar with the school policies in the U.S. and social expectations of their peers and teachers, receive limited social acceptance, and lack systems of support (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2010; Williams & Butler, 2003; Villalba et al., 2007), all of which negatively affect student development and academic success.

While the majority encounter multiple barriers in academic settings, some immigrant students face fewer educational challenges than what might be expected. For instance, high educational level and socio-economic status of parents, a supportive educational environment in family, and an achievement-oriented peer group are some factors that may reduce immigrant students' educational challenges (Constantine & Gushue, 2003). However, it is important to note that academic success cannot guarantee

the healthy psychological adjustment and well-being of immigrant students (Constantine & Gushue, 2003). School counselors who work with immigrant students and families should promote the population's wellbeing, healthy development, and successful integration. Therefore, it is important to explore what resources school counselors utilize to develop their competencies and what they believe about their competencies in working with immigrant students and families.

Immigrant students' experiences with school counselors. There is emerging evidence that most immigrant students have negative experiences with their school counselors (Clemente & Collison, 2000; Morganfield, 2012; Vela et al., 2013; Vela-Gude et al., 2009). For instance, Vela-Gude and her colleagues (2009) conducted a qualitative research study with eight Latina/o college students to explore their experiences with their high school counselors. Their data revealed that seven out of eight participants had negative perceptions of their high school counselors. The participants indicated that they received minimal individual counseling and inadequate or inappropriate advisement, and their school counselors were not readily available when needed. For instance, one of the participants, Jessica, said:

My counselor was never there, and I honestly believe that if she would have been there, if she would have given me that information about scholarships, about college opportunities, and all of these other opportunities that I could have gotten as a first-generation college student whose background is not all that academic, then I would have been able to, with scholarships and everything, I think I would have been able to achieve a lot more than I eventually did. (p. 275).

Similarly Vela et al. (2013) found that high school Latino/a students associated their school counselors with providing inappropriate or inadequate advisement, lack of availability, lack of individual counseling and attention, differential treatment, and low expectations or setting limits. They also found a direct relationship between higher expectations from school counselors and the enrolment rate of immigrant students in AP courses. In other words, school counselors' low expectations for immigrant students hindered the students from enrolling in AP courses that are crucial tools that give access to postsecondary education.

Clemente and Collinson (2000) conducted a qualitative research study to investigate "the multidimensional relationship between school counselors and ESL Latino students and the role ESL faculty play in this relational equation" (Research purpose and question section, para. 1). The data was gathered from forty eight students, five school counselors, and four ESL instructors in four middle schools. The results of the study revealed that there was a stressful relationship between immigrant ELL students and their school counselors due to language barriers. More precisely, most immigrant students who spoke a language(s) other than English were unable to voice their concerns in English, which may have discouraged them from using school counseling services. For instance, one participant said: "When I am upset and hurt I cannot say what I want to say in English. I don't know if she [school counselor] understands me very well" (Result section, para. 17). Most immigrant students believed that their school counselors were unable or unwilling to execute the core principles of the ASCA National Model (Malott, 2010; Morganfield, 2012; Vela-Gude et al., 2009).

Although some studies have found immigrant students have negative experiences with their school counselors, some studies have found immigrant students' perceptions towards their school counselors to be positive in nature. For instance, Jodry, Robles-Pina, and Nichter (2004) conducted a qualitative study to examine six Latina/o high school students' home, school, and community experiences. They found that most of their participants had positive experiences with their school counselors. For instance, one of the participants said: "I'll be the first in my family to graduate from high school. College, I did not think about it really until the counselor said I should" (p. 28).

In summary, immigrants have made major contributions to the U.S. in arts, sciences, economic, and culture contrary to a standard perception of American immigration. For example, foreign-born scientists are prominent in a number of fields with great achievements. However, many immigrants are vulnerable when they migrate to another settlement due to a variety of challenges. It is well known that although there are some similarities among immigrants, each one of them is unique and may have unique needs and challenges. Therefore, it is vital to consider them within the unique context of their cultural and family system. Based on the comprehensive literature review immigrant students' challenges are categorized into five themes: (a) language difficulties (b) academic issues, (c) racism and acculturation, (d) mental health issues, and (e) limited educational and economic capital. As a result of these challenges, many immigrants face academic, career, social, emotional, economic, discrimination, adjustment, family and health issues with limited support systems. As school counselors are in a unique position that enables them to work closely with immigrant students and families to promote their

wellbeing, healthy development, and successful integration, it is essential to explore school counselors' development and perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrants.

Family Language Policy

Researchers have been interested in exploring why and how some immigrant families maintain their native language while members of other families lose their native language. More specifically, scholars want to understand how immigrant families choose their language policy (King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008) and to what extent school personnel impact their decisions (Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013). Moreover, the influence of FLP and bilingualism on student outcomes is another interest of these researchers (Alban-Gonzalez & Ortega-Campoverde, 2014; Bak et al., 2014; Dolson, 1985; Gold, 2015; Snow, 1990).

FLP is the explicit and implicit planning of language use within the home and among family members (Armstrong, 2014; King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008). FLP determines what families actually do with language in their daily interactions and their beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies about language. For the purpose of this discussion, *beliefs* are defined as mental constructions based on evaluation and judgment that guide behaviors (Pajares, 1992). *Attitudes* are defined as “a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 1). *Ideology* means what people think should be done (Spolsky, 2004). Additionally, FLP determines “which *caretakers* attempt to influence what *behaviors* of which *family members* for what *ends* under what *conditions* by what *means*

through what *decision-making process* with what *effect*” (King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008, p. 910 – in original). Families shape their FLP based on what they believe would best serve them to achieve their goals (Curd-Christiansen, 2009). FLP examines the balance between and use of languages with the focus on children in the family. Therefore, FLP includes social and cultural context of family life, parental ideologies, decision-making and strategies concerning literacy and languages (King & Fogle, 2013).

The complexity of how parents form their FLP compels a multi-faceted perspective on the process. Therefore, it is important to take a holistic approach to parents’ belief systems in relation to language and education planning activities (Fogle, 2013). To comprehensively understand language practices in any community (such as a family, school, church, mosque, or workplace, etc.), micro and macro data, national and transnational language ideologies need to be considered (Seloni & Sarfati, 2013). Data at the *micro-level* provides insights about what affects parents’ and children’s language choices on an individual level. For instance, if a family strongly values their ethnic identity, then this value may lead the family to speak their native language. However, if another family prioritizes social and/or economic rewards of monolingualism of the dominant language (Fogle, 2013), they may choose to speak their society’s dominant language. The *macro-level* data, on the other hand, offers information about what affects language choices on the societal level (Baez, 2013). Language policies at the macro level aim to affect social structures and processes (Curd-Christiansen, 2009).

Current research in FLP aims to critically analyze how local language policies and practices in day-to-day interactions are created and transformed by transnational and

multilingual families (King & Lanza, 2015). It is crucial to examine how FLP fosters easy and successful transition and integration of families into a new culture because to help families successfully integrate into new environments. Moreover, as school counselors have direct contact with immigrant students and families, it is important to examine school counselors' perceptions of their impact on forming FLPs and what they believe about the impact FLPs have on student outcomes. To better understand FLP the interactions between internal language practices and external language ideologies will be discussed. Further, because FLP cannot be distinguished from sociopolitical realities, policies will be examined below (Fogle, 2013; Seloni & Sarfati, 2013).

Language ideologies. Language ideologies are defined as “belief systems about language and the people who speak in a particular way” (Allard, Mortimer, Gallo, Link, & Wortham, 2014, p. 337). Language ideologies are organizational schemes that constitute connections between people and language. These connections have a potential to determine who people are, what they are worth, and how they should be treated. Language ideologies are rooted in social practices and include ideas, constructs, and practices (Razfar, 2012). Language ideologies are contextual and have strong connections with parents' educational experiences and expectations. Because language ideologies stem from one's perceived value, power, and utility of a language, they are often seen as “the driving force of language policy” (Curdts-Christiansen, 2009, p. 354).

Language ideologies are not only concerned with language, they also are tied to social identity and nationalism. *Monoglossic* ideologies are constituted from nationalist language ideologies and assume “legitimate practices are only those enacted by

monolinguals” (García, 2009, p. 115). Monoglossic language ideologies are adopted in U.S. educational policy and practice and it treats monolingualism as the norm (Flores & Schissel, 2014). Monoglossic ideologies consider bilingualism as an obstacle to high academic achievement. Moreover, monoglossic ideologies assume that bilingualism will be maintained without formal educational interventions (Allard et al., 2014) which causes a great deal of pressure on immigrant families to assimilate to an idealized monolingual norm rather than building on their dynamic bilingualism that “sees languages not as monolithic systems made up of discreet sets of skills, but as a series of social practices that are embedded in a web of social relations” (García, 2009, p. 109). However, many researchers have concluded that the premises of monoglossic ideologies are not true and these ideologies do not serve immigrant students’ best interest (Baker, 2011; De Houwer, 2007; Dolson, 1985; Kasuya, 1998; Quiroz, Snow & Zhao, 2010; Rodriguez, Carrasquillo, & Lee, 2014; Schwartz, 2008; Shin, 2012; Snow, 1990).

With the effects of monoglossic ideologies, language shift or assimilation can be seen in many immigrant families. Assimilation is seen when immigrants “unequivocally accept the worldview, values, and beliefs of the dominant host culture” (Chung, Bemak, Ortiz, & Sandoval-Perez, 2008, p. 312). *Language shift* is concerned with a downward language movement (e.g., decreasing the number people who speak the language, losing proficiency) (Baker, 2011). Luykx (2005) said that there are two ways of language shift: “(1) rapidly modernizing societies undergoing language shift from a vernacular language (or languages) to an official language; and (2) immigrant communities in which families are transplanted into unfamiliar linguistic territory” (p. 1408). In both situations parents

are often linguistically unable to provide necessary support for their children to properly learn their native language, which means that schools become children's linguistic socialization sources.

Internal language practices and policies. Curdt-Christiansen (2009) defined language policy as “a political decision and a deliberate attempt to change/influence/affect the various aspects of language practices and the status of one or more languages in a given society” (p. 352). Immigrant families' language practices and language maintenance have been studied within the Language Policy framework, which intends to investigate families' language attitudes, beliefs, and their actual practices (Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013).

Language beliefs, language practices, and language management are the three major components of language policy at the family level (Spolsky, 2004). *Language belief* is defined as “beliefs about language and language use” (p. 5). In other words, language beliefs can be explained as how speakers view minority and majority languages in terms of aesthetic, symbolic, economic value; maintenance of ethnic language; and language choice for public and family contexts. Spolsky (2004) defined *language practices* as “the habitual pattern of selecting among the varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire” (p. 5), which is what people actually do with their language. Speakers' frequency of using minority and majority languages, patterns and reasons of language choice among family members and other people, and their language proficiency level that influences their language choice can be given as some examples of language practices. *Language management* is defined as “any specific efforts to modify or

influence that practice by any kind of language intervention or planning” (Spolsky, 2004, p. 5). A family member’s intentional effort to make other family members speak/learn a certain language or languages can be an example of language management.

Researchers have identified personal, social, cultural, economic, and political factors as the major elements that directly influence the language(s) used by family members in the home domain (Abdelhay, Makoni, & Makoni, 2011). For example, although multilingual education is offered and encouraged in Malaysia, most people choose English as their instructional language at school due to its social and economic rewards (Dumanig, David, & Shanmuganathan, 2013). In addition, competence in spoken English is a prediction of social status and level of prestige in the society that encourages people to learn and speak English. More specifically, fluent persons who speak English in Malaysia are perceived as being highly educated, which encourages many private schools and colleges to use English as their medium of instruction. Social, political, and economic advantages of speaking English attract many people globally and this trend is increasing (Abdelhay et al., 2011; Brutt-Griffler, 2004); Dumanig et al., 2013).

Interested in understanding language policy, Fogle (2013) conducted a qualitative study to explain how transnational adoptive parents who adopted children from other countries draw on categorizations and descriptions of their children to explain their language and education policies. The data was gathered from eleven adoptive families residing in a major East Coast metro arena. The study revealed that although larger discourse processes in society such as monolingual normativity influence FLP, parents

shaped their FLP based on their children's particular cognitive and emotional capacities, educational needs, and desire to form a family bond.

However, practical and pragmatic motivations are not the only critical factors that shape families' language policies. For instance, Curdt-Christiansen (2009) argued that aesthetic and individual benefits of bilingualism/multilingualism also have massive effect on language policies. Similarly, Tannenbaum (2012) positioned the mother tongue as the central to an internal sense of self and identity. Immigrant parents defined their native language as a cultural tool for their children to gain access to their cultural background; their native language is considered as a manifestation of their socio-cultural identity. Guardado (2008) stated that although family members do not necessarily have to be aware of the functions of their mother tongue, their mother tongue is the link to their homeland, childhood, memories, early significant relationships, songs, laughter, stories, affect, family, history, and meaning making in life. In other words, immigrant parents believe that identity can be validated through the development of their mother tongue (Tannenbaum, 2012).

King and Fogle (2006) conducted an ethnographic research study with 24 parents who were attempting to raise bilingual children to reveal the relationship between public discourses, private networks, and personal beliefs in influencing their parenting practices in relations to language. They found that parents were critical consumers of any source of public discourses. More specifically, although some popular press, parenting literature, and personal networks may influence family language policies, parents' own personal successful or unsuccessful experiences served as the major motivator sources. Similarly,

Armstrong (2014) demonstrated that since families establish their language policies over time, research, discussion, experimentation, misjudgment, happenstance, and accident are useful sources throughout this process. Instead of passively adopting dominant ideologies, parents “produce their own responses by negotiating, resisting or adapting to national and transnational language policies” (Seloni & Sarfari, 2013, p. 8). Family members can resist, shape or contest the values regarding language ideologies. In other words, they might transform these ideologies and manifest the transformation through language practices within the family. For instance, family members may exhibit their resistance to some ideologies by showing loyalty to their native language and use only their native language for their daily interactions. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see some families changing their children’s language environment to maintain their heritage language (Spolsky, 2012). As a result, in order to better understand this topic and its implications for school counselors, the benefits of bilingualism need to be explored.

Bilingualism. Although scholars do not agree on a single definition of bilingualism, Rodrigues, Carrasquillo, and Lee (2014) define it as “the ability of an individual to use two languages in a variety of situations and conditions” (p. 4). Bilingualism is seen in every country, in every society, and in all age groups; more than half of the world’s population is bilingual (Alban-Gonzalez & Ortega-Campoverde, 2014). People desire to speak a second language for a variety of reasons. For instance, bilingualism has social, economic, career, cognitive, and academic advantages and bilingual people are more open for cross cultural understanding (Alladi et al., 2013; Bak

et al., 2014; Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007; Rodrigues et al., 2014; Saidi & Ansaldo, 2015).

Advantages of bilingualism are not limited to any particular ethnic group, socioeconomic status, educational level, or duration of being bilingual, although early bilingual exposure has better outcomes. Specifically, although the positive outcomes of bilingualism are more significant for those who become a bilingual before the age of 5 and who are proficient in both languages (Rodrigues, Carrasquillo, & Lee, 2014), individuals who acquire a second language in adulthood also benefit (Alban-Gonzalez & Ortega-Campoverde, 2014). For instance, Deary found that older bilingual adults outperform monolinguals in cognitive tests although they did not have higher IQ scores (as cited in Alban-Gonzalez & Ortega-Campoverde, 2014, p. 129). In addition, according to Bak et al. (2014), cognitive advantages exist within illiterate societies as well, which means no special education or intelligence is needed to have the cognitive advantage of bilingualism (Gold, 2014).

It has been well documented that bilingual individuals “respond faster and more accurately than monolinguals to cognitive tasks requiring selective attention, inhibition, switching, and executive functions” (e.g., planning, organizing, remembering details, time management) (Saidi & Ansaldo, 2015, p. 52). Executive functions are a group of mental functions that help people make connections between present actions and past experiences (Soveri, Rodriguez-Fornells & Laine, 2011). Bilingual people are faster than monolinguals at “switching one mental task to another” (Alban-Gonzalez & Ortega-Campoverde, 2014, p. 131). Moreover, research has shown a connection between

bilingualism and multitasking. For example, Poarch and Bialystok (2014) found bilingualism as an enhancing factor for human multitasking and nonverbal executive processing.

Further evidence of advantages of bilingualism is seen on postponing the onset of Alzheimer's symptoms. Alzheimer's is "an age-related, neuro-degenerative disorder characterized by the decline of cognitive functions, difficulty completing familiar tasks, or withdrawal from work and social life" (Alban-Gonzalez & Ortega-Campoverde, 2014, p. 127). Overall, there are more than 5 million patients live with Alzheimer's and it is the sixth cause of death in the U.S. (Alzheimer's Association, 2015). Alban-Gonzalez and Ortega-Campoverde (2014) conducted a comprehensive literature review to investigate the relationship between bilingualism and Alzheimer's. They examined six studies carried out between 1991 and 2012 in the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom, India, and Sweden. Although these studies were conducted by different researchers, in different countries and settings, with different participants and with varying age groups, the studies reached "identical conclusions" (Alban-Gonzalez & Ortega-Campoverde, 2014, p. 128). A direct connection between bilingualism and postponing the onset of Alzheimer's symptoms were found. Furthermore, although bilingualism cannot prevent Alzheimer's, among patients who had been diagnosed with probable Alzheimer's, bilingual patients reported symptom onset up to five years later than monolingual patients. Similarly, Bialystok et al. (2007) found that bilingual patients showed 4.1 years delay in the onset of dementia in comparison to monolingual patients.

Bilingualism has been a valuable personal and family goal among many language-minority parents in the U.S. and elsewhere because FLPs are positioned as the central focus of immigrant families in raising bilingual children (Altman, Feldman, Yitzhaki, Lotem & Walters, 2014). These parents are more assertive about educational rights and creating opportunities for their children to maintain their native language because many of them consider bilingualism as a gift and an important advantage for their children (King et al., 2008). Moreover, Curdt-Christiansen (2009) stated “[immigrant] parents believe positively in multilingualism and consider languages to be an important socio-political-linguistic capital for social advancement” (p. 371). Most notably, parents’ desire to provide two-way bilingual education, in which minority and majority children learn both the mainstream and minority languages, has increased in recent years because they are not satisfied with the traditional high-school level, foreign language approaches (Baker, 2011; King et al., 2008).

School is one of the most powerful elements directly affecting FLP that may determine the status of bilingualism for families. In the language management role, families may be told by the school that they need to speak the dominant language used as the instructional medium. For example, research has found that teachers in Greece tend to advise parents to speak only Greek because they believe that speaking their native language confuses children (Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013). Ball and Lardner (1997) argued that when teachers do not respect the home language of students, students develop “negative attitudes toward the children who spoke it, that in effect, their attitudes constituted a language barrier impeding students’ educational progress” (p. 472).

However, it is important to note that such practices are not dictated by any official policy document; rather, it is teachers' personal beliefs in which speaking native language interferes and hinders the learning of a second language (Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013).

Most teachers believe that immigrant children's native language(s) is a burden or an obstacle because they think speaking the native language confuses children (Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013). However, schools should recognize the importance of home language and culture pattern and consider their language as an asset that should be cherished and cultivated (Spolsky, 2012). Instead of pushing families to give up speaking their native language, schools should adapt their curriculum and teaching methods and goals to include families' native language and culture for better student outcomes (Dolson, 1985; Snow, 1990). Therefore, it is crucial to have workshops, seminars, networks, and publications, brochures, and booklets for sensitizing teachers, health professionals, speech therapists, childcare workers to needs of bilingual children and families.

Researchers have concluded that bilingualism is *good* for people. However, there are some organizations (e.g., English Only Movement) that assert bilingualism as a “bad” thing and are opposed to bilingual education. Alban-Gonzalez and Ortega-Campoverde (2014) argued that it is crucial to know that these types of organizations' tenets “are based on prejudice and ignorance and have no scientific foundation” (p. 130). Therefore, it is important for school counselors, educators, parents, and policy makers to be aware of the advantages of bilingualism and advocate for bilingualism and bilingual education for

the sake of children and the society. Accordingly, this study aims to explore school counselors' perceptions of FLP, bilingualism, and how these policies impact student outcomes.

FLP and students' academic outcomes. Several research studies have employed observations, interviews, and questionnaires to examine the relationship between parental language policy and their children's attitude and performance (De Houwer, 2007; Dolson, 1985; Hammer, Davison, Lawrence, & Miccio, 2009; Kasuya, 1998; Quiroz et al., 2010; Schwartz, 2008; Shibata, 2004; Snow, 1990). Child language development and higher IQ score are positively correlated with parental language use. For example, Dolson (1985) conducted a study to determine the possible existence of differences in the scholastic performance of 108 fifth and sixth grade Hispanic students from additive and subtractive home bilingual environment. The additive home bilingual refers to families that prefer speaking their native language (Spanish in the study) while subtractive home bilinguals prefer speaking mainstream language, which was English in the study (Baker, 2011; Shin, 2012). The participants were similar in terms of initial home language, socioeconomic status, length of residence, and date of initial enrolment. However, students who spoke Spanish at home outperformed those from homes that had switched to English on mathematic skills, Spanish reading vocabulary, academic grade point average, and retention. These results can be understood as insisting on using weaker language (the dominant language that families are not fluent) at home results in children to be exposed less language and less complex language which negatively affect children's linguistic and cognitive development (King et al., 2008).

In addition to what Dolson's (1985) findings, Snow (1990) conducted a research study to determine how parents' language choices affect children's academic achievement at the United Nations International School in New York City. She found similar results in which children from monolingual, non-English speaking homes performed as well as children from monolingual English-speaking homes. Moreover, children from homes in which English was spoken but was not parents' native language performed worse on both formal definition and on the California Achievement Test. Snow (1990) concludes:

Having had more exposure to English constituted a detriment to performance in English *if* that exposure did not come from native speakers and if it took the place of the higher quality interaction that would have been possible in another language (p. 770)

Research in the literature about the role FLP and bilingualism play in student outcomes provides useful insights for conceptualizing the potential role of school counselors in promoting bilingualism among immigrants. As school counselors have intimate connections with immigrant students and families and interact with them on a daily basis, they are in a unique position to give messages about FLP and bilingualism either directly (talking to them) or indirectly (through school personnel). While school counselors could discourage immigrants for being bilingual or raising bilingual children, they also could encourage and inspire immigrants for maintaining their native language and raising bilingual children. In other words, what school counselors believe about FLP

and bilingualism is very important because these beliefs may have direct impact on immigrant students' and families' lives.

Although considerable research studies have been devoted to understanding the role of FLP, how families shape their FLP, and the potential outcomes of FLP and bilingualism, less attention has been given to exploring school counselors' perceptions of their impact on shaping FLP and the perceived impact of FLP on student outcomes. Consequently, a need exists in the literature is to explore what school counselors believe about their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policy and their perceptions of potential impacts that FLP may have on student outcomes.

To conclude, using a social justice framework to study immigrant students and families, the purpose of this phenomenological qualitative research study was to explore: (a) school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and what resources they utilize to develop their competencies; (b) school counselors' beliefs and attitudes toward being a social justice advocate and how these beliefs and attitudes affect their support and services to immigrant students and families; and (c) school counselors' perceptions of their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies and the perceived impact FLP has on student outcomes.

Summary

This chapter provided a selective review of the literature investigating foundational concepts, experiences of school counselors and immigrant students, and family language policy. This study, based upon social justice, which is concerned with fairness and equity in societies and promotes sharing resources among society's members

– both native-born and immigrant members (Goodman et al., 2004). However, immigrants face acculturation, which is the process of cultural and psychological change as a result of interactions between individuals and groups (Berry, 2005). In order to facilitate positive development and well-being of immigrants and their successful integration to the dominant culture, it is crucial to have an anti-oppressive and social justice-based perspective of acculturation which should appreciate multiculturalism and depreciate assimilation.

Based on research, it is possible to see that although many school counselors believe that counseling and addressing the developmental needs of linguistically and culturally diverse students is complex and challenging at first, they develop their competencies and skills over time. Moreover, school counselors who are culturally sensitive and have increased awareness about diversity receive positive outcomes from their students in both academic and therapeutic contexts (Clemente & Collison, 2000). Immigrant students face some major challenges that can be categorized into five themes: (1) language difficulties (2) academic issues, (3) racism and acculturation, (4) mental health issues, and (5) limited educational and economic capital. How immigrants navigate these changes and challenges is often determined by the family's language policy.

Families adopt their language policies based on a number of factors such as social, personal, cultural, political, aesthetic, and economic benefits of bilingualism or monolingualism. FLP is the explicit and implicit planning of language use within the home and among family members (Armstrong, 2014; King, Fogle & Logan-Terry, 2008).

These policies have impact on families selecting their acculturation strategy among integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization and each strategy has implications for education and language use. Bilingualism has a number of advantages such as social, economic, career, cognitive development, academic achievement, and openness for cross cultural understanding (Bak et al., 2013; Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007; Rodrigues, Carrasquillo, & Lee, 2014; Saidi & Ansaldo, 2015). As a result, it is important to pay close attention to implications of FLP and its impact on student outcomes. This selective review of the literature provided the foundation of the current study. In the next chapter, I will provide an overview of this study using phenomenological qualitative research methodology (Moustakas, 1994) to investigate the research questions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this research study is to explore: (a) school counselors' competency development and their perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrant students and families, (b) to what extent school counselors identify themselves as a social justice advocate and how being a social justice advocate influences their services and support to the population, and (c) respondents' perceptions of their impact on shaping linguistically diverse families' language policies (FLP) and their perceptions of how FLP may impact student outcomes. The nature of the research questions calls for the use of a qualitative research method; therefore, phenomenological qualitative research methodology (Moustakas, 1994) was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What are school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and needs in working with immigrant students and families?
2. What are the resources school counselors perceive to have in order to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families?
3. To what extent do school counselors who work with immigrant students and families perceive themselves to be a social justice advocate?
4. (a) What do school counselors believe about their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies?

(b) What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of family language policies on student outcomes?

Rationale for Design

In order to answer the research questions, the researcher utilized a qualitative methodology based in phenomenological theory (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative research methods enable researchers to investigate meaning and subjectivity (Wertz, 2005). More specifically, Creswell (2012) stated, “qualitative research begins with assumptions and the use of interpretive/theoretical frameworks that inform the study of research problems addressing the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 44). Qualitative research is used when a problem or issue needs to be explored, researchers need a complex and detailed understanding of the issue, researchers want to empower participants, and when quantitative measures and the statistical analysis are inadequate to explain the problem (Creswell, 2012). The qualitative researchers' purpose is to “restructure and clarify data to offer a narrative that captures the essence of participants' individual and collective stories” (Choudhuri, Glauser, & Peregoy, 2004, p. 445). Qualitative research methodology has been the ideal method to explore school counselors' experiences, competency development, and their perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrant students and families (Cazares-Cervantes, 2014; Clark et al., 2013; Clemente & Collison, 2000; Johnson, 2012; Schwallie-Giddis, Anstrom, Sanchez, Sardi, & Granato, 2004) as well as to investigate family language policy (Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Fogle, 2013).

Phenomenological qualitative research method is “scientific by virtue of being methodical, systematic, critical, general, and potentially intersubjective” (Wertz, 2005, p. 170). Phenomenological qualitative research method enables researchers to investigate a number of research participants, situations, forms of expressions or descriptions, analytic procedures, and a variety of ways to present findings (Patton, 2002; Wertz, 2005). Moreover, phenomenological qualitative research method derives evidence from first-person reports of life experiences searching for *meaning* (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) argued that phenomenology reaches the meaning of the whole by examining entities from sides, angles, and perspectives. Phenomenology seeks “meanings from appearances and arrives at essences through intuition and reflection on conscious acts of experience, leading to ideas, concepts, judgments, and understandings” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 58). Researchers using phenomenological qualitative research method collect empirical instances to “identify common meanings, general constituents, themes, psychological processes, and organizational features” (Wertz, 2005, p. 173).

By using this phenomenological qualitative research method, the researcher is able to search for “meanings and essences” of school counselors’ first-person reports of life experiences rather than “measurements and explanations” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 21). Therefore, because the goal of this research study was to examine: (1) school counselors’ perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrant students and families, (2) what resources they utilize to develop their competencies, (3) their beliefs and attitudes toward being a social justice advocate for immigrants, and (4) their perceptions of their impact on FLPs and how FLPs affect student outcomes, phenomenological qualitative

research approach was utilized. My rationale to use phenomenological qualitative research approach relies on the exploratory nature of the inquiry process and the importance of listening to the voices of school counselors who work directly with immigrant students and families. By using the phenomenological qualitative research method, I was able to gather the meanings and essences of school counselors' first-person reports of in vivo experiences in working with immigrants. I used semi-structured interviews as the data collection method.

According to the Ohio School Report Cards for 2013-2014 school year, the average percent of total enrolment that is classified as Limited English Proficiency from all types of K-12 schools in the state of Ohio was 9.9 % (Ohio Department of Education, 2015). Therefore, in order to maximize participation of the study, school counselors who work at schools that have five percent or greater of immigrant student population was targeted. The data was gathered from 13 school counselors through semi-structured interviews. The percentage of immigrant students in the respondents' schools ranged from 10 percent to 100 percent.

Sampling

For this phenomenological qualitative research study, criterion-based purposive sampling method was used (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Purposive sampling is defined as “strategies in which the researcher exercises his or her judgment about who will provide the best perspective on the phenomenon of interest, and then intentionally invites those specific perspectives into the study” (Abrams, 2010, p. 538). Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select information-rich respondents who have

important knowledge and experiences about the phenomenon that informs the research questions (Patton, 2002).

The targeted respondents were recruited through electronic communication (e.g., e-mail, listserv), phone call invitation, and snowball sampling. The initial invitation occurred utilizing the Ohio School Counselor Association listserv. The invitation email (See Appendix A) included the selection criteria and the brief explanation of the research study. The email highlighted that participation was voluntary and if they choose to participate in the study, they may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. The potential participants were informed that in agreeing to participate in the study, they do not give up any personal legal rights they may have as a participant in this study. In addition, the email mentioned potential risks and benefits for participation. Finally, the email included the researcher's private contact information to allow the potential participants to express an interest in participation.

Due to the lack of participation from first invitation on the listserv, the second invitation occurred via direct phone calls to potential participants. Schools that have five percent or greater of immigrant students in in the state of Ohio were determined through the Ohio Department of Education website. Once the schools were identified, school counselors who work at those schools were contacted via phone for participation. The counselors who were interested in participating in the study were sent the consent form (See Appendix B). The consent form included a brief explanation of the study, the purpose of the study, duration of each interview, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality, notice that participation is voluntary, they may answer or refuse to answer

any question or they may discontinue participation at any time with no penalty, the study's IRB approval number, and the researcher's contact information. In addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling method was used, as participants were asked to identify other school counselors who are information-rich respondents (Patton, 2002). The data collection process ended when saturation was reached (Wertz, 2005). Saturation was reached after 10 interviews. However, three more interviews were conducted for confirmatory purpose.

Data Collection

I used three methods to collect data. Although in-depth semi-structured interviews were the major data collection method for this study (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), the demographics of the respondents were collected via an online survey. Semi-structured interviews allow researchers to cover the same topics in each interview while “researchers can ask additional questions to clarify certain points or to delve further into a topic” and “participants are free to add anything else to the interview that they might feel is relevant to the discussion” (Corbin & Strauss, 2014, p. 39). Each interview took approximately 60 minutes. Interviews were arranged at a time convenient to both the respondents and the researcher, either in person or by phone (e.g., freeconference.com online conference call software) depending upon the interviewees' choice. While four interviews were conducted by phone, nine interviews were conducted in person at the respondents' workplace.

The participants were asked to verbally consent to participation during the interview. All interviews were digitally recorded, with the participant's permission.

Although I transcribed four interviews, a professional transcription service transcribed the remaining interviews. The respondents selected a pseudonym for the interview and all transcripts used those names. In other words, respondents' personal information was kept confidential through the research process. At the end of each interview, each respondent was asked to provide potential participants who may have interest in the study, and were given my contact information to share with the potential participants.

Because data analysis was continuous throughout data collection, saturation was possible to determine during data collection. Saturation is defined as new data that will not provide any new themes or novel significant additions for the developing categories (Creswell, 2008; Wertz, 2005). All data collected from participants was stored in password protected digital folders on the researcher's personal computer. In addition, all obtained physical media (e.g., transcripts, consent forms, etc.) will be kept in a locked cabinet for five years in the researcher's office.

Instrument. In order to obtain credible data, the researcher developed the interview questions to examine the development of school counselors' competencies working with immigrant students and families, their perceptions of their competencies, and perceived impact on the FLP and the perceived impact the FLP has on student outcomes. The researcher formed the research questions based on his experiences as a former school counselor, his own experiences of being a linguistically diverse student, the literature, and participants' demographics (Kline, 2008). The interview questions included four categories: participant demographics (See Appendix C) collected online; school counselors' competencies (Questions 1 through 8), social justice (Questions 9

through 11), and family language policy (Questions 12 through 17) (See Appendix D) all collected via interviews. I first drafted the interview questions, and then asked two persons (expert panel) who are knowledgeable in school counseling to provide feedback on the questions and to develop the interview questions. These people were specifically asked to provide feedback to refine the questions, to be respectful, relevant, and clear. These people did not participate in the study.

Data Analysis

In phenomenological qualitative research method, it is suggested that the data is analyzed as it is collected (Balls, 2008). In other words, I did not wait until all interviews are conducted to begin transcribing and analyzing the data. Data collection process ended when saturation was reached. In other words, when I reached the point that new data did not provide any new themes or novel additions for the developing categories, I conducted three more interviews to confirm evolving thematic interpretations (Wertz, 2005).

Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological method of data analysis was implemented to analyze the data. The data analysis process included four steps: (1) epoche, (2) phenomenological reduction, (3) imaginative variation, and (4) synthesis of meanings and essences. The first step of data analysis process is the epoche. Epoche is a Greek word means "to stay away from or abstain" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). In the epoche phase, researchers stay away from their biases, prejudgments, and preconceived ideas about the subject matter, a new fresh start, a new beginning is needed (Wertz, 2005). In other words, researchers are encouraged to see things, events, and people, "as if for the first time" to know things as they appear (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Although the

phenomenological epoche eliminates “the biases of everyday knowledge ... scientific facts, the knowing of things in advance”, it is important to know that it does not ignore the reality of life and things (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). Epoche provides the researcher an opportunity to look at the subjects from fresh eyes, which lead to producing new ideas, feelings, awareness, and understandings.

The tape-recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim as soon as the interview was conducted. And once I reached saturation and conducted three more interviews, each transcript was read multiple times carefully with an unbiased perspective. The purpose of reading the entire description is to grasp the sense of the whole. From 13 verbatim transcripts, 382 significant statements were extracted as the raw data (Moustakas, 1994).

The second step of analyzing the data process is phenomenological reduction. The researcher’s task is to describe the textural language in terms of both internal act of consciousness and external object (Moustakas, 1994). I focused on the quality of experience; therefore, I carefully read all of the statements multiple times. Irrelevant and repetitive statements were removed. After rereading the significant statements, I formulated 32 clusters from the statements, which later constituted the horizons. Once I had the horizons, I clustered the horizons into seven themes (Moustakas, 1994). Then, I organized the themes into a coherent textural description of the phenomenon. In other words, I carefully investigated each and every single of the meaning unit in order to determine what they tell about the phenomenon.

The third step in the data analysis process is imaginative variation. According to Moustakas (1994), the task of imaginative variation is “to seek possible meanings

through utilization of imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions” (p. 97-98). The researcher has freedom to take a perspective to describe the essential structures of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In this stage of data analysis, I tried to arrive at structural description of school counselor respondents’ experiences, and determine how these experiences came to be what they are. Further, I tried to understand the respondents’ experiences in working with immigrant as a group. I determined that the respondents share similar characteristics about their experiences with and understanding of immigrants. As a result, I developed four paradigms around these shared experiences.

In the last step, synthesis of meaning and essences, the goal of the researcher is to complete “intuitive integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the phenomenon as a whole” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 100), which will be presented in Chapter Four. By following step by step the guidance of Moustakas’ (1994) data analysis model, within a social justice framework, I was able to provide the essence of school counselors’ perceptions of their competencies and the resources they utilize in order to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families, and perceived impact on the FLP and the perceived impact the FLP has on student outcomes. I examined the findings with regard to (1) contributions to the body of scholarly knowledge (e.g., impact on previous research and theory), (2) practical implications (e.g., for school counselors, educators, policy

makers, counselor educators, parents), and (3) its impact on the participants (Wertz, 2005).

In order to increase the relevancy of validity, reliability, and interrater reliability (Landreman, Rasmussen, King, & Jiang, 2007) for the research study, two additional volunteer researchers were used to analyze the data, address consistency issues, and ensure the researcher's objectivity (Moustakas, 1994; Hill et al., 2005). The first research partner is a Counselor Educator who has conducted a number of prior qualitative studies. The second research partner is a doctoral student in a Counselor Education program who has been involved in a few qualitative research projects. Each research partner was given six randomly selected transcripts to identify themes. After independent analysis of the data, I met the research partners separately to discuss and compare the themes found. First volunteer suggested a new topic that was not included in the themes while the second volunteer did not suggest anything new. At the end of the meetings, 100 percent agreement was reached on the themes between the researcher and the two research partners (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

Member checking is "a way of finding out whether the data analysis is congruent with participants' experiences" (Curtin & Fossey, 2007, p. 92). In this research, the emerging themes and main ideas as I identified based on each research question were sent to six randomly selected respondents. The respondents were asked to provide feedback on the extent the results accurately represent their perceptions and experiences in working with immigrants. Two respondents returned their reflections (See Appendix E & F). They

conclusively indicated that the emerging themes accurately represent their experiences and there is no need for revision.

Trustworthiness

Quantitative research methodology uses statistical procedures to provide validity and reliability. However, qualitative research methodology can be evaluated based upon trustworthiness and rigor of the methodological procedure (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002). Trustworthiness is concerned with how a researcher can ensure his or her readers and self that the findings of his or her research are worth paying attention to and worth taking account of (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Four major constructs of trustworthiness are presented: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which must be addressed by any social science inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Credibility. Credibility is concerned with how credible the finding of the inquiry are (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). It is the inquirer's responsibility to take all appropriate steps to increase levels of his or her findings' credibility. Six major techniques for establishment of credibility have been identified: (1) activities increasing the probability that credible findings will be produced (e.g., triangulation, prolonged engagement, persistent observation), (2) peer debriefing, (3) negative case analysis, (4) referential adequacy, (5) member checks, and (6) confirmatory analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). I used triangulation, peer debriefing, confirmatory analysis, and member checking techniques to increase the level of credibility of the study. More specifically, triangulation with the literature, triangulation

with the respondents' demographics, and triangulation with multiple analysts were achieved. In addition, maintaining fidelity to the research methodology (epoch, purposeful sampling, audit trail documentation) contribute to credibility in these findings.

Transferability. Transferability is similar to external validity in quantitative research. Although naturalistic researchers are not able to specify external validity, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that they are able to provide “the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be completed as a possibility” (p. 316). Transferability of an inquiry can be strengthened by triangulating multiple sources of data, designing the study with multiple cases, multiple informants, and multiple data gathering method, literature, member checking, outside readers, and research team consensus (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). I utilized the literature, member checking, confirmatory analysis, triangulation with multiple analysts, epoche, purposeful sampling, and audit trail documentation to strength transferability of this study. As a result, it is the researcher's responsibility to provide the database that enables readers to make their own interpretations about whether the findings can be applied to other settings.

Dependability. Dependability is similar to reliability in quantitative research, where the inquiry is expected to be replicated. However, the qualitative assumption claims that “the social world is always being constructed and that the concept of replication is itself problematic” (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 203). Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that establishing an audit trail helps developing a dependable study. Audit trail, demographic information, research protocol, and triangulation with multiple

analysts were used for the purpose of increasing dependability of the study. Detailed information about audit trail will be provided below.

Confirmability. Confirmability is concerned with objectivity or if the findings of the study can be confirmed by other studies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). While the confirmability audit is the major technique for establishing confirmability, triangulation (using different sources, methods, investigators) and the keeping of reflective journals and confirmatory analysis are other useful techniques (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Halpern identified six audit trail categories: raw data, data reduction analysis products, process notes, materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information (as cited in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 321-322). Establishing an audit trail, cross-checking, peer debriefing, looking for exceptions, and literature may help improve confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985), six information categories are provided to inform the audit trail: raw data, data reduction and analysis notes, data reconstruction and synthesis products, process notes, materials related to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development information. Through examining these information groups, the audit trail assured that the study was carried out with considerable care and quality.

Assumptions. As numerated in Chapter 1, I had some assumptions for this study. First of all, I assumed that my inclusion criteria for the sample were appropriate, the participants would have relevant experiences, they would have sincere interest in the study, and they would answer the interview questions in an honest and candid manner. In addition, although “immigrants” and “ELLs” are not the same thing, I used them

interchangeably based on the original sources of information although the focus of this study is on immigrants. I also assumed that immigrants represent both low and high socio-economic statuses. Finally, I assumed that I selected the best methodology to investigate the research questions and I used a social justice lens while analyzing the data.

Ethical Consideration

All of the participants were treated favorably with the ethical guidelines of the American Counseling Association, the American School Counselor Association, and The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (See Appendix G). I completed my CITI certification, which is required to conduct IRB approved research. Additionally, I made sure that the additional two researchers who assisted with the data analysis have completed and renewed their CITI certifications.

The participants' responses were not identified with their name, district, or institution, so they were assured of confidentiality even though there are no risks for participating in this study. All data collected from the participants is stored in password protected digital folders on my personal computer. All obtained physical media (e.g., transcripts) will be kept for five years in a locked cabinet in my office at The Ohio State University. The participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and they could refuse to answer any questions that they did not wish to answer, and they could refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without penalty. The participants were offered the opportunity to examine the transcription of their interview and see the final draft of the report to understand how the data is used, bring any concern, correct any

inaccuracies, and add anything else that they think is worth adding. I made sure that the participants felt safe, confident, and free to participate or not to participate.

Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative inquiry was using a social justice framework to explore what resources school counselors utilize to develop their competencies, their perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrant students and families; and how they perceive their interactions with linguistically diverse families in terms of their language policies. This study used purposive sampling, snowball sampling, personal recruitment via phone calls methods to recruit school counselors from schools that have five percent or greater of immigrant students in the state of Ohio. Although respondents' demographics were collected an online survey, semi-structured interviews were the major data collection method. Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological method of data analysis was implemented to analyze the data. The data analysis process included four steps: (1) epoche, (2) phenomenological reduction, (3) imaginative variation, and (4) synthesis of meanings and essences. Trustworthiness and rigor of the methodological procedure were seeking through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in order to ensure the readers that the findings of this study are worth paying attention to worth taking account of. Trustworthiness efforts in triangulation with the literature, triangulation with the respondents' demographics, triangulation with multiple analysts, member checking, and maintaining fidelity to the research methodology (epoch, purposeful sampling, audit trail

documentation) were engaged to increase reliability of the study. The findings of the study are provided in the next chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

This study sought to explore the experiences and perceptions of school counselors' competencies and the resources they utilize to develop responding school counselors' competencies in working with immigrant students and families. Additionally, this study examined their beliefs and attitudes toward being a social justice advocate, and their perceptions of their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies (FLP) and how FLP influences student outcomes. Phenomenological research methodology (Moustakas, 1994) was used in this effort to analyze interview data from 13 school counselors working in diverse school settings. This chapter provides a summary of the empirical findings, which were derived from the online demographic questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

The Results chapter is divided in to four sections. The chapter begins with a description of the participants, followed by a summary of the emerging themes. Following this is a description of paradigms that emerged from participants' experiences, and finally the synthesis of the themes and the paradigms are presented as the essence of the phenomenon under study (Moustakas, 1994). Specifically, the results of this study answer the following research questions:

1. What are school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and needs in working with immigrant students and families?

2. What are the resources school counselors perceive to have in order to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families?
3. To what extent do school counselors who work with immigrant students and families perceive themselves to be a social justice advocate?
4. (a) What do school counselors believe about their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies?
(b) What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of family language policies on student outcomes?

With continuous data analysis, saturation of the data was determined at the 10th interview and three more interviews were conducted for confirmation. From 13 verbatim transcripts, 382 significant statements were extracted. Arranging the formulated meanings into clusters resulted in 32 clusters. Finally, seven themes were created from the clusters. Each theme can be located within a corresponding research question, as indicated:

Research Question 1: What are school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and needs in working with immigrant students and families?
And

Research Question 2: What are the resources school counselors perceive to have in order to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families?
(This question is merged with Question 1 in the Results and Discussion of Results.)

Theme 1: They feel competent in addressing immigrants' needs and challenges; however, their personal identities and experience impact their self-perceived competence level.

Theme 2: They believe that their training did not include counseling immigrants and was not sufficient for working effectively with immigrants.

Theme 3: They learn best about how to provide counseling services by willingly and intentionally leaving their comfort zones in order to seek out diverse experiences.

Theme 4: They need more professional development, language assistance, and collaboration with key stakeholders to improve their work.

Theme 5: The more they learn about immigrant students and families, they develop greater awareness of the individual differences in immigrant populations, as well as begin to develop greater humility about both the knowledge they have gained and how much they still have to learn.

Research Question 3: To what extent do school counselors who work with immigrant students and families perceive themselves to be a social justice advocate?

Theme 6: Social justice is at the heart of their work.

Research Question 4: (a) What do school counselors believe about their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies? (b) What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of family language policies on student outcomes?

Theme 7: They believe immigrant families should speak their native language with their children, and there was a range of opinions of whether or not FLP impacts student outcomes.

In addition to these themes, four paradigms were identified based on the participants' perceptions and experiences in working with immigrant students and families:

1. Superficial Awareness
2. Growing Awareness
3. Flexibility (in cognition, affect, behavior)
4. Culturally Competent School Counselor

In discussing of each theme and paradigm, direct quotations are included to assist in illustrating the phenomenon. As stated in the previous chapter, each participant selected a pseudonym and the quotes are presented under this name. Results are discussed using particular terms to indicate the frequency of respondents. The word "all" is used when the concept is supported by 13 (100%) respondents. The word "most" is used when the concept expressed by 9 to 12 (69% to 92%) respondents. The word "some" refers to 4 to 8 (31% to 62%) school counselors supported the concept. Finally, "a few" is used when the concept is supported by 3 (23%) or fewer respondents (Richie et al., 1997).

Description of Participants

Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used to recruit participants. Thirteen school counselors participated in this study. All participants work in a Midwestern state in the United States, and they were appropriately licensed by their state. The participants included a wide variety of backgrounds and experience (See Table 1). Among those, ten (77%) are White, two (15%) are African American, and one (8%) is Mexican. There are ten (77%) females and three (23%) males. While 9 (69%)

participants identified themselves as monolingual, 4 (31%) of them considered themselves being bilingual. The ages ranged from 26 to 58, with an average age of 39. While 11 (85%) of them work in urban schools, 2 (15%) of the participants work in suburban school settings. All three school levels are almost evenly represented where 5 (38%) work in elementary schools, 4 (31%) work in middle schools, and 4 (31%) work in high schools. Time spent as a school counselor varied among respondents. The length of being a school counselor ranged from 2 years to 14 years, with an average of 5 years and 7 months. Overall experiences in education suggested the range of respondents also varied. The length of working in education ranged from 3 years to 25 years, with an average experience of 11 years. The percentage of immigrant students in their schools ranged from 10% to 100%, with an average percentage of 43. The themes are presented below Table 1.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Name	Age	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Bilingual Statute	Yrs as school counselor	School level	School envi.	% of immig. stu.
Anne	26	F	White	Bilingual	3	Mid	Suburban	10
Ariyana	29	F	White	Mono	2	Mid	Urban	10
Carol	35	F	White	Mono	9	High	Urban	20
Fred	34	M	White	Mono	4	High	Urban	45
Marie	39	F	White	Mono	5	Mid	Urban	100
Meggie	40	F	White	Bilingual	3	High	Urban	100
Merry	50	F	White	Mono	14	Elem	Suburban	17
Pauline	31	F	Af. Am.	Mono	4	Elem	Urban	33
Ray	58	M	White	Mono	3	Mid	Urban	22
Ronni	44	F	Af. Am.	Mono	9	Elem	Urban	35
Scotts	35	M	White	Bilingual	2	High	Urban	98
Sophie	47	F	Mexican	Bilingual	9	Elem	Urban	50
Zoe	37	F	White	Mono	9	Elem	Urban	12

Emerging Themes

Research Question 1: *What are school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and needs in working with immigrant students and families?*

Research Question 2: *What are the resources school counselors perceive to have in order to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families?*

Theme 1: They feel competent in addressing immigrants' needs and challenges; however, their personal identities and experience impact their self-perceived competence level.

The respondents in this theme focused on self-perceived competence in addressing complex needs and challenges of immigrant students and families. All of the

participants stated that to some extent they feel competent in working with their immigrant students and families. Sophie, a 47 year-old Mexican female participant, said, “I feel very comfortable and competent.” Ronni, a 44 year-old African American female participant, explains that her years of experience working with immigrant students has developed a confidence in meeting their needs, an idea that Meggie, a 40 year-old White female participant, echoes. Zoe, a 37 year-old White female participant, stated that she is confident and competent to work with immigrants, and she is not “afraid to reach out and ask those questions and just to be personable and to be intentional with what I'm doing and who I'm working with.”

When asked to identify the most common issues and challenges their immigrant students and families face, most of the respondents determined that the population encounters substantial language, academic, acculturation, mental health, and documentation challenges, as well as economic, social, and educational capital challenges. Each of the following quotes illustrates one of the categories: Carol, a 35 year-old White female participant, said, “There is sometimes the language barrier, because many of our students are very new to the country.” Anne, a 26 year-old White female participant, stated, “All of our grades are posted online and a lot of these families have a hard time accessing it, whether it's they just didn't understand the directions, they never came to our orientation night”. Marie, a 39 year-old White female participant, reported, “Here’s what happens at home, and here’s what happens at school, and it not really fitting with.” Meggie reported, “We have a lot of students who are incredibly intelligent and they end up getting very good GPAs when they take classes here, but we

have a lot of difficulty with is the ACT test.” Sophie stated some concerns about documentation statuses. She said, “A big concern for them is if they’re in the country legally, or not. Some of our students have had their family members get deported.” Marie has dealt with immigrant students who live with someone else due to some immigrant conflicts. She stated, “Often students are not with maybe the family who raised them, so adjusting to a different family situation.”

Even though all of the respondents to some extent feel competent in addressing needs and challenges of immigrants, their self-perceived competency level varies depending of certain criteria. While they feel most comfortable with the students and families they share some similarities with, such as personal background (e.g. ethnic, race, language) or have more experiences with, they feel least competent to work with immigrants who they have spent less time with. For example, Pauline, a 31 year-old White female participant, said, “I am probably most comfortable working with students from Hispanic background because probably that is the group that I have had the most experiences with.” Merry, a 50 year-old White female participant, said, “Because I have more experience working with the Latino/Hispanic population, I feel more comfortable with that than I would any of the others.” Similarly, some respondents expressed that they are least comfortable in working with the populations they have less experience with. For instance, Ronni said, “I don't really know a lot about their [Hispanic students] cultural background, you know, something I might have read, but never personally, actually, work with them outside of my personal realm.” However, she feels most comfortable and competent in working with African populations because she knows a lot about them and

she shares the same ethnic background. Ronni said, “Honestly to say it could also be my interest as well because I am African American so it could also be just that there’s a natural interest of learning African culture as well.”

Speaking the language of the group is also an important reason why some respondents feel most comfortable working with certain populations. For instance, Scots, a 35 year-old White male respondent, said, “I try to work a lot with Latin American families because I speak Spanish ... I can explain things in Spanish.” In addition, even though Anne’s Spanish is not perfect, she speaks Spanish with her immigrant students, which helps her feel comfortable and competent to work with Spanish-speaking people. Anne said, “most comfortable with my Latino folks because I think they have a lot of respect for me no matter how crappy my Spanish is, but I try. We really try and have that conversation in Spanish.” However, not knowing the language is a reason for some respondents to feel less competent working with some immigrant populations. For instance, Pauline stated, “Because I don't understand the language, probably talking to someone who is speaking in Arabic or someone who is speaking in Somali that would probably be really difficult for me.”

Theme 2: They believe that their training did not include counseling immigrants and was not sufficient for working effectively with immigrants.

In this theme the school counselor respondents focused on their training experiences and how they felt prepared to work effectively with immigrants when they started working with the population. All of the participants highlighted that their training did not include specifically how to work with immigrants. Because of this, most

participants reported that early in their career it was hard to for them to address immigrants' needs and challenges and to provide services.

Meggie described how she was unprepared to provide social services to her immigrant students and families. She stated, "I think some of the first experiences that I had was working with families and social services that they needed. That was not something I feel like we were completely trained for as counselors." Fred, a 34 year-old White male respondent, reported similar experiences to Meggie. He believes that "at least talking about that as an issue in class could have been helpful, just at least start the process of okay this is potentially what can happen as a counselor." Zoe said:

Early on in my education career I had little or no training in terms of trying to understand the needs of diverse populations. I just expected every child to follow a certain way. And sometimes when students didn't, we looked at it developmentally, but not necessarily with like, a more open-minded lens ... culture was not often brought into the conversation.

Most participants, like Scots and Anne, stated that their classes were very general and surface. Scots stated, "It was more general of just how can you work with any population." Carol stated, "I don't remember that [counseling immigrants] being a part of it. Specific strategies or specific things to be aware of. I can't remember anything that I feel like has informed what I do here." Marie said, "Surface introductory. There was no really diving into any specific cultures or concerns. It was all very, very surface."

One of the ways that most respondents believe they could have learned more in school is having classes specifically focusing on immigrants' issues and challenges and how to address their needs. Most participants believe that the more specific the classes had been, the more they could have learned from them. For instance, Anne said, "I do

think specifics could be very helpful.” Ariyana, a 29 year-old African American female respondent, reported, “I am sure it [if the multicultural class had included specifically how to work with immigrant students] would have been helpful.” Meggie stated:

I think it would have been helpful for me starting ... I think it would have been better to know kind of to have a heads up about what needs I would be walking into because I don't think I was fully prepared for that.

Some participants stated that some of what was taught in school was not accurate for what they experience in the field, and experience has proved more useful. For instance, Sophie said:

Sometimes even their interpretation and understanding isn't always accurate ... I think the classes are great, but yet that, you don't get the true experience of working with that individual or that culture ... And I think if we hold onto what I learned in class, I'm going to have the wrong perception.

Learning how to effectively work with immigrant students and families is believed to be different from multicultural counseling. Some respondents mentioned that just taking a multicultural class is not the same learning how to work with immigrants. Zoe said, “I feel like that is not the same as just saying multicultural. When you're saying immigrant work, you're implying, like, where their parents' educational background and their experience growing up etc.” In addition, Ronni said:

We don't really deal with different cultures and how to address the needs of different cultures and I think that is what happened in our program as well. They had a multicultural class so they think wow we are done, we covered it, but there is still a lot more to do. That is very important.

Most respondents believe that their work would have been much easier and more effective in working with immigrant students and families if their training had included counseling immigrants. However, because they believe that their training did not

prepared them effectively for providing services and support to immigrants, they best learn by directly working with the students and families in the field.

Theme 3: They learn best about how to provide counseling services by willingly and intentionally leaving their comfort zones in order to seek out diverse experiences.

In this theme, school counselor respondents focused on the importance of willingly and intentionally leaving their comfort zone to have diverse experiences, although it may be uncomfortable. Some of the respondents expressed that they willingly and intentionally step out of their comfort zone because they cannot ignore the existing needs and challenges of immigrants. Zoe said:

... I could just sort of deny that there's multicultural needs, but when you have a population that's constantly changing and when you see that there's specific students struggling and that they're struggling because of the communication gap ... that that's a fact, *you can't ignore that*. Being intentional, purposeful, willingness.

Similarly, Scots believes that being willing to leave his comfort zone and step into different experiences is vital for his professional development. He reported, “Being willing to step out of those comfort zones and step into roles even though I’m a White male just to be sensitive to the needs of other people. That has helped me.”

Some respondents believe that being willing to participate in different events that do not take place between nine to five, which is usually when school counselors work at schools, is very important. Marie believes that even though it is uncomfortable immersing herself in her immigrant students’ and families’ cultures to have first-hand experiences, she forces herself to do so because it helps to better serve them. She stated, “When you actually immerse yourself in the culture and making connections with families, you really

gain a better understanding. Be willing to take risk or challenge going to someone's house and feeling totally uncomfortable.”

Having personal experiences with diversity is believed to be crucial in order to develop complex understanding needs and challenges of immigrants. However, those participants who came from a diverse background have different experiences than White participants in regard to pushing themselves for diverse experiences. The participants of color stated that, at some point in their life, they inevitably have to deal with biases and prejudices that makes them sensitive to immigrants' needs. Most of the White participants mentioned that they had to willingly and intentionally push themselves for experiences with diversity for their personal and professional growth. For instance, Sophie, a 47 year-old Mexican female participant, reported early resistance from the school system cause she was “different.” She said:

My family specifically, culture and background, would be Mexican, ... learning, understanding culture and experiencing that all through my school years and meeting some resistance from the school system and teachers who didn't understand my culture in schools where I was different, I looked different than everybody else.

These experiences helped her realize how important it is to know the people she works with. She says, “Then as growing professionally, specifically in college, making sure that I knew I wanted to be working with people, so I have to understand the various people I work with.” Ronni, a 44 year-old African American school counselor, has to deal with racism which gives her a clear vision of what is happening in her immigrant students' lives. She reported:

I as being a Black female my whole life, of course, have been dealing with racism ... I had to deal with lower expectations just because I was Black. I see what is going on as an actual client of the district.

However, some White school counselors expressed that they used to live in a *box* in terms of diversity. They believe that it is important to push and challenge themselves in order to experience diversity in their in non-diverse environments. Merry, 50 year-old White school counselor, expressed that when she was growing up, she did not have any diversity in her immediate environment. Therefore, in order to grow and learn about experiences of others, she forced herself to experience differences; she had to leave the “box.” She stated, “I grew up in a *box*, as I like to say.” Likewise, Zoe, 37 year-old White school counselor, said:

I was not in a very diverse environment as a child, a young adult and even within my major at Ohio State, I was a major in psychology and had a minor in family studies and 99% of my classmates were females, my same age, and were Caucasian. I kind of kept to my own comfort level with the people I kind of knew ... I have had to *push myself* more to kind of look at things from the other side, and look at things as if *the world isn't just as I see it. I'm not just trying to stay in my own comfort zone.*

Some White participants had experiences with different cultures earlier than becoming a school counselor that helped them to be sensitive to immigrants' needs and challenges. For example, Anne, 26 year-old White female, and Scots, 35 year-old White male, gained different perspectives from majoring in Spanish and studying abroad. Anne mentioned that when she was in Chile, she went through experiences similar to immigrants. She believes that it was a great opportunity to really understand what immigrants experience and feel in a situation where language is a barrier. She stated:

I studied abroad in South America when I was in college, and one of the things I distinctly remembered about that is I was put into classes with Chileans where I

was the only American, had no clue what was going on. Even though I spoke okay at the time, and I just remember thinking that teachers were jerks. They would make jokes and people would laugh and like man, I would have no idea. They'd go over my head, and I remember sitting there thinking, wow, I am a White girl English-speaking that has never felt so isolated and so different in my life ... that perspective of like wow, is this really what some students experience. If you're the only Spanish speaking kid in the class, is this your experience, cause it kind of sucks ... that gave me some good perspective on we got to be sure that these kids are feeling okay and that they're included.

All of the participants believe that they best learn when they directly work with immigrants. Fred said he learned how to work effectively with his immigrant students and families “on the job.” The following two excerpts illustrate how learning takes place during direct experiences with immigrants:

I don't know that any class would match up to the experience of like actually experiencing working with students of diverse cultures. I don't think any book can teach you ... I think you really internalize, you really dive into it, you get a greater understanding when you're actually experience something. While articles are great, books are wonderful, and going to workshops and hearing presentations and conferences. All that is great, but the actual day to day, in and out, living it, working it, participating, that's a better experience (Marie).

And

You are not really prepared to work with other families from other backgrounds until you are really just doing it. You can read whatever you want to read a textbook or be told you are going to have to think about this and that, but the true hands-on experiences with people from other backgrounds is really what is going to help you learn and grow. (Pauline)

Theme 4: They need more professional development, language assistance, and collaboration with key stakeholders to improve their work.

In this theme, the school counselor respondents focused on what they need in regard to developing their knowledge, strengthening their skills, and increasing the quality of providing services to immigrant students and families. What they need to do to

improve their work is characterized into three groups: professional development, language assistance, and collaboration.

Professional development. Most of the respondents believe that ongoing professional development is very important for them to become effective and competent school counselors in working with immigrants. Sophie said, “[Professional Development] is so important.” Marie thinks she needs “ongoing professional development”, Anne reported, “any kind of training would be great.” Scots highlighted how professional development increases his awareness of cultural differences and unique needs and challenges of immigrants. He said, “Professional development, having outside people coming in to talk to us to help us have more awareness.” Similarly, Ronni stated, “I would like to see more professional development, working with students from different cultural background because we’re so focused on the testing. I’ve never really seen a lot of professional development on that.”

Some participants expressed that the existing professional development opportunities are inadequate and insufficient to really learn and develop to provide what the immigrants need. For instance, Anne says:

I don't know that I've been to any really good sessions who have taught me a lot with immigrant families. How do you reach these families and what are they saying that they need? What do they want from schools? What are their expectations?

Meggie also thinks the professional development she has received was not exactly what she needs. She stated, “The ESL department for the district has professional development that they give. It is a lot about how to teach ESL students, but what it misses a lot of times is how can we work culturally with ESL students.” Most of the respondents are

looking forward to having any effective education or tools to become a better counselor. Anne said, “If there's a good program or someone's figured out an effective way to reach those families, I'd love to know about it.”

Language assistance. All of the participants are aware of the positive role that second language plays in their service. Of the respondents, those few who are bilingual expressed that being bilingual significantly helps them better serve their immigrant students and families. Even though Sophie is not fluent in Spanish, she utilizes it to assist her immigrant students and families. She said, “Some of the children are not able to verbalize what's happening in English, but they can in Spanish. Being able to listen to and understand [is important].” Likewise, Meggie reported that even though she is not fluent in French, she does not hesitate to use it when she works with her French-speaking students and families:

I also know a little French, which helps a tiny bit with our West African population. Usually I can understand when they're speaking; I just can't speak back to them very adequately. But it definitely helps, especially when someone's struggling for words when they are French-speaking students. When they're struggling to get it out in English, I say, ‘Try it in your language and maybe I can get it,’ and I usually do.

Anne stated that she is the only one in the school who speaks a language other than English. She uses Spanish to connect her immigrant students and families. She usually is the first person who immigrant families contact. “It helps that I speak Spanish,” Anne explains, “Sometimes I'm the one who takes calls about absences or sickness or hey I have no idea what my student's grades are, can you help me with this.”

On the other hand, monolingual participants reported that being monolingual is a barrier for working more effectively. Carol, Pauline, and Ray, a 58 year-old White male

respondent, all agree that only speaking one language becomes a barrier for them in their work. For example, Pauline explains that “The fact that I only speak one language that definitely could be viewed as a little bit of a barrier when I work with other families who maybe don't speak my language.”

Most participants stated that having translators and translating documents into the language families speak are crucial when working with immigrants. Although to some extent they use translators to better communicate with immigrant students and families, they expressed an essential need for additional interpretation services. Sophie stated:

I think our district needs to have more specific supports for our families. When we are looking at communicating with our families, many times the information that the district sends out is in English. How are the parents going to understand? For example, our test reports for our students are all in English. It's just very frustrating in that regard.

Similarly, Anne stated that they need translation services in her school. She said, “Interpreters are hard to come by in our district. It has to be for like a formal event of some sort to get an interpreter that doesn't happen all too often.”

Although having translators at school is crucial for counseling services, some respondents shared some concerns with regards to their experiences with translators. Carol stated that because she does not speak her immigrant students' native language, the students first go to the interpreters for help, where the counselor could provide effective services. She said:

We have a full time Somali and Nepal translator, and this isn't a negative thing, but it is a barrier probably a little bit. The students feel most comfortable going to them, probably because they interact with them on a daily basis and they do speak their native language. If there was a situation where they needed assistance, I think they would probably go to the Somali or Nepal translator first, just cause of

the comfort and sort of like the shared cultural understanding, versus coming to me. So that I would see as a *barrier*.

Similarly, Meggie shared her concerns with regard to translators. She reported that when she works with translators, she realized that the interpreters sometimes tell the clients what they think is the right thing rather than delivering what Meggie says. She said, “It is difficult, there's a third person in the room. It's hard for interpreters not to interject in the conversation. It's hard for them not to give their own advice when they're talking to students.” It is evident that most of the respondents need better translation services.

Collaboration. Collaboration between school counselors and key stakeholders is believed to be very important for students. Although most respondents reported that they partner with ESL teachers, interpreters, and community organizations, they expressed that they need to improve their existing partnership programs with the key stakeholders. Zoe believes that she needs to work more closely with the ESL teachers and intervention specialists in order to learn more about her immigrant students. She said, “I would like to do more like co-leading kind of groups with like the ESL teacher and with our intervention specialist.”

Scots believes that he needs to “learn better how to network with outside agencies who can help because there's so many agencies out there, I don't even know all of them.” In order to better help immigrant students and their families, Scots expresses that school counselors need to take more initiative in building networks of support. Similarly, Meggie thinks she should have stronger connections with community agencies. She stated, “Meeting with community members is the number one. For me that's huge ...

working with some of the community-based partnerships. I think [community organizations] is something that would really help improve how we work.”

Theme 5: The more they learn about immigrant students and families, they develop greater awareness of the individual differences in immigrant populations, as well as begin to develop greater humility about both the knowledge they have gained and how much they still have to learn.

In this theme, the respondents focused on the connection between having more experiences and how they began to realize differences within groups. Additionally, they develop humility in regard to what they have learned and what they still need to learn. Most of the respondents expressed that it is very important to reach out to immigrants as individuals, because every single of them is different and has a unique background. Zoe said, “The fact that there are definitely lots of differences among the students even if they are within that same classification, they're still different, they're individual people, and that's something that I try to focus on.” Similarly, Sophie mentioned that individuals coming from a specific country are not necessarily the same and should not be treated the same. She said:

Just because there's a particular family that is from El Salvador, that doesn't mean I can compare them to other children and families who are from El Salvador. I need to look at that family specifically and respectfully, inquire about needs and look at how we can support them. So that's how it has to be.

Anne shared her African students' frustration with the assumption that they are seen as the same as African Americans. Anne highlighted that it is very important to be sensitive of how the immigrants identify themselves, and we should put aside our biases and just accept them as who they are. More specifically, Anne stated:

Never assume that just because they're from here that this is the culture. I know one time, speaking with one of our students whose family's from Africa. She mentioned how different their family is versus the African Americans who are born here. So the culture is so different, and it's funny because people don't really see that. Two black girls, what's the difference? Well, hugely different.

Meggie mentioned that it is almost impossible to put her Nepali immigrants into one single category because they vary in terms of academic, social, economic, and cultural values. She stated that different versions of caste system exist in the U.S. within the Nepali immigrants, which has a fundamental influence on their socialization. Consequently, she reported that individuals from Nepal sometimes do not want to hang out with each other. Meggie shares an example from her school:

Like, the top three students in the 11th grade, academically, are Nepali girls. Them being at the top, there are just as many Nepali students at the very bottom of the class rank as well ... We had a teacher that said she had put all in a social studies class. She had groups separate by countries and by regions to work together as a group on a project. So, all the Nepali students were supposed to be working together and she said that they were balking at that and just like, 'We have to work with them?' You know, they see themselves as absolutely separate.

A few respondents argued that all Whites are not the same, nor are the immigrants. Scots stated "It's hard to put all American students in a box". Similarly, Anne reported that there is a variety of differences within her White students and families. She said:

All my White families aren't the same ... I have a family who's military, so they just came back from Japan, so they're adjusting culturally. But it's a White girl and she's having a really hard time with this culture, even though she's technically been an American the whole time. Do not assume that they're all the same.

Further evidence was gathered from the respondents about the humility they have begun to develop in regard to what they have learned, as well as how much they still need to learn. For example, Scotts knows a lot about immigrants needs and challenges, and

that he is capable of providing effective services to them. However, when asked how he perceives himself in terms of his expertise, he said, "I'm not exactly an expert. I just try to work with the students."

Marie stated that she does not know many things and it is impossible to know everything about immigrants. She said:

I don't want to sound ignorant and say that I'm completely aware [of immigrants' needs and challenges] because I don't think that's even possible. I don't think you're ever finished. Having an open mind is very, very important. Realizing I don't have all the answers.

This does not mean that school counselors are completely unaware of immigrants' experiences, just that they still have more to learn. Meggie is aware of what immigrants' needs and challenges are and that she always learns. She said, "I'm pretty aware, although I'm learning all the time." Moreover, Pauline believes she is in the process of learning even though she feels very competent in working with immigrants. She stated:

I am still learning though I don't know if I always know, always the best when I first meet a family, but I am always trying to get to know students better and know their families better and that helps me understand what they really, truly are looking for in their own lives or in their students' education.

Carol emphasizes that time spent in the field does not entail awareness of immigrants' challenges. She explains that "I would still consider myself in early experiences even though I've worked for 9 years." Similarly, Zoe said, "I honestly feel like I still just have a lot to learn even though I feel competent." Marie is aware that she could know more. She stated, "When I think that I'm aware of something, I find out really what I know is not quite as much as I want to know."

Research Question 3: *To what extent do school counselors who work with immigrant students and families perceive themselves to be a social justice advocate?*

Theme 6: Social justice is at the heart of their work.

In this theme, the school counselor respondents focused on the impact of social justice advocacy on their services to immigrant students and families. Most respondents are deeply connected to social justice, and identify themselves as social justice advocates. Some of the respondents believe that eventually advocacy for social justice becomes who they are. For example, Zoe stated, “I definitely think that I’m a social justice advocate to a great degree.” Additionally, Merry said, “I advocate for social justice ... treating people with equality regardless of who they are.” Like Zoe and Merry, Ronni described herself as “quite a social justice advocate for all students.”

Sophie expressed the effort she makes to make certain things happen for her immigrant students and families. She does not give up when she faces challenges because she believes that the students and families are very important and sometimes the advocates are all immigrants have. Therefore, she believes that it is her job to fight for social justice and equality. She stated:

We need to support our children, need to advocate for our kids. I don’t care where they’re from, that’s my job. And when I see that’s not happening, then my job is to look at the resources, where do I go to try to get this to happen? Sometimes the answer’s easy. Sometimes it’s very challenging. We have to keep attempting and trying ... I’ve been working on trying to get simple things translated for a while now and it still hasn’t happened, but I’m not giving up on it. It needs to happen for our families. Sometimes we are all that that child has and we can’t let hard work scare us.

Most school counselor respondents stated that they implement social justice into their practices to make the education experience equitable for everyone. Zoe stated that

when she thinks there is something that needs to be changed, she would talk to teachers and the principal with no hesitation. She said, "... speaking up to the principal if I think a policy could potentially be considered off putting to someone or a group or speaking up to teachers if I think something needs to be done." Similarly, Ronni stated that when she recognizes a situation where actions by school staff might be perceived as offensive by someone in school, she has no problem with talking to the person to change his or her attitude or action. She stated, "I am going to approach someone to say words 'that was not okay and this is how we need to work this out or whatever.' So I have no problem with that at all."

Some respondents stated that their social justice advocacy role should go beyond school counseling programs. Most respondents believe that school counselors should be able to talk to teachers, principals, school board members, and go to court to advocate for their immigrant students and families. Zoe stated that school counselors should take responsibilities in creating school policies instead of just waiting for someone else to make it. Zoe said:

Working with your school board members or your principal or whoever is creating policies for like your handbook or whatever it might be, or discipline you have to have a voice in that. You can't just say, oh, well that's just the school policy, not my decision. I mean you have to at least make that effort.

In addition, Zoe believes that school counselors should be critical to school policies rather than obeying the policies as they are and pretending everything is fine. Zoe stated:

And then not pretending like things are equitable if they're really not. It just means you're always looking for 'are all the needs being met?' If there is a problem where all the needs aren't being met by a certain group or a student or a family, you being the one to work with others and try to make it right.

Scots reported that he advocates for his immigrant students and families in school, as well as outside of school. He believes that advocating for his immigrant students and families is essential for social justice, because in some institutions, immigrants might be ignored. More specifically, he said:

Making sure that our students get their fair share in education ... like going to court and speaking on behalf of a student. They don't see a Latino girl, they see an American, and American person if you're advocating for that student.

Scots stated that in addition to advocating for immigrant students and families, school counselors should empower immigrants to be able to advocate for themselves. He said “The more that we bond together and we voice our concerns, and we need to empower our families and our parents and our communities to stand up for themselves as well.”

Some respondents stated that social justice is what they do all the time. Marie said, “That [social justice advocate] is what we do. I think it’s like a daily thing. It’s connected to everything we do it happens all day long.” Carol agrees, “That’s definitely what we do every day.” In addition, most of the respondents expressed that school counseling and social justice advocacy are inseparable. They believe that school counseling and social justice advocacy go hand in hand and one cannot be accomplished without the other. This notion was evident as most respondents expressed the connection between school counseling and social justice. Fred articulated:

I think in large part what we do as school counselors in this environment makes us one [social justice advocate] kind of *by default*. I think myself that way based upon the job that we have especially working in an urban school district kind of by default it is what exactly what we are, an advocate for social justice.

Similarly, Ronni, Merry, Pauline, and Zoe agree that social justice advocacy is part of the job. Zoe said, “School counselor is kind of just the same thing as being an advocate in general of students and families.”

Some respondents believe that social justice advocacy eventually becomes everything they do and a part of who they are. For instance, Ronni said, “Social justice is a huge part of who we are”. Zoe said:

I feel like as a counselor you are an advocate for everyone. Therefore, it has to just be part of your policies, part of your programing for students. It just has to be part of your everyday. It's like *who you are* and what you do and everything you do.

Likewise, Carol highlighted that being a social justice advocate is actually the main reason for becoming a school counselor. She believes that if someone is not a social justice advocate or does not have a desire to become one, they should not be a part of the profession. She said:

If that [social justice advocacy] is not what we're doing, then what's the point? This goes more back into the school counseling, but anyone can schedule a class, but that's not what we're here for. Those are some of the job responsibilities, but the point is helping people. The point is helping students, be successful, and go out in the world and make a difference for them. I think it [school counseling and social justice] has to go hand in hand. If you don't consider yourself a social justice advocate, then I'm not sure why you're in the profession.

Ronni stated that although social justice advocacy is necessary for the profession, it is more important to advocate for the right thing. She argued that school counselors need to be aware of what they advocate for, and the possible outcomes of their advocacy. She said:

What I am really fighting for? Am I fighting for them to be able to be themselves or am I fighting for them to become a part of the norm? So, yeah social justice is

what school counseling is about, but we still have to deal with the whole issue of who the school counselor is when they are fighting for social justice as well.

Research Question 4: *(a) What do school counselors believe about their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies?*

(b) What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of family language policies on student outcomes?

Theme 7: They believe immigrant families should speak their native language with their children, and there was a range of opinions of whether or not FLP impacts student outcomes.

In this theme, respondents focused on family language policy and bilingualism. In terms of what language immigrant families should speak to their children, most of the respondents are in favor of native language due to its pragmatic reasons, and personal and cultural benefits. Of those in favor of native language highlighted that speaking the native language usually results in maintenance of cultural values, which are the central aspect of people's internal sense of self and identity. These respondents also find bilingualism to have a positive impact on children's academic, career, and social/personal development.

When asked what language immigrant families should speak to their children, most respondents stated that parents should speak in their native language. Ariyana said, "I think that it is important that they speak to their children in their native tongue."

Sophie believes that immigrant families should speak in their native language to their children because their native language makes them "who they are, that's part of them."

Ronni said, "I think they should speak the language that they are comfortable with," and

Carol reported, “I think they should speak whatever language they feel comfortable speaking.”

The following two excerpts illustrate how monolingual White respondents approach reservation of native language with an emphatic manner:

If I were a family new to the US, I would dearly want to hold on to what I know of my culture. I think it's really important to preserve your culture, and I think that that's something that I know I would want to do. So, they should speak what they want to at home. (Meggie)

And

I feel like it has to be the language that they're comfortable with. I would never say parents should speak to their children in English at home, necessarily because that's part of their identity and you can't like take the identity away from somebody. No more than somebody could say to me well you need to start speaking Spanish at home with your kids ... So I have to kind of look at it that way. (Zoe)

Some respondents stated that families should speak to their children in their native language because the best communication can only take place in a native language. Zoe stated, “I think that it's really important that families communicate with each other.” Fred mentioned that even though speaking in English might be helpful for homework, for example, having good communication is more important. He said:

It is difficult for families try to speak in a language that is foreign to them. I think in general if they are just having a conversation about how their day was and you know what is bothering you. If that is in their native language, I think that is quite better because they are able to express themselves ... I can't imagine the communication would be very good [in English] ... speaking in their native language obviously the communication is going to be the best.

Anne believes that the communication should be in families’ native language because cultural language is so important to keep. She shared an interesting case about one of her

immigrant students where Anne expressed the need for a better communication with families. She stated:

She [her immigrant student] speaks English, her brother speaks English and Chinese, her parents only speak Chinese. She does not understand Chinese. I don't know how this came to be, but she's not talking to anyone at home, she's only practicing English here and doesn't really have a mastery of English, but doesn't understand Chinese. So I would say "you have to be able to communicate with your family".

Another reason why most of respondents want families to speak to their children in their native language is the importance of bilingualism. Most respondents deem bilingualism as an asset. Sophie said, "I think it's a gift"; Marie said, "I think being bilingual is very, very important"; Pauline reported, "it is a great attribute"; and Ronni said, "That person who is bilingual also has the power to build bridges that those of us that speak only one language can't do. I think that is very important to be bilingual or multilingual."

All of the respondents believe that bilingualism offers advantages that are manifested in academic, career, and social/personal domains. Ray articulated the advantages of bilingualism as "Being bilingual, I assume, shows a higher level of aptitude at least in some areas." Anne stated, "I imagine they have a lot more abilities, and different ability too, in learning"; Marie reported, "it's just got to strengthen the brain"; and Pauline said, "I think it positively affects all of those areas [academic, career and social/personal]. It makes them really well-rounded persons to communicate with all different types of people and I think it is really only a plus."

Most respondents reported how bilingualism positively impacts students' careers. Scots said, "I think it [bilingualism] is the future of our generations. If you can be

bilingual, you can be more hireable ... it should open up more doors and options for you.”

Similarly, Marie stated, “A lot of times employers are looking for Spanish speakers.

More connections, more resources, more opportunity just opens up that realm.” Pauline reported that people have so many career opportunities “especially if they speak another language.”

Some respondents mentioned the impact of bilingualism on students’ social/personal development. Sophie shared a case where one of her students, who has some behavioral challenges and relational issues with his peers, used to be monolingual and now is bilingual. When the student speaks Spanish, he is happy and almost becomes a different person than when he speaks English. Sophie stated:

... an African American student who has behavior issues speaks Spanish better than I do. When he speaks Spanish, he speaks so strong. It is amazing to see him do that and that is something he has gained here. He may have some other mental health issues, but when he speaks Spanish, he just shines. You see his strength, his confidence. It is beautiful.

Similarly, Ronni reported the positive influence of bilingualism on her students’ social/personal development. She believes that speaking a second language helps students get along better with each other. She said:

The English speaking kids honestly they will try to learn the other’s language. It helps to bridge the gap because it teaches our English-speaking students as well the skills that they will never might be exposed to. I think actually socially it is actually better because our English-speaking kids are like they ‘can you tell me how to say so on so in your native language?’ It actually builds a different kind of relation, which is very interesting.

In addition, some respondents made comments on the impact of a family’s chosen language on student outcomes. While most respondents stated that a family’s chosen language is not an indicator of student success, some expressed concerns about the

students' test scores. Meggie said, "I don't think that their chosen language is really an indicator of their success." Fred agrees with this idea, stating, "I don't think it is a really an indicator of success." Moreover, some respondents argued that other factors determine student success more than spoken language. For example, Sophie believes that "the priority of where education falls within that family" and the level of students' "desire to want to learn" determine the student's success. Zoe also believes this, explaining that success is based on:

... the family, the family dynamic, the parenting style, and what's happening in the family, willingness to connect with school. If English is not their first language, are they shying away from parent teacher conferences or are they still going and saying 'Do you have an interpreter'? It depends on are they reading with their child at night, regardless of what language they're reading in? Are they actively part of the educational process? So I think that's more of the issue, how active are they in their child's school success. Or are they saying, school's teaching them, they're gonna come home and I have nothing to do with that.

However, a few respondents stated that speaking in their native languages at home might have some negative impact on students' test scores. Fred reported that he has seen, "If a student speaks nothing but Spanish at home, sometimes their reading and writing abilities are a little bit lower because they are not using English as much and that sometimes can impact academic performance." Carol agrees with this sentiment, sharing the belief that speaking in the home language could be an issue "when it comes to testing."

However, some respondents argued that the meaning of success might vary. For instance, when asked if speaking in a native language negatively impacts students' success, Marie said, "It kind of depends on what the success is." She argued that it might negatively affect students' test scores, but more important than test scores is their

personal development. Some respondents also argued that immigrant students might have lower test scores “because testing has cultural biases that our [immigrant] students maybe aren't ready for” (Scots). Similarly, Meggie believes her immigrant students are smart and successful, but their test scores are low because the “test is so biased for American students and against our kids.”

Emerging Paradigms

In addition to the themes enumerated above, I have developed four paradigms. These paradigms are suggested in the variation of responses to each interview question. To account for each story, I developed these four paradigms as a means of conceptualizing a possible developmental process in six domains. I discovered differences in the level of refinement of the respondents work with immigrants. It is important to keep in mind that there is a cross-section of experiences in the paradigms. Although the data suggests these paradigms, a longitudinal study is needed for further evidence.

The paradigms are: Superficial Awareness, Growing Awareness, Flexibility (in cognition, affect, behavior), and Culturally Competent School Counselor. Each paradigm is described based on six domains: awareness/dimensionality, competence, affiliation with social justice advocacy, notion of FLP, involvement with translation, and what they think they need to improve (See Figure 1). The school counselor respondents shared thoughts, attitudes, actions, and behaviors in line with different paradigms, suggesting the fluid nature of learning in each domain. Details about each paradigm are provided below. Each section starts with a summary description then each domain is presented.

Domains	Paradigms			
	1. Superficial Awareness	2. Growing Awareness	3. Flexibility (in cognition, affect, behavior)	4. Culturally Competent School Counselor
Awareness/ Dimensionality	1 D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students 	2D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students Immigrants and non-immigrant students 	3D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students Immigrants and non-immigrant students Immigrant groups 	4D <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students Immigrants and non-immigrant students Immigrant groups Immigrant individuals
Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Superficial high competency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased competency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased competency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly increased competency
Affiliation with Social Justice Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-identification as social justice advocates No action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Politically correct Takes action only when asked 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions are confined to counseling program Nice counselor Syndrome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions at building, district, state, federal level Empowering immigrants
Notion of FLP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only English May lead to assimilation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Both English and native language May lead to marginalization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native language Could lead to integration or separation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Native language May lead to integration
Involvement with Translation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unaware of the need for translation services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Realization of the importance of translation services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everything is translated in a few languages before sending home Available translators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Everything is translated in multiple languages Separate meetings for immigrant families Awareness of illiterate families
What They Think They Need to Improve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No awareness of specific personal and professional development needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognition of a need for personal and professional development and collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing professional development Enhance existing collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Constructive learners How to provide professional development

Figure 1. Emerging Paradigms

Paradigm 1: Superficial awareness. Paradigm One is characterized as surface level awareness of differences between immigrant and non-immigrant groups and individuals. Because school counselors in Paradigm One are at the early awareness phase, usually they are not conscious of immigrants' unique needs and challenges. They do not know that the complex and multi-causal issues of immigrants require special attention, extra effort, and willingness to affectively meet their needs; therefore, they tend to provide the same services to everyone.

Awareness/Dimensionality. School counselors in Paradigm One are either unaware or are only aware of surface level differences between immigrant and non-immigrant groups and individuals. Therefore, they are only aware of very limited challenges and issues of immigrants. For example, Ariyana is aware of *typical* concerns and challenges of immigrants. She said, "Outside of what is typical, I wouldn't say much of anything I've noticed so that I am made aware of." She is only aware of the situations that are brought to her attention. Consequently, because they do not know enough about immigrants' issues and challenges, they usually provide the same services to all of their students and families, regardless of their immigration status. Ray said, "I connect with all the students who are new, in one way or the other. I go through a whole intake type, regardless of who they are." School counselors in the Paradigm One are not conscious of individual differences within immigrant populations.

Moreover, the school counselors are unaware of immigrants' possible biases and stigma about counseling. They know that immigrant students and families use counseling services less than non-immigrant families. For instance, Ariyana stated that the reason

why she knows less about her immigrant students and families than non-immigrant families is “because they [non-immigrant students and families] see me more often.” However, they are not aware of the reasons behind the disuse of the services and they do not make extra efforts to make sure immigrants receive adequate counseling services. Even the counselors may interpret the lack of parental involvement as lack of interest in education.

Because the counselors are not aware of immigrants’ biases and stigma about counseling, they assume that immigrant students and families would just come to them for help when they need. Ray said:

I work with them on just a counseling basis, with an *open door policy*, here I am, if you need something, please come through the door, if you just need to come in and sit, please come through the door.

Ray believes that just having an open door policy would make sure that immigrants receive what they need. Therefore, he does not try to meet specifically with his immigrant students. He works only with ones that are referred to him where he said, “I prioritize as they are submitted to me.”

School counselors in Paradigm One do not consider culture as a potential factor in differences between immigrant and non-immigrate students. For example, if an immigrant student has an issue with regard to learning in school, the counselors tend to believe that there is a learning disability or developmental issue. Culture is not considered as a potential reason for the challenge and the interventions usually are not culturally sensitive. Zoe said:

I kind of had my mainstream expectations. I just expected every child to follow a certain way. And sometimes when students didn't, we looked at it

developmentally, but not necessarily with a more open-minded lens. We would look at like, if there was an issue with this student, well developmentally this is what they should be doing, but culture was not often brought into the conversation.

Competence. School counselors in Paradigm One feel very competent in working with immigrant students and families. When asked how competent he feels, Ray said:

This sounds kind of bold, but I feel very competent as far as my counseling skills ... My hesitation or any lack of competence that I have comes from the amount of the workload. That's really not a lack of competence, that's a lack of time.

Their self-perceived high competency is not necessarily associated with the success in provision of effective services to immigrants. The main reason they feel competent is because they are not aware of immigrants' unique and complex needs and challenges, as well as their insufficient skills to meet the needs of immigrants. However, their self-perceived high competency comes from the connection between what they know needs to be done and what they do correspondingly. In other words, because they do not know much about immigrants' unique needs and challenges, they think that what they already provide to immigrants is enough.

Affiliation with social justice advocacy. School counselors in Paradigm One identify themselves as social justice advocates. However, social justice advocacy is a cognitive construct for them. In other words, they are passive social justice advocates. School counselors in Paradigm One spoke with supportive language, rather than action taking language. Ariyana said, "I definitely support such efforts." However, they lack awareness and knowledge about power, privilege, inequalities, and oppression. As a result, they do not take action to make unjust things just.

Notion of FLP. School counselors in Paradigm One perceive the spoken language at home as an indicator of student success. Ray explained that, “I think the more quickly that they learn that language [English], the more likely they are going to be successful.” Therefore, they want immigrant families to speak English at home. In addition, the counselors may believe that it is important for immigrants to be assimilated to be successful in the society. For instance, Marie made direct connection between assimilation and success where she said, “... assimilate to be successful.”

Involvement with translation. School counselors in Paradigm One are unaware of the need for translating information into other languages before sending it home. Zoe said, “Understanding that I needed to have things translated that went home was something I didn't even think of early on in my career.” Moreover, they believe that families need to understand what is written in English for their children to be successful. Ray said, “Communication with them [immigrant families] ... we want your child to be successful ... here's this study guide that's in English, *they [immigrant families] need to be able to use this.*” Usually translation services are not provided to immigrant families. For example, when they have meetings or conferences, they may not give special attention to immigrant families despite the language barrier.

What they think they need to improve. School counselors in Paradigm One usually do not recognize what improvements they can make to provide better services and support to immigrants. Ray exemplifies Paradigm One in his beliefs that he knows everything and has all the skills he needs in order to work effectively with immigrants. According to him, the only challenge he has is a heavy workload or lack of time. He said,

“My hesitation or any lack of competence comes from the amount of the workload.”

Similarly, Ariyana believes that the only thing she should improve is relearning Spanish, which is spoken by most of her immigrant students. When Ray said, “... at this point, I don’t know what I could do more,” he characterized respondents in Paradigm One who provide external reasons and surface level ideas. They are not aware of the advantages of collaboration with key stakeholders besides working with ESL/ELL teachers when needed.

Paradigm 2: Growing awareness. Paradigm Two is characterized as growing awareness of immigrants’ complex and multi-causal issues and challenges. In Paradigm Two, although school counselors are aware of the major differences between immigrants’ and non-immigrants’ needs and challenges, they do not know how to provide effective services to meet their needs. To avoid making mistakes or offending anyone due to a lack of knowledge and skills, they try to act *politically correct*. Their level of competency in working with immigrants declines because they are aware of what they know, what they do not know, and the fact that their existing skills are not enough to provide effective services to immigrants. They are open for professional development and extended collaboration with key stakeholders to better serve immigrants.

Awareness/Dimensionality. A new understanding of complex reality of working with immigrants is the characteristic feature of school counselors in Paradigm Two. They become open-minded about immigrants’ needs and challenges. Zoe said, “I was really encouraged and pushed to look beyond my own scope of understanding and really try to reach and look at more through a multicultural lens. I feel like my eyes were kind of wide

open.” Instead of assuming they know what immigrants need, they actually make an effort to understand their circumstances. Zoe stated, “It was almost like I knew better than to just assume things about students, I sought to understand.” School counselors in Paradigm Two are aware of the need to be willing to leave their comfort zone, immerse themselves into their immigrant students’ lives in order to serve them effectively.

Another characteristic of school counselors in Paradigm Two is that they are aware of the importance of involving families and closely working with them for better student outcomes. However, they struggle with how to involve the families. For example, when Zoe had immigrant students from South Africa, who spoke French, she said:

I didn't know enough. How do I invite them [parents] into this process? How do I work with these girls [students]? What might the parents need, because they had just moved here? There were just things that I felt kind of responsible for as a school counselor, but I did not know how to handle that.

They are aware that approaching immigrants should be somehow different than non-immigrants; however, they do not know necessarily how to achieve that.

Competence. Although school counselors in Paradigm Two to some extent feel competent in working with immigrants, their self-perceived competency level is lower than Paradigm One. Their competency level declines because they grow awareness of the differences between immigrants’ and non-immigrants’ needs with the consciousness of their lack of skills to meet immigrants’ complex needs. For example, Zoe stated, “I didn't necessarily have the competency at first, but I had the awareness.” Their self-perceived competence is lacking because they do not know what to do and how to deliver services to immigrants. Ariyana said, “Sometimes it is difficult because it is not like I have all the right answers. I know what needs to happen, but I don't know how to make it happen.”

Continuing Ariyana's thought, Pauline said, "I am kind of in the middle with how comfortable I feel. I am definitely sometimes very careful with my words and sometimes I am not sure if I am saying or doing the right thing."

Furthermore, school counselors in Paradigm Two know that they can only provide limited or surface level counseling services to immigrants due to their lack of skills and resources. Carol reported, "If they [issues or needs] are personal, social, academic, career situations, I would feel very comfortable dealing with it just on a surface level." Carol identifies a difference in how she works with different students. She feels more comfortable staying surface level with immigrant students, whose experiences she may not relate to. Moreover, it is not uncommon to see some school counselors in Paradigm Two focusing on certain immigrant groups because they may share similar backgrounds with or have more experiences working with, which might help them to feel more comfortable working with them.

Affiliation with social justice. In Paradigm Two, social justice is a cognitive and affective level awareness. The school counselors passionately identify themselves as social justice advocates, and they believe school counseling and social justice are inseparable. For example, Carol said, "If you don't consider yourself a social justice advocate, then I'm not sure why you're in the profession." In addition, they possess a growing awareness of privilege, power, inequality, and institutional and systemic oppression. Carol stated, "There's so much oppression, and so many of them [immigrants] come from a cycle of poverty." However, because their affiliation with social justice is mostly on cognitive and affective levels, they usually do not do what they

believe needs to be done. In other words, although they know what needs to be done to better serve immigrants, they do not necessarily take actions because they do not trust in their ability to do the right thing. Knowing that they need to do something to advocate for immigrants, but having the fear of being offensive due to a lack of cultural knowledge of their immigrant students and families leads them to act *politically correct*. Political correctness is defined as “Language or behavior that deliberately tries to avoid offending particular groups of people” (Oxford Dictionary). Pauline exemplifies political correctness when she explains that, “To be honest I don't want to be offensive, I don't want to say something wrong so I try to be very like politically correct.” However, they may take action when they are asked to. Ariyana demonstrates this idea, “I wouldn't say that I actively I seek out such opportunities although if it is presented to me, I would definitely take part.”

Notion of FLP. School counselors in Paradigm Two believe that families should speak to their children in both English and their native language. Pauline stated, “I definitely think it would be helpful if students have both native and English-speaking experiences at their home.” When asked what language families should speak to children at home, Marie said, “I’m torn. Both”. They are proponents of practicing native languages at home because they perceive bilingualism as an asset and a gift. In addition, Meggie explains that, “It's really important to preserve your culture.” Speaking a native language at home is an important way for families to do this. Similarly, Marie said, “It’s important for students to not lose who they are.”

On the other hand, they want families to speak to children in English at home, too, because they believe that speaking only in the native language somehow hinders children's learning and decreases their academic success. Ariyana said, "I do believe it [speaking only the native language] would hinder child learning and opportunities to advance." Pauline stated, "Their academic success can kind of suffer a little bit. Not that they cannot be successful, but it just will be harder for these students." Overall, school counselors in Paradigm Two believe that immigrant families should speak to their children in both English and their native language because bilingualism has positive outcomes for children.

Involvement with translation. School counselors in Paradigm Two to some extent are aware of the need and the value of translation. Although they want to translate documents in multiple home languages, they are only able to translate materials in one or two most commonly spoken languages by their immigrant families. It is important to note that although the absence of official translators in school is not the counselors' choice, they do not demand to have professional translators. Instead, they either rely on their second language knowledge, if any, no matter how fluent they are, or an electronic translation software. For instance, Meggie uses French to understand her students better even though she is not fluent in French. She said:

I know a little French, which helps a tiny bit with our West African population. And usually, I can understand when they're speaking; I just can't speak back to them very adequately. When they're struggling to get it out in English, I say, 'Try it in your language and maybe I can get it,' and I usually do. So it's helpful. Similarly, instead of having an official translator, Anne relies on Google translator to understand her Brazilian student who is not able to speak English yet. Anne said:

I have a student who just came a couple weeks ago from Brazil, doesn't speak any English. So we'll sit down at a computer next to each other and type back and forth into Google translate because that's all we can do.

School counselors in Paradigm Two rely on their knowledge of second language or electronic translation services for communication with immigrants because they have limited translation services. Unlike Paradigm One, they are aware of the importance of translation services for better student outcomes; however, they only translate documents into the most common home languages and do not seek professional translation services.

What they think they need to improve. School counselors in Paradigm Two are aware of what they need to improve their work with immigrant students and families. First of all, school counselors in this paradigm realize how little they know about immigrants and also recognize their additional need to learn more about how to meet the needs of immigrants, no matter how long they have been a school counselor. For instance, Carol, who has been a school counselor for nine years, stated, “I've learned even after working in education for a long time that you can still know so little about so many things.” When asked how much she knows about counseling immigrants, she said, “Very little and it pains me to say that.” They oftentimes encounter situations that they have no idea how to handle. For example, Zoe said:

We've had some students that came to us and said my parents are illegally here. I truly did not know how to handle that situation. And teachers would find, hear things and come to me, and I would say, ‘I don't know what to do right now.’

Another characteristic of school counselors in Paradigm Two is that they learn that increasing their knowledge and developing their skills in working with immigrants requires professional development as the key component of that process. Pauline

reported, “It is nice to attend training occasionally, different classes, and seminars. Those kinds of things that can help with my own understanding of an approach in working with families from other cultures.”

They also have a growing awareness of the positive impact of the community resources on serving immigrants and how to develop community-based partnerships. However, despite this awareness, they usually do not know how to connect community agencies and utilize them. For the importance of the community resources, Pauline said, “It is good to educate yourself on looking in your community for resources that fit those families' needs.” Meggie stated that she knows that there are community organizations that could provide services to their immigrant students and families, but she “didn't have a very close relationship [with the community organizations]. I didn't know anyone I could call personally and talk to.” As a result, they have limited partnerships with community organizations, even though they know they can and should extend their existing partnerships and create new ones, which is vital for successfully serving their immigrant students and families.

Paradigm 3: Flexibility (in cognition, affect, behavior). Paradigm Three is characterized as developed skills and provision of effective services to immigrants. School counselors in Paradigm Three are aware of the differences between immigrant and non-immigrant groups. Additionally, they are aware of types of immigrants' issues and challenges, as well as within-group differences among immigrants. They are able to implement social justice advocacy into their counseling programs; however, they lack the courage to initiate conversations with school staff in order to change policies or attitudes

because they are afraid of creating tension and conflict with someone. In other words, their biggest challenge with regard to implementation of social justice advocacy is not being able to go beyond the “Nice Counselor Syndrome” (NCS) (Bemak & Chung, 2008). Moreover, these counselors think immigrant families should speak to their children in their native language. They believe spoken language is not an indicator of student success; however, if the students have additional needs with regards to language, it is the school’s responsibility to make sure their needs are met. Although they know a great deal about immigrants’ needs and challenges, and they are capable of providing necessary services, they still want to develop their knowledge and skills because they are well aware of the significance of continuous professional development.

Awareness/Dimensionality. School counselors in Paradigm Three are aware of the differences between immigrants and non-immigrants in terms of what they need and how to meet their needs. They have a great deal of knowledge of immigrants’ complex and multi-causal needs, and they are able to provide services accordingly. Moreover, they are aware of immigrants’ possible biases and stigma about counseling. Sophie explains that immigrants will not always ask for help because “it’s difficult in the sense that culturally they tend to be very quiet about things, they don’t just like, ‘I need this’.” The school counselors try to understand the stigma to overcome it in order to be able to provide the services that immigrants need. Anne said, “... kind of figuring out what stigmas are and just the cultural norms for everyone, being sure we meet all of [immigrants’ needs].” They also know enough about within-group differences among immigrants. Finally, knowing that immigrants’ issues and challenges are complex and

have multiple components, the counselors try to provide diverse support and services to make sure their needs are met.

Competence. Increased confidence in school counselors' knowledge and skills is a characteristic feature of school counselors in Paradigm Three. Their competency level is improved because they have developed knowledge and skills that enable them to implement interventions to provide effective services to immigrants. Fred stated, "I am getting more competent. It has been a process for sure. My first couple years, I was very unsure what to do. It is a growing confidence for sure." However, they may not feel as competent with the immigrant populations that they have not had enough experiences with.

Affiliation with social justice. School counselors in Paradigm Three have strong affiliation with social justice advocacy. They identify themselves as social justice advocates and they implement advocacy in their daily practices. The main characteristic of the counselors in Paradigm Three is that their connection with social justice goes beyond cognitive and affective to behavior where social justice advocacy is manifested through their actions. For example, they organize their counseling services based on social justice advocacy. Anne stated:

At the beginning of the year, I do my needs assessment. I ask them all kinds of questions, and one of the questions I just started adding is 'Do you speak- does your family speak another language at home?' and 'Do you understand it, do you speak it?'

However, their advocacy is confined to their counseling services. Even though they know social justice advocacy should go beyond their counseling programs, they limit their advocacy within their counseling services. For example, Ray identified himself as a

proponent of social justice advocacy and manifests social justice advocacy “simply by the interactions that I have with students.” As a result, they unwillingly accept the school policy and norms. The conflict between knowing that they need to do something for their immigrant students and families, and the fear of creating any tension between someone, leads them to experience NCS. NCS manifests in the following ways:

By many good-hearted, well-meaning practitioners who are commonly viewed as being “nice” people to be around and to work with in school settings. These counselors live up to their reputation of being nice people by the manner in which they consistently strive to promote harmony with others while avoiding and deflecting interpersonal conflicts in the school setting. (Bemak & Chung, 2008, p. 374)

Notion of FLP. School counselors in Paradigm Three believe that families should speak to their children in their native language. They think it is crucial for immigrant children to be bilingual and maintain their cultural heritage. Anne believes that immigrant families should speak to their children in their native language because “cultural language is so important to keep.” In addition, school counselors in Paradigm Three do not consider the spoken language as an indicator of student success. Fred stated, “I don't think it is a really an indicator of success.” However, if they see any situations that immigrant students’ academic success is suffering for lack of English skills, they believe that it is the school’s responsibility to make sure students are learning and not staying behind their non-immigrant peers.

Involvement with translation. School counselors in Paradigm Three are aware of the value and the need of translation for better student outcomes and seek professional translation services. The counselors, like Fred, make sure that “When we send out information, we try to send it out in multiple languages.” Similarly, Marie said the

following about translation, “Here’s our permission form written in English, okay let’s translate it, let’s make sure everyone understands what’s going on.” Zoe explained the importance of translation as “The more information you can give them in a way they [immigrant families] understand, the more engaged they are, and then the more engaged their children are.” In this paradigm, counselors give special attention to immigrant families in meetings at school.

What they think they need to improve. School counselors in Paradigm Three have increased knowledge and developed skills in working effectively with immigrants. They know working with immigrants is an endless learning process; therefore, they want to increase their knowledge and advance their skills all the time. When asked what she needs, Marie said, “Ongoing professional development. I don’t think you’re ever finished.” Similarly, Meggie said, “I’m learning all the time, more about their needs, but I feel like I’ve got a better handle on it now.” They successfully implement community-based collaboration programs, but they believe that in order to improve their services to immigrants they should offer more collaboration services and improve the existing programs.

The counselors value ongoing professional development, which is believed to be necessary for their personal and professional growth and to strengthen their skills. For example, Ronni stated, “I would like to see more professional development within all school districts ... to learn more of cultural norms and things like that to help us better understand our students.” Similarly, Sophie believes that “[Professional Development] is so important, because we’re never going to know it all.” In addition to professional

development, they think they need to be willing to leave their *comfort zone*, and immerse themselves in the immigrants' community to learn more about immigrants, their culture and values. Scotts believes that in order to better serve immigrants, he should:

... step outside of my comfort zones ... be willing to step out of those comfort zones and step into [immigrants' community] just to be sensitive to the needs of other people ... go there as a helper, say I'm here to help, what can I do, what do you need?

Paradigm 4: Culturally competent school counselor. Paradigm Four is characterized as a strong social justice identity that is manifested through actions, individual-based increased awareness and knowledge and advanced skills in working with immigrants. Despite the fact that the counselors know many things about immigrants and how to provide effective services to immigrants, at this level, they develop humility about their knowledge and skills. They are in the constant stage of learning because they know effectively working with immigrants is an endless learning process. They believe that not only immigrant families should speak to their children in their native language to become bilingual, but also the children should be literate in their native language, rather than just fluently speaking it. They are competent and comfortable to advocate for immigrants at building or district levels. Finally, social justice advocacy may become a part of who they are.

Awareness/Dimensionality. School counselors in Paradigm Four are well aware of immigrants' unique issues and challenges, as well as within-group differences among immigrants. The counselors know that each individual is different and his or her needs are unique. Scots stated, "[I] investigate what's going on with those kids. I'm pretty specific, know the specific needs of our students." They know immigrants may have

some biases and stigma about counseling; therefore, the counselors do not wait for them to come to them for help, instead they offer the help. Scots stated, “If it's shown as a weakness to ask for help, then we don't let them ask for help, we offer the help, we just provide the help.” Because they know existing challenges and barriers may create a lack of immigrant families’ school engagement, they do not blame the families for the lack of participation in schools and it does not mean that they do not care for education.

Moreover, they try to learn all the components of the lack of school engagement and implement interventions to overcome the challenges. Finally, they are critical of their existing knowledge and skills, and they may realize some of the knowledge and skills they have been taught are not necessarily true for effectively working with immigrants.

Sophie stated:

Even their [classes and textbooks] interpretation and understanding isn't always accurate. I take what I've learned, but I approach each family, each individual, and get to learn from them ... If we hold onto what I learned in class, I'm going to have the wrong perception.

Therefore, they learn best directly from immigrants, and they are sensitive to individual differences and approach immigrants case by case.

Competence. School counselors in Paradigm Four are very competent in working with immigrants. They have increased awareness, knowledge and well-developed skills to work effectively with immigrants. They know that they will never learn everything, which makes them comfortable with not knowing everything. Marie stated, “I don't want to sound ignorant and say that I'm completely aware [of immigrants' needs and challenges], because I don't think that that's even possible.” They also develop humility about what they have learned and what they still think they need to learn. As a result,

they still feel confident and competent even in situations that they do not know how to handle because they know how to find the answers.

Affiliation with social justice. Becoming a change agent to make the education experience equitable for everyone is the main characteristic of school counselors in Paradigm Four. When they have unjust policies at school, they have the courage to initiate conversations with administrators and teachers to change the school policies. Zoe reported, “I’m not afraid to speak up if I think something isn’t working. Speaking up to the principal if I think a policy could potentially be considered off putting to someone or a group and speaking up to teachers.” Similarly, Ronni stated, “If I see something, I am still going to approach someone to say words that was not okay and this is how we need to work this out or whatever. So I have no problem with that at all.” They do not pretend everything is equitable when they really are not. As Zoe said, “You’re always looking for *are all the needs being met?* If there is a problem, you being the one to work with others and try to make it right.” In other words, they overcome NCS.

Moreover, their social justice advocacy exists outside of the building level as well. For example, Anne said, “I wrote a grant last year for a family, so we could pay their rent for a month, so she could get back on her feet kind of thing.” Furthermore, Scots said that he tries to “make sure that the district continues to advocate for our students.” Instead of waiting for someone else to make policies and regulations, they may take active role in building or district levels meetings in order to advocate for immigrants and make sure socially just policies are made. Zoe stated:

Working with your school board members or your principal or whoever is creating policies for like your handbook or whatever it might be, or discipline,

you *have to* have a voice in that. You can't just say, oh, well that's just the school policy, not my decision. I mean you have to at least make that effort.

In addition, they may go to court, for example, to advocate their immigrant students. When talking about why Scots feels he should go to court to advocate for his students, he said, “They don't see a Latino girl, they see an American, if you're advocating for that student.” In becoming advocates for immigrant students and families, school counselors in Paradigm Four become change agents. Zoe stated, “A lot of people look to me for direction on how to handle certain things.” Similarly, Scots said, “I am seen as an expert in advocating for our students.”

School counselors in this paradigm prioritize empowering immigrants because they know that just providing what they need is not enough. Anne said, “When I hear about families who are in need, a lot of times, we'll not only reach out and offer the food, but how can I connect you.” Likewise, Scots believes that they “need to *empower* our families and our communities to stand up for themselves as well.”

Finally, it appeared that social justice advocacy becomes an essential part of their identity. Zoe stated, “[social justice] has to be part of your policies, part of your programing for students, part of your everyday. It's *who you are*. ” Similarly, Ronni said, “social justice is a huge part of who we are.”

Notion of FLP. School counselors in Paradigm Four believe that families should speak to their children in their native language. They think that bilingualism and preservation of cultural values are very important. The counselors believe that spoken language is not an indicator of student success -- there are multiple factors that determine

success and the school is fully responsible for making sure immigrant students are learning and not staying behind their non-immigrant peers.

The school counselors think children should not only speak their native language, but also become literate in their native language. Anne stated the following about her Spanish-speaking students:

Their writing skills are kind of crappy in Spanish because nobody's ever taught them. They speak fine, but it's casual. This class will give them more of a professional or a quality writing, so you're more marketable, and you actually have that higher-level skill.

Involvement with translation. School counselors in Paradigm Four make sure that information sent home is in the home language. However, they know that just sending things in the home language does not mean the families read and understand it because families may not be literate. Therefore, they make additional effort to make sure families understand what they need to know. Moreover, school counselors in this paradigm pay close attention to immigrant families' needs and challenges in terms of school engagement. They are aware of the language and other potential barriers impeding full participation in school. Therefore, they may organize separate meetings for only immigrant families on their convenient time. Anne said, "I've proposed this to my principal, anything we host is all in English. We should have a separate space for our [immigrant] families."

What they think they need to improve. School counselors in Paradigm Four have increased awareness, knowledge, and skills in successfully working with immigrants. They realize learning about immigrants is an endless learning process; therefore, they

always need additional professional development and more direct experiences with immigrant students and families. In addition to the need for learning more and developing their skills, they want to learn how to provide professional development to school staff on how to work effectively and respectfully with immigrants. Zoe said, “[I] would like to partner with them [ESL teachers] more on education for staff.” The school counselors in Paradigm Four are in a constant state of learning.

Essence

An effort was made to formulate the themes and the paradigms in a fundamental structure in order to capture the essence (Moustakas, 1994) of the respondents’ experiences working with immigrant students and families.

The respondents feel competent in working with immigrants no matter how much they know about immigrants’ needs and challenges and specifically how to deliver counseling services to them. The self-perceived competence is high for those who know less about immigrants’ complex and multi-causal needs because they are not aware of what they need to know to better serve them. This makes them believe what they do is adequate, sufficient, and enough. However, once they realize what they know and provide are not enough, even maybe not adequate, to effectively serve immigrants, their self-perceived competence level declines. Their self-perceived competence level then increases with increased knowledge, developed skills, and creating partnerships with key stakeholders.

Furthermore, the respondents believe that their training was not sufficient for effectively working with immigrants. They also think that the best learning takes place in

the field, directly working with immigrants and immersing themselves into immigrants' community and culture, rather than reading books or taking classes about immigrants. In other words, it is evident that it is crucial for them to be willing to leave their comfort zone to have more diverse experiences for their personal and professional development. In addition to willingly and intentionally seeking more direct experiences with immigrants, ongoing professional development and extended collaboration with key stakeholders is important for their success.

Initially, the respondents' conceptualization of immigrants is confined to immigrants versus non-immigrants, where all immigrants are deemed as almost the same. However, when they have learned more about immigrants' complex issues and challenges and how to effectively deliver services to meet their needs, they first grow the awareness of within-group differences among immigrants, and following, they develop greater awareness of individual differences within each immigrant group as well as each family. In other words, each individual is perceived, accepted, and treated as unique and special considering his or her own reality. As a result, they develop greater humility about both the knowledge they have gained and how much they still have to learn because they know learning about immigrants and how to counsel them is an endless learning process. Therefore, they learn how to be comfortable with not knowing everything which leads to them becoming constant learners.

The respondents believe that social justice is a key component of their work. They identify themselves as social justice advocates, which is a motivation to make sure the educational experience is equitable for everybody. While those who conceptualize social

justice advocacy as a cognitive concept strongly advocate for immigrants, but lack action, the ones who conceptualize social justice as something that goes beyond cognition and affective, actually manifest advocacy through their behaviors. They are willing and have the courage to create conflict or raise tension to make things just when some needs of immigrants are not met due to unjust policies or circumstances.

Finally, the respondents advocate for immigrant families to speak in their native language to their children, even though there is some concern about its possible negative impact on students' test scores. While they tend to focus on the importance of learning English due to its impact on students in the beginning, once they develop as a competent school counselor, they become proponents of speaking native languages. They believe that speaking in the native language leads to bilingualism, which is deemed as a very important factor that positively affects students' academic, career, and social/personal development. In addition, preservation of cultural values is important.

Summary

This phenomenological qualitative study used data from 13 semi-structured interviews to provide empirical evidence that explores school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and what resources they utilize to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families. Additionally, school counselors' beliefs and attitudes toward being a social justice advocate and how these beliefs and attitudes affect their support and services to immigrants, as well as school counselors' perceptions of their impact on FLP and their perceptions of how student outcomes are affected by FLP, were examined. Seven themes emerged from the data: (1) They feel competent in

addressing immigrants' needs and challenges; however, their personal identities and experience impact their self-perceived competence level, (2) they believe that their training did not include counseling immigrants and was not sufficient for working effectively with immigrants, (3) they learn best about how to provide counseling services by willingly and intentionally leaving their comfort zones in order to seek out diverse experiences, (4) they need more professional development, language assistance, and collaboration with key stakeholders to improve their work, (5) The more they learn about immigrant students and families, they develop greater awareness of the individual differences in immigrant populations, as well as begin to develop greater humility about both the knowledge they have gained and how much they still have to learn, (6) social justice is at the heart of their work, and (7) They believe immigrant families should speak their native language with their children, and there was a range of opinions of whether or not FLP impacts student outcomes. In addition to the themes, the following four paradigms were discovered: (1) Superficial Awareness, (2) Growing Awareness, (3) Flexibility (in cognition, affect, behavior), and (4) Culturally Competent School Counselor. Each paradigm was described in six domains: awareness/dimensionality, competence, affiliation with social justice advocacy, notion of FLP, involvement with translation, and what they think they need to improve. These themes and paradigms explain the school counselor respondents' experiences and perceptions of their work.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Overview of the Study

The biggest educational attainment gap between any two groups is seen between English Language Learners (ELL) and non-ELL students. Of ELL students the largest majority by far are immigrant students. Immigrants have unique challenges and needs that are left unmet by society as a whole (Burnham, Mantero, & Hooper, 2009; Clemente & Collison, 2000; Lee, 2001; Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004). As educational settings are not immune to this phenomenon, immigrant students attend schools that are often unprepared to meet their needs (Clemente & Collison, 2000). Because school counselors are in a unique position that enables them to provide essential services to promote immigrant students' well-being, development, and success, it is important to explore school counselors' experiences and perceptions of their work.

This qualitative phenomenological research study explored (a) school counselors' competency development and their perceptions of their competencies in working with immigrant students and families, (b) their affiliation with social justice advocacy, and (c) their perceptions of linguistically diverse families' language policies (FLP) and their perceptions of how FLP may impact student outcomes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 professional school counselors recruited through purposive and snowball sampling methods. As mentioned in Chapter 4, seven overarching themes emerged from the data:

Theme 1: They feel competent in addressing immigrants' needs and challenges; however, their personal identities and experience impact their self-perceived competence level.

Theme 2: They believe that their training did not include counseling immigrants and was not sufficient for working effectively with immigrants.

Theme 3: They learn best about how to provide counseling services by willingly and intentionally leaving their comfort zones in order to seek out diverse experiences.

Theme 4: They need more professional development, language assistance, and collaboration with key stakeholders to improve their work.

Theme 5: The more they learn about immigrant students and families, they develop greater awareness of the individual differences in immigrant populations, as well as begin to develop greater humility about both the knowledge they have gained and how much they still have to learn.

Theme 6: Social justice is at the heart of their work.

Theme 7: They believe immigrant families should speak their native language with their children, and there was a range of opinions of whether or not FLP impacts student outcomes.

The themes were applied to the research questions to better understand the perceptions of the school counselor respondents in working with immigrant students and families. In addition to these themes, four paradigms were identified based on the respondents' perceptions and experiences: (1) Superficial Awareness, (2) Growing Awareness, (3) Flexibility (in cognition, affect, behavior), and (4) Culturally Competent

School Counselor. This chapter discusses how the aforementioned themes answered the research questions, and provides insight on findings from this study and how those findings are related to the field of school counseling. The information in this chapter is presented in five sections: discussion of the emerging themes, discussion of the paradigms, limitations, recommendations, and implications of this study.

Discussion of the Emerging Themes

Themes are categorized based on the research question they address.

Research Question 1. *What are school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and needs in working with immigrant students and families?*

The themes relating to research question one include:

Theme 1: They feel competent in addressing immigrants' needs and challenges; however, their personal identities and experience impact their self-perceived competence level.

Theme 2: They believe that their training did not include counseling immigrants and was not sufficient for working effectively with immigrants.

Theme 3: They learn best about how to provide counseling services by willingly and intentionally leaving their comfort zones in order to seek out diverse experiences.

Theme 4: They need more professional development, language assistance, and collaboration with key stakeholders to improve their work.

Theme 5: The more they learn about immigrant students and families, they develop greater awareness of the individual differences in immigrant populations, as well as begin

to develop greater humility about both the knowledge they have gained and how much they still have to learn.

In addition, research question two, which explores the resources that school counselors perceive to have in order to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families, is answered by the themes discussed under research question one; therefore, this question is not discussed separately.

The findings of this study indicate that all of the respondents feel competent in addressing needs and challenges of immigrant students and families. In addition, some factors were found impacting the counselors' levels of self-perceived competency. For instance, shared ethnic and cultural background, ability to speak a second language or being bilingual, and level of experiences with immigrants have a positive impact on the respondents' perceived competency level. Similarly, Aydin (2011) found race, ethnicity, and bilingual statutes as important factors in the establishment of partnerships with linguistically diverse families. Non-White and bilingual school counselors had higher involvement with immigrant parents than White school counselors (Aydin, 2011; Cook et al., 2013). Johnson (2012) found that while Latino/a school counselors had the highest self-esteem level in working with ELL students, White participants had the lowest score of self-esteem. Moreover, school counselors who speak a language other than English had higher self-efficacy scores in working with ELL students.

Schwallie-Giddis et al. (2004) found that school counselors feel least comfortable working with immigrants from Middle Eastern cultures and most comfortable working with immigrants from Hispanic cultures. However, this study found that the respondents'

level of comfort is connected to their level of experience with the target group. In other words, the level of experience and familiarity with immigrant groups impact how comfortable the school counselors feel in addressing the needs and challenges of immigrant students and families, rather than a certain ethnic group or geographical location.

In order to increase comfort with immigrant student' needs, direct experience with immigrants is essential in developing awareness, knowledge, and skills. Working with immigrants might initially be uncomfortable for some school counselors, but over time, the experience alters their views and perceptions of immigrants. Nilsson et al. (2011) found that as a result of direct experiences with immigrants, most counselors developed awareness, attitudes, skills, and confidence "reflecting growth in multicultural competency and social justice advocacy" (p. 419). Similarly, the counselor respondents in this study articulated that they best learn about how to work with immigrants when they are actually in the field. They believe that reading books, taking classes, or attending professional development training is not enough to learn immigrants' complex and multi-causal needs. Moreover, it is well known that experience only in their office is not sufficient to grow and learn more. They believe that it is crucial to intentionally leave their *comfort zones* in order to have diverse experiences with immigrants. In other words, although not knowing what to do or how to handle a problem may be uncomfortable, many counselors find that this uncertainty leads to the greatest insight into the issues of immigrant students and families.

One factor that might explain this notion of believing they have to have direct experiences in the field with immigrants to learn immigrants' needs and challenges, and how to counsel them, might be lack of training on counseling immigrants. They believe that their training in graduate school did not include how to specifically work with immigrants. Therefore, most of the respondents' first direct experiences with immigrants took place when they started working as school counselors. Once they learned the complexity of issues experienced by immigrants and the required advanced skills for working effectively with them, they realized how little, if not at all, they learned back in graduate school. The respondents stressed that their training back in graduate school should have included addressing the needs and challenges of immigrants and how to successfully execute interventions to meet their needs. Similarly, Cazares-Cervantes (2014) found that although most school counseling programs offer a multicultural counseling class, school counselors need additional training to better understand and address Latino/a students and their needs.

However, emphasizing direct work with immigrants as the best way of learning does not de-emphasize the need for professional development. Most respondents stated that they need ongoing professional development in order to increase their knowledge and develop their skills to better serve their immigrant students and families. In addition to professional development, the respondents need more collaboration with key stakeholders (e. g. ESL teachers, intervention specialist, families, community agencies) as well as translation services to better serve the population.

No matter how competent the respondents felt about counseling immigrants, most respondents disclosed an additional need for learning more about immigrants' needs and challenges, and for developing their own skills in order to successfully work with them. They are aware of the fact that learning about immigrants is an ongoing process. Because every individual's unique needs require different and diverse approaches, it is almost impossible to claim that the counselors are fully knowledgeable and developed in this area. They might know enough to successfully execute interventions with certain individuals or groups. However, when they work with immigrants who come from a different background with different needs and challenges, the counselors may not feel as competent, which may result in the need for additional learning.

Nilsson et al. (2011) found that many school counselors acknowledged that there is still much to learn about different cultures and that learning would help them grow both personally and professionally. Professional competence, career counseling, school behavior issues, and cultural awareness and sensitivity were found to be school counselors' top training needs when working with Latino students (Cazares-Cervantes, 2014). Most school counselors identified anytime web, in person, and live web as the most desirable type of training for learning practical counseling techniques and cognitive development. This current study revealed that some school counselors expressed humility about their knowledge and how much they still need to learn.

Overall, the findings of this study indicate that school counselor respondents feel competent in working with immigrant students and families although their personal identities and experience impact their self-perceived competence level. They believe that

their training did not include how to address the needs and challenges of immigrants, and they think they should have learned at least some basic facts about immigrants back when they were graduate students. In addition, they think the best way of learning about immigrants is willingly and intentionally having direct experiences in the field, immersing themselves in the community, and not assuming anything, but rather asking and learning from immigrants. They highlighted an additional need for professional development, translation services, and partnership programs with key stakeholders. They need professional development because they are aware of the fact that learning about immigrants is an endless learning process considering every immigrant individual is unique and he or she needs special attention and treatment.

Research Question 3. *To what extent do school counselors who work with immigrant students and families perceive themselves to be a social justice advocate?*

The theme relating to research question three is that social justice is at the heart of the respondents' work. Based on the findings from the individual interviews, the school counselor respondents indicated that social justice is a very important component of their work. They are cognizant of the importance of social justice advocacy in counseling services, and they identify themselves as social justice advocates. However, their conceptualization of social justice advocacy varies. While some respondents believed that being a social justice advocate means being cognizant and supportive of equitable and appropriate services for immigrant students and families, other respondents conceptualized social justice advocacy as the effort that must be manifested through *actions* and *behaviors*.

Social justice is conceptualized based upon the belief that “virtually all students can achieve at high levels and that counselors must be proactive leaders in closing the existing achievement gap in schools” (House & Martin, 1998, p. 285). Therefore, the contemporary expectation is for school counselors to leave their offices to work toward systemic change, which is different from traditional school counseling practice (Ratts, 2009). School counselors are encouraged to incorporate classroom, school, neighborhood, and larger community into their practice instead of just working in their offices because marginalized groups are better served when utilizing alternative helping roles and out-of-office interventions (Bailey et al., 2007). Thus, school counselors should utilize community resources and take active roles to change social structures at the macro level, which has a greater impact on social change (Clark et al., 2013; Goodman et al., 2004; Nilsson et al., 2011).

A variation between the respondents’ answers with regard to enacting social justice exists. While some of them believe that only taking action when they are asked to do is enough to be a social justice advocate, other respondents argue that social justice advocacy must go beyond cognition and affect to daily practices. They believe that active social justice advocacy is the most effective way to make sure the education experiences are as equitable as possible for everyone. The school counselor respondents know that advocating for immigrants may create some conflict with others (e.g., teachers, administrators, principals) because the advocacy effort challenges the status quo, requires the sharing of power, and involves the oppressed in decision-making processes, which may not be comfortable for some of those in positions of privilege and power. The fear of

creating a conflict should not stop counselors from advocating for students (Bemak & Chung, 2005). They should be comfortable with the conflict for the benefit of immigrants. Social justice is a desire for them to make everything as just as possible for immigrants. Moreover, some respondents argued that social justice eventually becomes an important element of their identity.

Overall, the counselors' perceptions of their involvement with and commitment to social justice make them aware of existing unjust and oppressive policies in their schools and districts. School counselors may consciously or unconsciously hold a position that perpetuates the status quo, which has limitations for meeting immigrants' needs. Simply fulfilling their defined job requirements may not be enough advocacy for immigrants to meet their needs. This is consistent with what Bemak and Chung (2005) argued in which school counselors should challenge the system with and/or on behalf of their immigrant students and families to create the necessary changes for them to fulfill their potential. This study suggests that school counselors should be critical of the existing policies in their schools and districts and should not disregard systemic and institutional challenges and issues facing immigrant students.

Research Question 4. *What do school counselors believe about their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies? What are school counselors' perceptions of the impact of family language policies on student outcomes?*

The theme relating to research question four is that the respondents believe immigrant families should speak their native language with their children, and there was a range of opinions of whether or not FLP impacts student outcomes. People desire to

become bilingual for a variety of reasons, such as social, economic, career, openness for cross cultural understanding, cognitive development, academic achievement, and personal benefits (Alladi et al., 2013; Bak et al., 2014; Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007; Rodrigues et al., 2014; Saidi & Ansaldo, 2015). The respondents believe that immigrant families should speak to their children in their native language for two reasons: pragmatism and future academic, career, and/or social/personal benefits. In other words, bilingualism is believed to be an asset for better opportunities. Researchers have achieved consensus on bilingualism as being an asset for people. If anyone takes an opposite position about the value of bilingualism, his or her tenet is based on “prejudice and ignorance” and has no “scientific foundation” (Alban-Gonzalez & Ortega-Campoverde, 2014, p. 130). Thus, it is crucial for school counselors to be aware of the advantages of bilingualism and become advocates for bilingual education.

In addition to pragmatic and practical motivations, families’ language policies are shaped by aesthetic and individual benefits of bilingualism/multilingualism (Curd-Christiansen, 2009). For instance, a mother tongue is deemed as the central aspect of people’s internal sense of self and identity (Tannenbaum, 2012). Mother tongue is associated with homeland, childhood, memories, early significant relationships, songs, laughter, stories, affect, family, history, and meaning making in life (Guardado, 2008). Tannenbaum (2012) argued that one’s identity could be validated through the development of their mother tongue. The school counselor respondents believe that immigrant families should speak to their children in their native language due to its

individual benefits, and because it is very important to maintain their cultural heritage. Native language is a vital component of their identity and makes them who they are.

School is believed to be one of the most powerful forces that directly affect FLP. Families might be told by the school that they need to speak the dominant language with their children at home for their children to be successful. For example, Chatzidaki and Maligkoudi (2013) found that teachers in Greece tend to advise immigrant parents to speak only Greek because they believe that speaking their native language confuses children. However, King and Fogle (2006) argued that parents are not uncritical consumers of any source of public discourses in shaping their FLP. They stated that although some popular press, parenting literature, and personal networks have some influence on family language policies, parents' own personal successful or unsuccessful experiences serve as the major motivating sources. Moreover, rather than passively adopting dominant ideologies, parents "produce their own responses by negotiating, resisting or adapting to national and transnational language policies" (Seloni & Sarfari, 2013, p. 8). This is consistent with what many school counselor respondents reported about the impact of the messages families receive from school counselors on their FLP. The respondents believe that families do what they think is the best for their children, which usually results in speaking in their native language at home.

However, some respondents stated that speaking only the native language with children might result in lack of English language skills, which could hinder students' success -- especially their test scores -- although the majority of the respondents believe spoken language is not an indicator of student success. Therefore, they emphasized that

schools must make sure that the students are getting what they need. This is consistent with the findings of Dolson's (1985) and Snow's (1990) studies, which found that students who speak Spanish at home outperformed those whose families switched to English in terms of mathematic skills, academic grade point average, and retention. More specifically, insisting on speaking a weaker language at home results in children being exposed to less complex language, which negatively affects children's linguistic and cognitive development (King et al., 2008). Snow (1990) argued that having more exposure to English in environments in which people are not proficient in English is a detriment to students' performance in the language because these interactions do not involve high level of linguistic proficiency. Similarly, many school counselor respondents believe that immigrant students should speak in their native language at home for better communication. Additionally, when they need extra help or support to develop their English skills, it is the school's responsibility to provide necessary services to ensure immigrant students are not behind their non-immigrant peers.

Discussion of the Paradigms

One of the discoveries in doing this research is the continuing process of understanding immigrants and becoming an effective school counselor in working with immigrants among the respondents. It has become apparent to me that there is a path in the respondents' process of becoming a culturally competent school counselor. As told by Fred:

It has been a process for sure. This is the first time I felt very competent, just because gaining experience of the first three years. But my first a couple years I was very unsure what to do. It is a growing confidence for sure.

Zoe stated the following as well:

... understanding, getting to know these families, and putting myself right there and understanding the behavior of students, how that might be different. I feel I'm much more flexible now. Before, I was sort of open-minded and wide-eyed. Now I'm more flexible in my thinking.

Based on the relationships between the paradigms as expressed by respondents, I hypothesize that school counselors' process of becoming an effective counselor in working with immigrants is composed of four developmental stages: (1) Superficial Awareness, (2) Growing Awareness, (3) Flexibility (in cognition, affect, behavior), and (4) Culturally Competent School Counselor. These stages might be parallel to the four paradigms presented in Chapter Four. The characteristics of each developmental stage are further manifested in six domains: (1) awareness/dimensionality, (2) competence, (3) affiliation with social justice advocacy, (4) notion of FLP, (5) involvement with translation, and (6) what they think they need to improve.

The developmental process of becoming an effective school counselor in general is not completely separate from the development process of becoming an effective school counselor specifically working with immigrants. However, these hypothesized developmental stages do not definitively describe the growth of an effective school counselor in general. It is important to keep in mind that the developmental process presented here is not a linear process, and requires longitudinal studies for further refinement and validation. School counselors may exhibit thoughts, attitudes, actions, and behaviors in line with different stages simultaneously. It is believed that each respondent is unique; therefore, his or her development process may be different than those of his or her colleagues. In spite of this, the desirable outcome remains the same: becoming an

effective school counselor working with immigrants. Further discussion concerning the stages is provided below across the domains.

Awareness/Dimensionality. Awareness is defined as the counselors' attitudes and beliefs about race, ethnicity, culture, immigration statuses, and the counselors' consciousness of his or her biases and stereotypes of cultural group membership with regard to privilege, discrimination, and oppression (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue et al., 1992). Although many school counselors are challenged in addressing immigrants' needs and challenges (Burnham, Mantero, & Hooper, 2009; Clemente & Collison, 2000; Lee, 2001; Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004), it is found that school counselors who are culturally sensitive and have increased awareness about diversity receive more positive student outcomes than the ones who do not have increased awareness (Clemente & Collison, 2000). Field experience with immigrants fosters the counselors' multicultural awareness (Burnham et al., 2009; Nilsson et al., 2011).

Gradually increasing awareness through stages was suggested by my examination of the participants' responses with regard to their awareness of immigrants' needs and challenges. School counselors in Stage One are aware of very surface level issues and challenges of immigrants, if they have any awareness. These counselors have one-dimensional awareness; they perceive all of their students as same, regardless of their immigration statuses. Because they are not aware of possible biases and stigma about counseling (Padilla & Perez, 2003; Yeh, 2001), they think having an *open-door policy* would be enough to provide effective services. As a result of this lack of awareness, many immigrants may have negative experiences with their school counselors because

their needs are not met (Clemente & Collison, 2000; Morganfield, 2012; Vela et al., 2013; Vela-Gude et al., 2009).

Transition from Stage One to Stage Two appears when school counselors adapt two-dimensional awareness, where they are aware of the complex needs and challenges of immigrants. The counselors have a new understanding of the complex reality experienced by immigrants. They are aware of the importance of family involvement for better student outcomes; however, they do not know how to provide such services. They do know that without providing the services, their influence on immigrants is limited.

School counselors become capable of providing effective services in Stage Three. They develop three-dimensional awareness of immigrants' needs and challenges, which adds awareness of within group differences among immigrants. They know immigrants' issues and challenges have multiple components, and they try to provide diverse support and services to make sure their needs are met. Finally, school counselors in Stage Four have four-dimensional awareness of immigrants. Since they know that it would be wrong to generalize any information, they provide individualized services and support. The counselors know immigrants may have some biases and stigma about counseling; therefore, the counselors would not wait for immigrants to come to them for help. They offer their help instead. In addition, they also become critical of what they have learned about counseling immigrants. Their capacity to create knowledge and determine what works and what does not work with their target population enables them to become constructive learners (Waters, 2010).

Competence. A competent school counselor is defined as the one who has the awareness, knowledge, abilities, attitudes, skills, and actions that enable him or her to work effectively with and meet immigrants' complex and multi-causal needs (Arredondo et al., 1996; ASCA, 2012c; Sue et al., 1992). Research found that the majority of school counselors are confident in their ability to work with ELL students, and they have a high level of confidence in developing trust and positive relationships with ELL students (Johnson, 2012). When considering the school counselors' race or ethnicity, Latino/a school counselors have the highest self-esteem level in working with ELL students, while White participants had the lowest score of self-esteem. Moreover, school counselors who speak a language other than English had a higher self-efficacy score than monolingual counselors in working with ELL students.

In examining the school counselor participants' responses on how competent they feel in working with immigrant students and families, it appears that their self-perceived competency levels evolve as they move through the stages. School counselors in Stage One might feel very competent in working with immigrants because they are not aware of immigrants' unique and complex needs, challenges, and the required knowledge and skills to effectively work with them. Their self-perceived high competency is not necessarily associated with successful provision of services to immigrants. Transition from Stage One to Stage Two appears when counselors' self-perceived competency level decreases due to their realization of the complexity of the issues and challenges faced by immigrants and the limited skills they possess. They know very well that they can only provide surface level counseling services to immigrants. Increased confidence in school

counselors' knowledge and skills is seen in Stage Three. Their competency level improves because they have developed knowledge and skills that enable them to successfully execute interventions and provide effective services to immigrants. However, their self-perceived competence might be lower with the immigrant populations which they have not had enough experiences. Finally, counselors in Stage Four feel very competent in working with immigrants. They would have increased awareness, knowledge and well-developed skills that enable them to work effectively with immigrants and meet their needs. They are aware of the fact that they will never learn everything, which makes them become more comfortable with new situations or new immigrant populations. As a result, they still feel confident and competent when facing and addressing unexpected issues or problems concerning immigrants.

Affiliation with social justice advocacy. Social justice is conceptualized as the effort to change the status quo to empower oppressed people who do not share equal power in society through culturally responsive practices (Constantine et al., 2007; Goodman et al., 2004; Miller, 1999). A number of studies have been conducted to explore social justice identity development. For example, Waters (2010) framed a developmental model based on a contemporary understanding of ally development, motivation, attitudes, and action. This model claims that ally developmental process goes through initial, intermediate, and mature stages. The development of social justice takes place across cognitive knowledge, intrapersonal awareness, and interpersonal skills. Waters underscored that the ally development scheme is not a linear process; individuals may exhibit actions, attitudes, and behaviors according to multiple dimensions

simultaneously. Similarly, Dollarhide, Clevenger, Dogan, and Edwards (2016) found that social justice identity development of counselor educators is a developmental process. They explored affective, behavioral, cognitive, and contextual changes in their respondents' experiences of challenge and support from a chronological and holistic perspective.

In examining the respondents' responses about their affiliation and commitment to social justice advocacy, the evidence suggests that while social justice is an affective and cognitive phenomenon in the early stages, advocacy is manifested in their *actions* and *behaviors* in the latter stages. For example, although respondents in the first stage identify themselves as social justice advocates, they do not disclose any advocacy action because usually social justice is an abstract concept for them. Advocating for immigrants on a cognitive level is enough to fulfill their desire for commitment to social justice. The shift from Stage One to Stage Two is manifested through awareness of social justice and taking limited advocacy actions where they only take actions when they are asked to act. The school counselors in Stage Two tend to act politically correct because they feel insecure about the cultural appropriateness of their interactions (Schwallie-Giddis et al., 2004). In Stage Three, school counselors are aware of privilege, power, and oppression and take actions when they think there is something needs to be done. However, their action-based social justice advocacy is confined to their school counseling programs. In other words, they are afraid of creating any conflict between people; therefore, instead of challenging the statue quo, they experience the Nice Counselor Syndrome (NCS) (Bemak & Chung, 2008) where they stay silent and unwillingly accept school policies and norms.

Finally, in Stage Four, school counselors are empowered to take actions at building, district, state, or federal level for advocacy based on their comfort level. They overcome the NCS and become change agents. As discussed by Goodman et al. (2004), the counselors prioritize empowering immigrants because they know that just proving what immigrants need is not enough. Similarly, Paulo Freire (2000) argued that if the oppressed were made aware of how politics, economic, and social conditions influence their lives, they would be empowered to advocate for themselves and take action. Moreover, the respondents become constructive learners, enabling them understand their capacity to “(re)create knowledge individually and collectively” and to pursue ongoing education and growth (Waters, 2010, p. 6). As they develop self-confidence to manifest their social justice advocacy, they will challenge and question privilege, power, the effect of identity on their intercultural understanding, how oppression is created systematically by the system, and the cycle of inequality.

Notion of FLP. FLP is defined as the explicit and implicit planning of language use within the home and among family members (Armstrong, 2014; King, Fogle, & Logan-Terry, 2008). Families decide on the language they would speak at home based on social, personal, political, cultural, economic, and aesthetic factors (Abdelhay, Makoni, & Makoni, 2011; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009). People want to continue speaking their native language because it serves as the central aspect of their internal sense of self and identity. It is also the link to their homeland, childhood, memories, early significant relationships, songs, laughter, stories, history, and meaning making in life (Guardado, 2008; Tannenbaum, 2012). Bilingualism is deemed beneficial for social, economic, career,

academic, cognitive development as well as openness for cross-cultural understanding (Alladi et al., 2013; Bak et al., 2014; Bialystok, Craik, & Freedman, 2007; Rodrigues et al., 2014; Saidi & Ansaldo, 2015). Such bilingualism and language selection is directly indicative of an acculturation strategy.

Acculturation is a complex pattern of change and is defined as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry, 2005, p. 698).

Acculturation takes place through four different strategies: assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Individuals are assimilated when they give up their original culture and seek interactions with other cultures. On the contrary, when they want to maintain only their cultural identity and avoid interactions with people from different cultures, they are separated. When individuals place a value on maintaining both their own cultural values and the dominant culture, integration is achieved. Finally, marginalization occurs when individuals neither accept their cultural values nor the dominant society’s values (Berry, 2005; Berry, 2009). Overall, these acculturation strategies have important implications for school counselors to provide effective services for positive social, emotional, and educational student outcomes.

In examining the participants’ responses in regards to their perceptions of FLP, their notion of FLP appears to change through the process of becoming a successful school counselor for immigrants. School counselors in the first stage believe that spoken language is an indicator of student success; therefore, they think immigrant families should speak English with their children at home. Moreover, they think in order to be

successful, immigrants need to be assimilated into the dominant culture. Immigrant students may be assimilated as a result of this notion of FLP. The transition from Stage One to Stage Two is seen when school counselors start believing that immigrant families should speak their native language in addition to English. Counselors are aware of the value of speaking a native language, maintaining cultural heritage, and practicing bilingualism: all are considered assets. Counselors in Stage Two think that families should speak English at home as well because speaking only their native tongue may hinder student success. This puts the families in the position in which they are responsible for their children's English and native language development, which could result in marginalization because their children may not attain fluency in either language at the advanced level, thereby decreasing their chance of academic success (Dolson, 1985; Snow, 1990).

In Stage Three, school counselors believe that the families should speak to their children in their native language because good communication, bilingualism, and multiple cultural values are important. They do not consider the spoken language as an indicator of success. In order to close the achievement gap between immigrants and non-immigrants, the school counselors believe that the school is responsible to provide necessary support and services to make sure the students are learning English at the advanced level, rather than assuming the families are responsible. If the students learn both languages adequately, integration may be experienced. However, if they fail to learn English at an advanced level, they may become separated from their peers. Finally, in Stage Four, school counselors believe that families should speak to their children in their

native language not only because of the pragmatic and practical benefit of bilingualism, but also its individual and aesthetic benefits. Moreover, their expectation for immigrant students in regard to native language goes beyond being fluent speakers; they believe that immigrant students should take classes and become literate in their native language. With the support and appreciation of both languages, the students are likely to integrate.

Involvement with translation. Language barrier is one of the most significant obstacles that school counselors face in working with immigrants, making it harder for school counselors to receive detailed information about immigrants, which may impede successful and effective school counseling services. Language barriers between immigrants and counselors and lack of information about immigrant students are frustrating for counselors-in-training (Roysircar et al., 2005).

When examining the participants' responses with regard to translation, it appears that their perception of and involvement in translation services evolve throughout the developmental stages. The respondents in Stage One are unaware of the need for translation. They might believe that immigrant families have to be able to understand what is written and said in English. They share "essentialist" characteristics of counselors who "have minimal exposure to, or information about, diverse peers, and understand difference through external sources such as history texts, television and film, and interpersonal relationships with individuals regarded as authority" (Waters, 2010, p. 4) and may strictly obey the school norms. The transition from Stage One to Stage Two involves the realization of the importance of translation services for better student outcomes. However, their effort in providing translation services is limited to their ability

to speak languages other than English or electronic translation software (e.g., Google Translator). In other words, they lack the advocacy for having professional translators in the school. For example, they do not benefit from having a translator's assistance in counseling sessions with immigrants and in translating documents. School counselors in Stage Three are highly aware of the value and the need of professional translation services for better student outcomes. They make sure everything sent home is translated in the home language. Moreover, the counselors in this stage make an effort to have available translators in meetings with families to increase their involvement. Finally, in Stage Four, school counselors make sure they translate everything in multiple languages before sending to families. Furthermore, they are aware that just sending documents in home language does not necessarily mean the families can read and understand it: the families may not be literate. Therefore, they make an additional effort to make sure families understand what they need to know. In other words, the counselors' involvement in translation services goes beyond translation; they want to make sure educational experience is equitable for everyone and immigrants have the right to understand and take advantage of it.

What they think they need to improve. Collaboration programs between key stakeholders have positive impact on student outcomes (Clark et al., 2013). School, family, and community partnership refers to collaborative practices between school personnel, families, community members, and community organizations such as businesses, churches, mosques, libraries, social service agencies, and banks (Bryan, 2005; Bryan & Henry, 2012; Mitchell & Bryan, 2007). Although school counselors are

involved in collaborative partnerships, they still need additional knowledge and skills to create and manage more effective partnerships with linguistically diverse families (Aydin, 2011). School counselors also need ongoing professional development in order to increase their knowledge and develop their skills to work effectively with immigrants.

In examining the participants' responses in relation to how they think they need to improve their services and support to immigrants, their notion of what they need seems to change as they experience different stages. School counselors in Stage One are not aware of the complexity of challenges and issues of immigrants; therefore, what they think they need to improve is not what they can easily accomplish. They may think that the only challenge they encounter is lack of second language knowledge or time. Their focus is not on skills or interventions, but rather, they focus on general assets that are not easily accomplished. For example, they might see the only issue for not being an effective school counselor to immigrants is their heavy caseload. However, they have no control on hiring additional counselors, for example, which might be their reason for not feeling guilty or responsible about not providing effective services to immigrants. School counselors in Stage Two attain awareness of the complex needs and challenges of immigrants, which helps them realize how little they know about immigrants. They know that increasing their knowledge and developing their skills in working with immigrants is an ongoing process and professional development is the key component of that process. Moreover, they start to realize the importance of collaboration with families and community agencies for better student outcomes. However, despite this awareness, they usually do not know how to communicate with immigrant families for involvement and

connect community agencies and how to utilize them. Therefore, they think they need more information and skills to create better partnerships with key stakeholders. Transition from Stage Two to Stage Three is seen when the counselors need to extend their existing collaboration programs to reach everybody. The counselors in Stage Three would understand the strategies involved in relationship building with key stakeholders to overcome the obstacles and would be more intentional about initiating collaborative efforts and making further progress. They would realize that learning about immigrants and improving their services is an endless ongoing process; therefore, ongoing professional development is crucial for them. Finally, school counselors in Stage Four need greater collaboration with key stakeholders and professional development. Moreover, their need goes beyond just developing their services. The counselors would want to learn how to provide professional development to school staff to better serve immigrants.

This study has presented suggestive evidence supporting this hypothesized continuous developmental process in school counselors' understanding of immigrants and becoming an effective school counselor. However, further investigation is needed to validate this potentially promising approach. Based on the rich data uncovered in this initial investigation, the findings suggest that there is more to be discovered about how school counselors could develop their competency in (1) working with, (2) becoming active social justice advocates for, and (3) meeting the needs of their immigrant students and families.

Limitations

Using a social justice framework, this phenomenological qualitative research study provided detailed information about the development of school counselors' competencies working with immigrant students and families; their perceptions of their competencies; their affiliation and commitment to social justice; and their perceptions of FLP. As with any other study, there are several limitations to this study that need to be considered when examining the findings.

First, this study was conducted with only 13 school counselors in a limited geographic area of the Midwest, where issues of immigration are not the same as in other areas. The generalizability of the study is limited to the participants. However, the purpose of this study was not to be conclusive; rather, it is a stimulus for ongoing conversation (Kline, 2008). Second, the subjects participated in the study on a voluntary basis, and they might have been predisposed to provide certain explanations or answers to the questions. In other words, because data was confined to self-report data, the respondents may have answered the questions in a way that is socially desirable, or in a way that made them appear as culturally competent school counselors in working with immigrant students and families. Additionally, they might have told the researcher what they thought the researcher wanted to hear.

Third, although data were collected primarily through face-to-face interviews, four interviews were conducted via phone. The researcher might have missed some nuances in the phone-based interviews such as facial expressions and gestures. Fourth, even though school counselor respondents represented urban and suburban schools, none of the respondents were from rural areas where many immigrants live especially in

farming related jobs. School counselors may have different experiences in rural schools that this study did not capture. Finally, the respondents were asked to share their personal opinions about the phenomenon, which later was interpreted by the researcher. As a result, the researcher's own possible biases about the phenomenon could be another limitation. However, theory triangulation, literature triangulation, peer debriefing, member checking, epoche, purposeful sampling, and audit trail documentation efforts minimized these potential limitations.

Recommendations

Findings from this study suggest several recommendations for future research. First, researchers may use the same methodology to examine the experiences of a larger, more representative group of school counselors who work with immigrant students and families. As discussed in the previous section, rural schools were not represented in this study; therefore, the respondents of future studies should come from all three school settings (urban, rural, suburban), from a number of different geographic regions and states since the respondents of this study were all drawn from one single state in the Midwest.

In addition, although the phenomenon examined in this study is concerned with school counselors and immigrant students and families, the primary data was gathered from only school counselors. This study did not investigate immigrants' perceptions of how effectively their school counselors provide services to them. Therefore, future research may want to explore immigrant students' and families' perceptions of their interactions with school counselors and the effectiveness of their school counselors'

services. Research examining immigrants' perspectives and experiences with school counselors with regard to the phenomenon would provide us a richer perspective.

Another possible avenue for future study might involve using a different methodology to investigate the same phenomenon. More specifically, although this study found suggestive evidence that shows school counselors' understanding immigrants and becoming an effective school counselor in working with immigrants is a continuous developmental process, further research is needed for validity. Moreover, the methodology used in this study is not necessarily the best methodology that allows the researcher to *create a theory*. Therefore, future research exploring school counselor' understanding immigrants and their process of becoming an effective school counselor may consider applying the Grounded Theory, which consists of "systemic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 1). In addition, future studies may employ longitudinal research methods to explore school counselors' development process of becoming an effective counselor in providing services and support to immigrants.

Finally, this study was conducted with school counselors from schools that have five percent or greater of immigrant students, regardless of the counselors' background. However, the process of becoming an effective school counselor in working with immigrants might be different for counselors who have different backgrounds. Therefore, future study could examine the development process of, for example, White school counselors and counselors of color separately in order to determine whether there is a distinct variation between their developmental processes.

Implications

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several implications are provided for school counselors and counselor educators. These implications may help school counselors increase their awareness and develop their knowledge and skills in order to become an effective school counselor in working with immigrants; help counselor educators incorporate how to work with immigrants into their curriculum; and lead to new research in the field in order to improve and disseminate the available professional development opportunities to counselors.

Implications for school counselors. This study revealed that high levels of self-perceived competency in working with immigrants do not necessarily ensure the provision of effective services to immigrants. More precisely, although some respondents reported high levels of competency in their knowledge and skills, they do not provide effective services to immigrants to meet their needs. Therefore, in order to determine how effectively school counselors are providing services to immigrants, it is important for them not to only rely on their self-perceived competency levels. For example, a school counselor may assume that having an open door policy is enough for immigrants to come to them for help. However, because some immigrants have biases and stigma about counseling, counselors should make extra efforts to reach immigrants in order ensure their needs are met. It is suggested that school counselors willingly leave their comfort zones to have diverse experiences with immigrants in order to increase their awareness, knowledge and develop new skills to work more effectively with immigrants. School counselors also can identify their immigrant students using language and immigration

related questions in their need assessment tools. Once they identify their immigrant students, they may gather detail information about their needs and challenges through individual counseling sessions.

Another implication for school counselors is that they should work as an interdisciplinary team for immigrants. As immigrants have a variety of complex and multi-causal needs and challenges, it is necessary for school counselors to partner with other service providers. School counselors should be able to work with, for example, ESL/ELL teachers, intervention specialists, translators, administrators, and community agencies to make sure the needs of immigrants are being met. In addition, translating documents in home languages is vital for family involvement, which positively impacts student outcomes. Therefore, school counselors should make efforts to have available translators in school for their immigrant students and families. It is also important to organize separate meetings or seminars, when possible, for immigrant families, which would help them feel comfortable and connected to school.

It is evident that although social justice is valued by all of the respondents, variations exist in the ways they manifest the phenomenon. While some respondents believe that supporting social justice endeavors is enough to become an advocate for immigrants, the majority of the respondents believed that social justice advocacy must go beyond cognitive and affective, and needs to be demonstrated through behaviors and actions. An implication for school counselors with regard to social justice advocacy is that even though acknowledging the importance and the necessity of social justice advocacy for immigrants is crucial, it is more important for them to actually do

something about it. For example, when they realize some unjust policies or inappropriate actions or behaviors in their school or district, they should take action to make a difference, rather than disregarding existing individual, systemic, and institutional issues.

School counselors should support families to speak their native language with their children. However, if the children need additional help to improve their English skills, it is the school's responsibility to make sure the children are learning and not staying academically behind their native-speaker peers. Moreover, school counselors and educators should support immigrant students not only to be fluent in their native language, but also to be literate in their mother tongue, which is the best way to maintain their cultural heritage and become bilingual.

Finally, once school counselors determine what stage of the developmental process they are at, instead of feeling frustrated for not providing effective services to immigrants, they will be empowered to move forward to the next stage by fulfilling the stage's predetermined requirements. As a result, understanding the developmental process will allow school counselors to increase their awareness and develop their knowledge and skills to work more effectively with immigrants.

Implications for counselor educators. Early exposure of counseling immigrants in graduate school is crucial for preparing school counseling students to become effective counselors in working with immigrants. Therefore, counselor educators should incorporate the needs and challenges of immigrants as well as how to address and meet those needs into their curriculum. The curriculum should provide ample opportunities for students to have experiences with immigrants during their practicum and internship. In

addition, because there are limited professional development opportunities for school counselors to effectively address the needs and challenges of immigrants, counselor educators, researchers, organizations, and school counselors should work together to increase their understanding of immigrants. In doing so, they can potentially create useful programs for school counseling students. Moreover, developing an evidence-based understanding of best practices and interventions of supporting school counselors in their practices should be prioritized. Such knowledge should be published, presented at conferences, and taught at workshops to counselors as ongoing professional development opportunities.

Finally, understanding that becoming an effective school counselor in working with immigrants is a continuous developmental process has implications for counselor educators. Counselor educators will be able to design their training programs to provide diverse opportunities for their students' learning and growth. Counselor educators will be able to meet their students at their developmental stage, which is crucial to provide what exactly the students need for moving to the next stage. As discussed by Waters (2010) meeting students at their developmental stage, counselor educators will be able to "enhance the attainment of desired learning and developmental outcomes" (p. 8).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore: (a) school counselors' perceptions of their competencies and what resources they utilize to develop their competencies in working with immigrant students and families, (b) school counselors' beliefs and attitudes toward being social justice advocates and how these beliefs and attitudes affect their support and

services to immigrant students and families, and (c) school counselors' perceptions of their impact on linguistically diverse families' language policies and their perceptions of how FLP influences student outcomes. This study revealed that school counselor respondents feel competent in addressing the needs and challenges of immigrants. Additionally, it was discovered that social justice is at the heart of their work and they identify themselves as social justice advocates. The respondents believe that immigrant families form their FLP based on what works best for them and there was a range of opinions of whether or not FLP impacts student outcomes.

Conducting this study gave me insider access to the thoughts, feelings, needs, and challenges of 13 school counselors with regard to working with immigrants. Although I did not provide any incentive or award for participation, the respondents showed great appreciation to me for doing this study and letting them be a part of it. Despite a high need for school counselors to increase their awareness and improve their knowledge and skills to become an effective school counselor in working with immigrants, research studies with the phenomenon are rare. As a result, many counselors lack the knowledge and resources to grow.

Additionally, I gained a deeper understanding of the big picture of school counselors' involvement with immigrants, how they develop, and what they need to improve their work. For example, as a result of this study, now we have some evidence suggesting that becoming an effective school counselor in working with immigrants is a continuous developmental process. More specifically, instead of merely relying on their self-perceived competency levels in order to determine how effectively they work with

immigrants, by means of the aforementioned paradigms and stages, school counselors could determine where they are in their developmental process. This would help them understand what they should do to improve their support and services to immigrants. Furthermore, there is no doubt that each school counselor is unique and has his or her own developmental journey. While some of them are in early stages, others are in latter stages; therefore, their needs and challenges vary. I believe that it is vital to make sure that competent school counselors' experiences facilitate the growth of school counselor candidates and school counselors who have not developed enough yet.

Finally, by means of doing this study I have matured, grown, and learned much about the phenomenon, which has empowered me to become an agent to provide meaningful and important resources to school counselors, counselor educators, researchers, and educators in order to better serve immigrant students and families. I hope sharing this research enables others to do the same.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter

Subject Line: School Counselors as Social Justice Advocates for Immigrants: A Phenomenological Study of their Perceptions of their Competencies and their Influence on Family Language Policy.

Dear School Counselor:

Using a social justice framework to study immigrant students and families, we are conducting a study to explore the development of school counselors' competencies, their perceptions of their competencies, and perceived influence on the families' language policy (FLP) and its impact on student outcomes. You are receiving this request because we are confident that you have a valuable perspective on my topic.

We know that you are very busy and that your time is valuable. We anticipate that your involvement will require about 60 minutes of your time, and the questions we pose are attached to this email. If you participate, we will ask your permission to audiotape your responses in order to produce a verbatim transcript. If you would like the opportunity to review the transcript and make any edits you deem appropriate, please inform the researchers. After transcription, the recording will be destroyed. If you do not wish to be taped, we can create detailed notes of our conversation and mail you the typed notes, again asking for any changes you deem appropriate.

Your responses will not be identified by your name or your institution, so you can be assured of confidentiality. The anticipated results will contribute to implications for training counselors in social justice work, with the intent of improving services for immigrant students and families. In addition, understanding the development of school counselors' competencies and their perceived impact on family language policies will help the profession better prepare counselor trainees. School counselors, counselor educators, counseling trainees, educators, and families will benefit from this study. Any conference proceedings or manuscripts resulting from this study will refer to the respondents in the aggregate. The informed consent document is attached to this email, and if you decide to participate, you will be asked to provide verbal consent to the study.

If you would like to participate in this study, contact the researchers to schedule a phone interview or a face to face interview at your convenience:
Sabri Dogan: sabridogan1987@gmail.com

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR TIME.

This study has been determined to be exempt from IRB review and the approval number is **2016E0024**. If there are any questions about this study, you can contact the principal researcher from The Ohio State University at:

Dr. Colette T. Dollarhide, Counselor Education, at dollarhide.1@osu.edu

Respectfully,

Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

The Ohio State University Informed Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: SCHOOL COUNSELORS AS SOCIAL JUSTICE
ADVOCATES FOR IMMIGRANTS: A
PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THEIR PERCEPTIONS
OF THEIR COMPETENCIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON
FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY

Researchers: **Dollarhide & Dogan**

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to verbally consent to participation during the interview, and you can retain this electronic copy of the form. If you decide to participate, you are free to decline to answer any questions during the interview.

Purpose:

Using a social justice framework to study immigrant students and families, the purpose of this study is to explore the development of school counselors' competencies, their perceptions of their competencies, and perceived influence on the families' language policy and its impact on student outcomes.

Procedures/Tasks:

Volunteers will be solicited using purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Schools that have five percent or greater of immigrant students in the state of Ohio will be determined through the Ohio Department of Education website. Once the schools are identified, school counselors who work at those schools will be contacted via email for participation. All invitees will be sent the informed consent document and the interview questions to review, and their verbal agreement and participation in the interview will be considered consent. There are no risks to the participants, as school counselor competencies and social justice work in counseling is honored and respected; many counselor educators research and publish on the subject.

The interviews will last about 60 minutes, and with permission, will be recorded for verbatim transcription. During the interview, the respondent will select a pseudonym which will be used to identify the transcript. After transcription, the tape will be destroyed so that there will be no connection between the identity of the respondent and the transcript. All responses will be attributed to the pseudonym in any publication of the

results. Contact information for respondents without attached pseudonym will be retained for member checking and any follow-up interview, and this information will be kept in a locked cabinet in a locked office for 5 years after the end of the study.

Duration:

Subjects will be invited to partake in audio-taped interviews which will last approximately 60 minutes, and member checking of the evolving model derived from the data will be via email, lasting another 20 minutes.

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University. You may also decline to answer any question during the interview.

Risks and Benefits:

There are no risks to respondents because the requested information is not threatening. Benefits include that the anticipated results will contribute to implications for training counselors in social justice work, with the intent of improving services for immigrants. In addition, understanding the development of school counselors' competencies and their perceived impact on family language policies will help the profession better prepare counselor trainees. School counselors, counselor educators, counseling trainees, educators, and families will benefit from this study.

Confidentiality:

Subjects will select a pseudonym for the interview which will be the only form of identification attached to transcripts. There will be no way to connect names to the participants. Tapes will be destroyed after transcription. Records for this study will be kept in locked cabinets in locked offices of the PI for at least 5 years after the study.

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law. Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies;
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;

- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study.

Incentives:

No monetary incentives will be given for participation in the study. However, the information gathered from participants will be additive to the field of counseling and increase knowledge on the topic area of school/community partnerships.

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee of the Ohio State University, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits, and may decline to answer any question during the interview. By verbally agreeing to this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

This study has been determined to be exempt from IRB review.

Contacts and Questions:

For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, or if you feel you have been harmed as a result of study participation; you may contact Dr. Colette Dollarhide at dollarhide.1@osu.edu.

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.

Informed Consent

By voluntarily participating in this study you are giving your informed consent.

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

1. Pseudonym
2. Age
3. Gender
4. Race/Ethnicity
5. School level
6. School environment (urban, rural, suburban)
7. Length of time
 - a. As Educator
 - b. As School counselor
 - c. In current job
 - d. Working with immigrants
8. Status of bilingual
9. Percentage of immigrants in school—approximate percentages from what countries or parts of the world

Appendix D: Instrument

1. In these questions, I am interested in learning about your work with immigrant students and immigrant families. First, in two sentences, tell me about your early experiences with immigrant students and families. In 2 sentences, tell me about your current experiences with immigrant students and families.
2. To what extent are you generally aware of immigrant students' and families' needs? To what extent do you know specifically about their needs?
3. To what extent do you feel competent in addressing those needs?
4. Which group(s) of immigrants do you feel most and least comfortable to work with? Why?
5. How do your linguistic/cultural background and experiences influence the way you think about counseling immigrants?
6. What specific problems or challenges do you encounter most frequently in addressing the needs of immigrant students and families? What do you think about these issues?
7. Tell me about any effort you have made to provide professional development to school staff on addressing needs of immigrant students and families?
8. What are the resources you have utilized in school/district/community to work more effectively with immigrants? Tell me more specifically what you have done with community leaders and members and families to assist with concerns of immigrant student and families?

9. As you may know *social justice* means the effort to change the status quo to empower oppressed people towards fairness and equity by culturally responsive practices. To what extent do you identify yourself as a social justice advocate?
10. What does it mean to be a social justice advocate in your school in terms of immigrant students and families?
11. How do you think your social justice identity/being a social justice advocate affect your support and service to immigrant students and families? What do you do as a social justice advocate for immigrant students and families?
12. What language (their native language or English) do you think families speak at home? Which language do you think families should speak to their children? Why?
13. In your opinion,
 - a. How does a family's chosen language affect their children's academic success?
 - b. How does a family's chosen language affect their children's career?
 - c. How does a family's chosen language affect their children's social/personal development?
14. What do you think about bilingualism as a general attribute?
15. In your opinion,
 - a. How does bilingualism impact a student's academic success?
 - b. How does bilingualism impact a student's career trajectory?
 - c. How does bilingualism impact a student's social/personal development?

16. To what extent do you think you have impact on families' decisions about what they choose to speak with their children?
17. Tell me any conversation or experiences you have had or have heard about when a family member asked for advice about what language to speak at home or with their children?
 - a. What type of messages do you think families receive from school personnel about what language to speak at home or with their children?
 - b. What impact do these messages have on the families' language choice?
18. In conclusion, is there anything else you would like to share with me with respect to counselors' competencies, social justice, and bilingualism for immigrant students and families?

Appendix E: Member Checking Response # 1

I agree 100% with your emerging themes. In my experiences in working with immigrants, much of the limited knowledge I do have is from learning as I go. The interactions I have had with my school community's diverse population have shaped how I work with those students. Admittedly, though, I acknowledge that there could be more training in the first place and as continuing education for counselors in working with immigrant students and families. This is certainly a growing community, and thus a growing need in schools for counselors to be the "expert" in this as well. As I consider this need, I reflect on a 45 minute conversation I had with a parent of one of my students who immigrated from Mexico. We spent our time talking about the differences in the educational systems and norms in his home country vs. in our school community. What was neat was how we ended our conversation with an exchange of phone numbers and information to share with our contacts: for me, I had new ideas of outreach for our Latino families; for this parent, he left with my direct phone number and the promise of a quick Spanish-speaking response for him, and any other families he knows who speak Spanish at any grade level in the district. I can't speak for him, but leaving that interaction, I felt more connected to at the very least one of our immigrant communities. I imagine with more training, I could proactively create these fundamental person-level and community-wide relationships with our immigrant families.

Appendix F: Member Checking Response # 2

I found the themes found in your results to be very accurate to what I've experienced in my time working with immigrants. The specific training I had going into my job (as well as professional development opportunities within the school system after) have not provided adequate training for dealing with immigrant issues. However, years of experience, and leaving my comfort zone (as well as being intentional about trying to learn the students' cultures) has left me feeling competent in dealing with students of all backgrounds. I think theme 4 is an especially important one, especially in a district that is as diverse as Columbus City, especially as the diversity only is increasing. Language assistance is a particularly important aspect of this, as communication barriers present a difficult obstacle in dealing with immigrant families, especially as we get more and more families that speak languages outside of just Spanish and French (where we have multiple translators in the building for).

Appendix G: IRB Approval



Office of Responsible Research Practices

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01/15/2016

Study Number: 2016E0024

Study Title: SCHOOL COUNSELORS AS SOCIAL JUSTICE ADVOCATES FOR
IMMIGRANTS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
COMPETENCIES AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY

Principal investigator: Colette Dollarhide

Date of determination: 01/15/2016

Qualifying exempt category: #2

Dear Colette Dollarhide,

The Office of Responsible Research Practices has determined the above referenced project **exempt from IRB review**.

Please note the following about this determination:

- Retain a copy of this correspondence for your records.
- Only the Ohio State staff and students named on the application are approved as Ohio State investigators and/or key personnel for this study.
- Simple changes to personnel that do not require changes to materials can be submitted for review and approval through Buck-IRB.
- No other changes may be made to exempt research (e.g., to recruitment procedures, advertisements, instruments, protocol, etc.). If changes are needed, a new application for exemption must be submitted for review and approval prior to implementing the changes.
- Records relating to the research (including signed consent forms) must be retained and available for audit for at least 5 years after the study is closed. For more information, see university policies, [Institutional Data](#) and [Research Data](#).
- It is the responsibility of the investigators to promptly report events that may represent unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This determination is issued under The Ohio State University's OHRP Federal wide Assurance #00006378. Human research protection program policies, procedures, and guidance can be found on the [ORRP website](#). Please feel free to contact the Office of Responsible Research Practices with any questions or concerns.



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