

## Culturally responsive school counseling for Hispanic/Latino students and families: the need for bilingual school counselors.

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### **Abstract:**

Hispanic/Latino students are the largest minority school-age population (Pew Hispanic Center, 2005). In this study, pupil services administrators in Florida identified concerns about Hispanic/Latino children and families and the need for bilingual school counselors for growing numbers of Hispanic/Latino students. Administrators' perceptions of cultural barriers, which isolate students from the school environment, were strongly related to their perceived need for Spanish-speaking school counselors. School programs more often provided for Hispanic/Latino students were those that specifically addressed language barriers rather than counseling services that specifically addressed cultural barriers of Hispanic/Latino students.

### **Article:**

The Hispanic/Latino population is the largest minority population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2003) and is also the fastest growing in the United States, expanding at a rate 3 to 5 times faster than the general population (Casas & Vasquez, 1996; Clemente & Collison, 2000; Garcia & Marotta, 1997; Pew Hispanic Center, 2005; Zapata, 1995). The rapid growth of the Hispanic/Latino population has changed the demography of U.S. schools. Hispanic/Latino children are the largest minority school-age population; by 2030, Hispanic/Latino students age 5 to 18 will constitute 25% of the total school population (Fracasso & Busch-Rossnagel, 1992; President's Advisory Commission on Educational Excellence for Hispanic Americans, 1996). According to the President's Advisory Commission (1996), Hispanic/Latino students are at risk for failure in the current American educational system. Only half of Hispanics/Latinos 25 years or older have completed high school, the population's dropout rate is higher than any other group in the United States, and Hispanic/Latino students drop out twice as often as non-Hispanic/non-Latino White students (Casas & Vasquez, 1996; Fracasso & Busch-Rossnagel, 1992; Garcia & Marotta, 1997). Their overall level of participation in the educational system is lower than other minority populations (Dana, 1998; Fracasso & Busch-Rossnagel; Santiago-Rivera, 1995). Therefore, it appears that Hispanic/Latino youth and their families are in need of assistance to promote school success.

### **COUNSELING ISSUES OF HISPANIC/LATINO CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

School counseling services that are culturally responsive are needed (Lee, 2001). As Lee asserted, cultural responsiveness in school counseling programs involves providing access, equity, and educational justice. Culturally responsive school counseling programs for Hispanic/Latino children and adolescents are critical because Hispanics/Latinos traditionally have not performed as well in school as their White peers (Bernal & Knight, 1997). Varying levels of English proficiency and a lack of understanding of the academic institution can lead to mistrust and discomfort for both parents and children toward schools and school officials (Zapata, 1995). Hispanic/Latino students also are susceptible to a variety of psychosocial difficulties due to the impact of language barriers, poverty, and discrimination in educational systems that can be ill informed and not equipped to deal with these students' distinctive needs (Alva & de los Reyes, 1999; Clemente & Collison, 2000; Koss-Chioino & Vargas, 1999).

Specific values within Hispanic/Latino cultures must be acknowledged and adequately addressed by the educational community if change is to occur. In the current system, Hispanic/Latino children are less likely than White children to depend on assistance from those outside the family, even when assistance is needed (Sue & Sue, 2003). Furthermore, Hispanic/Latino students and their parents often will hesitate in seeking out assistance (Padilla & de Snyder, 1987) because they find it difficult to rely on relationships for help other than from their family, friends, or community (Altarriba & Bauer, 1998). Due to misunderstandings between the traditional expectations of the U.S. educational system and Hispanic/Latino culture, Hispanic/Latino children and their families often need assistance in learning to navigate the educational system (Clemente & Collison, 2000; Koss-Chioino & Vargas, 1999). Counseling services that are available often are underutilized or not used at all by Hispanic/Latino students and their families because they do not know they are available or how to secure them (Gopaul-McNicol & Thomas-Presswood, 1998).

Lack of access to existing programs can prevent Hispanic/Latino students from receiving beneficial educational opportunities and contributes to the dropout rates and underachievement in low-English-proficient Hispanic-Latino students. Innovative programs that address the unique needs of Hispanic/Latino children and families are needed. Schools are in a unique position to assist Hispanic/ Latino students and help their families feel more comfortable as they navigate the school environment. School counselors are well positioned to assist them with their needs and concerns.

### **CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE COUNSELING FOR HISPANIC CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

First, to effectively assist students and parents, schools must set as a priority reaching out to Hispanic/Latino families and communities. Many Hispanic/Latino parents report wanting to be a part of their child's education but feel they are not listened to or welcomed by the school system (Ramirez, 2003). Thus, providing direct contact with Hispanic/Latino families is crucial to enlisting their commitment to their children's schooling (Fracasso & Busch-Rossnagel, 1992). Effective outreach services must extend beyond the Hispanic/ Latino student and family to include the Hispanic/ Latino community (Koss-Chioino & Vargas, 1999).

In order to recognize the importance of the family's culture to the educational system, the first contact with the student's family ideally would be in the Spanish language (Fracasso & Busch-Rossnagel; Preciado & Henry, 1997). Gopaul-McNicol and Thomas-Presswood (1998) suggested that reading materials and information be written in Spanish in order to assist family members who cannot read English. Furthermore, Casas, Furlong, and Ruiz de Esparza (2003) suggested using Spanish television and radio to encourage families to take part in their children's academic development. These authors also promoted the idea of contacting and allying with nonprofit organizations that work within the Hispanic/Latino community. When school personnel strive to connect with Hispanic/Latino children and families, the Hispanic/Latino community as a whole is more likely to become involved with schools and the schooling of Hispanic/Latino children.

Second, schools must be prepared to communicate effectively with Hispanic/Latino students and parents who do not communicate comfortably in the English language. Of the 17 million Spanish-speaking Hispanics/Latinos in the United States, 8.3 million either do not speak English or do not speak it fluently (Clemente & Collison, 2000). Use of the Spanish language in counseling Hispanic/ Latino students and families who have limited English proficiency is important for a number of reasons: When schools provide services specific to Hispanic/Latino students with personnel who are alike in ethnicity and first language, students and their families are more likely to seek help (Altarriba & Bauer, 1998; Dana, 1998). Clemente and Collison found that language barriers prevented counselors from establishing a quality counseling relationship with Spanish-speaking students with limited English proficiency. Also, research has shown that similar ethnicity and language helps with establishing trust between the counselor and client (Teyber & McClure, 2000). In particular, Hispanic-Latino students and families who were less acculturated perceived counselors with a greater degree of ethnic similarity as a more favorable resource than Anglo-American counselors (Altarriba & Bauer). In addition, language is crucial to the appropriate educational assessment of Spanish-speaking Hispanic/ Latino students because assessments conducted in English may bias the diagnosis and treatment of low-English-

proficient students (Flaskerud & Hu, 1992; Ochoa, Rivera, & Ford, 1997; Padilla & de Snyder, 1987; Santiago-Rivera, 1995).

Finally, the U.S. Surgeon General (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001) has suggested the need for bilingual, Spanish-speaking mental health providers. Despite the rapid growth in the Hispanic/Latino population and the number of Hispanic/Latino students in schools, the population of teachers and counselors remains predominately Caucasian (Beals, Beals, & Cordova de Sartori, 1999; Echeverry, 1997; Lee, 1995). In 1994, only 2% of school counselors were Hispanic/ Latino, while Hispanic/Latino students represented over 12% of the population (President's Advisory Commission, 1996). Under-representation of Hispanic/Latino school personnel has been reported as one factor negatively affecting the success of Hispanic/Latino schoolchildren (President's Advisory Commission). The disparity between the number of Hispanic students and the number of bilingual Spanish-speaking school counselors is particularly acute in states where there is substantial growth in the proportion of Hispanic students. In Florida, for example, Hispanic Americans are now the largest minority group in the state, making up 16.8% of the state's population. Hispanic/Latino population growth has been so prevalent that no county, in Florida had less than a 30% increase in the population group in the last decade (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000).

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

Recent statistics invite questions regarding the adequacy of culturally responsive school counseling services being provided for the growing number of Hispanic/Latino youth and their families. As a first step in framing a response to the question of adequacy of services, we reasoned it would be meaningful to obtain empirical information from pupil personnel service administrators in Florida concerning how well districts provide for the educational needs of this population. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to describe school administrators' concerns about Hispanic/Latino children and families and to examine the need for bilingual school counselors for growing numbers of Hispanic/Latino students. We also will examine factors influencing the administrators' need to have bilingual school counselors in academic, career, and personal/social development areas for Hispanic/Latino students. We believe that examining these factors will have implications for administrators and counselor educators in educating bilingual school counselors as well as in developing culturally responsive school counseling programs for Hispanic students and families.

## **METHODS**

### ***Participants***

Using a convenience sample of student services administrators in Florida, we elicited data that could be used to respond to questions identified above. Specifically, district-level directors of student services who were listed in the Florida Student Support Services Directory (Florida Department of Education, 2001) were selected to participate. In all, 242 participants, drawn from each of Florida's 67 county school districts, were included in the sample. Questionnaires were sent to all student services directors in each of the 67 school districts to increase representation of administrators from each of these districts in the final sample. Responses were received from student services administrators from more than one-half of the 67 school districts in Florida (N = 36, 54%). Of the 242 instruments that were mailed, 6 were returned as undeliverable, thereby reducing the sample to 236. The total number of questionnaires returned was 55, for a return rate of 23 percent. The overall response rate of 23 percent is comparable to other survey studies of social service providers (e.g., Daniels, White, & Wyatt, 2003; Kleist & White, 1997; Palm & Gibson, 1998; Polusny & Follette, 1996).

### ***Instrumentation***

A 13-item questionnaire, which is available from the principal author by request, was developed for this study based upon a review of literature related to counseling Hispanic/Latino students. Three items in the questionnaire measured cultural barriers to schooling of Hispanic/Latino students and families, such as, "Hispanic/Latino students and families experience trouble negotiating the school culture, experience communication barriers, and experience isolation from the school environment." A set of questions also measured academic, career, and personal needs of Hispanic/Latino children and families. These questions

addressed whether Hispanic/ Latino children and families understand problems related to academic, career, or personal success differently and receive necessary guidance in schools.

Other items measured the adequacy of current program offerings (e.g., "Hispanic/Latino students and families are at risk for not getting services they need to succeed in the community," "Hispanic/ Latino students and families are provided necessary guidance in schools") and the need for counseling and related programs (e.g., "Hispanic/Latino students and families need educational information in Spanish or school or district-wide programs to assist them with their transition into the local school system"). Finally, three questions measured the benefit of having bilingual school counselors. These items addressed whether Hispanic/Latino children and families would benefit from having a bilingual school counselor capable of dealing with academic, career, and/or personal needs.

For each item in the questionnaire, participants were asked to respond "yes," "no," or "undecided." The content validity of the questionnaire was determined by asking a Hispanic/Latino American panel of experts, which included a counselor educator, a district-level director of school counseling, and a district-level director of psychological services, to review the items. The questionnaire also included open-ended questions that asked for information about services currently provided by the school district and additional services that are needed.

### *Data Analysis*

Descriptive statistics derived from the questionnaire were obtained by counting the frequency of "yes," "no," and "undecided" responses for each item. Items that were left blank by respondents were not tallied into any of these categories. To examine the factors influencing administrators' perception of need for bilingual school counselors, an optimal scaling procedure, categorical regression, was used because an analysis that assumes a linear relationship would not be appropriate for the categorical form of the questionnaire data (i.e., yes, no, and undecided). In standard linear regression, categorical variables are treated the same as interval level variables. However, the arbitrary nature of the categories makes generalizations impossible (Meulman & Heiser, 2001). Therefore, if some of the variables are not continuous, alternative analyses should be performed. In this study, categorical regression was used to predict the values of a categorical or ordinal criterion variable (i.e., the benefit from having bilingual school counselors) from a combination of categorical or ordinal predictor variables (i.e., academic, career, personal needs; cultural barriers; service offerings). Meulman and Heiser stated,

Regression with optimal scaling offers three scaling levels for each variable. Combinations of these levels can account for a wide range of nonlinear relationships for which any single "standard" method is ill-suited. Consequently, optimal scaling offers greater flexibility than the standard approaches with minimal added complexity. (p. 8)

Open-ended responses were categorized according to the services currently provided to Hispanic/ Latino children and families. Two doctoral students independently reviewed each of the participants' open-ended responses and grouped responses that were similar in content. There was near perfect agreement between the categories derived by the two reviewers except that one reviewer derived an additional category that was included in the final results.

## **RESULTS**

Most administrators agreed that Hispanic/Latino children are provided necessary guidance in schools (52%). However, there were a number of administrators who either believed these students are not provided necessary guidance (26%) or were undecided (22%). There also was agreement among participants that Hispanic/Latino children and their families perceive problems related to academic (65%), career, (69%), and personal success (64%) differently than majority children and families due to their unique language and culture. Between 12% and 20% of participants endorsed "no" or "undecided" on items related to how children and families perceive academic, career, and personal problems.

Of the cultural barriers that Hispanic/Latino children and parents might encounter in schools, administrators most often endorsed communication barriers (79%) as a concern ("no" = 6%, "undecided" = 15%). Administrators were less likely to agree that children and families experience trouble negotiating the school culture ("yes" = 62%, "no" = 17%, "undecided" = 21%) and isolation from the school environment ("yes" = 59%, "no" = 18%, "undecided" = 24%), although there was a high level of agreement that these barriers also are problematic.

Regarding the adequacy of services offered for Hispanic/Latino children and families, most administrators responded that they believe Hispanic/ Latino children and families are at risk for not getting needed services (59%), but there also was some disagreement (18%) and uncertainty (24%) on this item. There was a high level of agreement that children and families need educational information in Spanish ("yes" = 82%, "no" = 8%, "undecided" = 6%), and most also believed that they would benefit from programs that assist them with their transition into the local school system ("yes" = 77%, "no" = 14%, "undecided" = 10%).

Finally, administrators perceived a high level of need for bilingual, Spanish-speaking school counselors to address personal (84%), academic (82%), and career (80%) needs. Few administrators were in disagreement or undecided about the need for these counselors. There was a relatively high level of agreement on these items with only 8-10% of administrators endorsing "no" or "undecided."

### **Factors Influencing Administrators' Need to Have Bilingual School Counselors**

Optimal scaling procedure (i.e., categorical regression) was used to analyze the influence of three predictor variables (academic, career, personal needs; cultural barriers; adequacy of program offerings) on a criterion variable (the benefit from having bilingual school counselors). The results of simple scatter plots and an examination of residuals show that all relationships among variables were curvilinear. All variables were defined as ordinal in subsequent equations (no = 1, undecided = 2, and yes = 3). The ordinal nature of the variables and the curvilinear relationship between criterion and predictor variables suggest that categorical regression on optimal scores may perform better than standard regression.

The categorical regression procedure yielded an  $[R_{sup.2}]$  of 0.48, indicating that almost 48% of the variance in the transformed administrators' need to have bilingual school counselors is explained by the regression on the optimally transformed three predictors. Transforming the predictors improved the fit over the standard approach ( $[R_{sup.2}] = .08$ ). Table 1 shows the standardized regression coefficients. Categorical regression standardizes the variables, so only standardized coefficients are reported. The largest coefficient occurs for cultural barriers ( $[\beta] = .39$ ). However, regression coefficients cannot fully describe the impact of a predictor or the relationships between the predictors. Alternative statistics must be used in conjunction with the standardized coefficients to fully explore predictor effects (Meulman & Heiser, 2001).

The squared partial correlation corresponds to the proportion of the variance explained relative to the residual variance of the criterion variable remaining after removing the effects of the other variables. In Table 1, the cultural barriers variable has a partial correlation of 0.41. Removing the effects of the other variables, the cultural barriers variable explains  $[(0.41)_{sup.2}] = 0.20 = 20\%$  of the variation in the administrators' need to have bilingual school counselors. Both the academic, career, and personal/social needs (12%) and service offering (7%) variables also explained a relatively large portion of variance when the effects of the other variables are removed. In addition to the regression coefficients and the correlations, Pratt's (1987) measure of relative importance aids in interpreting predictor contributions to the regression. Out of 100%, for example, the cultural barriers variable has an importance of 50%, followed by service offering (27%), and academic, career, and personal/social needs (23%). Finally, tolerance in Table 1 reflects how much the predictor variables are linearly related to one another. Due to multicollinearity, large correlations between predictors would dramatically reduce a regression model's stability. All statistics of tolerance are very high (.76 through .98). None of the predictors is predicted very well by the other predictors, and multi-collinearity is not present (Meulman & Heiser, 2001).

## Responses to Open-Ended Questions

Categories derived from the open-ended responses and sample administrators' responses are presented in Table 2. Responses to the question "What services currently are being provided by your school district to increase the personal and academic success of Hispanic/Latino students?" were organized into eight categories. Offering English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) and English as a second language (ESL) programs for Hispanic/Latino students was reported as the most common service offered to these students (n = 20). Programs that assist students and families with low English proficiency also included translators and language facilitators (n = 15); Spanish-speaking counselors (n = 6); federal, state, and locally funded programs (n = 7); workshops and parent meetings (n = 6); migrant programs and services (n = 4); and forms and documents provided in Spanish (n = 4). A few district-level directors reported that no services were offered for Hispanic/Latino students (n = 6).

Responses to the question "What additional services provided by your school district would be beneficial to increase the personal and academic success of Hispanic/Latino students?" yielded four categories. The most frequent response was the need for more bilingual Spanish-speaking school counselors and school personnel (n = 23). District-level administrators also believed it necessary for school systems to make greater efforts to involve families in the educational process (n = 9), and to provide cultural awareness and sensitivity training related to Hispanic/Latino cultures to the entire school staff (n = 5). Lastly, respondents suggested that additional services related to vocational and career development programs, as well as materials and paperwork written in Spanish (n = 4), were needed.

Responses to the final question, "What specialized training do you believe Spanish-speaking bilingual school counselors would need to increase the personal and academic success of Hispanic/Latino students?" were classified into four themes. First, district-level directors often reported that school counselors should have multicultural education concerning Hispanic/Latino cultures and should be able to share their knowledge with other school staff (n = 22). Administrators considered it important for school counselors to be aware of community resources for Hispanic/Latino students and their families (n = 9). Many of these administrators also stated a critical need to educate school counselors to involve parents and to provide outreach services to families (n = 5). Finally, according to some administrators, school counselors should be able to advocate for changes needed within the educational system to address the needs of Hispanic/Latino students and families while helping them to negotiate the current system (n = 7).

## DISCUSSION

*Table 1. Categorical Regression of Effects on Administrators' Need to Have Spanish-Speaking School Counselors*

Variable	Standardized		Correlation		Importance	Tolerance
	$\beta$	Standard Error	Zero-Order	Partial		
Academic, career, personal/social needs	0.29*	0.12	0.35	0.35	0.23	0.98
Cultural barriers	0.39*	0.14	0.55	0.41	0.50	0.76
Services offering	0.26*	0.14	0.45	0.29	0.27	0.78

Note. Total  $R^2 = .43$ . Adjust  $R^2 = .36$ .  $F(5, 43) = 5.79$ ,  $p < .01$ .

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

In this study, several issues were examined concerning Florida public schools' efforts to meet the academic, career, and personal needs of Hispanic/ Latino children and families. Information concerning the adequacy of services provided and the need for additional services, particularly bilingual Spanish-speaking school counselors, was sought.

Analysis of the descriptive statistics indicated that student services administrators are concerned with the academic, career, and personal development of Hispanic/Latino children and that districts are providing many needed services to these students and their families. However, not surprisingly, administrators also indicated that Hispanic/Latino children and families are at risk for not receiving needed services and acknowledged the need for additional programs to address these concerns. Administrators perceived the need for Spanish-speaking school counselors to be great--more than 80% responded that these professionals would benefit schools in dealing with students' academic, career, and personal needs. It seems that administrators view having counseling professionals who are able to speak Spanish as a particular advantage in working with Hispanic/Latino students.

Two primary reasons have been suggested to support the need for Spanish-speaking school counselors: The first is that speaking the same language as the client/facilitates many aspects of the counseling relationship including accurate assessment (Altarriba & Bauer, 1998; Dana, 1998; Flaskerud & Hu, 1992; Ochoa et al, 1997; Padilla & de Snyder, 1987; Santiago-Rivera, 1995; Teyber & McClure, 2000); and the second is that there is a critical shortage of these professionals in the schools (Beals et al., 1999; Echeverry, 1997; Lee, 1995; President's Advisory Commission, 1996; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

To further understand the issues related to the need for Spanish-speaking school counselors, we examined factors that influenced administrators' perceived need for bilingual school counselors. Findings of the study determined that administrators' perceptions concerning cultural barriers for Hispanic/Latino children and families was the most important factor (50%), followed by the adequacy of current programs offered (27%), and the need for academic, career, and personal/social school counseling and guidance (23%). How administrators perceived cultural barriers--such as trouble negotiating school culture, experiencing language barriers, and experiencing isolation from the school environment--was strongly related to their perceived need for Spanish-speaking school counselors.

Hispanic/Latino parents and children report negative experiences in schools related to not understanding how schools function, not receiving information in Spanish (or having information explained in Spanish), feeling left out of school activities, and relinquishing control of educational success (Ramirez, 2003; Wortham & Contreras, 2002). It may be that administrators directly relate having school counselors who speak these students' primary language to reducing or managing these cultural barriers. Administrators also may see Spanish-speaking school counselors as critical to bridging the gap between school administration and this population and creating culturally responsive counseling and related educational services.

Open-ended responses provided by school administrators further clarified information regarding programs currently provided, the adequacy of services currently provided, and the preparation of Spanish-speaking school counselors. In their written responses, school administrators listed programs that are most often made available to Hispanic/Latino students and families in schools as ESOL/ESL courses and translators. Less evident in administrators' responses were counseling services that specifically addressed needs of Hispanic/Latino students such as outreach through workshops and parent meetings, bilingual school counselors, and federally funded, state, and local programs, though these programs were mentioned by a few administrators.

However, when administrators were asked to suggest additional services that were needed in their school districts, the services they mentioned were most often related to counseling and guidance services. Spanish-speaking school counselors, involving families, cultural awareness training for school staff, and career development programs in Spanish were suggested as needed programs. Similar goals were emphasized when administrators were asked about preparation of Spanish-speaking school counselors, such as helping staff to understand Hispanic/Latino cultures, advocating for change in schools while helping students to negotiate the current system, involving parents, and providing community resources related to higher education and career development.

Taken together, results of this study suggest that services that address language barriers are more commonly provided than are programs that address other cultural barriers (i.e., experiencing problems negotiating school culture or isolation), and administrators agree that students would benefit from additional counseling programs to address academic, career, and personal concerns of Hispanic/Latino students. This finding was not surprising because many school counselors are not specifically involved with developing counseling interventions directly related to the academic, career, and personal/social needs of Hispanic/Latino children; rather, ESL teachers and other student personnel (i.e., school social workers) typically design and/or implement educational provisions that address the unique needs of Hispanic/Latino students (Clemente & Collison, 2000; Villalba, 2003). However, current programs and services must go beyond addressing language barriers and expand on existing programs focusing more centrally on the residual effects of cultural misunderstandings between the traditional expectations of the U.S. educational system and Hispanic/Latino cultures.

### **Limitations**

Finally, in examining the findings of this study, some limitations should be considered. First, the response rate is low and limits generalization. Also, the categorical information taken from the 13-item questionnaire is limited and should be expanded in future studies. A methodological change for future studies should include using Likert-type items to determine the degree with which the administrators agree with statements in the survey and to further examine the needs of schools in counseling Hispanic/Latino students. In addition, the response rate for the open-ended items was even lower than the 13 questionnaire items. More information concerning the status of school counseling programs for Hispanic/Latino children and families in these Florida school districts could have been obtained with a higher number of administrators responding to these items as well as the addition of specific questions that addressed the types of counseling programs currently being provided.

### **Implications for School Counselors**

Recent school counseling models adopted by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) address the role of school counselors in helping all students have equal access to school counseling programs (ASCA, 2005). This model specifically addresses the ways that school counselors can use their knowledge and skills as well as their position within the schools to promote the academic, social, and career development of all students. According to the ASCA National Model[R], school counseling programs should be collaborative efforts benefiting students, parents, teachers, administrators, and the overall community. This challenge is consistent with the findings of the current study.

As the number of Hispanic/Latino students grows in Florida and across the nation, school systems and counselor preparation programs are being called upon to provide culturally responsive services to this population, services that will ensure the availability of adequate counseling services and increase academic achievement of students. If the academic, social, and career concerns of increasing numbers of Hispanic/Latino children and families are to be addressed adequately in the future, then two primary areas should be addressed, that of direct services to children and families in schools and the training of future school counselors. An important first step in providing direct counseling services is to raise school administrators' and other school employees' awareness of barriers to Hispanic/Latino students' success, particularly in areas where the numbers of Hispanic/Latino families are growing and a large number of these families have low English proficiency, such as in Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee (Hamann, Wortham, & Murillo, 2002). Awareness of these needs is likely to influence administrators' understanding of the counseling needs of these students and their ability to develop and support programs to address academic, career, and personal needs of these students.

Language acquisition programs, translators, and other programs targeting students' native language that are critical to their success (Casas et al., 2003; Gopaul-McNicol & Thomas-Presswood, 1998) are common in most school districts in Florida. Furthermore, it also is clear that some districts have counseling programs that address the concerns of Hispanic/Latino children and families, but evidence also suggests that more efforts are needed. In addition to Spanish-language programs, additional counseling services would give added emphasis to the

following concerns: understanding diverse Hispanic/Latino cultures and educating school personnel, providing counseling and other educational services that are responsive to these unique cultures, advocating for system change while helping students and families negotiate the current educational system, involving Hispanic/Latino families in their children's education, conducting outreach into communities, and providing resources for Hispanic/Latino families that promote educational and vocational success (Altarriba & Bauer, 1998; Casas et al.; Dana, 1998; Gopaul-McNicol & Thomas-Presswood; Koss-Chioino & Vargas, 1999; Lee, 2001; Wortham & Contreras, 2002).

The preparation of school counselors also must expand on current efforts to include diversity in culture, language, race, and ethnicity in the education of Hispanic/Latino students. Although some in the education profession have recognized gaps in services to the Hispanic/Latino population, there has been little significant progress in addressing the lack of training or improving training for school counselors (Clemente & Collison, 2000; Ochoa et al., 1997). Counselor education programs should prepare school counselors to provide needed counseling services in areas identified as important to the educational success of Hispanic/Latino students. Based on the findings of this study and literature in culturally responsive counseling for Hispanic/Latino students, counselor preparation programs that are based on creating partnerships between schools and Hispanic/Latino families and communities will have the best chance of improving Hispanic/Latino students' access to school counseling programs.

Of considerable concern for schools is the need for Spanish-speaking school counselors. Anticipating the need for school counselors who would be prepared to work in schools that enroll large numbers of Hispanic/Latino students, Clemente and Collison (2000) proposed the need for non-native Hispanic/Latino school counselors trained in two or more languages--Spanish and English--as a form of providing a more complex form of training. Although this model has certain advantages, we advocate for an additional approach, one that focuses on the recruitment and training of bicultural and/or bilingual Spanish-speaking school counselors. To decrease the disparity between the Hispanic/Latino school population and ethnically similar, bilingual school counselors, counselor education programs might prepare individuals of Hispanic/Latino descent who are already proficient in both English and Spanish as school counselors.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Hispanic/Latino students now make up the largest minority group in U.S. schools, including areas of the United States unaccustomed to a large Hispanic/Latino population. Anecdotal, demographic, and research studies in the area of education and school counseling point to this growing student population in U.S. schools and its unique strengths and needs. All school personnel, including teachers, school counselors, administrators, and support staff, can benefit from acquiring the knowledge and skills to address the educational concerns of this population. This research study provides beginning information for school counselors and counselor educators to consider when assisting these children and their families with academic, career, and personal/social development. Ultimately, it is our intent to foster increased dialogue, research, and practice for training school counselors to work with Hispanic/Latino children and adolescents in K-12 schools. This research was funded by the College Research Incentive Fund through the University of Florida College of Education.

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**Table 2. Themes of Open-Ended Participant Responses**

<i>Question</i>	<i>Theme and Frequency</i>	<i>Sample Responses</i>
What services currently are being provided by your school district to increase the personal and academic success of Hispanic/Latino students?	ESOL programs are provided for Hispanic/Latino students. F:20	Our ESOL coordinator provides assistance that is limited due to many other district-wide responsibilities. Many of the schools have a full-time ESOL teacher who acts as an advocate, for students.
	Translators, language	We are constantly

facilitators, and/or paraprofessionals are provided for Hispanic/Latino students. F:15

recruiting bilingual/bicultural aides who can assist the content area teachers with delivering academic instruction.

No services are currently offered for Hispanic/Latino students. F:6

Our district lacks the resources for these services.

Outreach services are provided for Hispanic/Latino students and their families through workshops and/or parent meetings. F:6

Our annual college fair offers workshops for Hispanic students and parents including a financial aid workshop presented in Spanish.

Migrant programs/services that include advocates for Hispanic/Latino children and families are provided. F:4

Migrant advocates at all schools assist students and parents with all issues of school and community.

Some paperwork, forms, and/or documents are provided in Spanish. F:4

We translate documents and paperwork for parents into Spanish.

Bilingual Spanish-speaking counselors are currently employed. F:6

Many of our schools have Spanish-speaking counselors since many of our counselors come from this community.

Various federal, state, and/or local programs are in place to serve the Hispanic/Latino student population (i.e., Project New Beginnings, Title I, Title VII, NAACP partnership). F:7

Project "New Beginnings" is a program to address the special needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students who have little to no educational exposure.

What additional services provided by your school district would be beneficial to increase the

There is a need for more bilingual Spanish-speaking school counselors and school personnel. F:23

Bilingual personnel in the areas of institution, guidance, exceptional student education, psychology, and social work are needed. They are needed

personal and academic success of Hispanic/Latino students?

to answer questions that the students have concerning career and education-related issues.

cultural awareness/sensitivity training related to Hispanic/Latino cultures would be beneficial for the school staff as a whole. F:5

I believe the first priority should be a systematic approach to training the district's staff about the cultural needs of this diverse population.

It is necessary, to make greater efforts to involve families in the educational process. F:9

We are increasing our parent information nights for our Hispanic families.

Vocational/career development programs and materials in Spanish are necessary. F:4

Vocational programs and career guidance for Hispanic/Latino students would help students and their parents learn how the educational system works.

What specialized training do you believe Spanish-speaking bilingual school counselors would need to increase the personal and academic success of Hispanic/Latino students?

School counselors should be aware of community resources for Hispanic/Latino students and their families (i.e., scholarships, college programs, career development workshops). F:9

They must be aware of what is available both in the school and the community. The counselors also need to know about scholarships that are available for the Hispanic/Latino students.

Training related to ways to devolve parents and provide outreach to families is critical. F:5

Finding ways to gain family trust and help them learn about choices available is necessary. It is imperative for counselors to be aware of innovative ways to involve the parents.

Counselors should have training related to

Just because someone speaks Spanish, they do

cultural understanding/awareness of the differences within the

not always understand the differences among the students.

Hispanic/Latino cultures  
and should be able  
to share that knowledge  
with other school staff.  
F:22

Counselors should  
be able to balance  
advocating for change  
within the educational  
system with helping  
students and their  
families to negotiate  
the current system. F:7

It is necessary to  
assist parents and  
children in  
understanding the  
U.S. educational  
systems at the  
elementary, secondary,  
and postsecondary  
levels. Counselors  
should have the  
knowledge to help  
bridge the gap between  
the student's country of  
origin school culture  
and the near school  
culture.