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ASCA National Model Implementation and Discipline Disparities in Schools

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ASCA NATIONAL MODEL IMPLEMENTATION AND DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES IN
SCHOOLS

Abigail Mundy

A Capstone Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the Master of Science Degree in

Counselor Education at

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

CAPSTONE PROJECT

ASCA National Model Implementation and Discipline Disparities in Schools

This is to certify that the Capstone Project of

Abigail Mundy

Has been approved by the faculty advisor and the CE 695 – Capstone Project

Course Instructor in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Master of Science Degree in

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Approval Date: _____ 5/8/2019 _____

Abstract

Given the well-documented disproportionality in discipline rates by students' racial and ethnic identities across the United States, the current study examines these disparities at several levels in the school discipline process, and discusses impacts of being involved in these processes for students academically and behaviorally, as well as how these experiences impact students' perceptions of school. The design and purpose of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model are discussed, as are state-wide studies indicating that the ASCA National Model positively impacts student academic and behavioral success in several areas, including overall discipline rates and graduation rates. Then, implications for future research and interventions to aid school counselors in advocating for their students of color and for more equitable discipline processes are examined.

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Introduction

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) was founded in 1952 as a division of the American Personnel and Guidance Association (now the American Counseling Association; American School Counselor Association, 2012). In the years since, ASCA has become its own independent organization, and has developed a National Model, a framework from which school counselors, with collaboration from stakeholders, can build their school counseling programs (American School Counselor Association, 2012). The first edition was published in 2003, with subsequent editions in 2005 and 2012, the latter being the most current edition. According to Stone and Dahir (2015), the ASCA National Model transformed school counseling practice from “acts of service to a structured and outcome-based program,” meaning that the emphasis in school counselors’ roles shifted from emphasizing individual counseling and crisis response to emphasizing data-informed practice and whole-school programming (p. 185). The National Model was created to enact this change, as well as “to standardize school counseling programs across the country,” and to “re-establish school counseling as a crucial educational function that is integral to academic achievement and overall student success” (American School Counselor Association, 2012, p. x-xi).

The ASCA National Model framework is composed of four components: foundation, management, delivery, and accountability (2012). The foundation centers on the program focus (vision statement, mission statement, etc.), aligned with schools’ missions and includes the ASCA Mindsets and Behaviors for Student Success (organized into domains of academic development, career development, and social/emotional development) and the ASCA School Counselor Professional Standards and Competencies. The management component focuses on school counseling program assessment and includes strategies such as school counselor competency and use-of-time assessments, school counseling program assessments, annual

agreements with administrators, advisory councils, use of data to assess program results, planning and implementing curriculum, small-group, and closing-the-gap interventions, and weekly and yearly calendars (American School Counselor Association, 2012). The delivery component focuses on direct and indirect student services, including the school counseling core curriculum, individual student planning, and responsive services. The accountability component centers on data analysis and presentation to stakeholders to demonstrate the effectiveness of the school counseling program for all students and to direct future programming decisions so that outcomes can be improved for all students.

The National Model also includes four themes: leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. These themes influence the role of the school counselor in every component, as demonstrated in an introductory statement in the National Model: “Through application of leadership, advocacy and collaboration skills as a part of a comprehensive school counseling program, school counselors promote student achievement and systemic change that ensures equity and access to rigorous education for every student and leads to closing achievement, opportunity, and attainment gaps” (American School Counselor Association, 2012, p. 1).

As schools develop their comprehensive school counseling programs, they can work toward becoming Recognized ASCA Model Programs (RAMP). Schools are only awarded RAMP status after they show through an extensive application process that they have “developed and implemented comprehensive, data-driven, accountable school counseling programs” which are tailored to “their schools’ specific, identified needs” (Wilkerson et al., 2013, p. 172). RAMP schools re-apply for RAMP status every five years, using the same application process and submitting data on the impact their school counseling programs have had on their schools and students over the preceding three years (American School Counselor Association, 2019).

Given this focus on achieving equity and improving outcomes for all students, the current study examines the evidence of discipline disparities in schools and the impacts that ASCA National Model implementation has been shown to have in schools across the country. Implications for school counseling practice and further research are then discussed.

Review of Literature

Discipline Disparities in Schools

In prior research, many authors have found statistically significant disparities in schools' discipline practices based on students' racial identity (Arcia, 2007; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011; Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002). These disparate practices start in the classroom, with teachers' referrals of students to the office for discipline infractions, and continue on throughout schools' disciplinary processes once students arrive in the administration office. Students of color are thus more harshly affected by consequences such as suspension, and face a higher risk of the associated negative impacts of removal from instructional time.

Office referrals. One of the first opportunities for discrepant discipline interactions to occur is in teachers' disciplinary referrals to schools' main offices. Smolkowski, Girvan, McIntosh, Nese, and Horner (2016) discovered, through their analysis of nationally-representative elementary school discipline data, that Black students are more likely than White students to be referred to the office for subjective behavior violations, such as disrespect and defiance, than for more objective behaviors, like theft and using prohibited substances. Smolkowski et al. (2016) also found higher odds ratios for Black students receiving office referrals in the mornings (1.40 odds ratio); inside the classroom rather than in other settings (1.26 odds ratio); when the referral was considered major rather than minor (1.34 odds ratio; Black students also had a higher odds ratio for minor subjective referrals); and when the student was male (1.15 odds ratio), though Black female students were at a higher risk than their White peers for receiving office referrals (1.73 odds ratio). These findings emphasize the impact that implicit educator biases have on their decisions to refer students of color for disciplinary action.

Smolkowski et al. (2016) define implicit bias as "...the automatic, often unconscious impact that stereotype associations with racial and other groups can have on perceptions, judgments, decision-making, and behavior" (p. 179).

Anyon et al. (2014) reviewed how these implicit biases impact two points in schools' discipline processes: differential selection and differential processing. Differential selection involves teachers referring students to the office in disproportionate numbers, often due to minor, subjective forms of misbehavior, such as disrespect (Anyon et al., 2014). Differential processing occurs when, after the student is in the office, school administration assigns harsher punishment or consequences for the same behavior to students of color than to white students, again showcasing implicit bias. These are also typically more discrepant for minor or subjective infractions, since as Anyon et al. (2014) point out, more serious infractions tend to have mandatory consequences administration must enact. In their 2011-2012 study of kindergarten through twelfth grade students in the Denver, Colorado, Public School district, Anyon et al. (2014) found that Latino, Black, Native American, and Multiracial students all had increased odds ratios of receiving office referrals as compared to White students. These odds ratios were 1.40, 2.30, 1.29, and 1.50, respectively.

These increased odds of referral for students of color have also been shown to carry over to teachers' referrals to the school counselor. Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin, and Moore-Thomas (2012) studied math and English teachers' referrals to the school counselor for disruptive behavior of tenth grade students across the United States. While Bryan et al. (2012) found no significant correlation between math teachers' referrals and students' race, they did find a relationship between English teachers' referrals and students' race. Specifically, Black students had an odds ratio of 1.71 of being referred to the school counselor for disruption when compared

to White students (Bryan et al., 2012). And while female students overall had lower odds (0.35 odds ratio) of being referred than males overall in English classes, Black and Multiracial female students had much higher odds ratios of being referred when compared to White male students (2.24 and 3.22, respectively). While these referrals were not disciplinary in nature, Bryan et al. (2012) also studied teachers' post-secondary expectations for their students, and found that the students for whom they had lower expectations were those students whom they were more likely to refer. This also indicates implicit bias occurring at the classroom level.

In-school suspensions. Literature varies in regards to the perspectives authors have on in-school suspensions. In some studies (e.g., Arcia, 2007), in-school suspensions are considered a consequence between detention and out-of-school suspensions, and are included in reports of schools' overall suspensions. In other studies (e.g., Gregory, Huang, Anyon, & Greer, 2018), in-school-suspensions are treated as an alternative to out-of-school suspensions and not considered exclusionary. Arcia (2007) included in-school suspensions with out-of-school suspensions in her study of three-year averages of suspension rates in middle and senior high schools in a large, urban school district in the southeastern United States. She computed percentages of students who were assigned in-school or out-of-school suspension at least once per school year for comparison with other student- and school-level variables. Arcia (2007) found that, on average, 36% of Black students were suspended at least once, compared to 23% of non-Black students, and that there was a significant negative correlation between Black students' suspension percentages and students' overall reading achievement scores and the teaching experience of schools' instructional staff.

In contrast, in their study of students referred for discipline concerns in the Denver, Colorado, Public School District in the 2014-2015 school year, Gregory et al., 2018 found

protective effects of in-school suspensions: students who received an in-school suspension were 44% less likely to receive out-of-school suspensions than referred students who did not receive a restorative intervention or in-school suspension, even while controlling for students' race, free and reduced price lunch status, and disability status. They note the criticism that in-school suspensions are merely "holding room[s]" for students who would otherwise be assigned out-of-school suspensions, but argue that students who are assigned in-school suspensions have less time unsupervised than students who are given out-of-school suspensions and thus have more opportunities to engage in learning and potentially to gain access to academic and behavioral supports, if in-school suspension programs are structured in such a way as to prevent future disciplinary problems (Gregory et al., 2018, p. 177).

The contrast between Arcia's (2007) and Gregory et al.'s (2018) findings may relate to the perspective through which school staff, especially administration, view in-school suspensions. If school staff view in-school suspension as a punitive, exclusionary measure, then it is likely to be experienced as one by the students to whom it is assigned. However, as Gregory et al. (2018) point out, if structured in a more positive, preventative manner, in-school suspension could allow students to practice skills and re-engage positively with academic learning.

Out-of-school suspensions. Differential selection and differential processing also affect the rates at which students of color are given out-of-school suspensions (Bryan et al., 2012; Gregory et al., 2018). Anyon et al. (2014) found that Black students had an odds ratio of receiving an out-of-school suspension of 1.55 compared to White students after accounting for restorative practices and other factors. Gregory et al. (2018), in seeking to support and update Anyon et al.'s 2014 study, found an odds ratio for the same measure of 1.57.

In a study comparing low out-of-school suspensions schools to demographically similar high out-of-school suspension schools, Raffaele Mendez, Knoffe, and Ferron (2002) found that while variables like socioeconomic status, race, and student mobility rate were most strongly correlated with suspension rates at individual schools, the reverse was not true: schools with high populations of low socioeconomic status and racial/ethnic minority students did not necessarily have high rates of suspension. Low suspension schools instead were more likely to use several tiers of prevention strategies, to reach out to students' families to involve them in the school discipline plan, and to focus on student needs and treating students respectfully (Raffaele Mendez et al, 2002).

Impacts on students' perspectives on school. One of the implications of students of color being more likely to face disciplinary action than their White peers when all other considered variables are controlled for is that students of color are then disproportionately at risk for many of the negative impacts of these disciplinary actions. One of these impacts is a change in students' perceptions of their school environment. Lee et al. (2011) found that students who are removed from their learning environments due to disciplinary action have more difficulty completing assignments on time and potentially perceive their exclusionary consequences as messages that they are not wanted at school. Lee et al. (2011) connect this perception to students' perceptions of support from peers and adults declining, which in turn negatively affects disciplined students' investment in their education. Gregory et al. (2018) cite several earlier studies which showed correlations between schools with larger racial discipline discrepancies and students who feel less supported by and connected to school staff. Exclusionary discipline measures in general have been shown to correlate to students who are disengaged from school

and feel alienated from their school communities and to negative school climates (Bryan et al., 2012; Raffaele Mendez et al., 2002).

Impacts on students' experiences with juvenile justice. Exclusionary discipline measures have also been shown to be correlated with greater risk of “involvement in the juvenile justice system, and later arrest” (Gregory et al., 2018, p. 177). Anyon et al. (2014) found that Latino and Black students had significantly higher odds ratios (1.59 and 1.52, respectively) of law enforcement involvement in their disciplinary measures than did White students. Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, and Valentine (2009) discuss the impacts that labels have on students who become stigmatized as delinquent following a disciplinary incident and point out that the disproportionate rate at which students of color are disciplined can become a self-fulfilling prophecy, even if students were unfairly disciplined in the first place. In their study of students ages 10-17 in Missouri, Nicholson-Crotty et al. (2009) found that, when controlled for other factors, greater discrepancies in suspension rates of Black and White students were positively correlated with similar discrepancies in referrals to law enforcement.

Impacts on students' future academic and career outcomes. Disciplinary incidents, especially suspensions, have been shown to be correlated with a number of negative academic and personal outcomes for students including academic failure, grade retention, and drop-out (Bryan et al., 2012; Raffaele Mendez et al., 2002; Anyon et al., 2014, Arcia, 2007). As Raffaele Mendez et al. (2002) discuss, high school students who miss a substantial amount of class time due to disciplinary consequences risk falling off track to earn enough credits to graduate on time. In Lee et al.'s (2011) study of high school students in Virginia and dropout rates for White and Black students, higher suspension rates overall were associated with higher dropout rates, and Black students dropped out at higher rates in schools with higher suspension rates, in schools

where more students received free and reduced-price lunches, and in schools with lower spending per student. Though these are similar results for White and Black students, Lee et al. (2011) found that White student dropout rates were much more influenced by demographic variables than Black student dropout rates.

Academic Outcomes

Previous research suggests that implementation of the ASCA National Model is beneficial to students on several fronts, including in measures of students' academic success and reducing discipline referrals as a whole (Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Stevenson, 2012a; Carey, Harrington, Martin, & Hoffman, 2012b; Wilkerson, Pérusse, & Hughes, 2013). Some of these academic impacts include increases in students' test scores and in graduation rates.

Impact on students' test scores. In a study of 144 Utah high schools, Carey et al. (2012a) found that, after controlling for a number of other variables, higher levels of implementation of the ASCA National Model, as measured by the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (SCPIS), were significantly and positively correlated with higher average ACT scores, higher rates of students taking the ACT, and higher rates of proficiency in math and reading on state tests. Specifically, the percentage of their time that school counselors spent in "appropriate systems support activities" was significantly and positively correlated with higher rates of proficiency on the math state tests (Carey et al., 2012a, p. 96). Similarly, Carey et al. (2012b) studied 206 high schools in Nebraska, and found, after controlling for other variables, a significant, positive correlation between school counselors' level of implementation of ASCA National Model features and higher percentages of proficiency on the state math and reading tests.

Wilkerson et al. (2013) studied 301 elementary, middle, and high schools in the state of Indiana, 75 of which were RAMP schools. The remaining 226 schools were designated control schools, and efforts were made to ensure these schools did not have school counseling programs similar to those that have earned RAMP designation (Wilkerson et al., 2013). Wilkerson et al. (2013) used the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress Plus (ISTEP+) and the Graduation Qualifying Examinations (GQEs) to examine the correlation between students' academic proficiency and schools' RAMP status, both at one point in time (2009 exams) and over a span of four years (2005-2009). On the 2009 exams, they found that students in elementary RAMP schools had higher proficiency rates than their peers in the elementary control schools by 6.1% on the English Language Arts section of the ISTEP+ and by 6.4% on the Math section; both of these differences were statistically significant (Wilkerson et al., 2013, p. 180). Though Wilkerson et al. (2013) found that students in RAMP schools at the middle and high school levels had higher proficiency rates on the same exams, these differences were not statistically different. Similarly, the differences in performance between RAMP and control schools over the span of four years were not significantly significant, as other similar studies have found (Wilkerson et al., 2013). Wilkerson et al. (2013) conjecture that this is either because of study design or the small number of schools in each comparison group.

Impact on graduation rates. Comprehensive school counseling programs have also been shown to be positively correlated with graduation rates. Carey et al. (2012b) found a positive correlation between the amount of time counselors spent delivering preventative guidance curriculum with graduation rates in the state of Nebraska. Similarly, Carey et al. (2012a) found a significant positive correlation between the percentage of time school counselors spend in “appropriate system support activities” and graduation rates in Utah (p. 96). Though

more research is needed, current research supports the hypothesis that the ASCA National Model's emphasis on academic development and systemic change is correlated with two measures of student success: increased graduation rates and test scores.

Behavioral outcomes

Implementation of the ASCA National Model has been shown to have significant correlations with several school-level behavioral outcomes, including attendance rates and overall discipline rates.

Impact on school attendance rates. Carey et al. (2012a) found that longer time of implementation of a comprehensive developmental model program is positively and significantly associated with increased attendance rates for that school. They also found that lower student-to-school-counselor ratios were associated positively with higher attendance rates (Carey et al., 2012a). These behavioral outcomes also have an impact on academic outcomes, as students who attend classes more frequently are more likely to be more academically successful, as measured by graduating in a timely manner and demonstrating proficiency in their classes and on standardized tests.

Impact on overall discipline rates. Carey et al. (2012a) also found that lower student-to-school-counselor ratios and longer time of implementation of a comprehensive developmental model program were both correlated negatively with discipline rates. Similarly, Carey et al. (2012b) found, after controlling for other variables, a positive correlation between higher scores on the School Counseling Services subscale of the SCPIS and decreases in discipline rates. This indicates that when school counselors are providing comprehensive school counseling programs, their students are receiving fewer discipline referrals. Overall, there is evidence that school counselors being present, available to students, and implementing comprehensive school

counseling programs aligned with the ASCA National Model improves a variety of student outcomes, including the rate of discipline referrals.

School climate and culture

All of these correlations indicate better outcomes for students when there are more school counselors present in schools who are delivering comprehensive school counseling programs aligned with the ASCA National Model. One of these outcomes, measured at the school level, is that of school climate and culture. Carey et al. (2012a), cite research from Lapan, Gysbers, and Sun (1997) which showed a correlation between comprehensive school counseling programs and students who felt safe in school, a sense of orderliness at school, and a sense of belonging at school. Students at these schools were also more likely to report that they felt that their schools were preparing them well for their futures (Lapan et al., 1997, as cited in Carey et al., 2012a). In a later study, Lapan, Gysbers, and Petroski (2001) found that “in schools with more fully implemented comprehensive guidance programs, students reported feeling safer, having better relationships with their teachers, being more satisfied with the education they were receiving in their school, having greater awareness of the relevance and importance of education for their future, and earning higher grades” (Carey et al, 2012a, p. 90).

Implications

Further research

Part of school counselors' role in the ASCA National Model is advocating for equitable practices in schools, and for the equitable treatment of all students. Therefore, further research needs to address the possible correlation between ASCA National Model implementation and decreased discipline disparities in schools, and to examine, specifically, the impacts that more complete implementation of the ASCA National Model have on these disparities. It may be helpful to continue to study the correlations discussed in the literature across different states and at a national level, as well, so that the research indicating the importance of comprehensive school counseling programs can continue to develop. Continuing to use consistent assessments such as the SCPIS in this research is also an important step, so that more accurate comparisons can be made across studies.

Interventions and tools

As advocacy is one of the four main themes of the ASCA National Model, school counselors need to use their advocacy and collaboration skills to advocate for equitable practices for their students of color at micro-, mezzo-, and macro-levels. Advocacy could be talking to a teacher or administrator about the consequence they gave a student of color and about the impact that is having on the student, or empowering the student to stand up for themselves in certain situations. On a larger scale, school counselors can collaborate within their communities to advocate for populations who have historically lacked access to resources having access to the resources and services they need. Counselors can also communicate with their legislators at the local, state, and national level to lobby them to put more equitable policies in place, or to explain

why a policy the legislator is considering would have positive, negative, or inequitable impacts for their students or clients.

Currently, many schools across the United States have implemented school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which have been shown to partially alleviate discipline disparities in some schools, particularly because of their focus on “clear, consistent, and positive social culture” in schools (McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, & Smolkowski, 2014, p. 12). However, as will be discussed below, PBIS systems need to be implemented to fidelity and in a multiculturally competent manner so that students of color are not marginalized through discipline practices for their culturally appropriate behavior. In addition, adding a systems perspective to schools’ social-emotional learning curricula can help to make these curricula more sensitive to the impacts that culture, power, and privilege have on students and their social-emotional learning. Gregory and Fergus (2017) argue for accomplishing this through training teachers to be more self- and socially aware, increase their relationship skills and capacity for self-management, and to practice more responsible decision making.

However, PBIS and social-emotional learning curricula with systems perspectives alone are not enough to make the progress our students need. Implicit and explicit bias and the situations in which these affect students and discipline processes in schools also need to be addressed. McIntosh et al. (2014) suggest identifying specific vulnerable decision points in a school’s discipline process, and teaching staff to recognize when they are in a vulnerable decision point and then reducing the associated ambiguity in the discipline process by delineating more specific protocols. They suggest that making policy changes, rather than attempting to change educators biases, may be more effective in reducing discipline disparities,

and also advocate for schools' and districts' collection and use of student data, disaggregated by race, and district accountability measures for specific disparity reduction goals.

Conclusion

Given the documented disparities in school discipline practices, and their impacts on students' current and future academic and behavioral outcomes, and the positive impacts that comprehensive school counseling programs, such as those that are aligned with the ASCA National Model, can have on student- and school-level outcomes, more research is needed in discovering the impacts that school counselors and school counseling programs can have on reducing racial discipline disparities. However, several strategies and interventions may be effective, including PBIS systems of support and counselors' advocacy efforts. Expanding typical social-emotional learning curricula to include a systems perspective may help in empowering all students to learn the social and emotional skills they need, and reducing ambiguity in vulnerable decision points in discipline decisions may help make the process more equitable.

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Appendix A: School Counseling Program Implementation Survey

Please rate each statement below in terms of the degree to which it is currently implemented in your School’s School Counseling program. Circle your response using the following Rating Scale:

1 = Not Present; 2 = Development in Progress; 3 = Partly Implemented; 4 = Fully Implemented

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. A written mission statement exists and is used as a foundation by all counselors. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 2. Services are organized so that all students are well served and have access to them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 3. The program operates from a plan for closing the achievement gap for minority and lower income students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 4. The program has a set of clear measurable student learning objectives and goals are established for academics, social/personal skills, and career development. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 5. Needs Assessments are completed regularly and guide program planning. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 6. All students receive classroom guidance lessons designed to promote academic, social/personal, and career development. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7. The program ensures that all students have academic plans that include testing, individual advisement, long-term planning, and placement. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 8. The program has an effective referral and follow-up system for handling student crises. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 9. School counselors use student performance data to decide how to meet student needs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 10. School counselors analyze student data by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic level to identify interventions to close achievement gaps. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 11. School counselor job descriptions match actual duties. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 12. School counselors spend at least 80% of their time in activities that directly benefit students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 13. The school counseling program includes interventions designed to improve the school’s ability to educate all students to high standards. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 14. An annual review is conducted to get information for improving next year’s programs. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 15. School counselors use computer software to: | | | | |
| access student data | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| analyze student data | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| use data for school improvement | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 16. The school counseling program has the resources to allow counselors to complete appropriate professional development activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 17. School counseling priorities are represented on curriculum and education committees. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 18. School counselors communicate with parents to coordinate student achievement and gain feedback for program improvement. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |

Appendix B: A Procedure for Using the SCPIS in School Districts

In order to determine whether ASCA National Model implementation may be correlated with lower levels of discrepancy in student discipline referrals in a particular school district, school counselors in the school district to be studied will be invited to participate in this study. The school counselors will be asked to complete the SCPIS during the middle of an academic year. Following the academic year, their responses will be compared to their schools' yearly discipline data, which will be disaggregated by students' race and ethnicity.

Participants

The participants in this study will be licensed school counselors in public schools serving students in kindergarten through twelfth grades. In schools with more than one school counselor for the studied school year, all licensed school counselors will be invited to participate. Schools with no licensed school counselor employed for the studied school year will be included in the analysis of the discipline discrepancy data, in order to test for potential impacts of having a school counselor. However, employees who are not licensed school counselors will not be invited to participate in the SCPIS, as the assessment is specific to the duties of a school counselor.

Participants will be made aware that though the SPCIS data only identifies the school from which the counselor is reporting, this information may make them identifiable to the researcher, especially if they are the only counselor at their site who chooses to participate. However, school-specific data will not be reported in the final report of the study so that counselors are not able to be identified by the schools at which they work by others. To further protect participants' confidentiality, site-specific data will also not be made available to other individuals throughout the course of the study.

Materials

Materials to be used in this study include the School Counseling Program Implementation Survey (Clemens et al., 2010); stamped envelopes addressed to the researcher; school district discipline data, disaggregated by student racial and ethnic identity and by school; and school demographic data. This demographic data should include the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch, percentage of students identifying in each of the districts' assigned racial, ethnic, and gender identity categories, percentage of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), percentage of students in English Learner courses, and percentage of students in honors courses, Advanced Placement courses, and/or Highly Gifted programs. SPSS Version 25 or similar software is recommended to run statistical analyses.

The SCPIS is an 18-item assessment which uses a four-point Likert scale to measure the implementation of the ASCA National Model in school counseling programs (Clemens et al., 2010). While they were initially developing the SCPIS, Clemens et al. (2010) ran an exploratory factor analysis which showed that “a three-factor model that accounted for 54% of the variance of the intercorrelation matrix and a two-factor model that accounted for 47% of the variance” (p. 125). For each of the three subscales, Cronbach's alpha reliability estimates ranged from .79 to .87 (Clemens et al., 2010). Other research has indicated the adequacy of the SCPIS's reliability and construct validity in similar research (Carey et al., 2012a; Carey et al., 2012b). No specific training is required to administer the SCPIS; it can be found at no cost online (see Appendix A). Possible total scores range from 18 to 72. Although not included in this study, researchers may find the SCPIS to be a useful tool in gathering perception data from other stakeholders about the implementation of their school counseling programs.

Design

This study is based in multicultural counseling theory, as applied in school counseling (Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996). This theory advocates for the use of culturally and individually appropriate therapeutic methods with clients, which may include methods traditionally not considered good therapeutic practice, such as giving advice or teaching (Sue et al., 1996). It acknowledges the intersectionality of all clients' experiences and integrates them into therapeutic practice, and recognizes that the assumptions, values, and norms of mainstream American society do not hold true or have equal weight for all clients (Sue et al., 1996). Advocacy for systems change is an important part of multicultural counseling theory (Sue et al., 1996). Multicultural competencies are vital for school counselors to have and utilize in order to ensure the success of all of their students. Advocacy, at micro, mezzo, and macro levels, is also an important part of school counselors' roles. Microlevel advocacy includes student empowerment and acting as advocates for individual students, while mezzo-level advocacy involves community collaboration and systems advocacy, and macrolevel advocacy includes providing information to the public and social and political advocacy (Louis, Arnold, House & Toporek, 2002). These competencies also are a part of the ASCA National Model (American School Counselor Association, 2012).

The method of design for this study is a quantitative, correlational, cross-sectional study. Because of the nature of this topic and its participants, a true experiment is not possible. The nature of this research calls for intact groups, because the participants are already grouped by the school at which they are employed. The independent variables in this study are the score on the SCPIS and the caseload, in number of students, of each school counselor. The dependent variable is the school's discipline disparities between different racial and ethnic groups for the studied school year.

The first hypothesis of this study is that schools with higher rates of implementation of the ASCA National Model, as measured by the SCPIS, will have lower racial and ethnic discrepancies in their discipline referrals. The related null hypothesis is that there will be no correlation between scores on the SCPIS and levels of discrepancies in discipline referrals. Should some schools in the studied district serving the same grade-level students have school counselors while others do not, the second hypothesis will be relevant. Elementary schools are used as an example, but the hypothesis can be altered to suit the researcher's specific district. The second hypothesis is that elementary schools scoring higher than 45 on the SCPIS will have significantly lower discipline discrepancies than elementary schools who do not have school counselors employed. The related null hypothesis is that there will be no correlation between elementary schools' scores on the SCPIS and whether or not there is a school counselor employed.

Procedure

All licensed school counselors in the studied school district will be invited to participate in this study via an introductory email to all K-12 licensed school counselors. This email should provide a basic overview of the study and discuss informed consent, including possible risks to participation and participants' ability to withdraw at any time. Two follow-up emails will be sent to those who have not yet responded one and two months, respectively, after the introductory email. Then SCPIS forms, which will be assigned numbers, will be sent to each participant with a stamped envelope addressed to the researcher. Each number on the forms correlates with the participant to whom the form will be sent, so that counselors' responses will be kept confidential. The SCPIS will be distributed to participants shortly before the end of the first semester (or other point about midway through the school year), who will be asked to return it to the researcher via

the provided stamped envelope within two weeks of distribution.

Once the completed SCPIS forms are received, total scores can be calculated for each form. Then, for schools at which more than one counselor participates, the mean score should be calculated and used for comparison in Hypothesis I. Counselors' caseloads, in numbers of students, should also be calculated for each participant. At the end of the studied school year, each school's demographic data for the year and raw discipline data will be collected and analyzed to determine levels of discrepancy based on students' identified race and ethnicity.