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**Addressing the Achievement Gap for African American, Latino and Native
American Adolescents: Implications and Approaches for White School Counselors**

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**Addressing the Achievement Gap for African American, Latino and Native
American Adolescents: Implications and Approaches for White School Counselors**

by

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**Addressing the Achievement Gap for African American, Latino and Native
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ABSTRACT

The achievement gap is still an epidemic in America and many schools struggle with identifying the reasons that their students of color are not achieving at the same rates as their White peers. This review of the literature uncovers some of these reasons and gives counselors ideas for how they can help these students achieve appropriately. Throughout the literature the disproportionate ratio between the overwhelming majority of White school counselors and educators and the growing number of students of color is clear, meaning that Whites in educator roles are over-represented compared to the demographics of the student body. Also, it is evident that the education that counselors have received in the past, and are still receiving, has been lacking in multicultural competency standards. These are just a few of the reasons for the emotional disconnect that students of color feel with the education system and counselors in particular, which makes the job of the counselor difficult when trying to help all children be successful, as is mandated by the American School Counselor Association and NCLB. The literature suggests that White school counselors can become multiculturally competent and can improve school climates to embrace diverse cultures, which in turn increases the chances of student success. Counselors are important change agents in schools and can help to close the achievement gap.

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Introduction

For the rising number of ethnically diverse students in our schools in America there is still a huge achievement gap between students of color and White students. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics' most recent studies, African American, Latino and Native American students had lower achievement scores in school, higher incidences of dropping out, lower postsecondary participation, and lower median incomes than their White and Asian/Pacific Islander counterparts (NCES, 2007). There is a high need for counselor interventions to assist students who are not succeeding. It has historically been the school counselor's duty to help students with academic achievement, retention and career planning, but the programs have not been functioning in a way that benefits students of color for many years. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) is one of many counseling organizations that has noticed this discrepancy and has called upon its members to be catalysts for change and educational reform. The ASCA specifically recommends that counselors "advocate for all students navigating through the school system in preparation for post-high school options and to call attention to those factors in the school system that enhance or hinder student academic success for every student" (Colbert & Magourik-Colbert, 2003; Campbell & Dahir, 1997).

The percentage of students of color in public schools across the nation is increasing every year while the percentage of White school counselors is staying roughly the same. In 2006 and 2007, students of color made up 43.5% of the student population (NCES, 2007; The Education Trust, 2009). The overwhelming majority of counselors

today and those projected for the future are white (Pack-Brown, 1999). It is widely known that most school counselors, and other professional educational staff, are primarily white. This is a phenomenon that has not received much specific research attention despite the obvious implications of this observation to students of color and their families. To put the numbers of White school counselors into perspective, assuming that school counselor demographics mirror teacher demographics, the percentage of White school teachers in 2004 in America was 83.1% (NCES, 2007). This uneven ratio puts White school counselors as the most likely school counseling option available to students of color when a same-race counselor is usually the preference (Fusick & Bordeau, 2004). Therefore, it is imperative for the White school counselor to understand the needs and concerns of students of color in order to be able to offer the support that the students need in order to be successful. Multicultural competency (MCC), which refers to attitudes, knowledge and skills when working with individuals from different cultural groups (Constantine & Yeh, 2001), has been made a priority for all of the major counseling associations, including the ASCA, which supports appropriate access to services and opportunities to students of culturally diverse backgrounds (ASCA, 1999).

This review of the literature was prompted by two questions. Why are students of color statistically falling behind? How can school counselors help? From the preliminary research emerged a third question. What do White counselors need to change in order to improve their techniques with students of color? This literature review explores the reasons for the achievement gap, the reasons that White counselors have been ill-prepared to effectively counsel students of color, and how to remedy this problem,

including examples of specific counselor-initiated interventions. The intention of this review is to assist school counselors and educators in closing the achievement gap and improve relations between students of color, their families and the school systems entrusted with their education.

Chapter 1: The Achievement Gap

The Achievement Gap is defined as the observed disparity on a number of educational measures between groups of students defined by factors such as race/ethnicity, gender, economic status, etc. (Carpenter II, Ramirez, & Severn, 2006). The constructs that will be discussed regarding the achievement gap are those of race and ethnicity. Race and ethnicity have often been used interchangeably but they are actually two separate ideas. Race is a characterization of a group of people based on physical attributes, such as skin color and facial features while ethnicity is a characterization of a group of people sharing a common ancestry, cultural beliefs and traditions, such as language, values, music, food, etc. (Cokley, 2007). It is no secret that skin color has been the basis of rank ordering people in our society for hundreds of years (Wander, Martin & Nakayama, 2003). As much as some people would like to believe that this “ranking” system is no longer employed, the achievement gap that exists in every state in this country is striking evidence that African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans are still not receiving the same educational opportunities as Whites. For the purposes of this review, the term “people of color” will generally include African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans unless otherwise stated. Asian/Pacific Islander Americans are also people of color, but for complex reasons that this review will not delve into, this pan-ethnic group is not negatively represented in the achievement gap in this country. This is not to suggest that Asian/Pacific Islander Americans do not face discrimination in this country because they certainly do, (Sue, et al., 2007a) but according to national statistics, this group does not fit the criteria for achievement gap inequities. In fact, this group

statistically performs higher or at the same rate as Whites in achievement and all other positive academic measurements, therefore, the attention of this review will be concentrated on the three groups previously mentioned.

Evidence of an Achievement Gap

Achievement for school-aged children is measured by academic achievement on standardized tests, graduation rates, and post-secondary school attendance and completion. Since every state has its own state-mandated test which varies from state to state, the federal government administers its own test, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). This test is a snap shot of two points in a child's education, fourth and eighth grades, in which data is gathered to show a reliable account of how children in all states are performing academically. Reading and Mathematics are the two subjects tested and reported to the government. These results are what policy makers use to make decisions on education in America (The Education Trust, 2009; NCES, 2007).

The results of the 2007 Fourth Grade Reading NAEP show the achievement relationship between the racial/ethnic groups with the percentages of students in each group scoring proficient or higher: White-41%, Native American-20%, Latino-17%, and African American-14%. The 2007 Eighth Grade Math NAEP results fare even lower for students of color: White-41%, Native American-17%, Latino-15%, and African American-11% (The Education Trust, 2009).

The high school graduation rate for American students in 2006 shows the relationship between racial/ethnic groups graduating on time: White-81%, Native

American-62%, Latino-61%, and African American-59% (The Education Trust, 2009). These statistics are based on students graduating on time, which means that some of the numbers might be lower due to a high school student repeating a grade, as well as students who dropped out. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, the percentage of 16-24-year-olds who dropped out of high school in 2005 was higher among Latinos, African Americans and Native Americans than for Whites, with Latinos being the group with the highest drop-out rate (NCES, 2007).

Post-secondary participation in college is one area where the gap is slowly closing, although the discrepancies are still notable. Public college graduation rates for freshmen entering in the Fall of 2000 who graduated by 2006 are as follows: White-57%, Latino-46%, African American-41%, and Native American-38% (The Education Trust, 2009). Between the years of 1976 and 2004, the total enrollment of undergraduates who were students of color increased from 17% to 32% (NCES, 2007).

These recent statistics show that the achievement gap is still a huge problem in America and that something is preventing students of color from achieving their full potential. The next steps are to find out why this is happening and fix the problems.

Reasons for the Achievement Gap

There have been many speculations on the causes of the achievement gap in the past. The literature reveals many common theories addressing the reasons that the gap is between racial lines. The fact that the American education system was founded upon white, middle-class values, beliefs and practices is the most common reason given that white students tend to be able to excel academically, and students of color tend to have

more difficulty. When the child's culture at home does not match the culture at school, which will be the one assessing the child, the student is at a much higher risk of educational challenges. The child must change his or her ways of thinking, communicating, and behaving in order to fit the narrowly defined norm established by white educators and administrators in order to be successful in the school environment (Fusick & Bordeau, 2004; Lee, 2001; Leong & Tan, 2003; Simcox, Nuijens & Lee, 2006). The White student does not have to make this huge cognitive decision to think and behave differently at school and at home since the school environment is based on White culture, therefore the ability to succeed comes with much less effort. This phenomenon often makes students of color develop negative feelings toward school and school authority figures causing more behavioral problems and less participation in class and extracurricular school activities. This problem is well documented for African American students in particular (Fusick & Bordeau, 2004). The oppositional clash between White educational systems and African American culture may, in part, explain the resistance of students of color because of feelings that the system is racist as a result of these attitudes and practices (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). Some students of color choose to protest this perceived racism by rejecting anything associated with white society, which has come to include educational success, because in order to succeed in a system based on White norms, a child of color must acculturate, or identify with the beliefs and attitudes of the predominant macroculture (Leong & Tan, 2003).

Many students of color feel that if they acculturate to white culture in order to succeed, then they are also denying their own cultures in preference to the one oppressing

them. This is commonly referred to as “acting white” and is looked down upon among their peers (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Fusick & Bordeau, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Ogbu, 2004; Tatum, 1997). The fact that children still think of educational success as “acting white” is a testament to how much the schools need to focus on changing perceptions with the support of cultural role models and multiculturally competent counselors and other school personnel. This concept of associating academic success with “acting white” has been of interest to scholars in the field for decades. In 1986, Fordham and Ogbu published a study that addressed the differences between black underachievers and high achievers in regard to the consequences of the collective identity’s long-held belief that achieving academic success is “acting white” and thus rejecting the culturally collective identity. The study focused on African American students who had similar capabilities to excel evidenced through past academic successes in earlier years of education and academic testing. Some of the students chose to “put brakes” on their learning in order to consciously stop succeeding all together, or to lower their academic success to take the focus off of themselves in the classroom. The high achievers found that they had to devise strategies to be able to make good grades and not be ostracized by their peers for doing so. Methods included becoming the class clown at school while working hard at home so that the other students perceive the student to be like them and not to be trying to “act white” by being a good student. Other students used irregular class attendance and not participating in class as ways to maintain a low profile, while doing their school work at home. This extra effort to hide achievement is called the burden of acting white (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986).

The phenomenon of equating academic success with rejecting one's collective identity and "acting white" is not confined to the African American culture. Mexican Americans as well as Native Americans have developed culturally collective identities as well. Collective identity formation is a result of feeling like a subordinate minority in a dominate culture. These groups have an American history of experiences such as conquest, colonization, forced labor and mass immigration as well as being given an inferior status that is still perceived today (Ogbu, 2004). American public schools are still seen as agents of assimilation into white America and these groups consider such assimilation to be detrimental to the preservation of their cultures and identities (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). The effect of this phenomenon can be directly related to the current achievement gap that is present today.

The lack of diverse role models in the schools is another reason that students of color feel like schools are institutions of whiteness, and thus are not as motivated to participate and excel. For example, African American teachers make up only 7% of teachers while African American students make up 17% of student populations in schools (Fusick & Bordeau, 2004). When children look around and do not see adult examples of success of their own race or ethnicity, it clear why they feel removed from that environment. The fact that there are so few teachers and other school officials of color is based on a history of racism as well. The achievement gap has been around for decades, therefore fewer people of color were able to go to college and become teachers. Those that did go to college also faced the student teaching requirement that meant apprentice teaching for a semester without being paid. Many teaching students were unable to

forego pay for so long so chose to change their majors. The licensing tests have also been historically expensive which was also a deterrent for teachers having to deal with low socioeconomic status as well as minority status (Epstein, 2005).

Race is still a very volatile subject in America and these unresolved race issues are prevalent in our nation's schools. Schools have historically been unsuccessful in demonstrating that they are not operating with racism, despite the efforts of school employees. "Unbeknownst to many school personnel, resistance and racism are also nurtured by institutional norms and tacit cultural messages students receive from schools, families, places of worship, and the larger society (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004)."

Many educators, who do also happen to be mostly white (83% according to NCES, 2007) are reinforcing racist attitudes without their conscious knowledge. Society has instilled messages of inferiority about people of color so deeply that they have become nearly invisible and White Americans are simply unaware of the advantages they have in this society and how their attitudes and behaviors unintentionally discriminate against people of color (Sue, et al., 2007b). Even though the teachers and other school administrators do not necessarily see the discriminatory practices, the students of color do see them and continue to feel marginalized, thus contributing to their disadvantages and negative feelings about education.

Significance for White School Counselors

The topic of contributing factors for the achievement gap is of extreme importance and has not been exhausted here; however, the point is that the topics of race and ethnicity are obviously extremely salient to the reasons for the achievement gap. The

fact that most school counselors are White, as are most current counseling graduates, and that they are still being trained in Western European models of therapy and service delivery is problematic because nothing will change the systemic problems in American schools unless a paradigm shift occurs (Sue, et al., 2007b).

School counselors are the agents of change, social justice, and activism within the educational system and, although there are many other factors at work creating achievement gaps, they are the people charged with finding solutions (ASCA, 1999; Lee, 2001). Because most school counselors are White and it has been established that many students of color tend to feel resistant to White culture, as well as the fact that many well-intentioned White adults inadvertently discriminate against children of color, the White school counselor must find ways to become accessible to students of color by learning appropriate ways to bridge the racial gap and build trust. In order to improve approaches between White school counselors and children of color, it is necessary to figure out what has been going wrong and then how find realistic remedies.

Chapter 2: Preparation of White Counselors Concerning Multicultural Counseling

The field of psychology has a history of racism, as do many institutions in American history. The American Psychological Association was established in 1892 by twenty-six White men who held the then common belief that Whites were superior to people of color. All of the early prominent theorists that contributed to the field of psychology were White and, most of them male. Most of the subjects that these theorists used to come up with their theories were also white and middle-class. Therefore, the traditions, attitudes, beliefs and actions of the practice of psychology were built upon White, middle-class culture. As long as mental health services were based on White, middle-class criteria, people of color were also treated under these criteria. It was assumed that because the traditional counseling approaches were sufficient to majority clients, then they were beneficial for all minority clients as well. This was called the universal approach (Robinson & Morris, 2000).

Professionals within the field finally acknowledged that the universal approach was not sufficient and that people of color, especially African Americans, were not getting their needs met. By the early 1980's the field was ready to employ specific competencies with respect to multicultural counseling (Robinson & Morris, 2000). The positional paper, written by Sue et al., 1982, was the foundation for multicultural counseling competencies. In this fundamental paper, the characteristics necessary for developing these competencies were specified. This was the beginning and the competencies continue to be negotiated (Robinson & Morris, 2000).

The fact that it took until the 80's to acknowledge that people of color were not responding well to traditional methods of counseling embodies the first reason that school counselors have not had success with children of color. The counseling theories and service delivery methods used by school counselors have been created by and for the White, middle-class. Even though multicultural competencies have been in the literature since the 80's, multicultural counseling curriculums remain inadequate (Ridley & Kleiner, 2003).

When children of color are confronted with the traditional methods of counseling which is built on Western values, such as individuality, uniqueness and survival of the fittest, they feel like their own cultural values conflict. This leads to discomfort on the part of the child and makes the counselor seem insensitive, thus negating the therapeutic relationship (Fusick & Bordeau, 2006)

Several studies have shown that children of color prefer same-race counselors initially, but research also suggests that children of color view the counselor's sensitivity and interpersonal skills as the most important attributes, regardless of race (Fusick & Bordeau, 2004; Holcomb-McCoy & Moore-Thomas, 2001; Neville, Spanierman & Doan, 2006), which has positive implications for White counselors because sensitivity and interpersonal skills can theoretically be strengthened voluntarily as part of multicultural competency training.

There is evidence however, that White counselors generally do not naturally possess as much multicultural counseling competency as counselors of color. In a study done by Madonna Constantine, with counseling practicum students and clients of color,

the multicultural competency of 31 White counseling students, 11 Latino counseling students and 10 African American counseling students was measured and compared. Each counseling student's session with a client of color was audio-taped and transcribed. The transcriptions were analyzed by two advanced doctoral students in counseling psychology with expertise in multicultural counseling issues. The raters did not know the race or ethnicity of the counseling students that they were rating. The results were that the African American and Latino counseling students rated significantly higher in multicultural competency than did their White peers. These findings parallel other similar studies (Constantine, 2001). Although this evidence is disheartening for White counselors, it helps to explain why there has been a disconnect between White counselors and students of color. Constantine's findings support the importance of training courses for counselors to expose them to cultural issues and various populations in order to increase sensitivity to multicultural issues.

One technique some counselors erroneously employ in an attempt to bridge the racial gap is to try to treat all students equally in order to improve race relations in schools by having a "colorblind" attitude. To display a colorblind attitude is to act as if one's physical features, such as skin color, are not noticeable and therefore not important. Many White educators, counselors included, have adopted colorblindness as a way to see the individual, not the color of his or her skin. This ideology is adopted with the best of intentions and a genuine desire to treat people equally, but despite the good intentions, colorblindness is seen as a racist attitude by people of color. Race is often a very significant aspect of a person of color's identity and to pretend that it is not is to

minimize who that person is. Many White people think they are being sensitive to the person of color when in reality the person's experiences are being devalued (Sue, et al., 2007b).

Colorblind racial ideology is not successful with children of color, regardless of the race of the counselor, and is rated as frustrating and disruptive by students (Neville, Spanierman & Doan, 2006). Colorblindness is a common attitude for White counseling students beginning degree programs and must be challenged in a safe environment where attitudes on race and subconscious beliefs can be recognized. A suggested tool to effectively facilitate this process is to study racial and ethnic identity formation for White people as well as for people of color (Pack-Brown, 1999).

Most white counselors have been using the tools that they have been taught by their profession and are comfortable with those tools, such as established popular psychological theories of therapy, perceived knowledge of help seeking attitudes, and traditional theories of career development. Unfortunately for the counselors, many children of color are not comfortable with these techniques because they were created using Western cultural norms with White middle-class participants on whom the theories were tested. This means that either the theories are completely irrelevant for students of color, or their relevance has yet to be tested (Lee, 2001; Helms, 2003; Leong & Tan, 2003; Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Simcox, Nuijens, & Lee, 2006). Students of color deserve counselors that are able to serve them as well as White children

The next biggest obstacle for White counselors blocking real multicultural counseling competency, besides obliviousness to the problem, is resistance to the

concepts of White privilege and continued racism. Many White adults want to believe that racism is a thing of the past and that everyone should just be able to get along. That is still not the case. Understanding the realities of White privilege and racism are the first steps toward understanding identity and being able to understand the perceptions of children of color in the educational systems in America (Pack-Brown, 1999). By understanding these concepts, counselors can begin to bridge the gap between themselves and the children of color that they serve and see why students of color may feel that there are obstacles between themselves and a fair educational opportunity.

White Privilege and Continued Racism

The concepts of White privilege and racism, which is defined as a “system of advantage based on race,” are uncomfortable to accept for the White person who has not had to think about race in these terms. This idea of racism is described by Beverly Daniel Tatum in her 1997 book, *“Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?”*

This definition of racism is useful because it allows us to see that racism, like other forms of oppression, is not only a personal ideology based on prejudice, but a *system* involving cultural messages and institutional policies and practices as well as beliefs and actions of individuals. In the context of the United States, this system clearly operates to the advantage of Whites and to the disadvantage of people of color (Tatum, 1997, p. 7).

Most White people are not aware of the implications of being white and the extra advantages they receive that people of color are denied. Being denied privilege puts the discrimination at the forefront, but going through life with privilege means not having to

think about what it would be like without it. White privilege looks like being welcomed in neighborhoods, restaurants and stores without someone thinking you will cause trouble, or opening a newspaper or history text book or turning on the television and seeing people who look like you widely represented. It also looks like accomplishing something and not being called a credit to your race, or not wondering if the reasons for having a bad day or year have racial overtones, or taking a job at an affirmative action employer without co-workers assuming you got the job because of your race (McIntosh, 2008). These are examples of some of the many things that people of color have to deal with on a daily basis and White people take for granted. Studies on the existence of implicit stereotyping, or aversive racism, suggest that the new form of racism is most likely to be evident in well-intentioned White Americans who are unaware they hold beliefs and attitudes that are detrimental to people of color (Sue, et al., 2007a). Most Whites do not even realize that these occurrences happen and therefore do not think about them. These daily reminders that Whites have the privilege in our society are referred to as microaggressions against people of color. These microaggressions represent the other side of White privilege, because for someone to be privileged, someone must not be. The following table shows examples of microaggressions and the messages they send to people of color.

(Table 1) Examples of Microaggressions from the article, Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life

(Sue, Cappodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal & Esquilin, 2007).

Theme	Microaggression	Message
Alien in own land. When Asian Americans and Latinos are assumed to be foreign-born	“Where are you from?” “You speak good English.”	You are not American. You are a foreigner.
Ascription of Intelligence. Assigning intelligence based on race.	“You are a credit to your race.” Asking an Asian person for help with math or science.	People of color are not as intelligent as Whites. All Asians are good at math/science.
Colorblindness. Statements that a White person does not want to acknowledge race.	“When I look at you I don’t see color.” “There is only one race, the human race.”	Denying a person of color’s racial/ethnic experience. Assimilate/Acculturate to the dominant culture.
Denial of individual racism. A statement made when Whites deny their racial biases or privileges.	“I’m not racist. I have Black friends.” “As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority.”	I am immune to racism because I have friends of color. Your racial oppression is no different than gender oppression. I am like you.
Myth of meritocracy. Assertions that race does not play a role in life success.	“Everyone can succeed if they just work hard enough.” “I believe the most qualified person should get the job.”	People of color are lazy and should work harder. People of color are given unfair advantages because of their race.

These examples are only a few of the possible microaggressions that people of color deal with on a regular basis. Besides these personal microaggressions, there are many instances where people of color do not have the advantage in the societal systems of everyday life. These are called environmental microaggressions, which means that the systems in society show that Whites are privileged and people of color are below them, however, not in an intentional way. These systemic inequities are by-products of overt racism from the past that have not been corrected. For example, colleges or even grade schools for that matter, are named after and run by Whites, which sends the message that people of color don’t belong here and there is only so far you can go. The overcrowding of schools in communities of color and the lack of qualified teachers and academic rigor suggests that people of color don’t value education and are not as capable as Whites (Sue,

et al., 2007b). Even if these are not the messages that Whites are intending to send, the messages are still being sent. It is easy for the person who has not had to see these inequities from the losing end to tell people they should get over them. That would be another example of a microaggression and would not be taken well.

These societal messages that surround us all every day, and the fact that Whites still benefit from racism means that, in order for a White person to be able to counsel children of color effectively, one must take deliberate steps to educate oneself on how to change the subconscious beliefs and attitudes that are picked up as messages of racism, even unintentionally.

Chapter 3: How White School Counselors Can Become Multiculturally Competent

The American Psychological Association adopted a description of the components that make up multicultural counseling competencies in 1982 (Sue et al., 1982, Robinson & Morris, 2000). Those components fit into three broad categories of: (1) attitudes/beliefs (awareness), (2) knowledge, and (3) skills. In 1992, these categories were expanded to better describe the characteristics of a multiculturally competent counselor. They are: (1) becoming aware of one's own assumptions, values and biases, (2) understanding the worldview of culturally diverse clients (cultural knowledge), and (3) developing appropriate intervention strategies and techniques (Sue et al., 1992, Robinson & Morris, 2000).

Becoming aware of one's own assumptions, values and biases

As a White counselor, understanding the realities of White privilege and racism is the first step in the process of becoming aware of one's own assumptions, values and biases. Once these are accepted as reality, which is understandably difficult for many White adults but critical for continued growth in this area, the next step is to really learn about one's self as a racial being. Racial identity training is a successful tool to facilitate the process of teaching and helping White counseling students and counselors to counter racism and comfortably identify attitudes and biases that affect their actions (Pack-Brown, 1999).

Janet Helms's White Racial Identity Model is commonly used in the field of psychology. Abandonment of entitlement is the general developmental issue for Whites. In the process of defining a more nonracist White identity, there are numerous realities

that are involved, such as, loss of rights, privilege and status. Helms’s model accounts for the feelings associated with losing these “rights” which are part of the natural process (Helms, 1995; Pack-Brown, 1999). The following table defines the six levels of development, or statuses, of White Identity Development, according to Helms’s model.

(Table 2) White Racial Identity Statuses and Examples of Information-Processing Strategies (IPS)
(Helms, 1995; Pack-Brown, 1999).

Status and IPS	Description	Example
1. Contact -obliviousness	Satisfaction with racial status quo, obliviousness to racism and privilege and one’s participation in it, failure to perceive self as a “racial being.”	“I’m a White woman and I have been discriminated against too. I have had to work hard to get where I am. Blacks should just work harder too and stop blaming other people.”
2. Disintegration -suppression and ambivalence	Disorientation and anxiety arise because of awareness of the existence of racism and feelings of guilt over moral dilemmas about being White and fighting against racism. There is a fear of alienation by other Whites because of desire to fight racism.	“I want to speak up when White people are telling prejudiced jokes, but I am afraid they will not understand where I am coming from. I am uncomfortable about this and want to make friends with people of other racial groups.”
3. Reintegration -elective perception and negative out-group distortions	Idealization of own socioracial group, intolerance of other groups. Racial factors strongly influence decisions. (Results from negative experiences in status 2)	“I never discriminated against non-whites. I can’t help it that this society is built on the racism of White people. People don’t see me for me, only that I am White.”
4. Pseudo-independence -reshaping reality and selective perception	Intellectualization of commitments to the White race while making an effort to tolerate other racial groups. The primary goal is to rid self of racist ideas, while being aware that the racist ideas exist.	“I know that in the past I have been afraid of Black men. I know that this is racist and I will make a conscious effort to change my actions when in their presence.”
5. Immersion/Emersion -hypervigilance and reshaping	Search for increased understanding of the meaning of racism and privilege. An attempt to redefine Whiteness and may include becoming racial advocate.	“I am aware of the privileges that I have because I am White and I will try my best to change these inequities for others.”
6. Autonomy -flexibility and complexity	Motivated to educate themselves about personal Whiteness and willingness to relinquish privileges, like avoiding options that are privileged.	“It is important to me to only participate in activities that are truly diverse and open to everyone. If more White people stood up against stereotypes, this world would improve. I will do what I can to encourage this.”

The statuses are assumed to evolve in sequential order. The first three stages (contact, disintegration, and reintegration) of this model represent the introduction to racism and White privilege and the process Whites go through when processing these ideas. The final three statuses (pseudoindependence, immersion/emersion, and autonomy) are inclusive of the concept that White individuals must make the effort to eventually fully abandon racist attitudes and behavior and reflect a non-racist attitude. It is in these last three stages that a school counselor must be able to operate from in order to be aware of the possible conflicts that could arise for students of color interacting with a White counselor and a White society (Helms, 1995; Pack-Brown, 1999).

Understanding the Worldviews of Culturally Diverse Clients (Cultural Knowledge)

Once the White counselor has gone through the stages of White identity development successfully and has emerged as less racist and more aware, the counselor must also become aware of what people of color go through when developing their racial and ethnic identities. A person's worldview is defined as how the person perceives his or her relationship with the world. These relationships include other people, nature, institutions and society. A person's worldview is highly correlated to the person's life experiences and cultural upbringing (Sue & Sue, 2003b). Racial and ethnic identity development formation is an integral part of what makes up one's personal worldview.

By understanding the developmental processes, the White school counselor can have an educated idea of what children of color are experiencing while they are in school trying to learn, and why difficulties are possible. There are many racial and ethnic

identity models to choose from, and it is not possible to discuss all of them here. Counselors are encouraged to educate themselves on these many models if they are not aware of them. Two developmental models that are geared toward this age group will be discussed. Jean Phinney’s Model of Development of Ethnic Identity is usually considered when discussing adolescents. Her model is based on the theories of Erik Erikson and James Marcia. Erikson described the stage of Identity VS. Identity confusion as the hallmark stage of adolescence while Marcia conceptualized the identity formation process as having two components: exploration and commitment (Marcia, 1966). In Phinney’s model, the stages involved in identity development are also used in ethnic identity development (Phinney & Ong, 2007). The following table explains Phinney’s model with relation to the components of exploration and commitment.

(Table 3) Phinney’s Model of Development of Ethnic Identity in Adolescence (Phinney & Ong, 2007)

Status	Description	Components
Diffusion	Lack of clear identity	No Exploration No Commitment
Foreclosure	Commitment to identity without having thought about it for one’s self	No Exploration Commitment
Moratorium	Period of trying out different identities, and not choosing one permanently	Exploration No Commitment
Achievement	Firm commitment to one’s ethnic identity based on exploration that has led to a clear understanding	Exploration Commitment

Children begin in Diffusion and may go through Foreclosure or Moratorium, or both before reaching Achievement. It is important for the school counselor to be able to tell where a child is in their development in order to know how to proceed. A child’s level of exploration and commitment when it comes to identity development affects his or her attitudes and behaviors. A child in Diffusion will act and think very differently

from a child in Moratorium, for example. The first hasn't thought about race and identity so that is not at the forefront of the child's experience, while a child in Moratorium may be confused, angry or erratic while exploring who he or she is, and may be very sensitive to the subject of race.

The second racial/ethnic identity model describing the development of children of color that will be discussed is that of Janet Helms. Helms explains how her model, People of Color Racial Identity Ego Statuses, is applied to children and adolescents, particularly how the statuses manifest in the classroom and techniques for educators to help children to successfully navigate them in her chapter, Racial Identity in the Social Environment, in the book, *Multicultural Counseling in Schools*, edited by Paul Pederson and John Carey (2003). (Please note that Helms's use of the word *race* in this piece of literature merges the observations of common physical features and the cultural characteristics of identity, which have since been argued to be defined as the two separate, yet usually complimentary constructs of race and ethnicity within much of the literature.)

During childhood and adolescence, a child of color's racial identity is shaped by a variety of environmental factors. These factors are: (1) societal messages about the person's self-worth as well as that of the person's racial group, (2) parental socialization concerning ideas on race, (3) influence of peers, and (4) educators' communications concerning racial differences (overt and covert) (Helms, 2003). These factors, coupled with experiences having to do with race, cause children to need to make sense of their situations. Helms explains this process:

In a sense, maturation is triggered by need. That is, as the person encounters personally meaningful racial material in his or her environments and is unable to cope with it effectively, new statuses, and consequently schemata, may begin to evolve (Helms, 1995, p. 186-187).

The following table demonstrates the five statuses of Helms's People of Color Racial Identity Development Theory as well as examples of information-processing strategies and implications for educators.

(Table 4) Helms’s People of Color Racial Identity Development and Examples of Information-Processing Strategies (Helms, 1995; Helms, 2003).

Status and IPS	Description	Example	Educational Implications
1. Conformity -selective repression and obliviousness to racial concerns	General theme of White superiority, and the denigration of “color”	“Educational achievement is a foreign value among our racial group.”	Teachers reinforce this status when light-skinned children are favored
2. Dissonance -repression of anxiety-provoking racial information	Realization that one does not belong to White racial group and confusions about how one regards own racial group	“I tried to fit in with the White kids but never really felt accepted. Because of this, I don’t have any Black friends either.”	Children may try to call attention to their “differentness” by acting out. Counselors and Teachers should see the reasons behind this to enhance identity development and resist the urge to see it as a discipline problem
3. Immersion/Emersion -hypervigilance toward racial stimuli and dichotomous thinking	Idealization of the group of color and denigration of Whites. Anger at increasing awareness of racial oppression and desire to learn more about own culture	“I don’t want to even be around Whites. They are always putting us down with their rules and oppression and “talk this way, or dress like that.””	When the child’s racial reactions are motivated by Emersion, then he/she is very receptive to the influence of positive same-race role models Children may resist educational success in order to live up to certain racial stereotypes
4. Internalization -flexibility and analytic thinking	Positive commitment to one’s own socioracial group and are capable of functioning across racial groups	“Yes I am a person of color and I appreciate what my people have gone through to get me where I am today. I owe it to them to succeed and make something of myself to further our cause.”	Although this child is a role model and is seen as a helper and mediator to the teacher, the teacher should avoid over-emphasizing the “differentness” of the child to other peers
5. Integrative Awareness -flexibility and complexity	Values own collective identities as well as empathizing and cooperating with other members of other groups	“Difference is not something to be feared. We are all different in some way and we should all explore those differences to help each other.”	Sometimes these children are teased for their ability to look past racial transgressions and challenging racial norms by less advanced peers

Helms hypothesizes that these statuses occur in this order. She also states that it is very rare for children still in school to reach the Integrative Awareness status because it is usually reached in adulthood, due to its necessity for complex thinking (Helms, 2003).

Besides understanding the developmental processes of ethnic and racial identity formation, a White school counselor should make him or herself more aware of different cultures. As stated earlier, the practice of psychology is steeped in Western culture and that is one of the reasons that children of color have historically felt marginalized by school systems, White counselors, and educators. White counselors must take the time to familiarize themselves with the specific cultural knowledge of their particular students. There are many aspects of culture that are influential within the therapeutic relationship. Different cultures have different communication styles (verbal and nonverbal), cultural values about seeking help, disclosing personal information and family and personal responsibility. One cannot assume that all children can be treated the same way (Sue & Sue, 2003c; Rodriguez & Walls, 2000). The counselor must have this cultural knowledge in her or his mind when counseling any student of color, but must weigh this information with the personal and individual information so as not to stereotype. When there is a cultural community population represented in a school, it is the counselor's responsibility to be knowledgeable about common attitudes and practices for that culture, but never assume something without checking with the student first. Being able to determine how to appropriately use cultural knowledge is one of the essential skills that are necessary for the multiculturally competent counselor, which is expanded upon in the third area of cultural competence, the development of skills.

Developing Appropriate Intervention Strategies and Techniques (Skills)

In the past few decades counselor training programs have been improving in their attempts to prepare their graduates to be more multiculturally competent, especially in the first two domains of competence; self awareness of the counselor's attitudes and/or biases, and cultural knowledge. What is still lacking in preparation is the education of counselors on how to use this knowledge effectively with their culturally diverse clients (Rodriguez & Walls, 2000). Awareness and knowledge are necessary to create effective interventions, yet many counselors do not know how to translate their knowledge into useful strategies. Skills acquisition is the hardest domain to learn of the three, yet the most important to the client because this is what the client actually sees.

One obviously crucial skill is the counselor's ability to use cultural knowledge in a natural and indiscernible way. Communication styles differ between cultures and if the counselor is aware of these differences, he or she can recognize them and facilitate the communication in a comfortable way for the student. A skilled counselor is aware of communication patterns and does not take the fact that a Latino student is not making eye contact as evidence that he is not listening or engaged in the conversation, for example. By being aware of these patterns and adjusting, a counselor helps the student he or she is interacting with feel more comfortable. The consequence of a mismatch in communication styles between the counselor and client would be an inability to establish rapport at best and cultural oppression at worst. Examples of common cultural communication patterns are illustrated in the following table.

(Table 5) Communication Style Differences (Nonverbal/Verbal) (Sue & Sue, 2003a) (p. 143).

	Native Americans	Latinos and Asian Americans	Whites	African Americans
Rate and Volume of Speech	Speak softly/slower	Speak softly	Speak loudly and fast	Speak with affect
Eye Contact	Indirect gaze when listening or speaking	Avoidance of eye contact when listening or speaking to people of higher status	Greater eye contact when listening	Direct eye contact when speaking, but less when listening
Listening	Interject less; seldom offer encouraging communication	Interject less	Head nods, nonverbal markers	Interrupt when can (turn taking)
Responding	Delayed auditory (silence)	Mild delay	Quick responding	Very quick responding
Manner of Expression	Low-keyed, indirect	Low-keyed, indirect	Objective, task oriented	Affective, emotional, interpersonal

There are obviously other patterns of interaction that are important for the school counselor to be knowledgeable of and the examples given here are only a portion of the cultural knowledge necessary for the counselor to interact appropriately with students of color. It is imperative that the counselor educate him/herself on these patterns in order to intervene properly with students.

The most traditional and popular counseling theories taught to counselors were developed with the input of mostly White, middle-class subjects. Research shows that these traditional concepts are not especially favored by many people of color due to cultural differences. For example, Person-Centered Therapy is one of the most widely taught and used theories by counselors. It proposes that people are in charge of their own lives and problems and that through openly discussing feelings and thoughts, solutions can be found. These ideas go against the cultural beliefs of many other cultures, such as the collective nature of Latino, Native American and African American cultures. Another

conflicting idea with having control over one's own life is the fact that aspects of society control and perpetuate some of the problems experienced by people of color and individuals do not have the ability to change them (racism, discrimination, etc.) (Sue & Sue, 2003a). Even though counselor training emphasizes more reflective and attending therapy skills, many people of color have been found to prefer more directive approaches that include advice giving and self disclosure on the part of the counselor (Sue & Sue, 2003a).

Most counseling theories teach the ideas that reflective and individualistic counseling is best in order to allow clients to come up with their own breakthroughs and solutions; however, studies have shown that these types of therapies are too slow and ambiguous and even frustrating to people of color whose communication styles and cultural values differ from those who created the theories and for those whom the theories were tested upon and created for (Sue & Sue, 2003a). For example; an important study (Berman, 1979) focusing on the differences between the counseling styles of Black and White counselors found that the Black counselors used a higher percentage of active expression skills such as directives, interpretations, and opinions as opposed to the White counselors' use of attending and reflective skills with most every client. The study was conducted by showing videotapes of diverse clients to counselors and asking them how they would respond to each client. The fact that the Black counselors modified their styles based on the clients' perceived ethnicity evidenced a higher multicultural competency than that of the White counselors (Berman, 1979; Sue & Sue, 2003a). This study is another piece of evidence that multicultural competency must be learned by

White counselors and that cultural differences do matter when it comes to counseling styles.

It is highly likely that a beginning school counselor, or a school counselor beginning to become more multiculturally competent, will encounter the situation where he or she does not have the cultural knowledge about a student and will not know how to match communication styles or use preferred therapeutic strategies. When this happens it is more appropriate to acknowledge the limitation openly with the culturally diverse student than to try to guess what to do and risk offending the student. The counselor could tell the student that she or he understands that they may have different communication styles, but that she or he would like to try and help anyway and they could work together to get their goals met (Sue & Sue, 2003a).

Culturally educated questioning is another skill that is critical for counselors working with culturally diverse student populations. Counselors use the cultural knowledge that they have as a base point to ask relevant questions in order to find the best way to proceed (Rodriguez & Walls, 2000). This type of questioning shows the counselor information like, approximately where in the identity development continuum the student may fall or whether or not cultural issues are even at play in the students' presenting issues. An example of an educated question would be to ask how a Latino or African American student's family and friends feel about the student's future career decisions, knowing that family and collectivism is an important aspect of these cultures. When counselors ask culturally sensitive questions, showing an understanding of cultural

issues, the students will feel more understood and will be more likely to benefit from the counseling relationship (Rodriguez & Walls, 2000).

There are four key assumptions to remember when using culturally educated questioning. The first assumption is that the counseling process is always a cultural encounter. Regardless of the situation, there are different communication styles, experiences and perceptions that affect the experience for both student and counselor, even when the two may seem to share common characteristics.

The second key assumption is that the student's cultural identification may not relate directly to the presenting issues. Even though it is important to keep cultural knowledge in mind, a student's ethnicity may have nothing to do with the fact that he has come to see the counselor for help with anxiety or study habits. It is important to not bring up diversity issues when they are not pertinent because this will make the student feel awkward. If culture is a part of the equation, the student should let the counselor know through the counselor's assessment.

The third assumption of this technique is that the counselor assesses the situation but does not make assumptions. Through questioning, the counselor explores the degree to which the cultural context is significant and does not make assumptions without getting the information directly from the student.

Finally, the student's description of his or her own situation always supersedes any cultural knowledge that the counselor has. Of course, there may be cultural factors influencing the problem, but that is not to be brought up by the counselor until the client recognizes it or the counselor has seen many clues that culture is partially relevant. For

example, a student may come in to talk about not being able to get along with her teacher. The fact that the teacher and student are from different cultural backgrounds may or may not be a factor in their troubled relationship. It is a balancing act for the counselor because it would be detrimental to the counseling outcome to steer the student either way by discounting cultural factors when they are there or by inserting cultural factors when they are not. It is best to leave it up to the student (Rodriguez & Walls, 2000).

Educated questioning is a skill that counselors should naturally demonstrate with all students because it is how the counselor gets the information needed to assist the student. It would not be helpful for the counselor to assume that he or she already knows everything about the situation beforehand because this is not possible. Using cultural knowledge as the basis for the questioning is what makes it educated, meaning that the counselor asks the right kinds of questions.

Educated questioning is good practice for all counseling relationships. By tailoring the questions to the student, the counselor is making the student feel understood and appreciated instead of like just another generic student. Of course it is important for the knowledge that the counselor is basing the questions upon to be based on empirically sound patterns, which should be continuously researched. This skill is another example of a skill necessary for the multiculturally competent counselor and is beneficial for all students.

The skills that have been discussed in this section are beneficial for all student clients because they ask the counselor to take individuals into account and show the students that the counselor is interested in helping them feel more comfortable and build

the trusting relationship that is necessary for the counselor to be able to help. It is only when a student trusts a counselor can the counselor do his or her job for that student and provide the supports needed to help students succeed in school. Once a trusting relationship is possible between the White school counselor and students of color, then the counselor can really use his or her resources to improve achievement.

Chapter 4: Specific Counseling Interventions to Improve Achievement

School counselors are charged with helping all of their students succeed. This means that part of their job is to make changes when necessary and advocate for children who are not getting what they need in order to be successful. This advocacy is a crucial step toward changing the school climate into an environment that values the cultures of all of its students and their families (Lee, 2001; Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). The achievement gap is something that must be closed and counselors can begin to make these changes once they are multiculturally competent and have a plan. When emotional barriers are present for students causing risks for academic failure or unequal opportunities based on racial and cultural inequities in a system, it is necessary for the school counselor to employ interventions to remedy these inequities and negative attitudes (Bryan, 2005). These interventions should be research-based and empirically proven in order to maximize the efforts and minimize any further damage to students of color. The following three interventions are not an exhaustive list of appropriate interventions; however, they appeared multiple times throughout the review of the current literature. The interventions discussed are; 1) Creating School-Family-Community Connections, 2) Culturally Themed Group Counseling, and 3) Cultural Career Counseling. All three interventions are counselor initiated and have been shown to have measurable success. These interventions, if done correctly, are good starting points to get a school's social climate changing in the right direction to improve student achievement.

Creating School-Family-Community Connections

The current resources that schools alone can offer are apparently not enough for many students of color to make up for the lack of opportunities and other obstacles that these children face, as evidenced by the reality of the achievement gap. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 has attempted to address this disparity by mandating the implementation of school-family-community partnerships in all Title I schools. This particular mandate has been slow to implement due to the backlog of so many other necessary changes for Title I schools under this act, which was meant to address, in part, the achievement gap between children of color and their white peers (Bryan, 2005).

School-family-community partnerships are programs that connect the efforts and resources of the school and its faculty with the families of the students while bringing in elements of the community in order to help create positive relationships between all involved. Students and their families must feel like their culture is being valued by the school and these concerted efforts demonstrate this sentiment (Fusick & Bordeau, 2004). Because of the inequities and negative experiences many people of color associate with schools, through their own experiences or through dealings with their children, the relationships between the school and the family are often strained and uncooperative (Fusick & Bordeau, 2004; Lee, 2001; Simcox, Nuijens, & Lee, 2006). One of the characteristics of highly effective diverse schools is a high level of parental involvement (Lee, 2001). Parents must feel welcomed and safe in order to become involved with the school and it is within the counselor's power to initiate these types of programs.

Providing resource information to students and their families within the community is one example of an outreach action that counselors can do. By making contacts with businesses and agencies within the community, like churches, tutorial programs, day care services, social service agencies, medical and dental assistance, the counselor can help direct families to services while showing the surrounding community that the school is interested in helping improve the other aspects of life for the children and their families, as well as supporting local businesses (Holcomb-McCoy, 2004).

Another way to promote family and community connection with the school is to organize meetings, trainings or tutorials in environments that are comfortable for the families, like at churches or community centers, so they do not have to feel intimidated by coming into unfamiliar or uncomfortable territory (Bryan, 2005).

Bringing in mentors from the community is another way that counselors can make connections between the schools and the community and prove to families that the school is making an effort to fill in the role-model disparity for students of color. Successful men and women of color from the surrounding community can be asked to mentor students either one-on-one, come to speak to groups of students or even deliver workshops (Simcox, Nuijens & Lee, 2006).

These examples of ways to create school-family-community connections are positive methods for schools to interact with the families of the students of color who may need more resources than the students who get what they need from school in order to succeed. These ideas can be put into service by the counselors at a school in order to begin the building of relationships which increase trust and cooperation.

Culturally Themed Group Counseling

Group counseling has been found to be an effective way to help students understand and respect themselves and others, another goal set forth by ASCA that pertains to multicultural competency (Fusick & Bordeau, 2004; ASCA, 1999), because it allows students to see the universality of their struggles, can give them different perspectives, and from a logistical standpoint, allows the counselor to help more than one student at a time. Group counseling has been linked to improved achievement scores and enhanced self-awareness and personal responsibility (Bemak, Chi-Ying, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005).

There are two styles of group counseling that have been suggested in the literature in order to help give the support that students of color may need in order to process the experiences they have had, or will have, with others who can empathize with them. One type is a diversity focus group where students of different cultures can share experiences and discuss issues related to obstacles faced and ideas about promoting tolerance. This type of group would have the goal of improving understanding and mutual respect for others within the school (Simcox, Nuijens & Lee, 2006; Lee, 2001).

The second type of group suggested is the ethnic identity group that focuses on one ethnicity and allows these members to share their common experiences and how they handle situations from a common cultural perspective, promoting the development of a positive cultural identity (Simcox, Nuijens & Lee, 2006).

One recommended design for a more specific formation of an ethnic identity group has been presented by Bemak and commented upon by several other influential

scholars in the field of multiculturally competent school counseling. This intervention, named Empowerment Groups for Academic Success (EGAS), has specific guidelines that set it apart from the normal group counseling strategies employed by counselors. In EGAS, the counselor is the facilitator, however, the group is charged with setting the parameters of the group sessions as well as the agendas and the activities because they are the experts on deciding what is pertinent to address. The facilitator is still present and comments, but he or she allows the students to take ownership and leadership of themselves, thus empowering them in an environment where they have previously felt powerless. The counselor as facilitator only redirects the discussion when it veers away from the group's own predetermined goals. The idea is that by giving the group members the authority and power to plan and run the groups, they can really process what is on their minds and what is getting in the way of their own achievement. In the study that Bemack (Bemak, Chi-Ying, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005) presents, the group consisted of seven African American, at-risk female high school sophomores. The facilitators were a white male counseling professor, a white female school counselor, and two female Asian international interns, one first and one second semester. The group decided that its fundamental goal was to address "academic performance" and that to get to the reasons why their school work was suffering, they needed to address other issues in their personal lives. Examples of topics discussed were loss, pregnancy, sexual activity, smoking, family responsibilities, and abuse. The girls were asked for follow-up self reports for the next academic year and the results were unanimous that they were achieving higher grades, better attendance rates and better interpersonal relationships. The girls also

reported that they had participated in previous intervention programs that were not helpful (Bemak, Chi-Ying, & Siroskey-Sabdo, 2005).

One of the criticisms of this study is that there is not enough follow up data and that the existing data are qualitative self-reports. Bemak agrees with these criticisms and explains that due to counselor and administrative turn-over at the school the following year, contact was severed between the facilitators and the students and their records. Bemak responds by saying that the EGAS structure needs more research, but is a program that shows promise, which is echoed through the comments from other multicultural school counseling scholars (Bemak, 2005). One point did split the community; whether or not at least one of the facilitators should match the group's cultural ethnicity and gender (Bemak, 2005; Holcomb-McCoy, 2005a; Lee, 2005). It would obviously be best to have this ethnicity and gender match (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005a), but as previously stated, there is a very uneven ratio between the number of counselors of color and the number of students of color. In many instances, there are no possible opportunities to match ethnicities with counselors and their students. The greater disservice would be to not have the groups at all because of the mismatched ethnicities (Bemak, 2005; Lee, 2005). In the aforementioned study, the facilitators did not match the ethnicity of the group, and yet were able to provide a safe environment for the members to grow. This shows the importance of counselors possessing multicultural competency (Lee, 2005).

Cultural Career Counseling

Students who have career plans and goals for the future are more likely to adhere to the necessary steps to achieve those goals, which are the same steps that measure academic achievement. The career counseling theories that prevail in schools were again created by and for white, middle class students and, because culture is such a salient part of human behavior, these Western-based theories may not be as applicable for more diverse students whose cultural values differ (Leong & Tan, 2003). When students of color feel like they are not being included in the career discussions due to culturally mismatched ideas and biases, and are not shown any successful role models, they may tend to not see a future where school achievement is relevant (Lee, 2001). Counselors can help students of color develop life-plans through guidance toward the world of work with more appropriate strategies. Beginning steps could include implementation of guidance lessons that target students of color that include culturally representative films or narratives, or role-playing and discussions, for example. Another effort counselors can make in order to diversify the career counseling process is to invite culturally diverse speakers from the community to present at career fairs (Fusick & Bordeau, 2004).

In addition to culturally appropriate career guidance lessons, counselors must adapt the way they approach students of color about career decisions through more suitable career counseling models. Culturally appropriate models of career counseling address the fact that cultural variables are important to consider in the career counseling process. For example, customary career theory assumes that the individual has the freedom to choose whichever career he or she desires, but in collectivistic cultures such

as Latino and Asian American cultures, the desires of the family tend to be put ahead of the desires of the individual. This would be important to acknowledge and assess for when counseling a student. Another common assumption from popular career theory is that there exists opportunities for candidates that possess the qualifications for a particular career. This is not always the case due to hiring discrimination and career stereotyping (Leong & Tan, 2003). Again, the necessity of multicultural counseling competency is so apparent in the implementation of appropriate counseling interventions in order to serve the interests of all students. Multicultural competency is not just good for students of color because it benefits all students to have counselors who are open to listening to their stories and valuing their individual experiences (Leong & Tan, 2003).

Conclusion

School counselors are important participants in the process necessary for closing the achievement gap that is still plaguing America's students of color. Even though some areas of growth are occurring, the progress is still too slow. With the disproportionate number of White school counselors charged with serving all students, especially the growing percentage of students of color, counselor education must adapt to remedy the inequities in counselor education from the past concerning multicultural competency to help improve relations between White counselors and students of color, in particular. Only after school counselors are trained to be multiculturally competent can they begin to implement the strategies necessary to change the school climates to a mutual feeling of respect for all cultures. Children must feel respected and valued before they can concentrate on education and that is something that the counselor can and must facilitate. This is accomplished by the counselor through becoming aware of cultural biases and attitudes, becoming knowledgeable about the cultures of the students, and implementing research-based strategies to improve the educational opportunities for all students.

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