



AMERICAN COUNSELING
ASSOCIATION

VISTAS Online

VISTAS Online is an innovative publication produced for the American Counseling Association by Dr. Garry R. Walz and Dr. Jeanne C. Bleuer of Counseling Outfitters, LLC. Its purpose is to provide a means of capturing the ideas, information and experiences generated by the annual ACA Conference and selected ACA Division Conferences. Papers on a program or practice that has been validated through research or experience may also be submitted. This digital collection of peer-reviewed articles is authored by counselors, for counselors. *VISTAS Online* contains the full text of over 500 proprietary counseling articles published from 2004 to present.

VISTAS articles and *ACA Digests* are located in the ACA Online Library. To access the ACA Online Library, go to <http://www.counseling.org/> and scroll down to the LIBRARY tab on the left of the homepage.

- Under the Start Your Search Now box, you may search by author, title and key words.
- The ACA Online Library is a member's only benefit. You can join today via the web: [counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org) and via the phone: 800-347-6647 x222.

Vistas™ is commissioned by and is property of the American Counseling Association, 5999 Stevenson Avenue, Alexandria, VA 22304. No part of *Vistas*™ may be reproduced without express permission of the American Counseling Association. All rights reserved.

Join ACA at: <http://www.counseling.org/>



Suggested APA style reference:

Bray, S., & Salazar, C. (2007). *Essential awareness and knowledge for school counselors providing diversity-competent parent education and consultation*. Retrieved August 28, 2007, from <http://counselingoutfitters.com/vistas/vistas07/Bray.htm>

Essential Awareness and Knowledge for School Counselors Providing Diversity-Competent Parent Education and Consultation

Susan Bray

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Bray, Susan is a doctoral student in Counselor Education at Texas A&M University-Commerce, Commerce, and TX. The emphasis of her studies has been counseling children and adolescents, especially the issues that impact children in the school setting.

Carmen Salazar

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Salazar, Carmen is an associate professor in the Department of Counseling, Texas A&M University-Commerce, Commerce, TX. She has extensive experience supervising school counselor trainees working in rural communities and in a large metropolitan area. Her research, publications, local and national presentations focus on multiculturalism and diversity, and gender issues.

Research has shown that when schools and parents work together in a cooperative relationship that promotes student success, student academic success as well as the student's emotional health is improved (Brendel, 1998). However, it is important that information provided to parents is culturally congruent. When school counselors provide

culturally competent services, parents are less likely to reject the parenting information they provide, or reject suggestions for intervention because of cultural inappropriateness (Holcomb-McCoy, 2000). This is especially relevant considering that while most school counselors are representatives of majority culture, the demographics of schools most often includes a majority of individuals from diverse populations (Lindsey, Robins, & Lindsey, 2002).

Culturally competent counselors continually seek out knowledge and information about client culture and work to develop culturally appropriate interventions and strategies (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). Furthermore, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) *Ethical Standards* (2004) includes provisions that the school counselor is “sensitive to diversity among families” (B.1) and that the school counseling program must “advocate and affirm students from all backgrounds” (Preamble). To help school counselors gain essential awareness of important cultural parenting practices and knowledge of culturally appropriate interventions for parent education and consultation, we provide information about three cultural groups: Latino, African American, and sexual minority families.

Latino Families

Latinos are an increasingly important political coalition and the fastest growing cultural group in the United States today (Balz & Fears, 2006). We will focus on Latinos from Mexico, as they are the most widely represented group in the U.S.

Latino families value the economic opportunities in the United States; however, they may perceive U.S. culture as unreceptive to their traditional values. The Latino cultural value of *educación* includes learning in school as well as upholding cultural traditions (Plunkett & Bàmaca-Gómez, 2003; Reese, 2001). Latino parents see education as the key for their children's achievement of the American dream. However, the combination of demanding work schedules, lack of English language proficiency, and unfamiliarity with the expectations of the U.S. school system may make Latino parents hesitant to become involved in the school or to assist their children with schoolwork (Plunkett & Bàmaca-Gómez, 2003). Active strategies to involve Latino parents in school may include scheduling parent meetings at times that are more convenient such as Friday evenings and increased visibility in the community through home visits and participation in community festivals (Sosa, 1997).

In Latino families, the acculturation level of family members and varying familiarity with the English language can be a source of conflict between parents and children (Miranda, Estrada, & Firpo-Jimenez, 2000). Children may more easily adapt to U.S. language, culture, and values than their parents, yet parents may expect children to conform to traditional Latino values (Eamon & Mulder, 2005). A significant source of stress for Latino children may be the expectation that they will translate for parents who are less proficient in English (Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). School counselors can advocate for institutional responses within the school setting that address the conflict and confusion differences in language may create (Lindsey et al., 2002), for example by encouraging

their schools to provide translators for meetings with language minority parents and by encouraging school personnel to minimize their use of educational jargon (Ramirez, 2003; Sosa, 1997).

The Latino worldview embraces family closeness and inclusiveness, with familial self-identity being a valuable source of self-esteem (Perez & Pinzon, 1997). The cultural value of *familismo* or the importance of extended family in the nurturing and discipline of children may make it more likely that an extended family member is an additional caretaker (Garcia-Preto, 2005). Attendance to the significance of *familismo* means that school counselors will make certain extended family members are included in important school and parenting decisions.

Latino families may experience conflicts within the school setting when parents view the school as an extension of their home. Parents may expect teachers and school personnel to take the same responsibility for the care of their children as do they. Viewing the school as a social environment may mean Latino parents are more likely to respond to personalized invitations to school events, rather than the impersonal mass distributed flyers commonly used by schools (Ramirez, 2003). School counselors can use their relationship building and advocacy skills to promote discussions between school personnel and Latino parents that foster a home-school partnership with clearly defined expectations.

It is important that school counselors are not misled by the stereotypical view of Latino

men as uninvolved in their children's lives (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004). The cultural value of *machismo*, which includes positive attributes such as self-respect and responsibility for the family, interacts with *familismo* to encourage Latino men to participate in parenting their children. However, many Latino men work long hours for low pay, which limits their ability to be fully involved in a parent-school partnership. The combination of *machismo* and *familismo* is a method of connecting Latino fathers to the counseling process and interventions implemented for children's school success (Falicov, 2005).

Respeto, respect for elders and holding with the parents' value system, is an important value upheld by Latino parents (Falicov, 2005), who view their primary responsibility to their children as rearing *personade bien* or a good person (Reese, 2001). *Respeto* describes a beautiful inheritance characterized by passing on of ethical and moral behavior. Expected behavior for children includes greeting people, standing when an adult enters a classroom, and obedience to parents and other elders. School counselors can communicate respect for Latino parents and take care not to undermine children's culturally appropriate respectful behaviors towards adults (Sosa, 1997). However, counselors must also take care to not exhibit patronizing behavior toward Latino parents (Arredondo & Vasquez, 1999). This requires a careful examination of one's thought process and motives in addition to multicultural awareness.

Additional strategies include involving Latino parents in their children's education by suggesting they read aloud to children moral stories that teach proper behavior and

promote the values of respect and family unity (Reese, 2001). Encouraging parents to share stories and memories from their own childhood or life experiences with both their own children and other students is a strategy that takes into account the valuable fund of knowledge that Latino parents possess (Sosa, 1997).

African American Families

Often, portrayals of African American families reflect a cultural deficit model that leaves them appearing inferior and dysfunctional in comparison to majority culture families. Furthermore, African American parents may feel discounted if they challenge the authority of majority culture teachers and administrators (Bradley, Johnson, Rawls & Dodson-Sims, 2005). School counselors can promote understanding by other school professionals by becoming advocates for African American families.

African American parents pay particular attention to the racial socialization of their children (Hill, 2001); preparing them for the stress of the prejudice and discrimination they will encounter (Thomas, 2000). Development of a healthy racial identity provides a source of self-esteem for African American children, and predicts a lower level of depression and fewer externalizing behavior problems such as drug use for African American adolescents (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005). Culturally proficient school counselors will support parents' healthy racial socialization efforts (Bradley et al., 2005). Strategies may include ethnic exploration group guidance lessons in which students can explore their feelings related to ethnic group membership (Holcomb-McCoy). In addition, the school counselor may use small groups to allow students to process feelings about

experiences with racism and to explore the meaning of being a member of an ethnic minority group.

The African American worldview is characterized in terms of “I think, therefore, we are” in contrast to the majority culture view “I think, therefore I am” (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 2005, p. 88). Due to experiences of oppression and racism African Americans have an increased sense of community and interdependence and an expanded definition of family in which the closeness of relationship is not predictable based on the closeness of the biological relationship. For example, in many African American families, the minister of their church is a valuable resource for the family, and culturally proficient school counselors should work to establish relationships with spiritual leaders within the African American community (Bradley et al., 2005).

African American families often embrace a “spare the rod, spoil the child” approach to discipline (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 2005, p.97), because parents are aware that as racial minorities, their children have a much smaller window of opportunity for error than do majority culture children. While ethically or legally school counselors cannot ignore abusive child discipline practices, they must take into account the cultural differences in discipline methods used by African American families (Bradley, 1998). School counselors must keep the concerns of African American parents in mind while engaging parents in discussions about appropriate discipline methods.

African American children may be given more family responsibility at an earlier age than

majority culture children, in part due to economic necessity (Broady, Stoneman, Smith, & Gibson, 1999). School counselors and others must understand the realities of the family situation before prematurely assuming dysfunctional parentification (Hines & Boyd-Franklin, 2005). One strategy for school counselors who believe a child is parentified is to act as an advocate for the family, helping family members negotiate the system in ways that allow a more developmentally appropriate distribution of responsibilities (House & Martin, 1998).

Sexual Minority Families

There have always been children raised by sexual minority parents; however today these family constellations are increasingly visible, although sexual minority parents have the ability to be an invisible minority by allowing school personnel to assume heterosexuality (Ryan & Martin, 2000). In addition to the normal challenges of rearing children, sexual minority parents must deal with the prejudice of a homophobic society that questions their right to be parents (Lambert, 2005). These factors may leave children in sexual minority families unrecognized and/or underserved in the schools. Therefore school counselors must become aware of the issues faced by children reared by sexual minority parents and become advocates for these families (Lamme & Lamme, 2001), helping the school create an atmosphere that is welcoming for GLBT families and that allows for open and honest communication (Jeltova & Fish, 2005). One strategy is to display pro-GLBT symbols in the school counseling office that let children in sexual minority families know they have an advocate (Lamme & Lamme). Another is to celebrate Gay

Pride week within the school in the same ways that honor other diverse groups. School counselors can also provide in-service training to help teachers deal with their negative personal views toward sexual minority parents (Swartz, 1999), understand that acknowledging the student's home life does not require personal agreement, and learn the importance of the use of inclusive gender-neutral terms (Jeltova & Fish, 2005; Swartz, 1999).

School counselors should make efforts to avoid the hetero-centrist practice of comparing sexual minority families with majority culture families (Pachankis & Goldfried, 2004). Lambert (2005) noted that the professional literature yields no evidence that children raised by sexual minority families face any negative results. However, sexual minority parents may feel pressured to be exemplary parents to withstand or overcome homophobia (McCann & Delmonte, 2005). School counselors must familiarize themselves with the empirical research that supports sexual minority parenting and with resources available for GLBT parents (Ryan & Martin, 2000).

School counseling professionals must be sensitive to the child custody concerns of sexual minority families (Lambert, 2005). Children may have experienced bitter custody battles that influenced their feelings about their sexual minority parent (Schwartz, 1999).

Individual counseling that allows students to work through these feelings may be appropriate. School counselors must also advocate for teachers and others within the school setting to be sensitive when communicating with sexual minority families. For example, if the student's parents or caregivers are divorced, send a copy of information to

both households (Lamme & Lamme, 2001). In addition, school counselors must advocate the show of support for both partners in sexual minority families as equally responsible and concerned for the child's wellbeing.

Children from sexual minority families may be targeted for bullying (Ray & Gregory, 2001). School counselors are in an important position to counteract this homophobic bullying (Lamme & Lamme, 2001) individually and systemically. Individual counseling with victims of bullying may be an appropriate intervention (Roberts & Coursol, 1996). The sessions should allow the victim to process feelings about the experience of being a victim, build self-esteem, and work on empowerment strategies. Problem based learning in either group guidance or a small group setting is also effective in teaching assertiveness skills to bullying victims (Hall, 2006).

Conclusion

We have offered an overview of essential awareness and knowledge that school counselors must have when providing parenting education and consultation for Latino, African American, and sexual minority families. The suggested interventions provide school counselors with a foundation for diversity competent practice and advocacy.

References

- American School Counselor Association. (2004). *Ethical standards* (Alexandria, VA: Author).
- Arredondo, P., & Vazquez, L. (1999). Empowerment strategies from Latino/Latina perspectives. In: *Advocacy in counseling: Counselors, clients, & community*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. CG 029609).

Balz, D., & Fears, D. (2006). 'We decided not to be invisible anymore'; Pro-immigration rallies are held across the country. *Washington Post*, April 11, 2006.

Bradley, C. R. (1998). Child rearing in African American families: A study of the disciplinary practices of African American parents. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 26, 273-281.

Bradley, C., Johnson, P., Rawls, G., & Dodson-Sims, G. (2005). School counselors collaborating with African American parents. *Professional School Counseling*, 8, 424-427.

Brendel, J. M. (1998). Sixty-one successful strategies for fostering family involvement in schools. *TCA Journal*, 26, 44-48.

Broady, G. H., Stoneman, Z., Smith, T., & Gibson, N. M. (1999). Sibling relationships in African American families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 61, 1046-1057.

Coltrane, S., Parke, R.D., & Adams, M. (2004). Complexity of father involvement in low-income Mexican-American families. *Family Relations*, 53, 179-189.

Eamon, M. K. & Mulder, C. (2005). Predicting antisocial behavior among Latino young adolescents: An ecological systems analysis. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 75, 117-127.

Falicov, C.J. (2005). Mexican families. In M. McGoldrick & J. Giordano, & N. Garcia-Preto (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (3 rd ed., pp 229-241). NY: Guilford Press.

Garcia-Preto, N. (2005). Latino families: An overview. In M. McGoldrick & J. Giordano, & N. Garcia-Preto (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (3 rd ed., pp 153-165). NY: Guilford Press.

Hall, K.R. (2006). Using problem based learning with victims of bullying behavior. *Professional School Counseling*, 9, 231-237.

Hill, S.A. (2001). Class, race, and gender dimensions of child rearing in African American families. *Journal of Black Studies*, 31, 494-508.

Hines, P.M., & Boyd-Franklin, N. (2005). African American families. In M. McGoldrick & J. Giordano, & N. Garcia-Preto (Eds.), *Ethnicity and family therapy* (3 rd ed., pp. 87-100). NY: Guilford Press.

Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2000, March). *Integrating multicultural perspectives in comprehensive guidance and counseling programs*. Paper presented at the annual

meeting of the American Counseling Association, Washington, DC.

Holcomb-McCoy, C. (2005). Ethnic identity development in early adolescence: Implications and recommendations for middle school counselors. *Professional School Counseling, 9*, 120-127.

House, R. M., & Martin, P. J. (1998). Advocating for brighter futures for all students: A new vision for school counselors. *Education, 119*, 284-291.

Jeltova, I., & Fish, M. C. (2005). Creating school environments responsive to gay, lesbian, and transgender families: Traditional and systemic approaches for consultation. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 16*, 17-33.

Lambert, S. (2005). Gay and lesbian families: What do we know and where to go from here. *The Family Journal, 13*, 43-51.

Lamme, L. L., & Lamme, L. A. (2001). Welcoming children from gay families into our schools. *Educational Leadership, 59:4*, 65-69.

Lindsey, R. B., Robins, K. N., Lindsey, D. B. (2002). The counselor as a member of a culturally proficient school leadership team. In: *Building stronger school counseling programs: bringing futuristic approaches into the present* (pp. 111-129). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 464276)

McCann, D., & Delmonte, H. (2005). Lesbian and gay parenting: Babes in arms or babes in the woods? *Sexual and Relationship Therapy, 20*, 333-347.

Miranda, A. O., Estrada, D., & Firpo-Jimenez, M. (2000). Differences in family cohesion, adaptability, and environment among Latino families in dissimilar stages of acculturation. *The Family Journal, 8*, 341-350.

Pachankis, J E., & Goldfried, M.R. (2004). Clinical issues in working with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice & Training, 41*, 227-246.

Perez, M. A., & Pinzon, H. L. (1997). Latino Families: Partners for success in school settings. *Journal of School Health, 67*, 182-184.

Plunkett, S. W., & Bàamaca-Gómez, M.Y. (2003). The relationship between parenting, acculturation, and adolescent academics in Mexican-origin immigrant families in Los Angeles. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 25*, 222-239.

Ramirez, A.Y. (2003). Dismay and disappointment: Parental involvement of Latino

immigrant parents. *The Urban Review*, 35, 93-110.

Ray, V. & Gregory, R. (2001). School experiences of the children of lesbian and gay parents. *Family Matters*, 59, 28-34.

Reese, L. (2001). Morality and identity in Mexican immigrant parents' visions of the future. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27, 455-472.

Roberts, W. B., Jr., & Coursol, D. H. (1996). Strategies for intervention with childhood and adolescent victims of bullying, teasing, and intimidation in the school setting. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling*, 30, 204-212.

Ryan, D., & Martin, A. (2000). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender parents in the school systems. *School Psychology Review*, 29, 207-216.

Schwartz, W. (1999). Family diversity in urban schools. In *ERIC/Cue Digest*, 148. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 434188).

Sosa, A. S. (1997). Involving Hispanic parents in educational activities through collaborative relationships. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 21, 103-111.

Sue, D. W., Arredondo, P., & McDavis, R. J. (1992). Multicultural competencies: A call to the profession. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 70, 477-486.

Thomas, A. J. (2000). The impact of racial identity on African American child rearing beliefs. *The Journal of Black Psychology*, 26, 317-319.

Weisskirch, R. S., & Alva, S. A. (2002). The relationship of language brokering to ethnic identity for Latino early adolescents. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 27, 286-299.

VISTAS 2007 Online

As an online only acceptance, this paper is presented as submitted by the author(s). Authors bear responsibility for missing or incorrect information.